

BANNED AND BURNED

by Jerry Rabushka

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A Comedic Monologue

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SYNOPSIS: CoraLynn's been banned! A fictional character whose adventures have roused the ire of parents and the school board, her books have been snatched from backpacks and thrown into the fire. After all, she's teaching students to become better people! Can she be restored to her former glory, or will her legacy be snuffed out at a weenie roast?

TIME: Present day.

SETTINGS: School library, school board meeting.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1female)

CORALYNN SANCHEZZ MCDUFFIN (f)..... A popular teenage fictional character.

SET: Bare stage.

COSTUME: Trendy yet tasteful, with an eye towards something unique that would inspire others to dress like her.

PROPS: None needed, though fun could be had with a stack of books as indicated in the script.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

This short play is pretty straightforward. However, it also raises many issues that students and teachers are currently dealing with. There are many opportunities for parody, exaggerating characterization, and quick mood changes.

CORALYNN: So... I got kicked out of school. I was just sitting there minding my own business when the accusations started flying. First, they landed on me like a mosquito, and I could swat them away. I could squash them as if that poor skeeter got crushed between the pages of a fast-closing book. *(She can pantomime the action, or snap a book shut loudly.)*

But like any mosquito, it wanted to draw blood. Soon the parents started in on me, then the school board. No one, in other words, who knew anything about... education.

At the board meeting, I was public enemy number one. Or at least number two, after the cafeteria pizza.

(As a school board member, but exaggerated, like a witch.) "She's a distraction to other students. She's turning them from their studies, and her behavior is not in line with our district's mission and values. She needs to be... expelled."

The parents came for me next.

(As a parent, again exaggerated.) "We don't want our children interacting with... her. She puts *(As if this is horrible.)* ideas into their heads."

(In response.) Well excuse me, but I thought that's why people went to school.

(As same parent.) "The only ideas I want my children to have are mine, and I haven't had a new thought since I was sixteen years old."

And what was that brilliant concept that set the world on fire?

(As same parent.) "Boys. It was boys. *(Pause.)* And that was a very bad idea."

I guess I should explain. I'm actually very popular. My full name is CoraLynn Sanchezz McDuffin, and I'm the main character in a very popular series of books called "The Teenage Adventures of CoraLynn Sanchezz McDuffin," volumes one through... now up to twenty-four. My underlying mission is to help other teens with our age group's usual ala carte selection of anxieties and afflictions: acne, bullying, friendship, homework, and today's music. Oh, and a pandemic. And remote learning. And returning to school, and returning to remote learning, and... now ... (*Can start tossing the stack of books, one by one.*) I was getting put in the discard pile. Sold for a quarter at a used book sale. Or... simply thrown away (*Tosses the rest.*).

The kids loved me, but it turns out the way I dealt with many of these issues got some students to start (*Scandalized.*) thinking on their own. It encouraged them to stand up for themselves using strategies they learned from... (*Proud of it.*) me. And of course, a couple students took it too far.

(*As a teacher.*) "Jimmy, it's been a week since you turned in an assignment. What's going on?"

(*As Jimmy, smugly.*) "You're infringing on my freedom to study when and how I wish. So I respectfully decline your kind invitation to participate in the curriculum, as it does not apply to me and never will."

(*As a teacher.*) "It's math, Jimmy."

(*As Jimmy, smugly.*) "And it doesn't add up. You're passing along knowledge that nobody needs just to keep it on a cobwebbed shelf of my brain, just to keep yourself employed, just in case some day, some way, somehow, someone might care about algebra, geometry, or calculus, but there is no day, no way, and no how that that one is going to be me."

There was a chapter in my books where I refused to do a math assignment for weeks on end to protest the selection of the homecoming queen, who by rights, should have been me. It was followed by a chapter where I almost had to repeat 10th grade, but Jimmy didn't make it that far into the book, so he just stopped doing math and assumed there would be no consequence.

That was enough for the school board and a group of—as they called themselves—concerned parents, who upon reading two paragraphs of my rebellion, had me tossed into the library dumpster. Some of them took me out and threw me into a fire. Me, a sixteen-year-old fictional character, now a victim of a school board inquisition.

(Brutalizes a book during this speech.) It's hard to stand up for yourself when someone grabs you by the binding, shakes you with a furious laughter, tears your pages apart and tosses you into a fire pit where your inspiring life story is now roasting hot dogs and marshmallows for people who claim to know what's good for their children while feeding them three times their daily allotment of fat and sugar in a single sitting.

The school board was ripe with the power of book banning, finding fear in the very act of reading, and before we knew it, I was joined by countless others: fiction, history, music, art... at the end of the month there were exactly three books left on the shelves, all of them written by the superintendent's niece. A former hub of knowledge and entertainment was now nothing but an empty, enervating echo.

(As a parent, looking at a book and tossing it away as if the entire exercise of reading is passé.) "We want to make sure our children get the right kind of education. The education we had when we were their age. Where learning was a chore, where we did what we were told, where we were belittled, berated, and bullied but we came out just fine. I, for one, am tired of seeing our children coddled. Last week I told my daughter to do the dishes, take out the trash, mop the floors and clean the windows if she expected dinner that night,

and she said, 'Who do you think I am, Cinderella?' For this, I blame CoraLynn Sanchezz McDuffin!"

So of course, by condemning me to the fire pit, they made me more popular than ever. Kids who couldn't check me out of the library were taking to buying me online and hiding me in their rooms. My author made a lot more money in royalties and the entire effort backfired. Kids were standing up for themselves! They were dealing with their issues in the same way I did. And it was a disaster, because in the end, with the learning experience diluted like pouring water in a 3% chemical solution and making it 1%, well... there wasn't much left to stand up for.

French? Not with the revolution! Next thing you know our kids will be chopping off heads in the public square.

Russia? Not with the revolution! But we did win hockey gold at the 1980 Olympics!

American Revolution? We won, you lost, that's all you need to know!

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