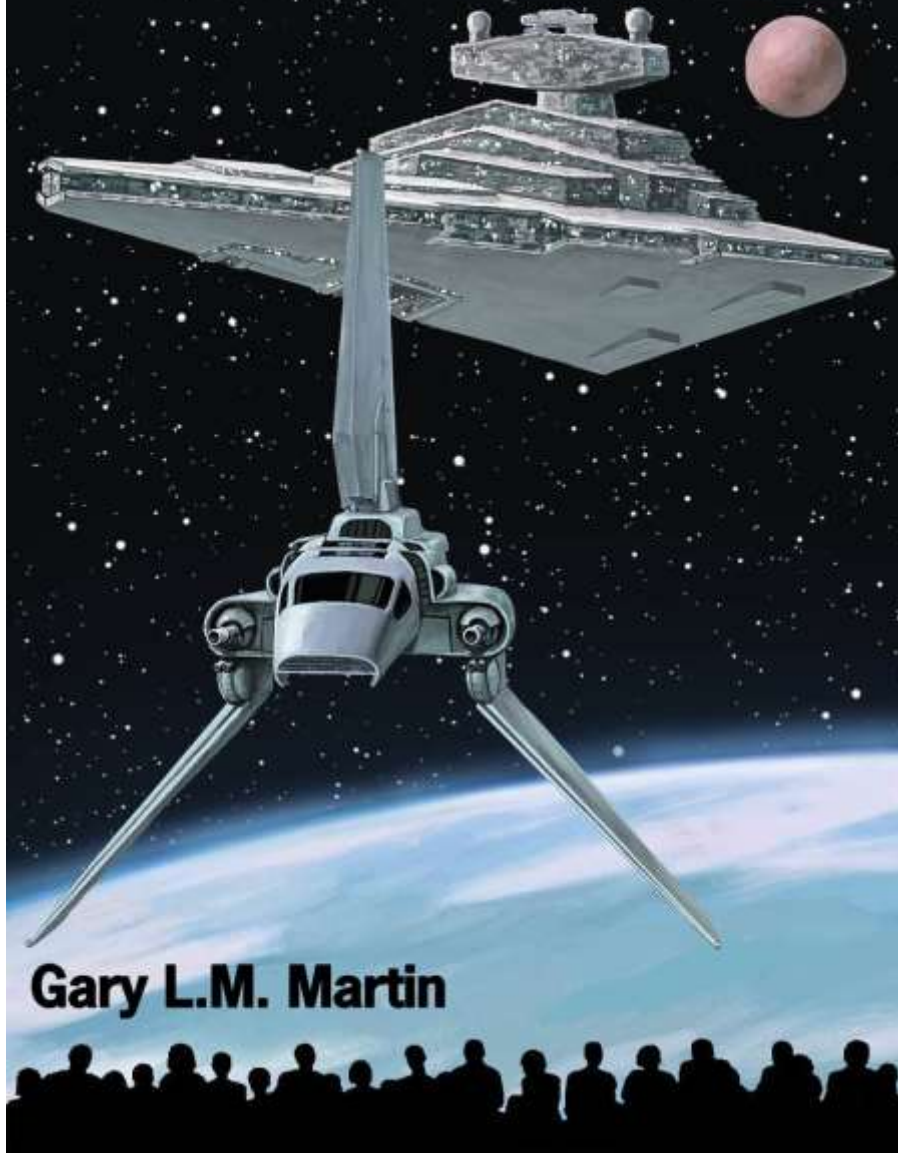


The Greatest Galactic Movie Ever Made



Gary L.M. Martin

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By Gary L.M. Martin

Prologue: The Greatest Contest Ever

The Clitorians were an advanced race, much more so than mankind.

Thankfully, they came in peace.

They had all kinds of technology which Earth would love to have, first and foremost their advanced FTL drive. Earth had an FTL drive of its own, but it was only fast enough to enable the Survey Service to reach the nearest stars in a reasonable period of time. To reach Henry's Star, which was 40 light years from earth, would take nearly five years in the fastest ship the Survey Service had available.

A Clitorian ship could cover that distance in six days.

Earth had to get their star drive. But the Clitorians were not inclined to give it up for free. Earth, with a much more primitive level of technology, seemed to have nothing that the Clitorians would want.

And then, almost by accident, the Survey Service discovered something the Clitorians wanted badly. Badly enough to trade away the secrets of their star drive. Whichever faction on Earth could give them what they wanted would become fabulously wealthy and powerful.

What, then, did they want?

And would the Earth be able to give it to them?

Whether or not mankind would be able to spread across the stars was riding on that answer.

That casual assertion raised a lot of eyebrows on the crew of the *Mongoose*, and Captain Blackstone immediately tried to determine if there was something they could trade with the Clitorians to get access to their star drive technology.

The Clitorians spent three days sifting through their cultural database, and as each day passed, Blackstone grew more and more pessimistic. The Clitorians were a highly advanced culture; it seemed unlikely Earth would have anything that they would covet.

And then, one day, they stumbled across the entertainment section of the database, and discovered the original *Star Wars* film.

After 400 years, it was still a timeless classic, the space opera version of Shakespeare (which itself had been largely forgotten after the 22nd century).

Captain Blackstone and her first officer, Lieutenant Commander Kelly Witt, watched in fascination as three of the Clitorians watched an old fashioned two dimensional broadcast of the classic film.

"I got one!"

"Great, kid! Don't get cocky!"

"Momomomomom!" said one of the Clitorians, turning to look at another seated beside him. "Momomomomomom!" said the one sitting next to him.

"Does that mean they like it?" Commander Witt asked.

"Momomomomomom," said the third Clitorian, bouncing back and forth in his seat excitedly as TIE Fighters raked the *Millennium Falcon*.

"I think so," said Captain Blackstone. She allowed herself a small smile, as hope began to grow inside of her.