

The Grief of the Pasha

Separated from all that was dear to
me, I am wasting away, solitary and
desolate. BYRON

---What's wrong with Allah's shadow? The humble dervish was saying;
His alms are quite poor and his treasures quite rich!
Somber, immobile, miserly, he laughs with a bitter laugh.
Did he notch the sword of his father?
Or else of his soldiers around his lair
Did he see the stormy sea roar?

---What's wrong with the pasha, the vizier of the armies?
The bombardiers were saying, their fuses lit.
Are the imams troubling his iron head?
Did he break of the Ramadan the austere fast?
Do they show him in a dream, on the confines of the earth,
The angel Azrael standing on the bridge of hell?

---What's wrong with him? The stupid icoglans were murmuring.
Do they say that he lost, in the swift currents,
The ship carrying the fragrances that rejuvenate him?
Do they find in Stamboul his glory rather ancient?
In the predictions of some Egyptian woman
Did he see the mute man come?

---What's wrong with the sweet sultan? The sultanas were asking.
Did he catch with his son under the plane trees
His favorite brunette with coral lips?
Did somebody soil his bath with a coarse essence?
In the fellah's bag, emptied on the dust,
Is some head expected in the seraglio missing?

---What's wrong with the master? ---Thus are the slaves fidgeting.
They all are mistaken. Alas! if, lost for his brave men,
Sitting, like a warrior who swallows an insult,
Bent, like an old man under the weight of the years,
For three long nights and three long days,
He has been crossing his hands on his forehead;

It is not that he saw the disloyal revolt,
Besieging his harem like a citadel,
Throw as far as his bed a sinister firebrand;
Nor of a father in his hand the old glaive become blunt;
Nor Azrael appear; Nor pass in a dream
The motley mute men armed with the black cord.
Alas! Allah's shadow did not break the fast;
The sultana is guarded, and his son is too young;
No ship has suffered inopportune storms;
The Tartar did have his customary load;
In the seraglio, fragrant solitude,
 No heads or perfumes are missing.

It is not either the collapsed cities,
The human bones darkening the valleys,
Greece burning down, prey to the sons of Omar,
The orphan, nor the widow, and her bitter complaints,
Nor the child butchered under the eyes of his poor mother,
Nor the virgin sold in the bazaar.

No, no, it is not those gloomy figures,
Who, with a bloody ray shining in darkness,
Upon passing in his soul have left remorse.
What's wrong with this pasha, whom war is calling,
And who, sad and dreamy, cries like a woman?...
 His Nubian tiger has died.

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Victor Hugo

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