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- Persian Letters - Letters -

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Letter 4

Letter 3	Letter 5
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Zephis [1] to Usbek in Erzerum [2]

That black monster has finally decided to drive me to despair : he insists on taking away my slave Zelide - Zelide, who serves me with such affection, and whose skillful hands place ornaments and elegance everywhere ; it is not enough for him that this separation be excruciating, he also wants it to be humiliating. The traitor wants to regard the motives for my confidence as criminal ; and because he gets bored behind the door where I am constantly remanding him, [3] he dares to suppose he has heard or seen things that I cannot even imagine. [4] I am terribly unhappy. Neither my solitude nor my virtue can protect me from his extravagant suspicions ; an abject slave presumes to attack me even in your heart, and I must defend myself. No, I respect myself too much to stoop to justifications. I want no warrant for my conduct than yourself, your love, and mine ; and, if I must say it, dear Usbek, than my tears.

The Fatmé seraglio this 29th day of the moon of Maharram 1711

[1] Second wife of Usbek mentioned, since she is treated as an equal by Zachi in letter 45.

[2] Capital of Turkish Armenia, and thus outside the borders of Persia, which Usbek apparently wanted to leave promptly.

[3] According to Chardin, eunuchs "control entrance and exit from the harem, which is the women's quarters, or more exactly their prison, and accompany them everywhere, that is, to the bath and on visits. They nevertheless do not have the liberty of entering their rooms when they are there alone" (Chardin, VI, 245).

[4] According to Chardin, the women were "closely observed, for fear, it is said, lest they spin intrigues or plots amongst themselves, or against their rivals, or fall in love with each other. Oriental women have always passed for *tribades*. [...] They prevent them as far from possible from practicing it, since they maintain that it lessens their attractiveness, and makes them less inclined to love men." (Chardin, VI, 232).