

**CARDASSIA**

UNA McCORMACK

WORLDS OF

**STAR TREK**  
DEEP SPACE NINE

VOLUME ONE

**ANDOR**

HEATHER JARMAN

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**“The Visionists Value Tradition Above  
All,” Shar Said.**

“This part of the world—the Archipelago—is the oldest inhabited region of our planet. Why our ancestors endured here for so long is hard to understand when you consider that nine months of the year the rain, cold, and storms make for miserable living conditions. The only way we survived was the profusion of underground hot springs that allowed homes to be kept warm and humid, as most of my kind prefer. So every year, at the peak of the storm season, they had a period of fasting, prayer, and sacrifice to the Water Guardian, begging for deliverance. The symbol on the door was to remind the Water Guardian that true believers lived within and to pass them over. In the old days, it would have been painted in the blood of the eldest *shen* in the house.”

Prynn blinked. “Excuse me? Blood?”

“Not for hundreds of years. Long before I was born, the celebration of the Spring Water Festival was heavily curtailed—some of its rites outlawed.”

“Fasting and prayer dangerous? Someone should warn the Bajorans.”

“Not that part. After the people felt like they’d been preserved from death, they celebrated. Eating, intoxicants,” he paused, “*tezha* with strangers—I’ve read historical accounts of sentient sacrifices: *saf*-induced hallucinations leading to murdering a *shen* or pushing a child off a cliff into the ocean.”

“You’re kidding me,” Prynn said dubiously.

“The finer points of our history—and culture—aren’t widely known offworld,” Shar said.

“History, I’ll believe. But culture? Come on, Shar. I had two Andorians on my floor at the Academy. They never went to parties. Ever. Hardly ever touched synthehol. Never once nibbled at a proposition for an illicit encounter. The phrase ‘one-night-stand’ wasn’t in their vocabulary. What gives?”

“Who we are as Federation citizens living among other species and who we are among our own kind...might be a bit disparate.”

“Have you...ever been intoxicated? Out of control? Decadent?”

“Yes.”

Intrigued, her eyebrows shot up. “Yes to intoxicated, out of control, or decadent? Or all three?”

Shar offered her only an obscure twitch of his antennae.

Prynn studied Shar with renewed curiosity, wondering how much of his true nature he held at bay—and what it would take to provoke it.

WORLDS OF  
**STAR TREK**  
**DEEP SPACE NINE**<sup>®</sup>  
VOLUME ONE

**THE LOTUS FLOWER**

UNA McCORMACK

**PARADIGM**

HEATHER JARMAN

Based upon STAR TREK<sup>®</sup>,  
created by Gene Roddenberry,  
and STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE,  
created by Rick Berman and Michael Piller



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# Cardassia

# **The Lotus Flower**

**Una McCormack**

## About the Author

Una McCormack discovered *Deep Space Nine* very late in its run, but loved it immediately for its politics, its wit, its ambiguity, and its tailor. She enjoys classic British television and going to the cinema, and she collects capital cities. She lives with her partner Matthew in Cambridge, England, where she reads, writes, and teaches. She is the author of the short story “Face Value”, which appeared in the *DS9* tenth-anniversary anthology *Prophecy and Change*, and she hopes to return to the worlds of *Deep Space Nine* very soon.

*For Matthew—best friend and love.*

## Acknowledgments

Love is reading someone's drafts. Thank you, Matthew.

A large number of people have helped me, and I would like to thank all the online and offline friends who have read and encouraged, and been patient with my late replies, extended disappearing acts, and last-minute cancellations. The denizens of Henneth Annûn, Eryn Arnem, and the Lyst have never failed to entertain, educate, inform—and distract.

Two people should here be held accountable for the parts played in setting me on this particular career path. Pat McCormack made me watch *Blake's 7* at an impressionable age and thus must be held personally responsible for all that has followed. Andrew Moul pressed his tapes of *Deep Space Nine* on me, saying, "You'll like this." He was rather more right than perhaps any of us could have imagined.

I would like to extend grateful thanks in particular for all the kindness and encouragement I have received from the following people: M.A.E. has the rare and special skill of being able to come up with names—and the generosity to supply them on demand. Tavia Chalcraft has been enthusiastic and merciless in exactly the right quantities. Andria Laws has provided ice-cream and moral support beyond the call of duty. Brenda Evans has shown me new possibilities in narrative, characterization, and collaboration—and, in turn, has been most receptive to the joys of symmetry. Ina Hark coaxed me, guided me, and pushed me through my first attempts at writing—I cannot measure the debt and can only thank from the heart.

Finally, a deeply heartfelt thank you to Marco Palmieri—for having faith in someone new, for subtle ideas and shrewd editing, for never failing to make things better...and for letting me loose on Cardassia Prime.

## **Historian's Note**

This story is set primarily in December, 2376 (Old Calendar), approximately eight weeks after the conclusion of the *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* novel *Unity*.

## Prologue

“Get that camera over here!”

Teris half-stumbles, half-runs toward the ridge. She waves her hand at Anjen to follow her. “Come *on!*” Then she looks out across the city.

Down below, there’s a riot going on. The streets—what’s left of them—are filled with people, pressing forward, picking up and throwing whatever they can lay their hands on. Little flashes of fire flare up and there are shouts and cries and sirens wailing.

It’s not clear yet what’s triggered it, although the city has been on a knife edge for the past week, since that outbreak of *tzeka* fever was announced. The government issued directives, got the medics out on the ground fast, said it was contained—but people are frightened...one spark, that’s all it will have taken. A situation waiting to happen. And what’s happening right now, Teris sees, is that the Cardassian police are overwhelmed, and are pulling back, and the Federation peacekeeper forces are moving in. They have better armor. And better weapons.

They form up in a smooth, professional line, but that crowd’s crushing forward....

“You know what, Anjen? I think we should go down there—”

“Have you gone stark raving *mad?*”

“I think we’ll get some *amazing* pictures—”

“And *I* think a Bajoran journalist wandering into a riot in the Cardassian capital is a *really* bad idea—”

“You call yourself a professional?”

“Whatever I call myself, it’s not stupid! You want pictures from down there—you go and get them yourself, girl!”

“All right, all right, we’ll stay here—can you get me and all that in shot?”

“Course I can....” Anjen raises the camera, gestures to Teris until he’s got her where he wants her. A foot to the left, an inch to the right. The perfect shot?

Then there is a massive explosion. Someone must’ve just torched a fuel depot. The blast sends them flying—they throw their hands over their heads, but are back up again in seconds. Anjen is waving the camera about. His hands are shaking.

Fire screams through the night, a red gash ripped in a black sky. It’s as bright as day. The whole of the capital is lit up under the unholy glare, the ruins plain to see below them, all for the taking. Teris shields her eyes and looks out at the pandemonium.

“*Prophets...*”

Then the stench reaches them. Teris gags. *Mephitic*, she thinks, marveling. She’s always wanted to get that word into a report. Now she can. She pulls herself together. “Did you get that? Did you *get* it? Don’t tell me you missed it...!”

“I got it, I got it!”

Teris coughs out the foul air, and thinks of the edit they’ll do later.

“*Beautiful...*”

# 1

The mountains rose sheer and high to the north and the west, their shadows shifting across the valley throughout the course of the day. When you walked around the settlement, you could always feel them. You could usually make a good guess as to the time. *Like living in a sundial*, Keiko thought absently, propping her elbows on the windowsill and resting her chin in her hands, staring up at the peaks that marked and measured out the days at Andak.

The mountains were shot through with black rock, which would glitter when hit by the harsh Cardassian sun, sending sudden sharp shards of light over the base and the settlement. Obsidian, Feric had told her, and then had launched into an impromptu lecture about the volcanic activity that had formed this part of the province. It had been the subject of his thesis.

“Too much information, Feric!” she’d groaned as his eyes, beneath their ridges, took on a zealous gleam. “There’s a very good reason I’m not a geologist!” He’d laughed, taking it in the good humor she’d intended, but couldn’t resist adding a little bit more information (“*Don’t worry—the volcanoes are extinct*”). He was a first-rate scientist, and she hoped that soon enough he might also be a trusted friend. She was sure that she had made a good choice, appointing him as her deputy.

Early evening in Andak brought with it an acute light that, for an hour or more, seemed to settle upon the ancient valley and the new base that lay there in its folds. If you looked at the calendar, it was supposed to be autumn—but the heat had not noticeably dissipated, and it endured even after it went dark. As the year died, Keiko had been told, and winter did come at last to the mountains, the days would become more barren and the nights would be bitterly cold. Cardassia, she suspected, had many cruelties left to reveal.

This evening, the sun seemed to have intensified further, and the efficient gray edges of the buildings were outlined with silver. It was still and hot—and expectant, as if the valley was waiting for something to happen, as if it was waiting for some change. Keiko opened the window, wishing for a little breath of air upon her face. She watched as a small group of people—ten or twelve, perhaps—assembled in the dusty, unpaved square around which the settlement was ordered. Feric was among them. He

stood for a while, speaking to one or two of those gathered, and then he and a young woman—Keiko recognized her as one of the junior engineers—moved a little distance away from the others. They each were carrying something, and it was only when they held these before them and then fastened them over their faces that Keiko saw that they were masks.

They turned to face one another, each studying the mask that hid the other from view. The moments slipped past more quickly now, and a hush had fallen over the others gathered there. They were drawn to the scene before them, and stood by unknowing, but eager, watching and waiting. Keiko gazed at this tableau as it held for a long, still moment. The mountains behind at first framed the scene and then, almost imperceptibly, seemed to become part of the composition.

A ripple passed through the onlookers as first Feric, then his companion turned to them. It seemed as if, each in turn, they became connected; whether by their own fascination or some other, more physical charge, they could not afterward tell. The sense of anticipation in the square was growing, the air was becoming slow. If this had been anywhere else, Keiko might have said a storm was coming.

The young woman began to speak, her voice low and rhythmical.

*“The power that moves through me, animates my life, animates the mask of Oralius...”*

There were some children in the square too this evening, Molly included, playing some game or other—it looked to Keiko as if Molly was organizing proceedings. *Like mother, like daughter*, she thought, with a grin. Growing up on Deep Space 9 had been good for Molly in many ways. She seemed to be able to fit in wherever she was—she certainly had none of her father’s difficulties mixing with the Cardassians here, although there were some children hanging back, Keiko noticed, watching the games but not taking part. Well, Molly could be a bit much at first, if you were a shy kid. No doubt they’d get used to her in time, or perhaps get used to each other.

*As must we all...*

The woman was still chanting:

*“It is the song of the morning, opening up to life, bringing the truth of her wisdom, to those who live in the shadow of the night...”*

Keiko had known even before she’d set foot here that a large part of her job at Andak would be making the staff come together not just as a team, but as a community. Cloistered together, all this way out, it would be easy for feuds to grow, for minor incidents to take on massive significance—for the place to become a hothouse of resentment and intrigue. Keiko was director here—but it was not just the scientific research that would need her attention. A community, that’s what she wanted too. And so she’d requested that the team she’d assembled should bring their families

with them to Andak. It was only when the requisitions came through—for living quarters, for rations—that she began to realize what a Cardassian “family” might mean. Everyone at Andak had been touched by the war. She, Miles, Molly, and Yoshi—they were the oddities: mother, father, sister, brother. No one else was that lucky. Some of them were the only survivors of their families: Feric, for one, had lost everyone—mother, two sisters, a wife, and a little boy. When Feric looked at Yoshi, Keiko thought her heart would break—another good reason to encourage a community at Andak.

She heard Feric’s voice rising, clear and sure in the evening air.

*“It is this selfsame power—turned against creation, turned against my friend—that can destroy his body with my hand, reduce his spirit with my hate...”*

She’d had to fight a hard battle to get Feric’s appointment confirmed, right the way up to the advisory board. At least Charles Drury back at the I.A.A.C. had supported her—well, she was *his* appointment, after all, it wouldn’t do to lose face and faith in your new research director *this* early on in the project....

“You’ve got your geologist, Keiko,” he’d said, with a twist to his mouth, “Despite his, ah, *fascinating* beliefs...”

“He’s a member of the Oralian Way, Charlie—and don’t raise your eyebrow at me like that. The only reason there’s been this much fuss is that he’s had the nerve to discuss his beliefs openly. And since when did the I.A.A.C. hire people based on their religion, or lack of it?”

“You make, as ever, a convincing case. But no more controversy if you please, Keiko,” he’d said, leaning over to turn off the link. “The budget won’t stand for many more emergency meetings. Catering for the great and the good doesn’t come cheap, you know. The funding isn’t *that* secure. Yet.”

*Politics, politics, politics...We’re meant to be doing science!*

Keiko sighed and leaned her forehead against the cool plastic of the window. It would be all politics again tomorrow, she thought ruefully, with far too little chance for science. Abandoned on her desk, a padd flashed a lonely and unnecessary reminder that the following afternoon, the Andak Project was to be favored with the presence of one Vedek Yevir Linjarin. As if that weren’t intruding on her every thought already. A high-profile visitor, putting the project under the spotlight. Yevir, it seemed, never went anywhere without a cavalcade of cameras in his wake. All in the cause of peace—although it didn’t seem to be doing his popularity back on Bajor much harm either....

Keiko chewed on her bottom lip. Playing the usual politics was bad enough, but when it meant putting aside all your personal feelings...Yevir had hurt a friend of hers, hurt her badly, and Keiko was going to have to spend tomorrow making good-

mannered small talk with him. Her friend was a practiced politician herself these days and would understand, Keiko knew, but she would still feel a pang of guilt when she next had to look Kira in the eye.

*Welcome to the Andak Project, Vedek Yevir. Here's a punch in the mouth in return for my friend's Attainder.*

Now, *that*, Keiko suspected, would get the funding cut for sure. No, she thought with a grin, she'd better steer away from the Miles Edward O'Brien School of Diplomacy and stick with something a little more welcoming.

She cast an anxious and appraising eye around the settlement, at the buildings that seemed to her to sit as yet precariously on the land, and wondered how it would all appear to an outside observer. It was, she would be the first to admit, pretty basic, but there were far worse places to be on Cardassia Prime these days. They had come through the capital on their way out here—that had been a shock. Keiko had *read* about it—had known in an abstract way, the way you think you know things that you see on news broadcasts or read about—but nothing had prepared her for the reality. Nothing had prepared her for the black, blasted landscape, for the dust and the dark, for the hollow eyes of the survivors trying to keep on living in the ruins. Trying to get down one street, they had been held up by workers clearing away the debris—she remembered with a shudder watching as they unearthed a pile of skeletons.... She'd only just distracted Molly's attention in time, before the little girl had seen. There had been risks, she and Miles knew, in first moving the family to Deep Space 9, then bringing them here to Cardassia. But there were limits. There were some things you had to protect your children from.

In the square, someone had started humming. Someone picked up the melody, then someone else—and soon the whole assembly had joined in. The sound seemed to build up, seemed to be moving outward from the group, out into the whole of the square, the whole of the settlement, the whole of the valley of Andak. Keiko closed her eyes, listened, found herself thinking of the evening's heat, and the black mountains, and the sharp white light that filled the valley....

“Bloody *hell!*”

Keiko's eyes shot open. She gave a wry smile. That had certainly killed the mood.

She looked over her shoulder and round their quarters with mounting disbelief. *He hasn't...tell me he hasn't...*

But he had. He'd pulled one of the panels off the wall and was investigating what lay inside.

“What *are* you doing, Miles?”

“I can't get this thing to work properly. Damned Cardassian settings!”

Realization dawned on her. “Are you talking about the temperature modulators?”

He made a noise that she took to be agreement.

“Is *that* why it’s so hot in here? *Miles!*” she scolded. “Why didn’t you just leave it alone?”

He looked up at her. “You were complaining about the heat again last night, and we had it right down. Turns out the levels have been fixed for Cardassian physiology. I wanted to see if I could get it to go down a notch or two. Should have thought of it sooner.”

“But now it’s even *hotter!*” She turned away from the window to take a better look at what he was up to and grimaced at the sight. Spread all over just about every available space was a chaos of tools and cables. Yoshi was sitting on the floor, happily absorbed in the vital business of emptying out his father’s toolkit and dispersing the contents as widely as possible. Teetering on the edge of a nearby table was a pot of *meya* lilies, paper-thin and exquisitely perfumed, that she had set out only that morning. She stepped across to rescue them, placing them out of harm’s way on top of some nearby shelves. Nobody could colonize space as quickly and as thoroughly as Miles, when he put his mind to it.

“Miles,” she said weakly, “what *have* you done to my home?”

“Eh?” He looked around. “Oh, don’t worry about this. I’ll have it all back inside and the panel on again before you know.”

*But I already know...!* she thought, and sighed, putting a hand to her forehead. From on top of her desk, the padd blinked at her, doggedly.

“Aren’t you leaving for the capital in a few hours?” she said. “And are you packed yet?” Something else crossed her mind. “Is your presentation even *ready?*”

He stuck his head again inside the panel and mumbled something.

“I can’t hear you with your head in there, Miles.”

He twisted his neck a little and glared at her. “I said, I’ll finish it on the ride up.”

Keiko, who was a mother of two and had once been a schoolteacher, knew guilt the moment she saw it. “So,” she said, putting her hands on her hips, “Let me see if I’ve got this straight. Instead of finishing a presentation on which the whole future of this project may hang, *you* decided you were going to open up the wall, pull out a bunch of cables, and play with them?”

He looked round at her, his expression one of complete bafflement. “To fix the temperature modulators,” he explained, as if to someone not quite following something very straightforward, and then he leaned over again. “Don’t you know by

now that everything I do is done to make you happy, sweetheart?” he added, and then quickly, and wisely, put his head back inside the panel—where he bumped it, and swore again, under his breath.

Keiko came away from the window, and cleared a space on the couch to sit. Yoshi climbed up beside her, and put his hand in hers. “Don’t play the innocent with me,” she said, stroking his hair. “I know you two—you’re both in this together.” He gave her a wide and guilt-free grin. Keiko tucked him under her arm, looked round at the anarchy into which her home had descended, and sighed.

*Earth, Deep Space 9, Cardassia...Nothing really changes...*

## 2

*Miles O'Brien is by no means the only person making a journey around Cardassia this night. As evening claimed the day, he packed and repacked an overnight bag. It is almost as old and tired as its owner feels right now, a little frayed at the seams, but still serviceable. A padd sits within it, pressed between the underclothes and the clean shirt. It contains almost half of a presentation. Almost. There is a faint hope that it will somehow have written itself in the morning. Not very rational, of course; but then improbable desires will persist, even in a modern man. Now it sits silent in the bag, which sits silent on the knee of the man who sits silently staring at his fellow travelers, rattling along in a curious vehicle, inhaling unburned hydrocarbons from an antiquated combustion engine that someone...how might he have put it...rescued from a museum, and put to more profitable use. With a few modifications, of course, to deal with the problems of fuel. Miles would be fascinated, if the night weren't hot, and the driver weren't the tiniest bit drunk.*

*Eventually, this torment will end, of course; he is among a very few on the planet with access to Federation technology, and soon the starship orbiting Cardassia will relay him from the transporter station to which he is headed, passing him molecule by molecule to his destination in the capital.*

*Others—no matter how elevated their status or urgent their business—are making do with more traditional means of transportation. One man, anxious to be home before full dark takes the capital city, nevertheless must pick his way cautiously over what was once the Department of Rhetorical Administration at the university. Eyes to the ground, flashlight casting thin rays before him, he is alert in a particular way, and so it is that he spots something most other men would miss. He stoops, and scrabbles at the debris, and exhumes it—a book. Most of the cover is torn off, the pages are blackened and a little charred at the edges. He turns it reverentially, as if fearing that further handling may cause it to disintegrate entirely. Enigma tales, he sees, and enjoys a fleeting moment of triumph. He does not have a copy of this one. He slips the book inside his jacket, and moves on. The oily blackness of the lake laps against the rubble, and his unsteady feet tingle at the thought of slipping beneath the cold ripples. In better days he never failed to enjoy this journey—perhaps that is why he had chosen this place for his business tonight—and as he stumbles on he takes some comfort in his find.*