

8 X 4= CHINA

By Jerry Rabushka

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A Ten Minute Comedy Skit-Play

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SYNOPSIS: What if you found yourself in a class where the answers make no sense at all? Where eight times four equals China and “32” is a place to live. How is it that no one else in school thinks this is crazy? Is Linda in the wrong class, or has she just not been paying attention for her entire life? As things progress, more and more words take on bizarre meanings, and soon she realizes that she has to turn the tables on multiplication. Should she beat ‘em... or join ‘em?

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(5 either; gender flexible)

TEACHER (m/f).....(38 lines)
JOEY/JEANNIE (m/f)A difficult student (15 lines)
LINDA/LONNIE (m/f).....A new student (41 lines)
ZELLY (m/f).....A student from the land of 32
(19 lines)
PRINCIPAL (m/f).....(11 lines)

SETTING: An 11th grade class. TEACHER is walking around in class, or standing in front of a board which can have some math problems on it if desired. Students are seated at desks or chairs. Or wood blocks –feel free to use your imagination, no need to make it realistic if you prefer a simple set. To make sure all characters are visible to the audience, you may need to “cheat” the students or the teacher so everyone can face front. From stage right, seat JOEY, LINDA, then ZELLY. As the skit opens, class is just getting started.

COSTUMES: While this is a short play, costumes can speak volumes – some of the students could dress in unusual and flashy clothing (same with hairstyles), whereas LINDA would be more conservative.

TEACHER: (*Upbeat.*) Ok class, quickie math quiz. I just want to see if you're on your toes.

JOEY: (*Smirking, smart aleck.*) No, we're sitting down. (*Laughs at HIS joke.*)

TEACHER: (*Giving it right back.*) You're not funny, Joey, but... neither is your math score, so (*Thinks it's funny.*) it's a perfect match. Now let's do eights, fast as you can! What's eight times six? (*Points to LINDA.*)

LINDA: Forty eight.

TEACHER: Great, Linda! Eight times nine. (*Points to JOEY.*)

JOEY: Seventy two!

TEACHER: Awesome. Eight times four. (*Points to ZELLY.*) Zelly you've been quiet, what's eight times four?

ZELLY thinks a short while, LINDA is impatient with this...then ZELLY blurts out.

ZELLY: China!

TEACHER: Correct. Now Linda, Eight times eight! Or as some might say, eight squared...

LINDA: (*Can't believe what SHE heard so SHE is lost in her own world.*) It is *not* China!

TEACHER: (*More insistent.*) Linda, eight times eight.

LINDA: (*Overreacting with wild gestures, can't understand why no one else knows this.*) Eight times four is not China!

TEACHER: Excuse me Linda, but who is teaching this class?

Pause as TEACHER stares LINDA down.

LINDA: (*Still not sure what's going on, says right back to TEACHER's gaze.*) Uh... No one, apparently.

TEACHER: (*Offended.*) Linda! Just because you don't agree with an answer does not mean I am no longer in authority.

LINDA: You can't give a geographical answer to a math problem.

ZELLY: (*Smarty pants.*) How do you know? There could be 32 people in China.

LINDA: I don't care if there are a *gazillion* and thirty two people in China. It's not the answer.

TEACHER: We have moved on, while you're stuck at the intersection of eight and four. Joey? Eight times eight, since Linda doesn't know.

JOEY: Sixty four.

TEACHER: See Joey, you *can* learn!

LINDA: *(Still annoyed and much louder. SHE stands up here as well, arms flailing.)* It's not China!

ZELLY: *(Up to argue with HER.)* You're just jealous. I got the right answer and you can't stand it.

LINDA: Your answer is not right.

ZELLY: *(Smug.)* Teacher said it was.

LINDA: *(Walks towards ZELLY, more combative.)* Teacher is wrong. All *my* life, eight time four has been 32. It's not China. It's not Japan. It's not Estonia, Latvia, or Lithuania. It just isn't. No matter how many times you say it *is*, it isn't and it never will be.

TEACHER: *(Stern and trying to regain control.)* Linda! This minute!

LINDA: *(Fighting back.)* This minute what? Field trip to Shangri La?

TEACHER: Eight times four. What is it?

ZELLY: *(Very self-assured.)* It's China.

ZELLY sits down with a contented sigh. LINDA sits down as well with an annoyed sigh, resigned that this will continue.

Really fine china.

TEACHER: Exactly. *(To LINDA, confused as well.)* I don't know what they taught you before you got here.

LINDA: Zelly where did you grow up?

ZELLY: In 32. I grew up in 32. *(Explaining a little.)* We had to move. It wasn't a very tolerant society.

JOEY: I can see 31 or 33 being a lot more accommodating for odd people.

TEACHER: Linda, I think you need to visit the principal.

LINDA: My mother and the principal are best friends. We visit every Sunday after church.

ZELLY: We didn't go to church in 32. We tried, but they said people of our faith had to go to 29, and that was too far to drive.

LINDA: *(Up again, trying to make a point that no one seems to get.)*
You didn't live in 32. Eight times four is 32. What is wrong with everyone?

TEACHER: *(Trying to stay calm.)* Linda, you're the one with the problem. You're not open to new things.

LINDA literally gets on her toes, ready to burst. TEACHER says with an angry smile.

I guess we're not on our toes, are we?

JOEY: *(Pointing at LINDA with HIS thumb.)* She seems to be.

LINDA realizes she actually is, feels silly and sits back down.

TEACHER: *(Picks up a phone, intercom, etc.)* Ms. [or Mr.] Smithton, would you please come in here? I'm sorry to bother you but we have a disciplinary emergency. Thank you. *(To LINDA.)* Now we'll see who's right and who's wrong.

LINDA: And who's crazy.

TEACHER: And until she gets here, what's eight times two?

ZELLY: That would be... Guam.

TEACHER: That would be... correct.

LINDA: That would be 16! Joey can you help me here!

JOEY: I can barely keep on my toes as it is. I just play along. All you have to do is swallow the material and puke it back up on the standardized test and you pass. No one said you had to learn anything.

LINDA: This isn't standardized! It's randomized!

PRINCIPAL: *(Enters, annoyed at being summoned.)* What seems to be the problem here? I was busy implementing protocol in order to facilitate a more conducive learning environment. *(Notices LINDA.)* Linda, didn't we already have an incident after church last weekend?

TEACHER: Linda is disrupting my classroom. Rather than send her to the principal's office, I thought it would be more effective for the office to come here.

PRINCIPAL: It's a breach of my recently implemented and facilitated protocol, but OK.

LINDA: Eight times four is not China!

PRINCIPAL: What is she talking about?

TEACHER: I don't know. She's arguing with me over a math question. I can barely teach with her histrionics.

LINDA: My what?

JOEY: Histrionics. It's when you're all like (*Shrieking and mocking LINDA.*) "eight times four is not China!" and you get all gamma globulin about it.

LINDA: I am not getting gamma globulin about anything. That's a hepatitis medicine, it's not something you *get* about things.

ZELLY: (*Remembering, sadly.*) It is in 32.

TEACHER: She insists that eight times four is...

PRINCIPAL: (*Knowingly, as if having dealt with this problem before.*) 32. I know...

LINDA: Exactly. It is!

PRINCIPAL: I understand.

LINDA thinks PRINCIPAL is on her side, but only for a moment.

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