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Letter 63

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Usbek to his wives in the seraglio in Isfahan

I have learned that the seraglio is in disorder, and that it is filled with quarrels and internal divisions. What did I prescribe for you when I left but peace and harmony ? That is what you promised me ; was it to fool me ?

It is you who would be fooled if I wished to follow the advice which the great eunuch is giving me, if I wished to invoke my authority to make you live as my exhortations required of you.

I am unable to make use of those violent means before I have tried all the others ; do therefore for your own sake what you have not wished to do for mine.

The principal eunuch has very good reason to complain : he says you have no regard for him. How can you reconcile such conduct with the modesty of your station ? Is it not to him that your virtue is entrusted during my absence ? It is a sacred treasure, of which he is the depositary ; but the contempt you show him is a sign that those whose duty it is to make you live according to the laws of honor are onerous to you.

Therefore change your ways, I beg you, so that I may the next time reject the proposals that are put to me against your liberty and tranquillity.

For I would like to make you forget that I am your master, so I can remember only that I am your husband.

Paris this 5th day of the moon of Chahban 1714