

## THE BREEDING PITS

By

Max Robbins

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Eulid was annoyed with the foreigner. He took an interminable amount of time for everything. More irritating still was that Eulid knew nothing about him. The curt imperial correspondence had simply stated, “take care of the man” and cater to whatever he required without question. The tone and the strange, anonymous nature of the message raised endless questions. It would require, at minimum, a personal senatorial-level edict to demand such action from a man of his station, and even more so to forgo the courtesy of a signatory.

He regarded Aleion for the nth time—clothes so clearly out of fashion, as though they were purchased from a history of empire tome, centuries out of date. The gold lining of the toga was leaves—leaves! For Hera’s sake! These had not been in court fashion since Julius the 8th! His sandals were thin at the base by half, and the loincloth displayed no trace of a family crest. It was maddening to consider that he, Eulid the Fourth, of the family Meritius, could be compelled to show this imbecile anything but a good beating. Adding insult to injury, the man had asked him to accompany him to the slave sector to look at breeding stock, and now he was over an hour late!

He fumed beneath his practiced smile, skillfully avoiding eye contact with the passing citizenry, covertly scanning the crowd, lest he be seen by someone of rank and compelled to explain his humiliating situation.

“Eulid, how pleasant to encounter you this day,” Aleion spoke, appearing as if from nowhere at his side. Briefly startled, Eulid quickly regained his composure.

“Ahh, Aleion, so pleased to join you this morning.”

“Shall we proceed to the pits?”

“I must again urge you to use an intermediary, as it is quite unusual for a man of your... err, for any citizen to visit the breeding pits directly. There are people for whom this activity can be arranged in a more private and... uh, dignified venue.”

“No, I will do so directly. Please lead the way.”

Eulid felt insulted and confused. The man had no sense of decorum. A person of good breeding would never immediately contradict such a request. Yet, while Aleion essentially ordered him forward, he did so without the smug assurance of a high-ranking official. He did it in a way that made Eulid feel as if his role was incidental and assumed. Clearly, the man was an idiot, and Eulid briefly considered telling him so, but the thought of the imperial communiqué quickly stilled his tongue. It was possible this idiot might be important to the emperor, and perhaps favor could be had by treating him well. Again, he bridled between his feelings and his well-trained diplomacy.

“Of course, Aleion. Please follow me.”

They crossed the market square, and for the first time since his youth, Eulid walked the back paths, usually reserved for vendors, careful to avoid the main thoroughfare where he might encounter another citizen. They moved slowly through the crowded alleys, lined by a menagerie of differing cultures, each hawking wares ranging from elaborate lamps from the east to rugs and candles. The smell of soaps and scented wood filled his nostrils. He briefly recalled an incident from his school days when a vendor had become abusive, refusing to meet his more-than-adequate offer for a set of leather riding boots. Eulid had smacked the man across the face, and unbelievably, the man had swung his fist, nearly breaking his nose. Eulid had, of course, called the city guard and personally attended the whipping, enjoying the man's pleas for forgiveness as his skin was slowly flayed by the repeated strokes from the town guard. He came back from his reverie at the sound of a dog barking.

"Ahh yes, we are here."

He rapped twice, loudly, on a dark wooden door with an arched top, so firmly fitted in its stone enclosure that it was nearly invisible. Several moments passed before the rattling of metal against wood could be heard, and a small partition opened. Silence persisted until Eulid finally spoke.

"It is I, Eulid the Fourth of the family Meritius, and honored guest." More rattling and the soft scraping of wood on stone followed as a smaller, nearly invisible portion of the door swung soundlessly open. A short, obsequious man appeared in the doorway.

“Pardon, sir. Pardon, please. Please enter.”

“We require to see the breeding pits. Please send for a guide.”

Aleion spoke, “No, we will not need a guide. Please let us proceed directly.”

Again, Eulid nearly broke out in anger but caught himself.

“Of course, Aleion. Please follow me.”

What a lowlife this man must be, thought Eulid. What could possibly compel him to forgo even the basest of etiquette by entering the pits without a guide? It was an unthinkable breach of protocol and only reaffirmed his feeling that this man must be from the lowest class. How was it possible that he found himself leading this maggot through the merchant district?

“We will not be taking a guide, and please inform your master that we are on the premises. We will be some time, and during this, we would like not to be interrupted. Make sure that there are no other viewers or staff save the guard while we are browsing.”

“Yes, yes, master sir. I will see to it right away. Is there anything else the master requires?”

“No, you filthy oaf. Now be about what I have ordered.”

Eulid took pleasure in berating the little man. A small comfort, given his current circumstances, but it made him feel like himself again.

“Please, Mr. Aleion, follow me.”

They walked through a simple, square stone room that served as a combination cloakroom and weapons storage. Nearly complete sets of robes, sandals, and a variety of largely ceremonial arms were interspersed with satchels of food lying on wooden benches around the periphery. At the far end of the room, a carved set of circular stairs led down. They could hear the hushed activity below.

“Aye, a genuine lord! Move, move, get out!” could be heard.

Clearly, the frantic machinations of patrons had no reason to expect their visit would be interrupted in such a way.

As they made the last turn, the stairs opened into a long, open stone hallway with barred doorways at regular intervals along the walls. A large man, nearly naked and wearing only a loincloth, squatted on a stool near the first of what could only be described as cells.

“You can trust the discretion of the eunuchs, as we remove their manhood and their tongues before they are allowed to work in the pits.”

They approached the first cell. The doors to the cells were heavy and wooden, with a cross-section of iron bars at eye level, allowing a full view of the interior. In stark contrast to the heavy atmosphere of the hall and door, the rooms were brightly lit by a series of golden biers that burned near the ceiling, casting a warm, ambient light across the space. The walls were lined with long, comfortable-looking couches covered in velvet. A single mechanical contraption made of heavy oak adorned the back of the cell, where a naked woman lay bent over, face down, and secured by leather bonds. Her arms were bound above her head, and each leg was secured at the ankle near the floor, completely exposing her. Obviously, the last patron had been busy before being quickly ejected by their unexpected arrival. The room contained twenty very attractive young women, all dressed in similar blue silk robes designed to emphasize their figures. Each wore the same expression—an eager, forced smile as they regarded the two men at the door.

“I see you are not from the capital. May I recommend for you a couple of serviceable—”

“No. Open the door. I wish to inspect directly.”

“Dear Zeus, have you—err, are you certain? It would be highly irregular.”

“Open the door!” Aleion spoke, and while his voice never changed register, it was clearly an order.

Eulid bit his tongue, tasting a small amount of blood as he answered.

“Of course. Eunuch, the door!”

The fat, loincloth-clad man moved with surprising speed to the door. Awkwardly, he tried to use the keys without touching the two men, though the space simply would not allow it, and Eulid was forced to move aside.

“Later, I will have this man boiled at my estate the moment I leave the company of this insufferable imbecile,” he thought.

The door opened inward with a click, and the eunuch bolted backward, falling to his stomach in a sign of complete submission.

Aleion immediately entered the room, causing Eulid to scramble after him in a most undignified fashion. They approached the first woman on the right—a rather unremarkable redhead.

“You! Stand and demonstrate!” he barked.

She rose from the couch, pulling a single thread near her neck, and the entire robe fell to the ground, leaving her standing naked, breathing in short, quick breaths in front of them.

“As you can see, the quality of this one is questionable. What I recommend—”

The most extraordinary thing happened. Aleion reached out his hand and clasped the girl by the wrist. Eulid could not believe what he was seeing. This man was touching a slave! He could not even think of an insult; his mind was completely blank.

As Aleion touched the woman, both of them seemed to freeze. A faraway look came into their eyes, and they simply stood there—her completely naked, and him clasping her arm. An eternity of time, which may only have been a few seconds, passed. Neither moved nor spoke. Eulid stood equally frozen, finding the situation incomprehensible. The moments seemed to stretch on forever. He considered speaking, but the absurdity of the moment washed over him again as he stared, transfixed by the enormity of the disgrace. Finally, he realized that all the other women had turned their attention toward them—toward him! He felt intimidated. They looked with such amazement, failing to avert their eyes. The punishment for such an action should have been trained into them since birth. It was so unexpected that it shifted his entire reality. In that moment, he no longer understood who was in charge. He began to sputter, “This is... no, it’s... what...?” Then, as quickly as it began, it ended.

Aleion let go of the girl, and she sat back down. Time resumed its normal flow, breathing returned, the women averted their eyes, and Aleion moved to the next girl. She immediately stood, duplicating the feat of the previous one with the quick removal of her robe, and Aleion again clasped her wrist. Remarkably, the same thing occurred again, as their gazes turned glassy and time seemed to stop. The



only difference was that this time, the other women averted their gazes, no longer awestruck, each attempting to be unseen. This repeated itself another dozen times until finally, at the conclusion of the thirteenth girl, Aleion turned to Eulid and spoke.

“This one will do. Have her delivered to my residence forthwith.”

With that, he walked from the room, leaving Eulid alone, surrounded by a bevy of very confused breeding stock...

## Part 2

Milton could not seem to wipe the smile from his face. He knew this was just a reaction to the endorphins that the pod was infusing into his blood. Time shifts, without treatment, lead to significant mental trauma. The happy drugs were just a byproduct; nonetheless, he felt amazing. His local feed began to orient him in both location and time. He was near the edge of galaxy 113.221.3ic, orbiting the third planet of a G-type star. More or less, the backwaters of the local galactic cluster.

Odd that this sector, lacking significant solar masses, had developed such excellent bio-temporal stock. Perhaps because of, not in spite of, its relative isolation, it provided such exquisite material. The math was beyond him, and he did not fancy trading the neural resource to learn it. Suffice it to know that this small world had provided excellent stock for millennia. It was good fortune that its governing sentients were on the verge of their final move to a non-physical plane,

and that he had been able to secure acquisition rights—a privilege not likely to repeat itself. He chose to use his personal AI, instead of the ship's, to select a guide and secure him clothing and the physiological apparatus that would allow him to engage with the populace with minimal disruption. The ship would likely keep him within the framework of the local sentients, but his personal AI would prioritize comfort. While his host entities allowed his visit, they were quite strict in their codes of interaction. It was a bit of a gamble, but to his mind, an acceptable one. The local species was not to have any record of his interaction, and the use of mind control or temporal displacement was not allowed planet-side. Despite himself, he was excited at the prospect of direct interaction with a pre-technology society.

His awareness expanded as his AI implanted the language and culture of the planet into his neo-cortex. The expanding awareness and the remainder of the acclimatization drugs were an experience he would have to share with his family in the coming months, he thought.

“Upon completion of acclimatization, place me in direct proximity to the guide subject,” he mentally sent to his AI, unconsciously activating the security protocols built into teleportation within a gravity well. A brief, nearly blinding white light followed, and he instantly stood next to a man in an ornate period piece.

“Eulid, how pleasant to encounter you this day,” he spoke, marveling at the formation of sonic energy created by his lungs and punctuated by quick movements of his mouth.

The man looked startled, then quickly regained his composure.

“Ahh, Aleion, so pleased to join you this morning.”

“Shall we proceed to the pits?”

“I must again urge you to use an intermediary, as it is quite unusual for a man of your... err, for any citizen to visit the breeding pits directly. There are people for whom this activity can be arranged in a more private and... uh, dignified venue.”

He received a stream of feedback from his cerebral implants informing him that his guide would be deeply unappreciative of his requirements and would attempt to alter his mission. Recommended response: “treat him as an inferior.”

“No, I will do so directly. Please lead the way.”

His implant indicated that this society was hierarchical, and all relationships were subtle attempts to appear closer and more influential with key figures, who derived their power either through direct genetic legacy or periodic revolution. This man’s position was near the middle of the class, and his behavior would be dictated by the degree to which he understood Milton’s relationship. His implant recommended behaving in a fashion that demeaned Eulid in order to receive satisfactory service.

The man looked bothered by the direct request, but quickly recovered. While his facial expression showed a pleasant guise, his pheromones indicated to Milton that he was extremely upset—but still within the parameters suggested by his implant. The bio-feedback validated his response, giving Milton a feeling of cleverness. He smiled to himself—his purchase of the research data on the planet, while only accurate to within a few hundred years, appeared to be valid. This should allow for minimal disruption during his task.

Eulid led them from the large, well-maintained path to an area meant to service the shops. His implant informed him that Eulid was attempting to avoid meeting anyone of his social class. Milton briefly toyed with ending this evasion but then quickly dropped the thought as childish. Maintaining a good relationship with the sector sentients was important, and he could later replay the scenario virtually if he still felt the need to satiate this desire.

They passed numerous artisanal stalls selling foods, clothing, and farm equipment. He turned down his onboard data-feed to a level 1, the lowest setting, as all biometric and atmospheric information dropped from his feed. This was necessary, as the amount of chemicals in the air bordered on toxic. The absence of the feed gave him the unusual sensation of directly interacting with what his AI told him were “smells.”

He felt his heartbeat and respiration altering, briefly noting updates from the nanobots that were removing impurities from his bloodstream.

His implant noted that his guide was experiencing a heightened emotional state. Curiosity overwhelmed practicality, and he reached out, amplifying the signal of Eulid and copying the visual stream to his own. Ahh, the man was enjoying the physical violence he had provoked and the subsequent torture of another who lacked his societal protection. It caused a nearly sexual reaction in Eulid, and a bit of disgust in Milton, who immediately dropped the feed.

“Ahh yes, we are here.”

Eulid physically hit his hands on a piece of formed wood, obscuring an internal room. Milton changed visuals to infrared, identifying several humanoids on the far side of what his implant told him was a portal. He turned up his sensors to validate that there was no danger. His AI would have done this automatically, but the strangeness of his surroundings made him slightly ill at ease. Perhaps the afterglow of the feed from Eulid had discombobulated him.

A smaller section of the wood opened, and the reddish outline of the interior entity faded into the visible spectrum, becoming a small man.

“Pardon, sir. Pardon, please. Please enter.”

“We require to see the breeding pits. Please send for a guide,” spoke Eulid.

Milton understood that Eulid was requesting another entity. He felt mildly bothered and decided that interacting with another local would greatly increase the

complexity of his immediate task. He formed words almost before he was aware—obviously, the training implant had now fully adapted.

“No, we will not need a guide. Please let us proceed directly.”

His danger sensor briefly spiked. The reading from Eulid indicated that the man had nearly moved to assault him physically. Milton manually retracted the defense initiative. It would serve no one if he vaporized this man. The sector sentients would definitely react badly.

“Of course, Aleion, please follow me.”

He noted that Eulid continued in a physiological state that kept re-engaging his auto-defense system, forcing him to repeatedly override manually.

“We will not be taking a guide, and please inform your master that we are on the premises. We will be some time, and during this, we would like not to be interrupted. Make sure that there are no other viewers or staff save the guard while we are browsing.”

“Yes, yes, master sir, I will make it straight away. Is there anything else the master requires?”

“No, you filthy oaf. Now be about what I have ordered,” Eulid snapped.

Milton noted that the verbal abuse Eulid used on this man elicited a positive physiological response in him. Turning up his monitor, he noted that this society was largely addicted to a chemical produced by a gland in their brain. This chemical was produced in response to the suppression of other members of the society. He referenced his AI and was not surprised to find that this was why they had been intentionally isolated from cosmic society for the last million parsecs.

He pondered momentarily—would this race ever be allowed to move beyond its own planetary system? Perhaps he could move to have his sentient group take over the management of this sector when its current sentients ascended. A long-term engagement, for sure, but genetic rights to a planet unlikely to join the cultures might be profitable indeed.

“Please, Mr. Aleion, follow me.”

They passed through a room formed entirely from stone. His sensors noted that the room had been recently occupied, and his audio monitor reported that patrons, two meters lower, were being quickly ejected. An aperture in the floor, with an access made of layered stone, opened before them, and he followed Eulid down.

At the bottom of the access, he noted a man whom his implant indicated as sexually incompatible, as his biological age did not match his sexual development. His implant informed him that this man’s sex organs were removed prior to full development in order to induce a more docile temperament. Milton surprised himself with his reaction to the barbarity.

“You can trust the discretion of the eunuchs, as we remove their tongues before they are allowed to work in the pits,” spoke Eulid.

His perimeter sensors showed a series of rooms, each containing several females of the species, radiating from the current enclosure. Analysis of atmospheric pheromone activity indicated a high probability of good source material.

They approached the first enclosure. He noted that the structure was intended to allow access from one side. The occupants were not at liberty to leave. While the portals themselves were not closed, some behavioral structure kept the occupants from leaving. Inside the room were a number of young women, one of whom was secured to an object intended to allow access to her reproductive organs. The room had a strong odor of physical intercourse, and the facial readings of the women did not match their biometrics. His implant indicated that this enclosure was something roughly translated between market and laboratory.

“I see you are not from the capital. May I recommend for you a couple of serviceable—” Eulid began.

His implant informed him, “The man Eulid is attempting to interfere with the sampling and requires a reaffirmation of the hierarchical protocol.”

“No. Open the door. I wish to inspect directly.”



“Dear Zeus, have you—err, are you certain? It would be highly irregular.”

His sensors moved into alert, reporting increased heart rate, respiration, and the production of epinephrine. His implant recommended, “Immediate imperative statement without tonal fluctuation.”

“Open the door!”

“Of course. Eunuch, open the door!”

The sexually immature entity moved quickly to apply a metal object that engaged the barrier to entry. Some small difficulty was encountered as Eulid obstructed the actions of the eunuch. This seemed to please Eulid and caused an endorphin response, dropping the danger reading from Milton’s implant.

The portal opened, and Milton followed Eulid into the room, approaching a female with a genetic marker differentiating her hair color.

“You! Stand and demonstrate,” Eulid commanded.

The female rose and activated a physical mechanism designed to quickly remove all clothing. Her biometrics indicated that she was in a position of extreme discomfort, while her expression indicated the opposite.

“As you can see, the quality of this one is questionable. What I recommend—”

Milton reached out and grasped her by the wrist. His encounter subsystem engaged. The world fractured as temporal distortions created several hundred million alternate timelines. In each timeline, a version of the girl and a version of Milton were created.

Each timeline differed in background, education, experience, and geography. Every instance of the circumstance of their meeting changed. Millions upon millions of different realities expanded exponentially, each one ranked by thousands of criteria. The less successful instantiations quickly pared away, leaving only the positive interactions.

Each successful pairing elongated into time, near infinite periods of time passed, again subtly rated on the success of the pairing until only one remained. In the finale, of the millions of interactions, a rating of 86% potential positive match in 7 trillion alternate realities. System recommendation: negative.

Milton moved to the next girl...