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- Persian Letters - Letters -

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Zachi [\[1\]](#) to Usbek
in Tauris

We ordered the head eunuch to take us to the country. He will tell you that we encountered no difficulties. When we had to cross the river and leave our litters, we each climbed into boxes as is the custom ; two slaves bore us on their shoulders, and no one was able to see us.

Dear Usbek, how could I have lived, in your seraglio in Isfahan, in those premises which, constantly recalling my past pleasures to mind, every day excited my desires more violently ? I wandered from one apartment to the next, ever seeking you and never finding you, but encountering everywhere a cruel memory of my past felicity : now I would picture myself in that place where I first I took you into my arms ; now where you decided that famous quarrel among your wives. Each of us claimed to be superior to the others in beauty ; we came before you after exhausting all that imagination can furnish by way of embellishments and ornaments : it pleased you to see the miracles of our art, you even admired how far the eagerness to please you had impelled us ; but you soon made those borrowed charms yield to more natural graces : you destroyed all we had done ; we had to remove those ornaments, which had got in your way, we had to let you see us in the simplicity of nature. I had no sense of shame ; my only thought was for my glory. Fortunate Usbek, what charms were displayed before your eyes ! We long watched your eyes roam from one enchantment to the other ; your indecisive soul long hesitated to choose. Each new grace sought your approval ; we were in a moment covered with your kisses ; your curious gaze reached into the most secret places ; you made us strike in rapid succession a thousand different poses : ever new commands, and ever-renewed compliance. I confess it, Usbek, a passion even more lively than ambition made me hope you would choose me. Little by little I found my way to your heart : you took me, you abandoned me, you came back to me, and I managed to hold onto you : the triumph was all mine, and the despair for my rivals. It seemed to us we were alone in the world ; nothing around us was any longer worthy of our attention. Would to heaven that my rivals had had the courage to remain and witness all the signs of love I received from you. If they had truly seen my ecstasies, they would have felt the difference between my love and theirs ; they would have seen that if they could rival my charms, they could not rival my sensibility... [\[2\]](#) But where am I ? Where is this vain tale taking me ? To be unloved is a misfortune, but to be no longer loved is an affront. You are leaving us, Usbek, to wander in unknown lands. Do you count for nothing the advantage of being loved ? Alas, you know not even what you are losing ! I utter sighs that are not heard ; my tears flow and you do not enjoy them. The seraglio seems full of love, and your insensitivity takes you ever farther away. Oh my dear Usbek, if only you knew how to be happy ! [\[3\]](#)

The Fatmé seraglio this 21st day of the moon of Maharram 1711.

[\[1\]](#) The first of Usbek's wives (see letter 19 : "Usbek to his wife Zachi") to be named.

[\[2\]](#) The word *sensibilité* is frequently synonymous with delicacy, but can also take on, as here, erotic connotations.

[\[3\]](#) Zachi's amorous complaint will take on a different meaning after Usbek's confession in letter 6.