The NW-33, designed to keep orbital construction sites clear of high speed debris and micrometeoroid strikes, was considered a marvel of modern technology in the nano design labs at MIT. Chronus arrived in the skies above earth 28 November 2314 at 10:40 GMT and the *UES Starlight,* under the final stages of construction at the time, was pulled through a tunnel in the fabric of space and time and hurtled to a strange future where the Watchers tormented the itinerant remnants of life from earth and her colonies. For its part, Chronus barely knew humans existed, even up to its destruction; its sole thought was to feed. A creature who’s life ran backwards through time, it took sustenance from the fabric of reality: space, time, and gravity, punching holes in existence as it traversed, and warping time around it. When Chronus arrived above earth that morning, the NW-33 floating around the Starlight Construction Complex reacted unexpectedly – and violently. Bombarded by waves of tachyon radiation, they twisted and warped from their original programming into what would become known as watchers. Their only thought now was to consume and reproduce; they began absorbing everything above earth, including the humans that had created them. First, earth was wiped clean, then Mars, Titan, Ganymede, Calisto. Within hours all human life within the Sol system was consumed. The insane nano constructs wrapped their new, uncaring god in a cloud of shadow and flame, eventually devising a method of faster-than-light travel based upon Chronus’ ability to bore through time, using the body of Chronus itself to create conduits through space. During the interim, humans outside of earth began building ships to carry them beyond the threat of these new creatures. Due to the effect Chronos had on time, the humans aboard these vessels slowly began to die out as the gene pool stagnated, population declined and new diseases evolved, while simultaneously the pets and animals that mankind had brought along to preserve aboard the new home ships also evolved into sentient life.

This was the world the *Starlight* found itself in. And after destroying Chronus, the maddening effect on the NW-33 nano machines ceased and the Watchers instantly fell dormant. The hole Chornus bored through time split open and expanded across the remains of the Sol System.

The *Starlight* found itself hurtling through time again. Aaron Stobulous stood alone on the helm again, blood dripping from an open wound on his hand. Pain was the only way he knew how one stayed awake in then Chronus-tunnel. He looked down at his communicator, a flash of surprise came to his face, and he rushed down to the launching bay. Various pieces of gear and tools was scattered around the deck, as though the entire crew had dropped everything it was holding and left. Three MSs were also splayed across the deck, and the old man scrambled up onto the nearest one. Inside, passed out, was a pilot, Rafael Lopez. Stobulous released the seal on the cockpit and reared back his fist, striking Lopez across the jaw. The Brazillian angrily shouted “que diabos?” and grabbed the old man by the beard.

“Young man! Rafael! It’s me! Stop!” Stobulous cried out. Lopez held on tight to the beard as the Captain continued. “We haven’t much time Lopez, help me wake the other two. You have to hurt them to wake them up, do you think you can do that?” Lopez unbuckled himself, smiled and gamboled towards Slover’s MS.

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“Maybe you could tell us what this is all about, old man. And where the hell is everyone else?” Slover asked, rubbing his jaw. The lift they were in whisked them quickly towards the main deck of the *Starlight*.

“Well, I’m rather excited someone else is here, to be honest. Last time this happened, everyone disappeared until after we came through the other side… maybe it has something to do with proximity to Watchers nano machines, or Chronus or… “ the Captain trailed off.

“What the ‘ell are you talkin’ about?” MacNeil asked

“Why we’re all still here, the only ones here. I was awake during my pass through last time.” The captain flexed clenched his fist, some blood trickling out. “I thought it had to do with the pain, but… it must be something else… oh, I don’t know, look.” The doors to the main level slide open the captain started moving down the hall to the bridge. “My last time through, your first time through… there’s one more bit of information I know that wasn’t in the book. It was told to me. By me. I was told ‘You can’t do it alone. You need someone else’s help.’” And that was it. I thought I might have meant I needed more help doing this… you know, this whole thing, but with the three of you here...” The doors to the bridge slid opened and the captain sat down before the command console.

“Slover, Lopez, I need you two at nav. This baby is a bear to fly. MacNeil, tactical is over there. You all might also want to strap yourself in.”

“Would you like to explain to us what’s going on first?” Lopez spat at the old man, while buckling himself into the left-most navigation seat.

“Sure. We’re heading back in time to our own… at least I assume we are, because when I came through the first time… I mean… the… your first time through. Let me start over. When I crossed over *YOUR* first time through, I saw the ship *Starlight* headed back this way we’re coming. I assume that was us. A version of… you know, anyway, that means, on that end, Chronus may still be alive.” He pressed some buttons on the command console. It went dark on the bridge, save for the emergency lights and their monitors as several non-vital systems began shutting down across the ship. Excess power began to flow into the gravity cannon’s capacitors. “Which means we have one choice. To charge the cannon, and take it out. Once and for all.”

Several minutes passed and another *Starlight* appeared on the edge of the *Starlight*’s visual screen; then another, and another. Captain Stobulous and the MS pilots stared in wonder at the hundreds of other *Starlights* swirling around them, in varying states of damage and disrepair.

“I say, when I came through, there was only one other ship…” Captain Stobulous opened a comm channel and broadcast to all the Starlights there “You can’t do it alone. You’ll need the pilots’ help.” He then closed the channel. “Have to close the loop and all.” He nervously followed up. “Get ready.”

A great shudder reverberated through the entire vessel and real space appeared in the view screen. Several ships were gathered about, awaiting the launch of the *Starlight*, and the earth loomed in the below – the earth they were all familiar with. Unconscious crew members winked back into existence on the bridge, and all around the rest of the ship. The communication channels flared to life with traffic, several video feeds appearing around the bridge.

“-is flight control! *Starlight*, respon-what the hell is that?” a stressed-out looking flight controller shouted at them.

“Slover, Lopez, bring us around! One-eighty degrees!” The Starlight ponderously spun in place as Lopez and Slover strained against the unfamiliar controls of the massive ship. On the earth below, they could all see cities, blue water, clouds, all a welcome sight. A yellow swirling vortex appeared in their view. A pair of red burning eyes could be seen gazing through the hole in space.

Captain Stobulous raised a fist. “You’re going down, you son of a bitch! FIRE THE CANNON!”

“Hold on, I’m aimin’” MacNeil replied, expertly aligning the targeting reticule on his tactical screen.

“Young man, there’s no time!” The captain responded, shaking his fist in the air.

MacNeil smiled wryly. “There’s always time to aim,” and loosed the full power of the gravity cannon.