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- Persian Letters - Letters -

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<a href="#">Letter 138</a>	<a href="#">Letter 140</a>
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### *The great eunuch to Usbek in Paris*

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Things have reached a state that cannot be maintained : your wives have imagined that your departure left them complete impunity. Horrible things are happening here ; I myself tremble at the cruel account I must give you.

Zelis, on her way to the mosque a few days ago, let her veil drop and appeared with her face almost uncovered before everybody.

I have found Zachi in bed with one of her slaves, [1] a thing so forbidden by the laws of the seraglio.

I have by the greatest chance in the world intercepted a letter, [2] which I am sending to you ; I have never been able to discover to whom it was addressed.

Yesterday evening a young boy was found [3] in the garden of the seraglio, and escaped over the walls.

Add to that the things I have not learned about, for surely you are betrayed. I await your orders, and until the happy moment when I receive them, I am going to be in a mortal situation. But if you do not place all your wives under my discretion, [4] I answer for none of them, and will every day have equally sad news to send to you.

### *The Isfahan seraglio this 1st day of the moon of Regeb 1717* [5]

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[1] Zachi was earlier reproached (letter 19) - just as Zephis before her (letter 4) - for her "familiarities" with the slave Zelide.

[2] Its content will never be known ; the episode nevertheless serves to reinforce the impression that the seraglio is permeable.

[3] The "false information" of letter 9 has become a reality.

[4] "It is said, in terms of war, that a stronghold surrenders *à discretion*, to say, at the mercy of the victor" (Furetière, 1690).

[5] This letter brings us suddenly backwards in time : chronologically, it should have borne the number 101 ; and the last letter of the novel (150) would have been numbered 134. The twelve final letters of the collection, containing the condensed story of the final calamity of the seraglio, make up an ensemble of exceptional coherency : on the one side in Paris with Usbek, on the other in Isfahan with the guardians and inhabitants of the seraglio. Since letter 63 - that is to say, chronologically between 1714 and 1720 - there is not a single letter of Usbek relating to the seraglio. All the letters between 126 and 137 are from Rica, which means that for over a year (from 4 October 1719 to 11 November 1720) Usbek has remained completely silent, which can be explained by the letters he has received in the meantime (but which the reader has not seen until this final cascade). At the time when Usbek writes his letter 119 of 1 November 1718 on the misfortunes of the "children of the Prophet", he has perhaps already received this one (1 September 1717) which tells him, in sum, that the situation in the seraglio is all but beyond repair.