

Velvet Glove

“They’re very gentle,” I murmured as the deathworlder explored the formal garden. He kept his arms behind his back, like a small child looking at a precious keepsake.

“Most people from their planet are,” the abbot told me. “At least, when they visit us. This world resonates with them on a fundamental level, stirring protective instincts akin to a mother for her child. They will do nothing to harm this world.” The alien turned, his eyes now colder. “Directly, or indirectly.”

“Yes, yes, message received,” I replied, waving one hand irritably. “We would have offered your world generous terms anyway.”

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