

50 STATES IN 60 MINUTES (excerpt)

by Matt O'Brien

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Christopher Columbus makes the trek to Spain to convince Queen Isabella to give him some ships to bring back loads of Asian pasta so he can open a chain of restaurants

COLUM: Ah here I am, the court of the Castle of Spain! *(Isabella goes rushing by him)* Hey, what's a this?

ISABELLA: Quickly – you must hide me from Roderigo – he is mad with passion!

MAN B : *(Roderigo – with a Castillian lisp)* Ah, Ithabella, I mutht have you!

ISABELLA: No, I told you a thousand times, I'm married to Ferdinand. *(she swats him with her fan; to Columbus)* Please can you help me get rid of this pest!

COLUM: Well...I got a brother-in-law in the cement business...

ISABELLA: No, I just want him gone from my court. I want him far away from me.

COLUM: How far?

ISABELLA: You can take him to China for all I care!

COLUM: *(light bulb appears over Columbus' head accompanied by a "ding" sound effect)* Did you say China? Well I have an idea for you. You've got a boats, I'm a need'a boats. You give me three boats, and I'm a take him far away from here and you not see him long'a time.

ISABELLA: Done. I give you three of my best ships; the Nina, the Pinta, and the Gertrude. *(sound of screeching brakes and crashing wood – she looks out "window")* Let's make that the Santa Maria. You sail under the Spanish flag, and any lands or properties you acquire will thenceforth belong to the Holy Kingdom of Spain. Sign here *(she whips out a contract)*.

COLUM: Tha'sa deal. You won't'a be sorry. We're all gonna be rich. C'mon you, you're going with me.

MAN B: But I don't wanna go to China!

COLUM: If you stay here, the king will have your head.

MAN B: When do we leave? *(Button sound - they vamanos)*

LECTURER: And so Columbus had his three ships. He recruited a crew of 87 men from among the finest sailors in Spain, and set off in August, 1492 to find a brave new passage to the treasures of the orient.

COLUM: I tell you, when'a we get there, I'm a gonna buy up every piece'a rotinni I can'a find!

LECTER: And finally, on the morning of October 12, 1492, they struck land! (*sound effect, Columbus is knocked forward off of his chair*) After giving a brief prayer of thanks (*prayer...*), Columbus and his intrepid group of adventurers rowed ashore to set foot on the shining shore of what they believed to be Asia.

COLUM: (*gets up, and stands proudly with a staff in his hand*) In the name of God, I claim these Asian shores for the holy empire of Spain! (*Man C and Woman A appear, talking to each other in Scandanavian-sounding gibberish*) Ah, a native Asian couple! (*to first mate*) Aren't they awfully dark-skinned to be Chinese?

MAN B: Maybe they're Indians instead.

COLUM: Good morning, noble Chinese or Indian savages. I'm Christopher Columbus, here to claim these Chinese shores for the Holy Empire of Spain!

WOMAN A: Chinese? Did you say "Chinese?" (*she looks at her husband, then both break out in hysterical laughter*).

COLUM: I'm not in China. Then where am I ?

MAN C: Our island is called Guinahani. Say, you're taller than the last European we saw.

COLUM: Wait - Someone has been here before me?

WOMAN A: Oh yah. Well, not here, but to our summer place up north. What was that fellow's name?

MAN C: Leif..something or other...Erickson!

COLUM: Darn it...well, let me cut to the chase – do you have any pasta to trade?

MAN C: Pasta? No – but we've got these yellow sparkly rocks....you can't eat them, but they're pretty.

MAN B: Gadzooks! Do you have much of this gold....er...."sparkly rocks"?

WOMAN A: Oh yes. All over the place! Oh, we've got these too. (*she displays a tomato*) they don't sparkle, but they're shiny red and they taste good.

LECTURER: And so it was that Christopher Columbus discovered not a trading route to the east, but a land rich in gold, sugar, and tobacco. And while Columbus didn't find the pasta he sought, he *did* bring back something that soon became a staple of the Italian diet – the tomato!