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The Last Rehearsal



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T. S. DENISON & COMPANY, Publishers, 154 W. Randolph St., Chicago

THE LAST REHEARSAL

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

BY

IRENE JEAN CRANDALL

AUTHOR OF

*"Hands All Round," "For Freedom," "The Lost Love," "Beyond
the Gate," "The Fairy Woods" and Other Plays.*



CHICAGO
T. S. DENISON & COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

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1919

THE LAST REHEARSAL

Originally produced by the Chicago Dramatic Society at Sinai Social Center, in Chicago, on the evening of March 28, 1917, with the following cast:

(Named in order of appearance.)

MARGERY PATTERSON.....*The Ingénue*
MISS EMILY TAFT.

HAROLD SPAULDING*The Lover*
MR. JAMES CARLIN CRANDALL.

M. FORBES-SMITH*The Stage Manager*
MR. WILLIAM ZIEGLER NOURSE.

DORIS STREET*The Playwright*
MRS. MATIE CADWALADER DONNALLY

ISABEL BROOKINS*The Leading Lady*
MISS CAROLINE KOHL.

TIME—*The Evening Before the Amateur Performance of a Play.*

PLACE—*A Room Arranged for a Rehearsal.*

TIME OF PLAYING—*About Twenty-five Minutes.*

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OCT 29 1919

COSTUMES AND CHARACTERISTICS.

ISABEL—Pretty, spirited and wilful. She is about twenty. A beautiful evening gown and wrap.

DORIS—High-strung, earnest and determined. She is about twenty-five. Stylish street suit and hat.

FORBES-SMITH—Self-important and autocratic. He is about thirty. Striking business suit and white spats. He wears a flower in his button hole and carries a cane and gloves.

MARGERY—Sweet and seventeen. A pretty party gown and evening wrap.

HAROLD—Good-looking college chap of twenty-one. Evening clothes.

PROPERTY LIST.

A small table and four or five chairs.

Papers on table.

Box of candy for Harold.

Manuscripts for Doris and Harold.

Large feather fan and letter for Isabel.

Cane, gloves and flower for Forbes-Smith.

NOTE—The play can be given with or without a stage, in a theatre, hall, church, studio or private home. If the entrances cannot be made from the side or back, the players can come through the audience.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

R. means right of stage; *C.*, center; *R. C.*, right center; *L.*, left; *1 E.*, first entrance; *U. E.*, upper entrance; *R. 3 E.*, right entrance, up stage, etc.; up stage, away from footlights; down stage, near footlights. The actor is supposed to be facing the audience.

THE LAST REHEARSAL

SCENE: *A room arranged for the rehearsal of an amateur performance. There are four or five chairs and a small table. Properties are strewn about and everything is in disorder. The table is left of the Center, a chair door R. and another chair door L. Near the table is a small chair that can be easily moved.*

At rise of curtain there is no one on the stage.

HAROLD (*off stage*). Let me open the door for you.

MARGERY (*off stage*). Oh, thank you.

MARGERY and HAROLD come in gaily. MARGERY is sweet and seventeen. HAROLD is a well set-up college chap of twenty-one. HAROLD helps MARGERY take off her evening wrap, revealing a pretty frock.

HAROLD (*offering her a box of candy*). Here's something for you.

MARGERY. Oh! Thank you. (*With a smile.*) You might open it for me. (*HAROLD opens the box and MARGERY takes a piece of candy. MARGERY, turning slowly to display her gown.*) Do you like my gown?

HAROLD. I like you, Margery. You're adorable in it. (*MARGERY glances up at him with a look of demure coquetry.*)

MARGERY. I had it made especially for the play. (*Looking around.*) We're early.

HAROLD. I'm glad because I can have a few minutes alone with you before the others come.

MARGERY (*sitting down and looking disconsolate*). I feel a little sad-like tonight.

HAROLD. Do you? Why?

MARGERY (*wistfully*). Oh, I don't know. I think it must be because this is the last rehearsal. I'll be lonesome when

it's all over. You come to know people so well when you rehearse with them night after night.

HAROLD. Yes, it's almost as good a test of the disposition as traveling.

MARGERY. I've heard that lots of romances start that way.

HAROLD. At rehearsals.

MARGERY (*shyly*). I meant traveling—on trips.

HAROLD. Oh, I was thinking of rehearsals. It has been awfully jolly, hasn't it?

MARGERY. Yes—seeing so much of—folks.

HAROLD. Folks? Of course, you mean Isabel, Miss Street and Forbes-Smith.

MARGERY (*shyly*). Well—not exactly. (*She gives HAROLD an alluring glance.*)

HAROLD (*leaning over her*). Have you cared a little bit about seeing me?

MARGERY. A little.

HAROLD. Do you lo—like me, Margery?

MARGERY. You know what I say in the play.

HAROLD (*impatently*). Oh—the play—

MARGERY. In the play—

HAROLD. The play be hanged. (*Leaning over her*). I mean really.

MARGERY (*sweetly*). Yes—really, too. Somehow, I feel as if something were going to happen tonight.

HAROLD (*eagerly*). Do you? So do I.

MARGERY (*jumping up nervously*). The others are late. I wonder if Miss Street will come. Wasn't she angry last night because Isabel wouldn't play her part the way it was written?

HAROLD. Well, you can't blame Miss Street. Naturally an author wants her play given as it is written.

MARGERY. But Isabel always has her own way about everything and she will never give in to Miss Street—never. You know that Isabel always plays the leading part and everybody says that her acting is perfectly wonderful for an amateur.

HAROLD. I know somebody who is a much sweeter little actress.

MARGERY (*innocently*). I wonder whom you mean.

HAROLD. Some things go without saying.

MARGERY. Yes—some of the very loveliest things of all we—that is—one can't say out—you—you just feel them.

MR. FORBES-SMITH *comes in with an air of importance*. MARGERY and HAROLD *start self-consciously*. MR. FORBES-SMITH *is a young man of thirty with an autocratic manner*.

FORBES-SMITH. Good evening. (*Shakes hands with MARGERY and HAROLD.*) Miss Brookins and Miss Street not here yet?

HAROLD. Not yet, Mr. Forbes-Smith.

MARGERY. No, we're all alone—that is—we were.

FORBES-SMITH (*briskly at center*). Well, I hope they will not be more than an hour late tonight. We have a good evening's work before us if we are going to make this thing go off decently tomorrow night. (*Takes the candy and papers from the table and straightens things up.*) Amateurs have no idea of the importance of promptness and details. That's why these private theatricals lack snap. Now, when I was in the profession we were fined for being late.

HAROLD. Were you ever fined?

MARGERY. Were you on the stage long?

FORBES-SMITH (*proudly*). A year and two months. Great experience! So you see I know something about real acting. If you are in the profession you have to toe the mark. There's some discipline there.

MARGERY. But you couldn't discipline Isabel, could you? She never does anything she doesn't want to. Her mother believes in letting her develop her individuality.

FORBES-SMITH. Of course, Miss Brookins has the star part and we have to make some concessions to her. Even on the stage the star has things very much her own way. (*HAROLD, at the back, is secretly studying his lines.*) Spaulding, what are you doing?

HAROLD (*starts*). I—I—

FORBES-SMITH. Don't you know your lines yet?

HAROLD (*guiltily*). I did know them before I came—but something has knocked them clean out of my head. I thought I would brush up a bit.

FORBES-SMITH. Remember that you appear before an audience tomorrow night.

MARGERY. I just get trembly all over when I think of facing an audience. I can feel the shivers run up and down my back now.

HAROLD (*reassuringly*). Never mind, Margery, I'll help you.

DORIS STREET *comes in with a manuscript and a very determined look. She is about twenty-five, quick, nervous and high-strung.*

DORIS. Good evening.

FORBES-SMITH. Glad to see you, Miss Street. We are just waiting for Miss Brookins. As soon as she comes we'll get to work.

DORIS (*coldly*). Yes, we usually wait for Miss Brookins. (*She seats herself in a chair to the left, near the front.*)

FORBES-SMITH. I see you've brought your manuscript. That's good. I mislaid my copy.

DORIS (*with a sigh*). Yes, I have brought my manuscript and hope to have this play given as it is written.

FORBES-SMITH. Well, you know, Miss Street, some little changes—

DORIS (*scornfully*). Little?

ISABEL BROOKINS *comes in wearing a beautiful evening wrap. She is about twenty, pretty, spirited and with an imperious air. ISABEL and DORIS exchange cold glances, but do not speak to each other.*

ISABEL (*sweetly*). Oh, were you waiting for me? You know I never can remember the time. Mother says that it is my temperament.

FORBES-SMITH (*With deference to ISABEL*). We haven't waited long, Miss Brookins. (*FORBES-SMITH gallantly helps her to take off her wrap. She wears a lovely evening gown.*)

ISABEL. I would have been here sooner if it hadn't been for this gown. It didn't come from the dressmaker's until half an hour ago, and I couldn't come to a dress rehearsal without the dress.

MARGERY (*sympathetically*). Of course not, Isabel. I had mine made just for the play, too.

ISABEL (*looking at MARGERY'S dress with a patronizing air*). Quite a pretty frock. Do you think mine suits my temperament?

MARGERY. Oh, yes—it's a peach of a gown.

HAROLD. A cling-stone.

DORIS (*scornfully*). Your dresses seem more important than the play.

FORBES-SMITH. Miss Street, many successful plays are fashion shows—girls and gowns, you know.

ISABEL. Ever since I consented to be in the old play, I've been planning how I would dress the part.

DORIS. Undress it, you mean.

FORBES-SMITH (*a little impatiently*). Come, come, young ladies, we must rehearse. We have lots to do this evening. (*Pausing to think.*) Let's see. We'll take the third act first—that's our weakest point—and then we'll run through the whole performance just as we are going to give it tomorrow night. Miss Brookins, you open the third act with the letter scene. (*Rearranging a chair.*) Now this chair will be the desk where you find the letter. Tomorrow the real desk will be sent up.

ISABEL (*pouting*). I wish you had things ready tonight. It would make it so much easier to act. With my temperament these things are very disturbing.

DORIS (*under her breath*). Temperament—temper.

FORBES-SMITH. I know, I know, but you must use your imagination. This is the window through which you overhear the conversation that confirms your suspicions. Keep the location in your mind so that you will stand in the right place. The desk is to the right of that. Now—let's begin. (*To MARGERY, who is talking with HAROLD R. up stage*). Margery, please.

MARGERY (*starts and comes forward*). Yes, Mr. Director.
 FORBES-SMITH. Are you ready for the curtain?

(ISABEL goes over to the chair-desk and begins to search for something. DORIS watches every move. ISABEL finds a letter, opens it, reads it, crumples it up and then throws it down. She sinks into a chair near the table and buries her head in her arms. MARGERY comes up shyly and with stage consciousness. ISABEL starts and looks up.)

ISABEL (*tragically*). Oh, sister, sister—he is false—my heart is broken.

MARGERY. What has—

ISABEL (*interrupting MARGERY*). What has he done? Ah, if you only knew. Oh, the bitterness, the terrible bitterness of this discovery.

MARGERY. Tell me what—

ISABEL. Tell you what I have learned? This morning I was happy in my blissful ignorance. I was like a bird singing in the tree all unconscious of the wicked snare below. And now this awful revelation has come upon me.

MARGERY. Oh—do—

ISABEL. Sister, do you ask me what it is? (*Picking up the letter.*) Read this letter. (*MARGERY takes the letter and examines it.*)

MARGERY. A woman's handwriting.

ISABEL. Yes, the very hooks on her qs show her to be a dangerous, designing woman.

MARGERY. She writes—(*begins to read the letter aloud*).
 Dear Boy:—I—

ISABEL (*interrupting*). Give me the letter. I will read it.

DORIS (*unable to restrain herself longer*). That is not the way it is written.

ISABEL. Well, it is the way I learned it and that is the way I am going to play it.

DORIS. You don't give Margery a chance to speak her lines. You take her speeches away from her.

ISABEL. Since I have the star part I ought to have most of the lines.

FORBES-SMITH. That's true, Miss Street. It is custom-

ary for the star to appropriate lines here and there. It's always done on the American stage.

DORIS. I want the lines given as I wrote them or not at all.

ISABEL. The way I say them is much better. It makes the meaning clearer.

DORIS. That is not my meaning.

ISABEL. Well, it's what the character means.

DORIS (*indignantly*). Don't I know what my own characters mean?

ISABEL. Not so well as the actress who plays the part.

DORIS (*excitedly*). I appeal to you, Mr. Forbes-Smith. Hasn't the author a right to ask to have her lines played as they are written?

FORBES-SMITH. I am sorry, Miss Street, but if you had ever been in the profession (*with pride*) as I have, you would know that plays are never given as the author writes them. The actors make changes here and there, the stage-manager takes the whole play to pieces and puts it together again and sometimes the electric light men take a hand.

DORIS. But doesn't the playwright make the play?

FORBES-SMITH. Certainly not. Of course, the playwright furnishes a few ideas—plot, characters, dialogue—but that's a small part.

DORIS (*facing the others in indignant protest*). Small part, indeed! I have lain awake at night thinking this out, I have worked over every word of it—and now—you people change it all. Oh, why must a playwright submit to such treatment?

FORBES-SMITH (*pompously*). If you had had the professional experience I have—

HAROLD (*imitating FORBES-SMITH'S important air*). A year and two months!

(FORBES-SMITH *gives HAROLD a look of withering scorn and then turns to DORIS.*)

FORBES-SMITH. As I was saying—if you had my professional experience, Miss Street, you would know that playwrights are often glad to have the actors contribute

ideas. The authors need them. Many a dull play has been saved by a witty actor.

DORIS. And many a clever play has been ruined by a stupid—actress.

ISABEL (*flaring up*). Does she mean I'm too stupid to say her (*sarcastically*) "clever" lines? (*Turning to DORIS.*) Miss Street, you take yourself too seriously. (*With scornful amusement.*) I believe this is your first little play.

DORIS. And the last I will write for you.

FORBES-SMITH. We are losing time. Miss Brookins, let's go on with the rehearsal. (*ISABEL picks up the letter and becomes tragic.*)

ISABEL. Oh, sister, sister—he is false. My heart is broken. Oh, the bitterness, the terrible—

DORIS (*interrupting*). "Terrible" is not in the manuscript.

ISABEL. It ought to be there.

DORIS. "Terrible" is not my word. That's not the way I write.

ISABEL. But that's the way I feel. Oh, the bitterness, the terrible—

DORIS (*to FORBES-SMITH*). Please give me my manuscript. If my play is not to be given as it is written, I will not have it played at all. (*Holds out her hand for the manuscript and taps the floor with her foot.*)

ISABEL (*jumping up*). If I am not to act as I feel inspired to act I will give up the part.

FORBES-SMITH (*in despair, turning from one to the other*). Miss Brookins—Miss Street, listen to reason.

ISABEL. I know my own mind and I will not be dictated to by anybody.

DORIS (*standing near table center*). I'll not have my play ruined to satisfy anybody's vanity.

ISABEL (*gasps and tosses her head*). Vanity—indeed. (*ISABEL crosses over to R. MARGERY goes up to her and tries to pacify her. ISABEL turns from her angrily and MARGERY, half-frightened, retreats to the other side of the stage. She is followed by HAROLD.*)

DORIS. I will not allow the play to be given tomorrow night unless it is played as I wrote it.

ISABEL. Then you can get someone else for my part.

FORBES-SMITH. You know that we can't do that. No one else could play it.

ISABEL (*seating herself in a chair right front and fanning herself*). I absolutely refuse to change my way of acting it.

DORIS. Then we will not give the play.

HAROLD. But we can't throw the thing up. The ads are out and the tickets are sold.

MARGERY. And it's for charity, too.

HAROLD. The tickets have sold so well that I think we could give the old ladies at the Home a jolly treat.

MARGERY. Yes, they are counting on it. I stopped in there this afternoon and they were so interested in the play and thought it was so good of us to get up this benefit for them. Old Mrs. Flannigan said, "Sure, dear, it's sweet of you young things to be thinkin' o' the like of us old-uns."

HAROLD. Everybody's counting on it. After all the rehearsals we simply can't give it up.

DORIS. We'll not give the play.

FORBES-SMITH (*looking from DORIS to ISABEL*). Miss Brookins, think of all your friends who are coming to see you tomorrow night.

ISABEL. I don't care.

DORIS. I cannot sacrifice my play.

MARGERY. Think of the poor old ladies at the Home.

ISABEL. I don't care.

DORIS. My literary reputation is at stake.

HAROLD. It isn't fair, by Jove.

FORBES-SMITH. Miss Street, do be reasonable. Can't you see how important it is to go on with this?

DORIS. Tell the petted Miss Brookins to be reasonable. (FORBES-SMITH *looks at ISABEL, sulky, stubborn and impatient, with a mixture of admiration and fear.*)

FORBES-SMITH. Miss Brookins—eh—Miss Brookins—I hope—

ISABEL. You needn't hope. My mind is made up.

MARGERY (*almost crying*). Oh, what shall we do? What shall we do?

FORBES-SMITH. Miss Street, don't you think it is selfish of you to consider only your play and disappoint so many people?

DORIS. Why shouldn't the star make some sacrifices for the good of the whole?

FORBES-SMITH. Well, eh—that's different. Somebody must yield and it is usually the author.

DORIS (*coldly*). That seems to be the general impression. This time you will find that you are reckoning without your host. (*Sits down at table. FORBES-SMITH stands perplexed. Then a light comes into his face and he goes up to MARGERY and whispers something in her ear. She smiles and nods. MARGERY goes up to ISABEL and sighs.*)

ISABEL. Why do you sigh?

MARGERY. Because our lovely new gowns will be wasted. Nobody will see us in them. And yours is so pretty, Isabel. It's the most becoming gown you ever had. Don't you think so, Mr. Forbes-Smith?

FORBES-SMITH (*looking at ISABEL'S dress with admiration*). The color—the soft clinging folds—it's stunning, there's no doubt of it. What a shame she is not going to appear in it tomorrow night.

ISABEL (*softening a little*). I don't care.

FORBES-SMITH. Well, let's go home, since we're going to give the thing up. It's a pity, too, because it's a good play and I wanted Miss Street's friends to see what a clever writer she is.

DORIS. I'm sure I would never recognize my own play as Miss Brookins insists upon playing it.

FORBES-SMITH. Someone has said, "It is a wild playwright who knows his own play." You ought to be thankful if you recognize a line here and there.

DORIS (*moaning*). Oh, my beautiful lines are ruined.

FORBES-SMITH (*impatiently*). Let's go home. (*He goes for his hat, cane and gloves.*) There is no use talking

about it. The matter's settled. There's to be no play to-morrow night. Spaulding, you'll have to return the money for the tickets and send away the people when they come to the show.

HAROLD. Beastly job.

FORBES-SMITH (*emphatically*). I'm going. (*Goes out. HAROLD and MARGERY whisper in the background. DORIS looks at her precious manuscript with a stern expression. ISABEL sits moodily thinking. She frowns. She rearranges the folds of her dress. She smiles.*)

ISABEL (*to HAROLD*). Harold. (*HAROLD, startled in the midst of his conversation with MARGERY, comes forward hastily.*)

HAROLD (*like a soldier at attention*). Here.

ISABEL. Call that young man back.

HAROLD. Sure. (*He goes to the door and calls.*)
Forbes-Smith.

FORBES-SMITH *re-enters*.

FORBES-SMITH. Did you want to see me?

ISABEL. Yes. Do you think I am going to spend all this time learning a part and getting a new gown and then not act?

FORBES-SMITH (*in exasperation*). Well, what *are* you going to do?

ISABEL (*rising*). Say the old lines to please the author and wear this gown to-morrow night. (*FORBES-SMITH looks relieved. DORIS sighs happily. HAROLD puts his arm around MARGERY.*)

QUICK CURTAIN.

An Old Fashioned Mother

By WALTER BEN HARE.

Price, 25 Cents

The dramatic parable of a mother's love, in 3 acts; 6 males, 6 females, also the village choir or quartet and a group of silent villagers. Time, 2¼ hours. One scene: A sitting room. A play of righteousness as pure as a mother's kiss, but with a moral that will be felt by all. Contains plenty of good, wholesome comedy and dramatic scenes that will interest any audience. **Male Characters:** The county sheriff; an old hypocrite; the selfish elder son; the prodigal younger son; a tramp and a comical country boy. **Female Characters:** The mother (one of the greatest sympathetic roles ever written for amateurs); the village belle; the sentimental old maid; the good-hearted hired girl; a village gossip and a little girl of nine. Especially suited for church, Sunday school, lodge or school performance.

SYNOPSIS.

Act. I.—**The Good Samaritan.** Aunt Debby's farmhouse in late March. The Widder rehearses the village choir. Sukey in trouble with the old gray tabby cat. "She scratched me. I was puttin' flour on her face for powder, jest like you do!" Lowisy Custard reads her original poetry and Jerry Gosling drops in to see if there are to be any refreshments. "That's jest what maw says!" Lowisy and Jonah pass the fainting tramp by the wayside and Deborah rebukes them with the parable of the Good Samaritan. The tramp's story of downfall due to drink. "A poor piece of driftwood blown hither and thither by the rough winds of adversity." John, Deborah's youngest son, profits by the tramp's experience. "From this moment no drop of liquor shall ever pass my lips." John arrested. "I am innocent, and when a man can face his God, he needn't be afraid to face the law!"

Act II.—**A Mother's Love.** Same scene but three years later, a winter afternoon. "Colder'n blue and purple blazes and snowin' like sixty." Jerry's engagement ring. "Is it a di'mond? Ef it ain't I'm skun out of two shillin'." "I been sparkin' her fer nigh onto four years, Huldy Sourapple, big fat gal, lives over at Hookworm Crick." Deborah longs for news from John, the boy who was taken away. The Widder gossips. "I never seen sich a womern!" "You'd think she was a queen livin' in New York at the Walled-off Castoria." Lowisy is disappointed in Brother Guggs and decides to set her cap for Jonah. Deborah mortgages the old home for Charley and Isabel. The sleighing party. "Where is my wandering boy tonight?" The face at the window. Enoch and John. "I've been weak and foolish, a thing of scorn, laughed at, mocked at, an ex-convict with the shadow of the prison ever before me, but all that is passed. From now on, with the help of God, I am going to be a man!"

Act III.—**The Prodigal Son.** Two years later. Deborah bids farewell to the old home before she goes over the hills to the poorhouse. "The little home where I've lived since John brought me home as a bride." The bitterest cup—a pauper. "It ain't right, it ain't fair." Gloriana and the baby. "There ain't nothin' left fer me, nothin' but the poorhouse." The sheriff comes to take Aunt Deb over the hills. "Your boy ain't dead. He's come back to you, rich and respected. He's here!" The return of the prodigal son. Jerry gets excited and yells, "Glory Hallelujah!" The joy and happiness of Deborah. "Honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long in the land."

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SYNOPSIS

Act I.—Jack's lil suburban home. A misplaced husband. "He kissed me good-bye at eighteen minutes after seven last night, and I haven't laid eyes on him since." The Irish maid is full of sympathy but she imagines a crime has been committed. Elmer, the college boy, drops in. And the terrible Turk drops out. "Sure the boss has eloped wid a Turkey!" Jerry and Jack come home after a horrible night. Explanations. "We joined the Shriners, I'm the Exalted Imported Woggle and Jack is the Bazook!" A detective on the trail. Warrants for John Doe, Richard Roe and Mary Moe. "We're on our way to Florida!"

Act II.—A month later, Jack and Jerry reported drowned at sea. The Terrible Turk looking for Zuleika. The return of the prodigals. Ghosts! Some tall explanations are in order. "I never was drowned in all my life, was I, Jerry?" "We were lashed to a mast and we floated and floated and floated!" A couple of heroes. The Terrible Turk hunting for Jack and Jerry. "A Turk never injures an insane man." Jack feigns insanity. "We are leaving this roof forever!" The end of a perfect day.

Act III.—Mrs. Bridger's garden. Elmer and Zuleika start on their honeymoon. Mabel forgives Jack, but her mamma does not. They decide to elope. Jerry's scheme works. The two McNutts. "Me middle name is George Washington, and I cannot tell a lie." The detective falls in the well. "It's his ghost!" Jack and Jerry preparing for the elopement. Mary Ann appears at the top of the ladder. A slight mistake. "It's a burglar, mum, I've got him!" The Terrible Turk finds his Zuleika. Happiness at last.

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