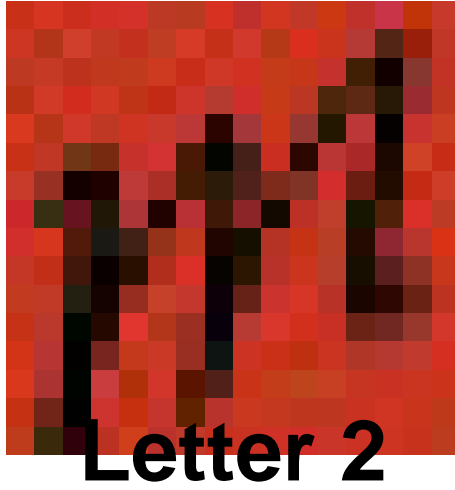


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- Persian Letters - Letters -

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Letter 2

Letter 1	Letter 3
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Usbek to the principle black eunuch [1] in his seraglio in Isfahan [2]

You are the faithful guardian of the loveliest women in Persia. I have placed in your hands all that is dearest to me : in them you hold the keys to those fateful gates that open for none but me. While you watch over my heart's precious treasure, it rests and enjoys complete security. You protect it in the silence of the night as in the tumult of the day ; it is your indefatigable attentions that sustain virtue should it waver. If the women you guard wanted to forget their duty, you would make them lose all such hope ; you are the scourge of vice and the column of fidelity.

You both command them and obey them : you blindly respect their every wish, and likewise you make them respect out the laws of the seraglio ; you glory in rendering them the most basest services ; you submit with respect and fear to their legitimate orders ; you serve them as the slave of their slaves. But by a reversal of authority [3] you command as master just like me when you fear slackening of the laws of shame and modesty.

Always remember that you were nothing, the least of my slaves, when I picked you for this position and entrusted my heart's delights to you. Maintain a deep submission with those who share my love ; but at the same time make them aware of their extreme dependency. Provide for them all the pleasures that can be innocent ; distract their anxieties ; entertain them with music, danse, delicious beverages ; persuade them to assemble frequently. If they wish to go to the country, you may take them : but show no mercy to all men allow themselves to be seen. [4] Exhort them to orderliness, which is the image of the purity of the soul ; speak to them sometimes of me : I would like to join them again in this charming place which they beautify.

Tauris this 18th day of the moon of Saphar 1711

[1] The black eunuchs, supposed to be more physically revolting, were intended to be frightening and impose the master's authority (cf. letter 4 : "that black monster"). They have undergone complete genital removal, whereas the white eunuchs have lost only their testicles.

[2] According to Chardin, the word *haram* is the Persian equivalent of the Turkish term seraglio ; in the original it is *sérail* (Chardin, *A New and Accurate Description of Persia and other eastern nations*, London : A. Bettesworth *et al.*, 1724, vol. I, p. 111). "The apartment of the women in Persia is called haram, which is to say, a sacred place, the entrance whereof is interdicted and forbid" (p. 160).

[3] Cf. letter 9 : "There is among us a sort of ebb and flow of authority and submission."

[4] See note to letter 45 about the procedure called *courouc*.