Chapter 5 Naval Academy: Term 5

My advisor meeting for fifth term went well. I had a new advisor and he really didn’t give a shit which for me was a good thing. I was just 89 hours from reaching Grade 2 in life support systems and that was all he focused on during the meeting. I don’t think he read past that on my sheet as our meeting lasted just 9 minutes. My class rank had slipped again, down to 39th. It wasn’t surprising as people were starting to reach Grade 2 in their specialties. I had 7 of 11 certs for sensors so this term I wanted to finish those four certs and work on FTL for a bit. Adam wanted me to test out for a sidearm so that was on my radar as well.

During the break I paid for me and Hailey to go planet side. I had over 5000 credits saved and my debt was now under 15,000. Hailey scheduled our day activities and I studied at night after some short energetic sex sessions. The four certs for sensors revolved around six courses, so I enrolled in three of them and mixed the other ones in. I felt like I would need half the term to digest enough of everything to pass the certs.

Well after the 8 day break I was down 2200 credits and my relationship with Hailey had simmered to friends with benefits. I had exhausted the sugar daddy role apparently. She was from an asteroid mining colony and had a mountain of debt. Almost 100,000 credits now. She just had one term left and by the time she began her fleet assignment she would be paying insane amounts just on the interest. Thankfully she seemed ignorant of her future problems.

Classes started again, 5th term. My routine was mostly the same as the prior semester except I got my cert for a sidearm one evening and only stayed with Hailey one day a week. Buckie administered the live sidearm test and I scored ‘elite’ which meant top 10% which I guessed was impressive. The restrictions for buying scrap had been completely repealed which gave me a path to earn credits faster again. I repaired a large stevedore bot and sold it to a merchant ship captain for 6,500 credits. That was my only big score during the term. Everything else was just a few 50 to a 100 credits profit here and there. My two work days in the shipyards soon earned me my Grade 2 rating for life support systems. I also started supervising other engineers, working toward Grade 3. I would have to complete five courses for supervisory and management. At least their were no certs, just exam and practicals.

I did get my sensor certs done by the sixth week of the term. I wasn’t sure if I should get my management courses done or focus on FTL as I had planned. Before I could do that I found my roommates had broken into my sleep capsule or allowed someone to break in. My SLUMBER helmet was gone and all dozen of my data pads. The security on the unit I had installed was pretty good but the thief had physically drilled a large hole to access the unit. I assumed it was Asher either doing it himself or bribing my roommates. At least this was pretty petty and I didn’t bother reporting the incident. I had copies of everything on the missing pads. The SLUMBER unit was a big loss as it had twenty programs that were unique on it. I got a secure tiny apartment in one of the zones near the robotics lab. It was just 4 meters by 3 meters. The bed folded up into the wall to create room and there was a small kitchen. I started cooking meals as Camila had a line on cheap fresh produce from the planet. Unfortunately, it would be a 20-minute commute back to the academy now but I only needed to go there for cert exams.

It took me four days to find another SLUMBER unit in the scrap heap and refurbish it. It was an older model but had a VR unit embedded. Essentially the VR allowed preprogrammed dreams. Technically it was a restricted item, you could own one but couldn’t sell one. I repaired it and added the oxygen feed. The seventy-two sleep VR programs loaded in it were all pornographic in nature. I scanned them briefly in movie mode and erased 65 of them to free up some memory. Although some people would find them more in the realm of nightmares, I purchased ship emergency and combat scenarios online, 58 elite difficulty programs in total. They were all old and not popular so only cost a few credits each.

Abby, Adam and Buckie sympathized with me and sometimes came by and hung out after our practice in my tiny apartment. I was focusing on my leadership and management courses. As the term came to a close I said goodbye to Hailey. She was graduating and assigned to the destroyer, Golden Slipper, an old ship but well maintained. I reached Grade 3 for life support systems and completed another cert for FTL. It was the first time I had to take a cert twice. I failed the FTL test the first time because I accidentally used the wrong load calculations blowing up the VR ship.

My advisor was the same dumbass. He actually read my entire profile this time. He offered me a training cruise for the next term. But after finding out I wouldn’t earn income on the cruise I passed to his disappointment. I had heard how restrictive marine training was and wasn't too sure why I had so much leeway so I asked my advisor. He said engineers were technically not in the navy until they graduated and were assigned. He revealed that my time at the academy wouldn't count toward my 20 year term. He said if a failed a course at any point then they might take a more active role but since I was doing so well I had my freedom.

I decided this term I would work on a propulsion cert so signed up for three classes in that area. I figured if that was all I focused on this term I might be able to complete 5 or 6 certs. It was my 6th term and I thought I was doing pretty damn good and that was reflected as my class rank had climbed. I was 26th after the last term. Out of curiosity more than actually caring I asked how rank was calculated. Basically, it was course grades, certs obtained, and additional points allocated by professors in oversight. It was just as I thought, a fluid system that could be manipulated. The only good thing is that it was cumulative so points couldn’t be taken away.

During the break I spent all my time in manufacturing using printers and fabricators. There were five certs easily obtained as they were just programming and quality control checking. Well the programming was a little more complex than just loading programs and the material stocking and feeding and troubleshooting took some time but I was very competent. So just seven 18-hour days later and I was done with everything, all 5 certs completed. It wasn’t a record but did draw some attention from the lead fabricator. She offered me a job after graduation. It would be a good job on the secure station and I would have taken the offer except for Asher and his family had a large presence here.

I was down to my last few terms at the academy. I had spent over a year working hard and my debt was down to just over 6,000 credits and I had over 9,000 saved. This might be the last time I would have access to this focused military technology education. I planned out for terms 6, 7, 8 and 9. I would finish my propulsion certs and FTL certification. FTL engineers made the most credits in the navy, even at Grade 1, so it was important for me to achieve Grade 1.