

Say what?

VOICE:
(overlapping)

*Big Shakes--
With just his quill
That's William Shakespeare!
That's William Shakespeare!
That's William Shakespeare!*

EVERYONE:

VOICE:
(overlapping)

Say what?

EVERYONE:

Big Shakes--
With just his quill
That's William Shakespeare!

CAMILLE:

"The greatest playwright of all time"

MARIA:

He wrote in free verse---

JESSE:

But mostly in rhyme.

CAMILLE:

He wrote about jealousy, pride and greed---

JESSE:

He wrote about murder and other misdeeds--

MARIA:

He wrote about honor, faith and love--

RAY-RAY:

With a lot of "thees"--"thous" and "where-ofs"

JESSE:

You're stupid to write him off--
Just like that--

EVERYONE:

*Willie Shakespeare--
His work was real PHAT!*

*Big Shakes,
The bad bard
That's William Shakespeare*

JESSE:
C'mon, let's help him out. Music!
(beat-boxing starts)
Once upon a time in a far away place,
A dude named Shakespeare
Was writin' with grace,

CAMILLE:
And style, with such ease...
He was aimin' to please...

MARIA:
Sonnets, poems and plays,
The dude was writin' for days--

JESSE:
But, no one could touch him
The Brother was that good--

MARIA:
Top of his game--
Writin' in the hood.

CAMILLE:
No sissy--hey missy--
No powder puff--

JESSE:
The dude was creatin',
And his stuff was tough!

RAY-RAY:
Give me the low down--
The real McCoy--

EVERYONE:
William Shakespeare--?!
The classical BAD BOY!

Big Shakes,
The bad bard
That's William Shakespeare

CAMILLE:

Shakespeare?! Naw---you got it all wrong-- Ray-Ray! Shakespeare's the bomb! His writing is like----well, it's like he's living right here and now. I don't think you're reading his plays right.

MARIA:

(grabs him)

Ohhhh, yeah---I love his Romeo and Juliet....it's so romantic!

JESSE:

(grabs him away from Maria)

Macbeth's my favorite--They call it the Scottish play---

(he puts his arm around Ray-Ray's shoulders)

It's like there's this guy who gets all the signs as to what to do in his life and still winds up dying a tragic death.

CAMILLE:

(grabs him)

I like his comedies the best---you know--A Midsummer's Night Dream---now that one is---

RAY-RAY:

(cuts her off and turns to the audience)

You see this??? You see why I'm goin' crazy up here?! It's not normal to get excited about a dude older than dirt! As you can see, all my friends are whacked!

(turning back to friends)

Hey-hey-hey, y'all! I'm talking about Shakespeare....not Puff Daddy, not Snoop Doggy Dog, not even Vanilla Ice! Read my lips---Shakespeare! If I gonna pass Mrs. Robert's class--I need help--real gen-u-ine help. You're gonna have to speak in a language I understand!

MARIA:

Listen--we're not here to do your home work for you--

JESSE:

(interrupts her)

Hey--hey--

RAY-RAY:

Yeah---chill, chill!

What?!
EVERYONE:
Is this drama club?
RAY-RAY:
Yes!
EVERYONE:
Good! Then I'm in the right place.
RAY-RAY:
So, what's the problem?
MARIA:
I'm looking for knowledgeable people to help me with my little dilemma.
RAY-RAY:
How little is it---
CAMILLE:
And what's the dilemma?
JESSE:
Mrs. Roberts' class. I've got a bunch of plays to read.
RAY-RAY:
And---?
MARIA:
And so I've got a bunch of plays to read.
RAY-RAY:
So, what's the problem? Can't you read?
CAMILLE:
No--man--not if it's Shakespeare! I've got to get through three of his plays, by next week. Everyone says that he writes in English---but believe me, with all the "thees," "thous," and "what-have-yous" up in there, he be writing in a foreign language...

JESSE:
(to stage manager)

Look, I've got have something to work with!

STAGE MANAGER:
Well, don't look at me! I'm just the stage manager.
(Jesse looks at Maria)

MARIA:
Hey--don't look at me--I'm just the talent. The playwright is standing right over there. Talk to her.

CAMILLE:
None of you understand the process of creativity.

JESSE:
So, what you're saying is that you don't have any rewrites---is that what you're trying to say, Camille?

CAMILLE:
Well--kinda-sorta.

MARIA:
(to Jesse)
What does she mean "kinda-sorta" Either she has rewrites or she doesn't have rewrites. No rewrites--- no leading lady! Because my Mama is not coming to see me in this play if the play stinks! Drama, club or no drama club!

JESSE:
All right! All right! Every one take five!
(he gestures to Camille to come over to him and they talk while Maria ad-libs complaints to stage manager. Ray-Ray comes in. He is a hip-hop wanna-be. He wanders over to one group and tries to get their attention but they ignore him and turn away from him. He then goes over to the other group and they do the same. Ray-Ray, frustrated, moves to center stage--)

RAY-RAY:
(yells)
HEY YOU GUYS!!!!

VERSION I

SCENE 1

PLACE: High School drama club.

(Jesse enters followed by Maria and Camille and the stage manager.)

JESSE:

All right Maria, we're gonna try this again. Camille you got your rewrites on the monologue?

CAMILLE:

(pointing the the stage manager)

I gave them to the SM.

(Jesse turns to the stage manager)

STAGE MANAGER:

(calmly)

She never gave me any rewrites.

CAMILLE:

Did to!

STAGE MANAGER:

Did not!

CAMILLE:

Whatever---

JESSE:

C'mon people! I need the rewrites. Maria needs the rewrites--

MARIA:

Yeah---'cause what you've got here is looking pretty rough!

CAMILLE:

Please tell me that you are not dissing the playwright!

MARIA:

Wouldn't you like to know?!

KIM HINES

THE ART OF REVISION

Hip Hop Shakespeare is a play that I was commissioned to write for George Street Playhouse in New Brunswick, New Jersey in 1999. They went on to tour the show later in 1999 and in 2000.

I went through many different versions, as the company wasn't sure what they wanted and how they wanted the final production to look like. So—you'll notice in the first version, there is a 'song-rap' ...but, by the time I got to my revision, the 'song-rap' disappears and more dialogue is added in its place.

Revision(s), at times, take you in a direction that blows apart your original ideas. There will be many different reasons for this—whims of a producer, limits due to the type of actor, or their level of experience, constraints or limits due to the design of the set, age of the audience, lack of research information, an idea that works better with overall concept...etc...there are so many reason for going in a different direction.

Any Questions?

Kim