My advisor was very upset with me. I had no new certs this term and my rank had fallen to 290th. I just didn’t care as long as I had no more black marks. We argued for a bit about my lack of focus and dedication. In the end there was nothing he could do though. My 'contract' only required I complete Grade 1 in one field before the 15 terms expired. Many other students had to take courses two or three times before passing them. I heard it took the average student 9 terms before they achieved a grade 1 rating. This allowed them to go on training cruises from their 11th to 12th terms, a 21 week long exercise for experience. In the end I signed up for three propulsion courses. With these courses I could take two more certs in propulsion.

Over the break I got Eve into her fabricated skin. She looked amazing. Even in a society with skin sculpting she was a beauty. Her lack of a vagina and nipples were a little odd when she was naked. She did have an anus to press out anything she consumed as she had a very basic digestive tract. I decided if she ever asked for it I would add it. She ended being 1.8 meters tall, with an athletic build in appearance, modest breasts and modest hips.

I dressed her in coveralls and brought her to a sparring session with the marines. Well my new skin for Eve looked great but it wasn’t very durable. It took some effort but it tore and leaked. Well it had looked great anyway before combat. The marines were overall impressed and suggested I make her skin able to bruise and heal while I fixed the durability issue. Didn’t they understand how difficult that would be?

Later that night in my apartment I decided to have Eve work towards an extrovert personality, smiling a lot, positive, supportive and friendly. Rather than programming I just found characters in six different series that she could blend together to emulate a personality close to what I envisioned. Now I had not watched the shows but I admit while Eve watched the series on the big screen in the apartment I got hooked. One series was of a space pirate crew. It was a comedy of errors for them. Another was a military love story drama between a navy commander and marine captain. Another had the main character with fantastical powers doing good deeds while hiding his identity. I got sucked in and after two weeks managed to reset myself…well I ended limiting myself to one episode a night of just the pirate comedy.

So the 8th term was a bit bumpy for me. First was the waste of time with the fiction shows. Next was incorporating a nanofiber circulatory matrix in Eve’s skin. The extra mass and limited space available made it a head ache. The course work was another problem. I didn’t plan to attend any classes thereby getting black marks. I did finish the courses by the fifth week of the term but still that accounted for 54 missed classes. Abby also got pulled to serve on the Chimera, a battleship. Apparently there was trouble brewing on the front with the Sapphire Empire.

Well by the fifth week of the term things smoothed out for me. Eve’s personality was developing nicely. I finished my courses and passed all the exams. I came up with an ingenious solution to my skin strengthening problem. I changed the vessels for the thermal fluids and sweat to be made of the nanofiber. It also allowed me to add micro packets of repair nano bots for the skin, slightly more advanced than the ones in marines skin suits. They crawled out to the surface, did the repairs and then perished. The new fabrication would cost 20,000 credits for the materials and nano bots. I needed to make more money. Her fission core also lasted about 35 days before needing more fuel, 5,000 credits each. I wanted to upgrade it to a dual core and make the refuel easier but her frame was packed and already heavy at 141 kg.

I started working in the robotics lab again with Eve by my side. She was great at finding repairable salvage. She was also partial to finding humanoid robots and repairing them. The return for the time required wasn’t worth it my opinion. A 200 hour investment might earn me 3 or 4 thousand credits after I bought replacement parts needed. Where as fixing a VR headset would take 3 hours and earn me about 200 credits. Eve pulled out six old servant bots. Rather than pull parts from all to fix one or two she asked me to fix all six. Did she feel sympathy for the bots?

I decided to rent storage space in the lab officially. It was insurance of someone coming and stealing my works in progress. The bots were all from different manufacturers. This was going to be a headache. I decided rather than restore the bots I would just do my best to upgrade them and get them functional. Four had memory cores intact. For the other two I just cloned the memory of the oldest bot. I upgraded all the batteries, cells and any parts I needed to fabricate I used a stronger and lighter material from my other salvage.

The term ended with all six bots half finished and my debt increased 32,174 credits. I had my meeting with my advisor, he wasn’t happy again. The black marks didn’t make up for the three propulsion certs I had completed during the term in his opinion. Well I chose three more propulsion courses before leaving him to stew. Technically, according to the rules I read, I could be compelled to attend classes. But there was a recent standing academy rule that since I had already been promoted to Grade 2 I was free to do whatever as long as I completed my two days a week in the repair yards. During break I split my time between working on the propulsion courses and working on the robots. Eve was actually a huge help. Her dexterity was extremely high and she could install parts with high efficiency.

The break finished with the bots getting close to completion. I immediately tested out on one course to start the term. I needed work on the VR practicals for the other two courses as they were cruiser fine maneuvering thrusters I was unfamiliar with. I figured this should take just a week. It took just 5 days and I tested out of the other two classes. Three weeks into the term and all the bots were restored with a new coat of metallic paint. Each was slightly upgraded and I placed them all up for sale at 8,800 credits each. A new servant bot was between 15 and 25 thousand credits so they should sell.

They all sold in less than a week as my handle on the auction site had a very good reputation. I managed to pay my entire debt off and bank 12,080 credits. I bought the materials and time on the advanced fabricators for Eve’s updated skin. I accrued 10k of new debt and paid another 12k from my funds. Well the skin came out great. We headed over to spar with Adam and Buckie to test it out.

We first tested the bruising option and it worked well enough. The new skin was also super durable. It was even a little resistant to slashing attacks from Adams knife attacks. The upgrade was a success. I planned to design a way to bring in additional skin repair patches for Eve in the future but for now I shelved the project. The rest of the term I would focus on propulsion systems and getting certs.

Week 9 of the term brought terrible news. The Chimera and her destroyer escorts had been destroyed by the Sapphire Empire. Abby was most likely dead. Adam and Buckie came over and we all drank in morning. There hadn’t been an official release but the marine grapevine had gotten the info to Adam. It was heartbreaking news and probably just the tip of the iceberg. Two days later thousands of navy personal and marines were called to ships in the dry docks. A few were assigned to ships coming out of moth balls. A major mobilization was happening.

Students in their 13th, 14th and 15th term were called to serve immediately. It was a very tense time on the station. The term ended and the station facility seemed hollow and the station seemed quiet. I had completed a number of certs and was more than halfway through the 29 certs required for propulsion Grade 1. I had no meeting with an advisor. I guessed he was sick of arguing with me. My courses were just assigned. All were propulsion courses at least. During the break I watched shows with Eve, spent time training with Buckie as Adam was on the planet helping marines get ready for deployment, and worked on propulsion coursework. Eve’s personality was getting extremely close to human and I counted her a friend which I was in short supply of. The slips on the station also started to get ships for major repairs instead of just refits and overhauls.

It was obvious we were at war and the announcement finally came the first day of classes my 10th term. This caused many things to happen. The biggest impact was economical. Taxes increased, domestic spending decreased, and everything got more expensive including food. The vending machine prices nearly doubled overnight. While the Union was not seizing assets I did find some new taxes affecting me, personal bots were now taxed. It was a minor amount but many other small taxes quickly resulted in civil unrest. I finished my courses by the end of the first week and was working on completing additional certs when news came that eight star systems had been taken including the Petersburg system. It was originally settled by the Russians but more importantly had the largest shipyards in the Union and a vast and resource rich asteroid belt. I decided I needed to start wearing a sidearm.

I fabricated a heavy energy pistol, a Russian Mark VI. It had three settings, pulse stun, heat beam, dense beam. The stun was an electrical pellet charge and had 20 stored shots. The heat beam was used in space as it had minimal penetration power. The dense beam had decent penetration power but restricted usage on space ships to prevent bulkheads from being breached. I could get 70 shots on a single charge with the heat beam setting and 20 shots in the dense beam mode.