

Chapter 1

The core members of this unit arrived on a Shuttle flight on a brilliant clear Tatooine day . . . but I am getting a little ahead of myself . . .

It was in the early stages of the Clone Wars that the group, which would later become known as Garrison Tyranus, was assembled. Lord Tyranus, Count Dooku, had successfully planned and launched the construction of a weapon that would carry the Trade Federation and his master, Lord Sidious, into a new era of Galactic Domination and unimaginable power.

The very reason the Trade Federation existed was to pool the resources needed to bring this monstrous undertaking to fruition. Several Outer Rim planets were stripped of their raw materials and left as mere shells of what they had previously been. They had flourished in the flurry of activity and jobs that buzzed around the project, and all but died out when the mining efforts were withdrawn. In most cases the worlds were left behind as barren reminders of the blind ambition of the Empire.

Even moisture had to be coaxed from the atmosphere on these now-desolate planets using evaporative collection units.



This new weapon was kept hidden from everyone except those responsible for its design and construction. Once construction began, the designers were the victims of a horrible navigational mishap on a transport shuttle taking them to oversee the construction. It appears that the ship's nav' computer was set to jump on a course that took it directly through the center of the Rishi Maze and a clustering of stars. The ship was vaporized, and all on board with her.

In the years that unfolded during the course of the Clone Wars, many things came to light . . . General Grievous was destroyed by Obi Wan Kenobi,

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Darth Sidious was deeply entrenched in his plan to unravel the Republic, and as the beginning of the end, Darth Tyrannus was slain by Anakin Skywalker . . . beheaded in a lightsaber battle during a rescue mission to free the then-Chancellor Palpatine from the Count and General Grievous. Although the soon-to-be Emperor lost his Sith Apprentice that day, he was cultivating a new one in the troubled victor of the harrowing duel.

By the time of the fall of the Jedi Temple and the beginning of the Great Jedi Purge, the skeletal framework of the



project was nearing completion and raw materials were flooding in from the Mining Guild to a remote construction location to continue the work. The surreptitious project had been so expertly protected and hidden from even the Jedi by Darth Tyrannus, that Emperor Palpatine commissioned a Garrison from among the members of Lord Vader's handpicked 501st Legion, the very troops that had stormed the Jedi Temple, and placed them in charge of security for its construction.

To honor his fallen apprentice, he anointed the newly formed group:

GARRISON TYRANUS.



The construction scale was enormous. The final product would be roughly the size of a Class IV moon. Shortly after the end of the battles on Kashyyyk, many Wookiees were enslaved and taken to work on the construction.

To maintain secrecy, the scale of the project was shrouded even from those troopers working on it. There were several instances

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of small, unorganized uprisings among the Wookiees in the years that followed, which were dealt with swiftly. One smuggler, so troubled by what he



saw, freed several hundred of the hairy giants and made an escape with at least one of them.

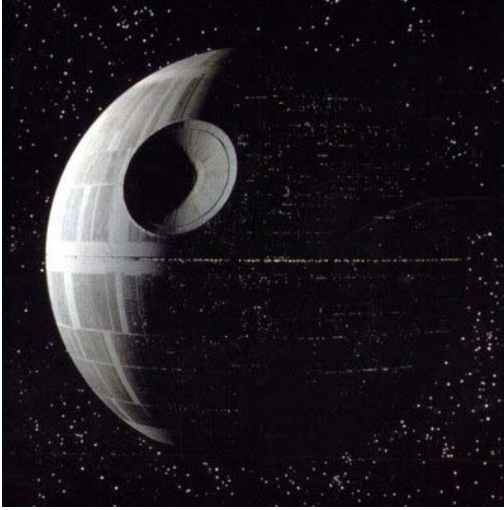
Most of the delivery manifests were destroyed in the battle, so the pilot was never identified. Those manifests that were recovered showed shipments from Dantooine and Tatooine to our location with continuing flightplans to the Endor system. Sometimes there were projects that were kept secret from even the elite, until we became needed.

With the birth of the Rebellion, supply lines were compromised in some sectors. The rebels had no idea what supplies they were diverting or destroying. They simply knew the cargo was Imperial in nature, and attacked the defenseless convoys. It spooked many of the regular suppliers. Those that remained, smugglers for the most part, were less than reputable and suspect in and of themselves.

While we earned a reputation to be feared as a Garrison, and were able to maintain security of the project, we did not have the numbers to repel any serious external assaults or onboard insurrections should they have arisen. The project had also grown too large to keep concealed from long range scanners. There were Loyalists from Alderaan and many other inner systems that were merging efforts to scan for possible remote building sites. They feared the very covert operations that were currently under way, and acted to protect what remained of the Republic.

They hoped to one day regain the peace they had known before the Empire. Remote listening posts, comp scanners and orbital signal-jamming platforms were deployed to assist in keeping the draped veil securely in front of our project. Behind the shroud, armored ground assault vehicles, several TIE squadrons, speeder bikes and a weapons stockpile including hand-to-hand weapons as well as sonic charges were amassed to ensure security.

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And so our task progressed for nearly 20 standard years from start to finish. It was a constant battle to maintain security and order until the most magnificent killing machine ever devised was completed and its name revealed . . . Death Star.

Once the Death Star was completed, Garrison Tyranus was reassigned to other duties close to the Dark Lord Vader. Some were dispatched to assignments on the new battle station, some to duty onboard various Star Destroyers and some were

assigned to various other posts, depending on their training and specialty. There had been a small outpost guarding the mining of materials on Tatooine and Dantooine, among others. Some of the members of TYRANUS were assembled into a small patrol unit, assigned to re-establish an Imperial presence in the closed outpost on Tatooine.

It was with the formation of this new unit that my standing transfer request had finally been answered. It was late in the day, and I was just returning from a 3 day mission in the caves, when my CO confirmed the transfer for me, **"Deckard, I just got the holonet confirmation of your transfer approval. I don't remember signing off on this, but I guess I must have if it's going through. How did things go on this mission?"**

I shouldered my rifle and glanced back to the entrance to the caves, **"It went as well as could be expected. We found traces of Rebus, but no luck locating his . . ."** I turned my head back to my CO and he had walked away from me in the middle of my sentence. He must have had an urgent need to ***check in with headquarters***. I seriously wondered if the guy ever did any work at all. We were constantly doing his work and making the difficult, necessary decisions. Clouds were gathering and moisture hung heavy in the air . . . preparing to dump yet more water on us as night came on.



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I entered my barracks, hurriedly gathered my gear together and slipped off my armor plates. I keyed a special request to the pilot of the shuttle that would be arriving in the morning. Confirmation of my sent message flashed 3 times on the small screen of my field holonet pack. I sat back in my chair and switched it off. I was finally getting out of here. Standing, I crossed the small space to my bunk and rolled in, onto my back. I was hungry, but too tired to eat. I closed my burning eyes as thoughts and images from the past several days flooded through my head. My breathing slowed and steadied and I gave in to the seductive reprieve of sleep as the sound of the first droplets of the falling rain became an elemental, hypnotic rhythm.

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I awoke with a heart-pounding start to the blaring claxon mounted on the wall of the barracks. Other troopers began slipping on their gear and heading out for chow. It was almost light, and I knew the shuttle would be here soon. I gathered the few personal belongings I had and shoved them into my gear bag. I heard the whine of engines, and I crossed the room to the door. The rain had stopped and the morning shuttle was just arriving on the landing platform. I jogged the short distance to the base of the platform and took the stairs 2 at a time. As I reached the top and stepped onto the landing pad, our ground crew was already at work unloading the supplies from the hold. The pilot was going over the manifest with them when I came running up. He shot me a look, shook his head and smiling, threw me a small, light pouch.

"I guess you got my message?" I said, snapping a quick, relaxed two-fingered salute his way. **"We're lifting off shortly! Hurry Up, Deckard!"** he shouted at me, laughing. I ripped open the pouch as I disappeared down the stairs. Out slid a new black thermal body glove. I held it to my face and breathed in deeply . . . it smelled new, nothing like the sewers of Anoaat, the way mine did. I had been on this rock for several years, and there had never been any point to getting a new one, knowing I would just be going back into the sludge and muck in the caves and sewers. But now . . . well, now was a different story, I thought, as I walked into the barracks . . . now I was getting out of here . . . no more lizard-ants, and no more poodoo.

I threw open the door to the empty barracks and disappeared into the shower room, as I stripped off the disgusting old glove. Shortly, I emerged again, clean and in the new glove. I tossed the old one in the waste chute and slipped on my armor plates. Grabbing my gear bag,

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rifle, environmental backpack and bucket, I took one last look around, and walked out toward the shuttle.

I chewed on a high-energy ration bar as I walked up the boarding ramp. The last of the supplies had been offloaded and the pilot was bringing the engines online for our departure. I walked between the twin rows of jumpseats. I moved all the way forward, just behind the gunner's seat and folded my metal seat down. Restraint harnesses hung from the bulkhead in a row behind the seats. I clipped my rifle into the mounted rack in the center of the aisle, and dropped my gear bag and pack to the deck, kicking them back under my seat. I placed my bucket down in front of them and stepped one leg into the harness as I sat down. The thin metal was cold and hard, I thought, as I pulled the restraint up. It didn't really matter, as long as I was leaving this place! I put one arm through a hanging strap, then the other and clipped the two halves of the harness together with the crotch strap into the center clasp at my chest. I settled in for what was likely to be only the first leg of a long flight.

The ramp retracted and raised to the stowed position . . . airlock seals hissing. The pilot called back to me, **"You in?"** I yelled back to be heard over the engines, **"Let's get out of here before somebody changes their mind!"** I felt the ship lift under the force of its' repulsor field, and then the engines' whine raised to a loud, dull roar as the shuttle rose further away from the deck and pivoted, climbing skyward.



The row of jumpseats shook and vibrated as the upward reaching wings lowered into their familiar triangular shape. I leaned forward, peering out the port in front of the gunner's seat, and watched Anoat slip into the archives of my past tours of duty as we accelerated away into the darkness toward my new post. I closed my eyes and rested my head back against the bulkhead.

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