

Porgy And Bess

Music: George Gershwin

Lyrics: DuBose Heyward, Ira Gershwin

Premiere: September 30, 1935

Story:

In 1926 George Gershwin read Porgy by DuBose Heyward, a native of Charleston, South Carolina, and immediately wrote to the author suggesting that they collaborate on a folk opera based on the novel. Heyward was enthusiastic, but it was 1934 before Gershwin's composing and performing schedules permitted him to begin actual work on the project. Meanwhile, Heyward and his wife Dorothy dramatized Porgy for a 1927 production which incorporated spirituals into the action. This Theater Guild presentation of Porgy ran for 367 performances and elicited interest from others, among them Al Jolson, in using it as a basis for some sort of musical production. However, nothing came of these ideas and in 1934, after years of correspondence, George and Ira Gershwin joined DuBose Heyward in Charleston to write the opera which had been germinating in George's imagination for several years.

They settled for the summer at Folly Beach, located on a barrier island about ten miles from Charleston, where they could observe the Gullahs an isolated group living on adjacent James Island who became the prototypes of the Catfish Row residents. It was a happy collaboration as DuBose Heyward wrote the libretto, and Ira Gershwin and Heyward wrote the lyrics. (Heyward's contributions included the lyrics to Summertime and My Man's Gone Now.) By mid-August the Gershwins left Charleston, and George applied himself to finishing the recitatives and orchestrating the opera. When it was finally completed in July, 1935, the 700 pages of music represented his most ambitious creation and his favorite composition. According to David Ewen, Gershwin's first biographer, he " never quite ceased to wonder at the miracle that he had been its composer. he never stopped loving each and every bar, never wavered in the conviction that he had produced a work of art."

Next, Gershwin involved himself with the casting and production of his opera.

Todd Duncan, the first Porgy, recalled that Gershwin was "going around the country looking for his Porgy." Music critic Olin Downes recommended that Gershwin hear Duncan, who was teaching at Howard University as well as singing, but Gershwin rejected the idea because he felt that "he didn't want any university professor to sing." For his part, Duncan was not interested because Gershwin was "Tin Pan Alley and something beneath me." Finally the two arranged a meeting during which Gershwin played and Duncan sang, and Gershwin asked Duncan to take the part of Porgy. Gershwin arranged an evening for Duncan with Ira Gershwin and his wife, the Theater Guild board, and prospective backers.

Duncan recalls that he was supposed to sing three or four songs, but " I sang an hour, an hour and a half." Then Ira and George got out the score of Porgy and Bess and sang the entire opera in "their awful, rotten voices." Duncan continues "I just thought I was in heaven. These beautiful melodies in this new idiom it was something I had never heard. I just couldn't get enough of it when he ended with I'm on My Way I was crying. I was weeping."

Gershwin chose to have Porgy and Bess given a Broadway run at the Alvin Theater rather than a full operatic production, to assure more performances, and the word opera was carefully avoided.

The first cast of nineteen singing principals

included, with Duncan, Anne Brown as Bess, John W. Bubbles as Sportin' Life, Warren Coleman as Crown, and the Eva Jessye Choir; Rouben Mamoulian produced and directed, and Alexander Smallens conducted. Porgy and Bess tried out in Boston and opened in New York on October 10, 1935, for a disappointing run of 124 performances; it was years later before the show's backers got their money back, and more.

Porgy and Bess was George Gershwin's longest and most ambitious creation, but it was not truly successful during his lifetime. Some of the songs had achieved popularity before Gershwin's death in 1937, but the work earned real approval and favor only after the 1940 Theater Guild presentation of a slightly revised version. For years it was performed more frequently in Europe, where it was considered a true American opera, than in America. Porgy and Bess received its first uncut production in Houston in the 1970's, conducted by John DeMain, to great acclamation, and it was finally produced at the Met some 50 years after the first production. It is probably the only opera founded on 1920's and 30's jazz which has survived past the post-World War II period, when composers began to use jazz satirically.

Heyward's novel was inspired by a newspaper article about a maimed black man who committed murder in the height of passion, and was based on a real-life well-known local character called "Goat Sammy," who could not stand upright and was forced to travel about in a goat-drawn cart. The three-act opera takes place in Catfish Row, once an aristocratic mansion, now a crowded waterfront tenement.

The opera opens with a brief overture, then a piano is heard playing Jasbo Brown Blues. It is night and Clara sings a lullaby, Summertime, to her baby as a crap game takes place in the background. Jake, Clara's husband, sings A woman is a sometime thing to the baby, and we hear the call of the honeyman.

Porgy enters in his goat cart as his friends tease him about caring for Bess.

He protests that When Gawd make a cripple, He mean him to be lonely. As the crap game continues (Boxcars again) a drunken Crown enters with flashily-dressed Bess and joins the game. Enraged by his losses, Crown attacks Robbins before the horrified Catfish Row inhabitants, and kills him with a cotton hook. Bess gives Crown money as he goes to hide, and Sportin' Life offers to take Bess to New York with him. She refuses, but as the police whistles are heard she pleads for shelter and Porgy opens his door to her. Scene ii opens in Serena's room where Robbins' body lies on the bed with a saucer on his chest to receive donations for burial expenses. Many people cluster around singing spirituals to mourn Robbins and comfort his widow, Serena. Porgy and Bess enter and put money in the saucer as the people exhort one another to do the same, in Overflow, overflow. A detective arrives with policemen and accuses Peter, a half-deaf old man, in an attempt to get the others to accuse Crown. Peter is taken off as a "material witness," and Serena sings My man's gone now. Bess leads a last spiritual, ending the scene.

Act II takes place a month later in Catfish Row. Jake and the fishermen sing It take a long pull to get there as they repair their nets and prepare to go to sea, despite warnings about September storms. Porgy appears at his window singing I got plenty o' nuttin, and the people comment on the positive change in Porgy since Bess came to live with him. Sportin' Life struts in and Maria, the cook, blows white powder from his hand. He protests, but she tells him nobody ain' goin' peddle happy dust roun' my shop and threatens him with a carving knife. He runs off as Lawyer Frazier enters looking for Porgy, to whom he sells a divorce' for Bess, pointing out as he does so that it is much more difficult to divorce someone who has never been married. Next Mr. Archdale appears, offering to provide bond for the still-jailed Peter. (NB: Sometimes the Buzzard Song is left out, sometimes it is placed elsewhere in the opera; Gershwin himself excised it in an attempt to cut the role of Porgy slightly, as it is fatiguing.) Porgy sees a buzzard, and he and the chorus sing the Buzzard Song, warning of bad luck if the bird alights. Sportin' Life reappears

and again suggests to Bess that she go to New York with him, but she declines, saying that she hates the sight of him. Porgy warns her to stay away from Bess, who now tells Porgy that she will not leave him to go to the picnic, as he cannot go. They sing the beautiful love duet Bess, you is my woman now, and Maria insists that Bess must join the picnickers as they start on their way. As they leave Porgy happily sings I got plenty o' nuttin.

Scene ii opens on Kittiwah Island at evening. The picnic is in full swing, and the participants sing and dance to I ain' got no shame; next Sportin' Life treats them to a sermon on the virtues of skepticism in the brilliant It ain't necessarily so. Serena comes upon the scene and denounces everyone as sinners (Shame on all you sinners), further reminding them that they must hurry or the boat will leave them behind. As Bess lingers for a moment, Crown appears and tells her that he will soon return for her. She pleads to be allowed to remain with Porgy and to live a decent life, but Crown laughs and tells her that her living arrangement is temporary but permissible, and will cease the moment he comes back. She asks him to find some other woman (What you want wid Bess?), but his old attraction reasserts itself and as the boat leave Bess remains behind with Crown.

As Scene iii begins Jake and the fishermen are preparing to go fishing, singing a bit of It takes a long pull to get there. Peter has been released from prison, and we hear the sound of Bess' delirious voice from Porgy's room, indicating that she has returned from Kittiwah Island. She was lost for two days, and incoherent when she returned home. Serena prays for her, and tells Porgy that Bess will soon be well as she sings Oh, doctor Jesus. We hear the cries of the strawberry woman, the honeymen, and the crab man; finally Bess, sounding recovered, calls for Porgy. She talks with Porgy, who tells her that he knows that she has been with Crown, but that he loves her all the same. She says that although she told Crown she would go with him she really wants to stay with Porgy and is fearful of the effect of Crown's presence on her, singing I loves you, Porgy. Porgy assures her that he will take care of Crown if he bothers Bess again. Clara watches the sea anxiously as a storm approaches, and the fearful sound of the hurricane bell is heard as the scene ends.

The Scene iv curtain rises on Serena's room as a terrible storm rages outside. People huddle in anxious groups, singing Oh, doctor Jesus. Peter sings I hear death knockin' at de do' and almost immediately a real knock is heard on the door as the people rush to hold the door closed. It is Crown, who has come for Bess, and he throws Porgy down as he attempts to come between Crown and Bess. Serena warns Crown that at any moment the storm might get him, but he scoffs at her warnings, singing If God want to kill me He had plenty of chance tween here an' Kittiwah Island. The frightened keening continues until Crown stops it as he strikes up a cheerful number, A red-headed woman makes a choo-choo jump its track. Suddenly Clara thrusts her baby at Bess and runs out because she has seen Jake's fishing boat floating upside-down (Jake's boat in de river). Bess urges the men to follow her but only Crown will brave the storm. He leaves, promising that he will return for Bess, and the act ends with the people again pleading for mercy in Oh, doctor Jesus.

Act III opens in the courtyard again, with the people mourning Clara, Jake, and Crown, all of whom they fear are lost. As they start to pray for Crown, Sportin' Life interrupts them with laughter. Maria scolds him, but he hints that Crown is not dead and he slyly wonders about the result of the rivalry

between Crown and Porgy over Bess. Bess sings Summertime to Clara's baby, and everyone drifts off. Suddenly Crown is seen at the gate, moving stealthily across the court toward Porgy's door. As he passes the window an arm extends, grasping a long knife which is plunged into Crown's back. As Crown staggers, Porgy seizes him around the neck and throttles him. Porgy exclaims Bess, Bess, you got a man now.

Scene ii takes place the next afternoon as the police arrive to investigate Crown's death. Serena says she was ill and knows nothing of the death of the man who, as everyone in Catfish Row will swear, killed her husband Robbins. Porgy is brought in and dragged away to identify Crown's body, protesting that he will have nothing to do with Crown. (His reluctance has been increased by Sportin' Life, who said that Crown's wound will begin to bleed when the man who killed him comes near the body.)

Bess comes in and Sportin' Life offers her some happy dust to help her over her nerves at the prospect of losing Porgy. She tries to refuse, but cannot, and Sportin' Life again urges her to come to New York with him, singing There's a boat dat's leavin' soon for New York.

The final Scene is again in Catfish Row, a week later. Life seems normal, children dance and sing, and the people greet one another in Good mornin', sistuh. Porgy returns after a week in jail for contempt of court because he would not look at Crown's body. He has brought presents for everyone (after some successful crap-shooting in jail), as the people sing It's Porgy comin' home. He finally realizes that Bess is not there, and sings the heartbreaking Oh, Bess, oh where's my Bess? Serena and Maria join in, one condemning Bess and one explaining and excusing her, and in this trio Porgy expresses his longing for her. Told that she has gone to New York, Porgy asks that his goat-cart be brought to him. As he starts out of Catfish Row to find Bess wherever she may be and bring her back, he and the chorus sing the finale, Oh Lawd, I'm on my way.

ACT ONE

1. Summertime
2. A Woman Is A Sometime Thing
3. Here Come De Honey Man
4. They Pass By Singing
5. Oh Little Stars
6. Gone, Gone, Gone
7. Overflow
8. My Man's Gone Now
9. Leavin' For The Promise' Lan'

ACT TWO

10. It Take A Long Pull To Get There
11. I Got Plenty O' Nuttin'
12. Buzzard Song
13. Bess, You Is My Woman Now
14. Oh, I Can't Sit Down
15. I Got Plenty O' Nuttin' (Reprise)
16. I Ain't Got No Shame
17. It Ain't Necessarily No

- 18.Doctor Jesus
- 19.Strawberry Woman
- 20.Crab Man
- 21.I Loves You, Porgy
- 22.Oh Hev'nly Father/Oh De Lawd Shake De Heavens
- 23.Oh, Dere's Somebody Knockin' At De Do'
- 24.Red-Headed Woman
- 25.Clara, Clara
- 26.There's A Boat Dat's Leavin' Soon for New York
- 27.Good Mornin' Sistuh!
- 28.Oh, Bess, Oh Where's My Bess
- 29.Finale: Oh Lawd, I'm On My Way

ACT ONE

Scene 1

CATFISH ROW

(Evening, Catfish Row is quiet. Jasbo Brown is at the piano, playing a low-down blues while half a dozen couples dance in a slow, almost hypnotic rhythm.)

GROUP

Da-doo-da. Da-doo-da.

(As a rhythmic chant)

Wa, wa, wa, wa. Da-doo-da. Da-doo-da.

(Lights find another group on stage, in the center of which Clara sits with her baby in her arms, rocking it back and forth)

CLARA

Summertime and the livin' is easy,
Fish are jumpin', and the cotton is high.
Oh your daddy's rich, and your ma is good lookin',
So hush, little baby, don' yo' cry.

(Girls of chorus sing "OOH" behind Clara)

One of these mornin's you goin' to rise up singin',
Then you'll spread yo' wings an' you'll take the sky
But till that mornin', there's a-nothin' can harm you
With Daddy and Mammy standin' by.

(Lights come up on still another group, this time a crap game.)

MINGO

Oh, nobody knows when the Lawd is goin' to call.

MEN

Roll dem bones, roll.

SPORTING LIFE

It may be in the summertime and maybe in the fall.

MEN

Roll dem bones, roll.

SPORTING LIFE

But you got to leave yo' baby and yo' home an' all,
So --

SPORTING LIFE AND MEN

Roll dem bones, oh, my brudder, oh my brudder,
Oh my brudder,
Roll dem bones, roll dem bones, roll, roll.

(The stage grows lighter and Catfish Row takes up its normal life; children pass, couples walk about, the crap game continues.)

JAKE

(Rolling dice)

Seems like these bones don't give me nothin' but boxcars tonight.
It was the same two weeks ago, an' the game broke me;
I don't likes that kind o' luck!

SPORTING LIFE

(Sporting Life produces own dice, but Mingo grabs them)
Damn you, give me dem bones!

MINGO

What do you say to these, Jake?

JAKE

Them's the same cock-eyed bones
what clean the game out last Saturday night;
If they rolls in this game, I rolls out.

SERENA

(To Robbins)
Honey boy!

JAKE

Come on down, Robbins, we're waiting for you.

SERENA

Honey, don't play tonight. Do like I say.

ROBBINS

(To Serena)
I been sweatin' all day. Night time is man's time. He got a
right to forget his troubles. He got a right to play.

SERENA

If you hadn't been drinkin' you wouldn't talk to me that way.
You ain't nebber hear Lord Jesus say nuttin' 'bout got to play.

ROBBINS

There you go again. Lissen what I say.
I works all the week; Sunday got to pray.
But Saturday night a man's got a right to play.

GROUP

A man's got a right to play.

ROBBINS

Yes, sir, that's right. That ole lady of mine is hell on
savin' money to join the buryin' lodge.

I says spend it while you is still alive and kickin'.
(Picks up dice and throws with grunt)

JIM

(Enters)

Lord, I is tired this night. I'm done with cotton.

JAKE

Better come along with me on the Sea Gull. I got room for another fisherman.

JIM

That suit me. This cotton hook done swing its las' bale of cotton. Here, who wants a cotton hook?

(Throws cotton hook to center of floor; children dive for it; scramble)

CLARA

(Walking with baby)

Summertime and the livin' is easy. Fish are jumping etc. ...

CRAP SHOOTERS

Seven come, seven come to pappy! Throw that beautiful number! Come seven to me! Yeah, man! I'll bet yo' wrong. I'll bet he's right! Gettin' hot!

CLARA

...Oh, yo' daddy's rich and yo' ma is good lookin'...

CRAP SHOOTERS

Come, seven! Shoot! Made it! He made it!

CLARA

So hush, little baby, don't yo' cry!

CRAP SHOOTERS

Ol' man seven come down from heaven!

JAKE

(To Clara)

What, that chile ain't asleep yet? Give him to me.

I'll fix him for you.

(Jake takes the baby from Clara)

Lissen to yo' daddy warn you,
'Fore you start a-travelling,
Woman may born you, love you and mourn you,
But a woman is a sometime thing,
Yes, a woman is a sometime thing.

MINGO

Oh, a woman is a sometime thing.

JAKE

Yo' mammy is the first to name you,
Then she'll tie you to her apron string,
Then she'll shame you and she'll blame you
Till yo' woman comes to claim you,
'Cause a woman is a sometime thing,
Yes, a woman is a sometime thing.

SPORTING LIFE

Oh, a woman is a sometime thing.

JAKE

Don't you never let a woman grieve you
Jus' cause she got yo' weddin' ring.
She'll love you and deceive you,
Take yo' clothes and leave you
'Cause a woman is a sometime thing.

ALL

Yes, a woman is a sometime thing.
Yes, a woman is a sometime thing,
Yes, a woman is a sometime thing.

JAKE

There now, what I tells you; he's asleep already.

(Baby wails)

(Men at crap game laugh).

CLARA

He got better sense than to listen to that nonsense.
(Carries baby out)

ROBBINS

Come back, Jake, you make a better crap shooter.

PETER

(Entering)

Here come de honey man.

Yes man, dis de honey man.

You got honey in de comb?

Yes man, I got honey in de comb.

An' is yo honey cheap?

Yes mam, my honey very cheap.

Here come de honey man.

ALL

Hello, Peter.

LILY

Well, here come my ol' man.

(Takes tray from his head)

Now gimme the money! Now go sit and rest.

MARIA

You Scipio! Here come Porgy. Open the gate for him.

(Scipio opens one side of iron gate. Porgy enters in goat cart; crowd greets him)

JAKE

Here's the ol' crap shark!

MINGO

Now we'll have a game!

PORGY

Evenin' ladies, hello, boys! Luck been ridin' high with Porgy today. I got a pocket full of the Buckra money, and it's goin' to any man what got the guts to shoot it off me.

MINGO

Get on down, son we'll take it.

SPORTING LIFE

Lay it down.

ROBBINS

All right, mens, roll 'em. We done wait long enough.

JIM

You bes' wait for Crown. I see him comin', takin' the whole sidewalk,
And he looks like he ain't gonna stand no foolin'.

PORGY

Is Bess with him?

JAKE

Lissen to Porgy. I think he's sof' on Crown's Bess.
(Men laugh)

PORGY

I ain't nebber swap two words with Bess.

MARIA

Porgy got too good sense to look twice at that liquor guzzlin' slut.

SERENA

That gal Bess ain't fit for Gawd fearin' ladies to 'sociate with.

PORGY

Can't you keep yo' mouth off Bess. Between Gawd fearin'

ladies and the Gawd damnin' men that gal ain't got a chance.

JAKE

Ain' I tells you Porgy sof' on her?

PORGY

No, no, brudder, Porgy ain't sof' on no woman;
They pass by singin', they pass by cryin', always lookin'.
They look in my do' an' they keep on movin'.
When Gawd make cripple, He mean him to be lonely.
Night time, day time,
He got to trabble dat lonesome road.
Night time, day time,
He got to trabble dat lonesome road.

(Crown shouts off stage, frightening children who scatter, yelling.)

MINGO

Here comes Big Boy!

JAKE

'Low, Crown.

JIM

'Low, Bess.

(General greetings)

CROWN

Hi, boys! All right, Sporting Life, give us
a pint and make it damn quick.

CROWN

Pay him, Bess.

(Sporting Life pulls out flask and hands it to Crown who takes long drink)

JAKE

Drunk again!

PORGY

He sure love his liquor, but some day
she's gonna throw him down.

CROWN

That damn whiskey'-jus' as weak as water.
(Passes bottle to Bess)

SERENA

See that hussy drinkin' like any man!

BESS

(Offers bottle to Robbins)
Here, Robbins, have one to the Gawd fearin' ladies.
There's nothin' like 'em, thank Gawd.
(Robbins drinks)

CROWN
(Snatching bottle)
Oh, no, you don't. Nobody ain't drinkin' none of my lick. (sic)
(Throws down money)
All right, mens, I'm talkin' to you. Anybody answerin' me?
(All throw money down)

ROBBINS
(Throwing)
Boxcars again.

MINGO
Cover 'em, brother, cover 'em.

ROBBINS
Cover hell! I goin' to pass 'em along and see
if I can break my luck.

MINGO
Robbins' lady ain't allow him but fifty cent and he can't
take no chances with bad luck.

(All laugh)

BESS
That's all right, honey boy, I'll stake you when yo' four
bits done gone.

SERENA
Go ahead an' play. You don't need no charity
off no she-devils.

BESS
See what I gets for you. Yo' woman is easy
when you know the way.

JAKE
(Throws)
Crapped out!
(Passes dice to Mingo)

PORGY
(To Robbins)
Don't you ever let a woman grieve you

PORGY and ALL

She'll love you and deceive you,
take yo' clothes and leave you
'Cause--

PORGY

A woman is a sometime thing.

ALL

Yes, a woman is a sometime thing.

SERENA

That gal ain't need to worry 'bout no man marryin' her.

BESS

Some women got to marry a man to keep him.

CROWN

Shut yo' damn mouth!

You don't give Mingo a chance
to talk to the bones.

MINGO

Fade me.

(All throw down money)

Old snake-eye go off an' die.

Old man seven come down from heaven.

(Throws)

Seven!

(Scoops up dice)

CROWN

I ain't seen that seven yet.

You done turn 'em over.

MINGO

What I throw?

SPORTING LIFE

Seven.

Seven.

PORGY

He throw seven.

CROWN

Well there's more than one big mouth done meet his Gawd
for pullin' 'em in before I reads 'em see!

An' I'm sayin' it over tonight.

MINGO

Yo' mammy's gone and yo' daddy's happy

Come home little bones, come home to pappy.

(Throws)

Four to make. Come four!

(Throws)

PORGY

Crapped out!

CROWN

(Picking up dice)

I shoots like that.

Come clean you little blackeyed bitches.

(Throws)

MINGO

Six! Six!

SPORTING LIFE

Six to make!

JAKE

Six to make!

CROWN

(Produces rabbit's foot)

Kiss rabbit foot

and show these tinorns how to hit.

(Throws)

SPORTING LIFE

Crapped out, come to your pappy

(Crown brushes Sporting Life back)

ROBBINS

Crown too cock-eyed drunk to read 'em.

What the dice say, Bess?

BESS

Seven.

CROWN

I ain't drunk enough to read 'em.

That is the trouble. Ha ha, ha ha, ha ha!

Licker ain't strong enough.

Give me a pinch of happy dust, Sportin' Life.

(Sporting Life produces small paper from hat band)

BESS

Don't give him that stuff, Sportin' Life.

He's ugly drunk already.

CROWN

Pay him an' shut up.

(Takes paper from Sporting Life and inhales. Bess pays Sporting Life.)

PETER

Frien' an' dice an' happy dust

ain't meant to 'sociate...

You mens bes' go slow.

(Crown draws fist to Peter.)

JAKE

Leave Peter be, let him alone.

MINGO

He ain't mean no harm.

SPORTING LIFE

(Throwing)

Huh, seven! Huh, seven! Huh, seven! 'Leven come home,
Fido!

(Whistles, pulls pot in. All ante)

CROWN

God damn it, I ain't read 'em yet.

MEN

Crown cockeyed drunk, he can't tell dice from a watermelon;
Crown cockeyed drunk, he can't tell dice from wa--

CROWN

Shut up!

SPORTING LIFE

Six to make!

(Shoots again)

JIM

Seven!

MINGO

Crapped out!

JAKE

Seven, Seven!

Porgy shoots now.

PORGY

Oh, little stars, little stars,

Roll, roll, roll me some light,

(Throws)

'Leven little stars, come home, come home,

(Pulls in pot, all ante)

Roll dis poor beggar a sun an' a moon,

A sun an' a moon.

(Shoots)

MINGO

Li'l Joe.

JIM

Little Joe,

PORGY

Oh, no, my brother, that ain't little Joe.

They is the monin' and the evenin' stars. An' just you

watch 'em rise and shine for this poor beggar.

(Crown grabs his arm)

Turn me loose.

(Shoots)

JIM

Made 'em!

CROWN

Roll up that bastard's sleeve.

(Porgy pulls in pot, laughs, rolls up sleeve)

Well, you got them damn dice, conjer them.

PORGY

Boy, boy, boy, I'm a crap shootin' idiot.

(Rolls)

SPORTING LIFE and JAKE

Crapped out!

MINGO

Rolled out!

(Robbins takes up bones, shoots)

ROBBINS

Nine to make, come nine!

(Throws again)

Read 'em. Nine spot! Nine right!

(Sweeps up money, Crown seizes his wrist)

CROWN

Touch that money an' meet yo' Gawd!

ROBBINS

Take yo' hand off me, you lousy houn'. Han' me that brick
behin' you.

(Pulls out of Crown's grasp)

CROWN

Nobody's gettin' away with Crown's money. I'm goin' kill
dat bastard!

(Lunges at Robbins)

MINGO

Looks like trouble to me; He made his nine, he made his
nine.

MARIA

There's gonna be a fight, look out!

Hold him back, Somebody hold them back,

Crown got murder in his eye!

Somebody hold them back!

PORGY

Crown's drunk, Robbins bes' take care, take care,
Robbins take care. Look out Robbins!

JIM

Dat's right.
Some one will sure get hurt.

SPORTING LIFE

Robbins ain't got a chance wid Crown, he's too big.
(Crown and Robbins fight fiercely as crowd holds Serena back)

SERENA

Oh, stop them! Don't let them fight!
I warned him, oh! Won't somebody stop them,
Won't somebody stop them now!
Oh, stop them! etc.

BESS

Someone will surely get hurt, so stop, won't somebody stop
them! Come on Crown, stop it. Oh! I'm so afraid!
I'm so afraid! Stop Crown! stop dem, make 'em cut it out!

MARIA

Ain't you men got better sense? Such fools! Liquor always
make trouble; better put a stop to this fighting, it's awful,
it's simply awful! Someone stop the fight, he will surely

kill dat man!

PORGY

Crown is drunk, there's goin' to be some trouble.
Robbins, take care!
Oh, Lawd have mercy an' don' let Crown hurt Robbins!
This is de worst fight yet.

MINGO

Look out, be careful!
Someone is gonna get hurt!
He'll kill 'im! He'll kill 'im! Crown's had too much
Crown is like a debbil when he's drinkin' like a fool.
Stop!

SPORTING LIFE

Crown cock-eyed drunk, he don' know what he's doin'.
Yes sir, Crown has had a little but too much.
Crown's had too much, Crown is like a debbil etc.

JAKE

This looks like a real fight, Robbins done for.
Oh, Crown is actin very bad, bad, bad.
Come on, let's stop dem now, come on, let's stop dem!

Dis Crown is like a debbil etc.

WOMEN

Oh, stop them, someone will get hurt!
Why must people fight?
Crown is a bad, bad bizness when he's drunk!
Why mus' they fight, won' somebody please
goin' an' stop dem now!

MEN

Crown is drunk! Robbins got no chance,
oh Robbins got no chance!
Crown is a bad, bad bizness when he's drunk!
Something mighty bad is boun' to happen!
Hold dem back! Won't some one hol' dem back
some one hol'dem back!

(Crown throws Robbins down. They fight fiercely; Crown jerks out his cotton hook.)

WOMEN

Can't anybody make Crown stop,
Can't anybody make Crown stop?
Lawd, please make dem stop!

MEN

Robbins is gone, Yes, suh!
He's got no chance! No suh!
Lawd, please make dem stop!

(Suddenly Crown stabs Robbins with cotton hook. Robbins falls dead. Serena screams)

MINGO

Jesus, he killed him!

(Serena flings herself upon the body)

BESS

Wake up an' hit it out. You ain't got no time to lose.

CROWN

What the matter?

BESS

You done kill Robbins and the police will be comin'.
(She shakes him to his senses. The entire crowd disperses in various directions.)

CROWN

Where you goin' hide? They know you an' I pulls together.

BESS

Some man always willin' to take care of Bess.

CROWN

Well, get this: whoever he is, he's temporary. I'm comin'

back when the hell dies down.

BESS

All right, only get out now. Here, take this.

(She takes money from stocking and gives it to him. He disappears. Bess runs - senses Sporting Life behind her)

That you, Sportin' Life?

SPORTING LIFE

Sure, and I's the only friend you got left.

BESS

For Gawd's sake, give me a touch of happy dust.

I shakin' so I can hardly stand. (He gives her powder)

SPORTING LIFE

Listen, I'll be goin' to New York soon. I'll hide you out and take you with me. Why you an' me will make a swell team.

BESS

I ain't come to that yet.

SPORTING LIFE

Well, the cops ain't goin' find me here for no woman.

(Slinks out. Bess looks for shelter, knocks at doors. They are locked or slammed in her face.)

MARIA

You done bring trouble enough, get out before the police come.

BESS

You wouldn't have a heart and let me in?

MARIA

Not till hell freeze!

BESS

Who live over there?

MARIA

That's Porgy, he ain't no use to your kind, he's a cripple and a beggar.

BESS

Come on, Please let me in!

(Bess moves toward the gate. As she reaches it, police whistle sends her back. She turns back, frightened - Porgy's door opens. Porgy stretches out hand to her. Shuddering away from Serena and the body, she goes to Porgy's door. Porgy reaches for Bess' hand. She enters his room)

CURTAIN

ACT I
Scene 2

SERENA'S ROOM

WOMAN

Where is brudder Robbins?

ALL

He's a-gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone.

WOMAN

I seen him in de mornin' wid his work clo'es on

ALL

But he's gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone.

MAN

An' I seen him in the noontime straight and tall,
But death acome awalkin' in the evenin' fall

ALL

An' he's gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone.

WOMAN

An' death touched Robbins wid a silver knife

ALL

An' he's gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone.

MAN

An' he's sittin' in de garden by de tree of life.

ALL

An' he's gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone.
Robbins is gone, gone, gone, etc.

SERENA

Who's dat acomin' climbin' up my steps?

MARIA

It's Porgy, an' Bess is ahelplin' him.

SERENA

What's dat woman comin' here for?

(Porgy and Bess enter. Bess advances toward bier, money in hand)

SERENA

I don't need yo' money for to bury my man.

BESS

Dis ain't Crown's money. Porgy give me my money now.

SERENA

All right, then. You can put it in the saucer.

(Bess puts money in the saucer.)

WOMAN

Come on, sister, come on, brudder,
Fill up the saucer till it overflow,

GROUP

Overflow, overflow.
Fill up de saucer till it overflow.

JAKE

Yes, my Jesus, overflow.

FIRST WOMAN

'Cause de Lawd will meet you,
Yes, de Lawd will meet you at the court-house do'-

ALL

Court-house do', court-house do',
De Lawd will meet you at the court-house do'.

JAKE

Yes, my Jesus, court-house do'.

PETER

How de saucer stand now, my sister?

CHORUS

Oh, he's gone, gone, gone, etc.

SERENA

Fourteen dollars an' fifty cent.

MARIA

Dat's a-comin' on, sister, you can bury him soon.

SERENA

What am I goin' to do if I ain' got the money?

PORGY

Gawd got plenty of money for de saucer.

SERENA

Bless de Lord!

PORGY

An' he goin' to soffen dese people heart for
to fill de saucer till he spill all over.

ALL

Amen, my Jesus!

PORGY

De Lawd will provide a grave for his chillen,

CLARA

Bless the Lord!

PORGY

An' he got comfort for de widder.

ALL

Oh, my Jesus!

PORGY

An' he goin' feed his fadderless chillen.

ALL

Yes Lawd, Truth Lawd!

PORGY

An' he goin' raise dis poor sinner up out of de grave.

JAKE

Allelujah!

PORGY

An' set him in de shinin' seat ob de righteous.

SERENA

Amen, my Jesus!

ALL

Overflow, overflow,
Oh fill up de saucer till it overflow,
Everybody helpin' now - sendin' our brudder to heaven,
Lawd, Oh Lawd, send down your angels!
Robbins is rising to heaven!

PORGY

Oh, sufferin' Jesus! You knows right from wrong.
You knows Robbins was a good man, an' now he's weary
an' he's goin' home. Reach down yo' lovin' han' an' take our
brudder to yo' bosom. Thank you, Lawd, Bless you Lawd.
Lawd will fill de saucer, over, overflow, Oh!

ALL

Overflow, overflow, Oh Lawd will fill de saucer,
Ev'rybody helpin' now etc.
Robbins is risin' to heaven! etc. -till it
overflow, Oh!

(Detective enters with policeman)

DETECTIVE

Um! A saucer-burial setup, I see. You're his widow?

SERENA

Yes, suh.

DETECTIVE

He did not leave any burial insurance?

SERENA

No, boss, he didn't leave nuttin'.

DETECTIVE

Well, see to it he's buried tomorrow.

(To Peter)

You killed Robbins an' I'm going to hang you for it!

LILY

He ain't don um!

PETER

What he say?

LILY

He say you kill Robbins.

DETECTIVE

Come along now!

PETER

'Fore Gawd, boss, I ain't never done um!

DETECTIVE

Who did it, then? You heard me, who did it?

PETER

Crown done it, boss. I done see him do it.

DETECTIVE

You're sure you saw him?

PETER

I swear to Gawd, boss, I was right there beside him.

DETECTIVE

(Laughs)

That's easy. I thought as much.

(To Porgy)

You. You saw it too. I don't want to have to put the law on you. Look at me, you damn dummy!

PORGY

I don't know nuttin' 'bout it, boss.

DETECTIVE

That's your room in the corner, ain't it?

PORGY

Yes, boss, dat's my room.

DETECTIVE

The door opens on the court, don't it?

PORGY

Yes, boss, my door opens on the court.

DETECTIVE

An' yet you didn't see or hear anything?

PORGY

I don't know nuttin' 'bout it, boss. I been asleep inside, and my door been closed.

DETECTIVE

You're a damn liar.

(Indicating Peter)

He saw the killing; take him along and lock him up as a material witness.

POLICEMAN

Come along, uncle.

PETER

I ain't done it, boss.

MARIA

How long you goin' lock him up for?

POLICEMAN

Till we catch Crown.

PORGY

I reckon Crown done loose now in de palmetto thickets, an' dere ain' no rope long enough to hang him.

DETECTIVE

Then the old man's out of luck. Remember, you've got to bury that body tomorrow or the board of health will take

him an' turn him over to the medical students. Come on, get the old man in the wagon.

PETER

I ain't never done nuttin', boss.

(They drag him off)

I swear to Gawd I ain' never done nuttin'.

(The sound of the wagon's bell fades away in the distance)

PORGY

I can't puzzle this thing out. Peter was a good man, but dat lousy Crown was a killer and forever gettin' into trouble.

JAKE

That's the truth, brother.

PORGY

And there go Peter to be lock up like a thief.

JAKE

Like a thief.

PORGY

An' here be Robbins with his wife and his fadderless chillen, an' Crown done gone his ways drinkin', gamblin', swearin', to do the same thing over and over somewheres else.

ALL

Gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone.

SERENA

My man's gone now,

Ain't no use alistenin'

For his tired foot-steps

Climbin' up de stairs. Ah!

Ole Man Sorrow

Come to keep me comp'ny,

Whisperin' beside me

When I say my prayers. Ah-

Ain't dat I min' workin'.

Work an' me is travellers

Journeyin' togedder

To de promise land.

But Ole Man Sorrow's

Marchin' all de way wid me

Tellin' me I'm ole now

Since I lose my man.

WOMENSERENA

Since I lose my man.

WOMENSERENA

Ole Man Sorrow sittin' by de fireplace,
Lyin' all night long by me in de bed.
Tellin' me de same thing mornin', noon an' eb'nin'
That I'm all alone now since my man is dead. Ah-
Since my man is dead!

ALL
Ah -

SERENA
Ah -

UNDERTAKER
(Entering)
How de saucer stan' now, my sister?

SERENA
There ain't but fifteen dollar.

UNDERTAKER
Hum! Can't bury him for fifteen dollar.

JAKE
He got to be buried tomorrow or the board of health will
take him and give him to the medical students.

UNDERTAKER
(Kindly)
Life is hard, brudder, but we all got to live.
It cos' money for to bury a grown man.

SERENA
Oh, for Gawd sake, bury him in the grave yard...Don't let
the students take him to cut up an' scatter. I goin' to work
on Monday, an' I swear to Gawd, I goin' pay you ev'ry cent.

UNDERTAKER
All right, sister, wit the box an' one carriage, it'll cos' me
more'n twenty-five, but I'll see you through.

PORGY
Jesus bless you, my brudder.

UNDERTAKER
You can all be ready tomorrow mornin'. It's a long trip to
the cemetery.
(He leaves)

GROUP
Oh, he's gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone

BESS

(Suddenly jumping up)

Oh, the train is at the station

An' you better get on board

'Cause it's leavin' today,

ALL

Leavin' today, leavin' today.

BESS

Oh, the train is at the station

An' you better get on board,

'Cause it's leavin' today,

'An it's headin' for The Promise Lan'.

ALL

Headin' for the Promise' Lan'.

BESS

Oh, we're leavin' for the Promise Lan'

Leavin' for the Promise' Lan'.

BESS AND ALL

Keep that drivin' wheel arollin', rollin'

Let it roll. . .

Until we meet our brudder in the Promise' Lan'.

BESS

Oh, I got my ticket ready

an' de time is gettin' short

'Cause we're leavin' today,

BESS AND ALL

Leavin' today, leavin' today.

BESS

Oh, I got my ticket ready

an' de time is gettin' short

'Cause we're leavin' today,

an' we're headed for the Promise Lan'.

ALL

...headed for the Promise Lan'

BESS

Oh, we're leavin' for the Promise Lan'

Leavin' for the Promise' Lan'

BESS AND ALL

Keep that drivin' wheel arollin', rollin`
Let it roll...
Until we meet our brudder in the Promise' Lan'.
ALL
Oh, we're leavin' for the Promise' Lan'
an' you better get on board
all you sinners, oh, you better get on board.
'Cause we're leavin' etc..
'Cause we're leavin' for the Lan', Oh!
Keep that drivin' wheel arollin', rollin`
'til we meet our brudder in the Promise' Lan'.

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

Scene 1

CATFISH ROW

(Jake and fishermen repair netting, swaying to the rhythm of a rowing song.)

JAKE

Oh, I'm agoin' out to the Blackfish banks
No matter what de wedder say,
An' when I say I'm goin' I means goin'
An' I'm leavin' at de break o' day.

JAKE AND MEN

It take a long pull to get there, huh!
It take a long pull to get there, huh!
It take a long pull to get there,
But I'll anchor in the Promise' Lan'
In de Promise' Lan'.

JAKE

An' Lawdy, if I meet Mister Hurricane
an' Hurricane tell me no
I'll take ole Mister Hurricane by the pants
an' I'll throw him in de jailhouse do'.

JAKE AND MEN

It take a long pull to get there, huh!
It take a long pull to get there, huh!
It take a long pull to get there,
But I'll anchor in the Promise' Lan'.
In de Promise' Lan'.

JAKE

I got a blister on my settin' down place
I got a blister in my han'
But I'm goin' row dis little boat, trust me Gawd,

Till I anchor in de Promise' Lan'.

JAKE AND MEN

It takes a long pull to get there, huh!
It takes a long pull to get there, huh!
It takes a long pull to get there,
But I'll anchor in de Promise' Lan'.

ANNIE

Mus' be you mens forgot about de picnic. Ain' you knows
dat de p'rade start up de block at ten o'clock?

JAKE

That's right, mens. Turn out tomorrow mornin' an' we'll
push de Seagull clean to de Blackfish banks 'fore we
wet de anchor.

CLARA

Jake, you ain't plannin' to take de Seagull to de Blackfish
banks, is you? It's time for de September storms.

JAKE

How you think dat boy goin' get de college education, if I
don' work hard an' make money?

PORGY

(At window, laughing)
Oh, I got plenty o' nuttin',
An' nuttin's plenty fo' me.
I got no car, got no mule, I got no misery.
De folks wid plenty o' plenty
Got a lock on dey door.
'Fraid somebody's agoin' to rob 'em
While dey's out amakin' more.
What for?
I got no lock on de door,
(Dat's no way to be)
Dey can steal de rug from de floor..
Dat's okeh wid me,
'Cause de things dat I prize
Like de stars in de skies
All are free.
Oh, I got plenty o' nuttin',
An' nuttin's plenty fo' me,
I got my gal, got my song,
Got Hebben de whole day long!
No use complainin'!
Got my gal, got my Lawd, got my song.

WOMEN

Porgy change since dat woman come to live with he.

SERENA

How he change!

ALL

He ain't cross with chillen no more, an' ain't you hear how
he an' Bess all de time singin' in their room?

MARIA

I tells you dat cripple's happy now.

CHORUS

Happy.

PORGY

I got plenty o'nuttin',

An' nuttin's plenty fo' me.

I got de sun, got de moon, got de deep blue sea.

De folks wid plenty o' plenty,

Got to pray all de day.

Seems wid plenty you sure got to worry

How to keep de debble away, away.

I ain't afrettin' 'bout hell

Till de time arrive.

Never worry long as I'm well,

Never one to strive to be good, to be bad,

What de hell, I is glad I's alive.

Oh, I got plenty o' nuttin'

An' nuttin's plenty fo' me.

I got my gal, got my song,

Got Hebben de whole day long.

No use complainin',

Got my gal, got my Lawd, got my song!

CHORUS

Got his gal, got his Lawd.

MARIA

Lissen there, what I tells you.

SERENA

Go 'long with you, dat woman ain't de kin'

for to make a cripple happy.

It take a killer like Crown to hol' her down.

SPORTING LIFE

(saunters over to Maria's table)

(Maria seizes his hand and blows white powder from his palm.)

What you t'ink you doin'?

Dat stuff cos' money.

MARIA

Lissen here, I ain' say nuttin',

no matter how drunk you get dese boys

roun' here on rotgut whiskey,
but nobody ain' goin peddle happy dust 'roun' my shop.
Does you hear what I say?

SPORTING LIFE

Oh, come on now, ole lady,
le's you an' me be fren'.

MARIA

(Grabs Sporting Life by the throat and picks up carving knife.)

Frien' wid you low-life, hell, no!

(Threatening him)

I hates yo' struttin' style,

Yes sir, and yo' god damn silly smile

an' yo' ten cent di'mons an' yo' fi'cent butts.

Oh, I hates yo' guts.

Somebody's got to carve you up to set these people free

An' de writin' on the wall says it's a goin' to be me.

Some night when you is full of gin an'don't know I's about,

I'm goin' to take you by de tail an' turn you inside out.

Frien wid you, low-life! hell, no!

Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! I's figgerin to break yo' bones

Yes sir, one by one.

An' then I's goin' to carve you up an' hang you in de sun.

I'll feed yo' meat to buzzards an' give'em belly aches.

An' take yo' bones to Kittiwah to pizen rattlesnakes,

Frien's wid you, low-life?

I fears I mus' decline!

I sooner cuts mah own throat 'fore I calls you a frien' of mine!

(Sporting Life runs off. Lawyer Frazier enters. Maria sees him and follows after him)

MARIA

Mornin', Lawyer, lookin' for somebody?

FRAZIER

Porgy live here, don't he?

MARIA

He sho' do, right over there's his room.

Here, Porgy, here's Lawyer Frazier to see you.

FRAZIER

Mornin', Porgy.

PORGY

Mornin', Lawyer.

FRAZIER

Ain't that Crown's Bess in yo' room?

PORGY

No, sir, she ain't, she's Porgy's Bess..

FRAZIER

Ah ha, ah ha, Porgy's Bess, eh? Den I guess she'll be wantin' divorce.

PORGY

Huh?

FRAZIER

Ef de woman livin' wid you now, she got to have divorce from Crown or else it ain't legal.

(Takes document and shows it to Porgy)

PORGY

How much dat t'ing cost?

FRAZIER

One dollar. Dat is, if there ain' no complication.

PORGY

Bess, you likes to have divorce?

BESS

What you think, Porgy?

PORGY

I'm agoin' to buy you a divorce.

(Hands Frazier money)

FRAZIER

Wait a minute, it ain't legal yet.

Yo' name?

ALL

Bess!

FRAZIER

Yo' age?

BESS

Twenty year.

ALL

Lord, Lord, listen what she say.

Dat girl's thirty if she's a day!

FRAZIER

You desire to be divorce from dat man Crown?

ALL
Sho' she do, sho' she do,
Yes suh, yes suh, sho' she do!

FRAZIER
I'm askin' you.

BESS
Yes, boss, dat's true.

FRAZIER
Address the court a "Yo' honor."

ALL
Yes, yo' honor. Yes, yo' honor.
Yes, yo' honor. Yes, yo' honor.

FRAZIER
When was you an' Crown marry?

BESS
I don't rightly remember, yo' honor.

FRAZIER
One yeah, five yeah, ten yeah, what?

LILY
Dat gal ain' never marry!

FRAZIER
Ah, dat's a complication!

ALL
Dat's a complication. Dat's a complication, Lord, Lord --

ONE MAN
Dat is a complication.

PORGY
You can't sell her divorce, gimme back my dollah!

(Everybody laughs)

FRAZIER
'Course I sells divorce. You got no right to laugh, but it
take expert to divorce woman what ain't marry, an' it cos'
you, ahem, a dollar an' a half.

BESS
Don't pay him, Porgy. Don't let him take you in.

FRAZIER

All right, go on livin' in sin.

(Porgy counts out money and gives it to Frazier, who signs and seals paper and hands it to Bess)
Good day to you, Missis Porgy. Only dollar an' a half to
change from woman to lady.

ALL

Woman to lady, woman to lady, Lord, Lord, woman to lady!

SCIPIO

Dey's a Buckra comin'.

ANNIE

What he say?

SERENA

W'ite gen'man.

ARCHDALE

(Entering the courtyard)

Boy. Come here, boy!

I'm looking for a man by the name of Porgy.

Which is his room?

Come, don't you know Porgy?

SCIPIO

No, suh.

ARCHDALE

(goes to Clara)

I'm looking for a man named Porgy;

Can you direct me to his room?

CLARA

Anybody here know a man name Porgy?

ARCHDALE

Come. I'm a friend of his, Mister Archdale

I have good news for him.

SERENA

Go long and wake Porgy. Can't you tell
folks when you see em?

CLARA

Oh you mean Porgy!

I ain' understan' what name you say.

MINGO

Oh, de gen'man mean Porgy.

JAKE

Dat's him, boss, dat's ole Porgy. Glad to serve you boss.

CLARA

Wake up Porgy, a gen'man come to see you.

PORGY

How you does, boss?

ARCHDALE

Good morning. I've come to tell you about your friend,
Peter, who got locked up on account of the Robbins murder

PORGY

How you come to care, boss?

ARCHDALE

His folks used to belong to my fam'ly
and I just heard he was in trouble.

PORGY

He sho' got plenty of trouble.

ARCHDALE

Well, you can tell all of Peter's friends
I'll go his bond. He'll soon be back home again.

PORGY

Thank you, boss. Gawd bless you, boss, bless you, bless you!

FRAZIER

Good mornin' Mister Archdale.

ARCHDALE

Good morning Frazier, hope you're not selling any more
divorces.

PORGY

He jus' made a lady out of Bess for a dollar an' a half.

ARCHDALE

(reading)

I, Simon Frazier, hereby divorce Bess an Crown, for the
charge of one dollar an' fifty cents cash, signed Simon
Frazier.... Look here, Frazier, this divorce mill must close
or I'll have to put you in jail. I won't report you this time.
Good morning.

FRAZIER

Gawd bless you, boss. Gawd bless you.

PORGY

Good mornin', Mister Archdale.

(At this point o great bird flies low, frightening everybody)

PORGY

Look out, dat's a buzzard!

CHORUS

Drive um off, don't let um light, chase away dat buzzard'

ARCHDALE

What is it, what's the matter?

PORGY

Boss, dat bird mean trouble.

Once de buzzard fold his wing an' light over yo' house,
all yo' happiness done dead.

Buzzard keep on flyin' over, take along yo' shadow.

Ain' nobody dead dis mornin'

Livin's jus' begun.

Two is strong where one is feeble;

man an' woman livin', workin',

Sharin' grief an' sharin' laughter,

An' love like Augus' sun.

Trouble, is dat you over yonder

lookin' lean an' hungry?

Don' you let dat buzzard keep you

hangin' round my do'.

Ain' you heard de news this mornin'?

Step out, brudder, hit de gravel;

Porgy who you used to feed on,

Don' live here no mo'

Ha, ha, ha, ha! Buzzard, on yo' way!

Ole age, what is you anyhow,

nuttin' but bein' lonely.

Pack yo' things an' fly from here,

Carry grief an' pain.

Dere's two folks livin' in dis shelter

Eatin', sleepin', singin', prayin'.

Ain' no such thing as loneliness.

An' Porgy's young again.

PORGY AND CHORUS

Buzzard, keep on flyin',

Porgy's young again.

(All move off to their various rooms, leaving Bess alone. Sporting Life enters, sneaks up to Bess)

SPORTING LIFE

'Lo, Bess, goin' to picnic?

BESS

No, guess I'll stay home.

SPORTING LIFE

Picnics is all right for these small town suckers, but we is use to the high life, you know. You an' me, we understands each other. I can't see for the life of me what you is hangin' roun' this place for; why, with your looks, Bess, an' your way with the boys, there's big money for you, an' me in New York.

BESS

I can't remember ever meetin' a nothin' what I likes less than I does you.

SPORTING LIFE

Oh, come on, now, how about a little touch of happy dus' for old time sake?

BESS

I's through with that stuff!

SPORTING LIFE

Come on, give me yo' han'.

(Porgy opens door and listens unobserved)

BESS

I tells you, I's through!

SPORTING LIFE

Just a pinch, not enough to hurt a flea.

BESS

No, no, I done give up dope.

SPORTING LIFE

Tell that to somebody else, nobody ever gave up happy dus'.

(Porgy reaches out and seizes Sporting Life's wrist)

Leggo, you dam' cripple! Gawd, what a grip for a piece of a man!

PORGY

Sportin' Life, you keep away from my woman, or I'll break yo' damn neck!

SPORTING LIFE

I'd like to see a lousy cripple, like you, break my neck.

PORGY

If I get my hands on you once more, you'll see quick enough.

BESS

Go 'long now.

SPORTING LIFE

All right, yo' men frien's come an' they go, but remember
ole Sportin' Life an' de happy dus' here all along.

PORGY

Get out, you rat, you louse, you buzzard!

(Sporting Life scuttles off. Jake and Clara come out dressed for the picnic)

JAKE

Honey, we sure goin' strut our stuff today.
Be sure to come 'long to de picnic, Bess.

(They leave. Bess and Porgy are left alone)

PORGY

Bess, you is my woman now, you is, you is!
An' you mus' laugh an' sing an' dance for two instead of one.
Want no wrinkle on yo' brow, no-how.
Because de sorrow of de past is all done done.
Oh, Bess, my Bess,
De real happiness is jes' begun.

BESS

Porgy, I's yo' woman now, I is, I is!
An' I ain' never goin' nowhere 'less you shares de fun.
Dere's no wrinkle on my brow, no how,
But I ain' goin'! You hear me sayin',
If you ain' goin', wid you I'm stayin'.
Porgy, I's yo' woman now, I's yours forever
Mornin' time an' evenin' time an' summer time
an' winter time.

PORGY

Mornin' time an' evenin' time an' summer time
an' winter time, Bess, you got yo' man.

PORGY

Bess, you is my woman now an' forever.
Dis life is jes' begun.
Bess, we two is one now an' forever.
Oh, Bess, don' min' dose women.
You got yo' Porgy, you loves yo' Porgy
I knows you means it, I seen it in yo' eyes, Bess.
We'll go swingin' through de years a-singin'
Hmmm...Mornin' time an' evenin' time an' summer time
an' winter time.
My Bess, my Bess, from dis minute I'm tellin' you,

I keep dis vow;
Oh, my Bessie, we's happy now,
We is one now.

BESS

Porgy, I's yo woman now, I is, I is!
An' I ain' never goin' nowhere
'Less you shares de fun.
Dere's no wrinkle on my brow, no how
But I ain' goin'! You hear me sayin',
If you ain' goin', wid you I'm stayin'.
Porgy, I's yo woman now! I's yours forever.
Mornin' time an' evenin' time an' summer time an' winter
time, hmmmhhh.
Oh, my Porgy, my man Porgy,
From dis minute I'm tellin' you, I keep dis vow;
Porgy, I's yo' woman now.

(Catfish Row crowd comes out attired in their lodge regalia, singing and dancing, ready for the picnic.)

ALL

Oh, I can't sit down.
Got to keep agoin' like de flowin' of a song.
Oh, I can't sit down
Guess I'll take my honey an' her sunny smile along.
Today I is gay an' I's free
Jes' abubblin', nothin' troublin' me.
Oh, I's gwine to town
I can't sit down.

Happy feelin', in my bones astealin'
No concealin' dat it's picnic day.
Sho's is dandy, got de licker handy.
Me an' Mandy, we is on de way
'Cause dis is picnic day.
Oh I can't sit down
Got to keep ajumpin' to de thumpin' of de drum!
Oh, I can't sit down.
Full of locomotion like an ocean full of rum!
Today I is gay an' I's free.
Jes' abubblin', nothin' troublin' me!
Oh, I's gwine to town
I can't, jes' can't, sit down!
(Crowd leaves. Maria goes to Bess)

MARIA

What's de matter wid you, sister? Ain't you know you goin'
be late for de picnic?

BESS

I stayin' with porgy.

MARIA

Sho' you goin'. Ev'rybody goin'. You got to help me wid my basket. Come now, where's yo' hat?

(Gets her hat from Porgy's room)

What's dis talk about stayin' home when ev'rybody goin' to de picnic?

BESS

Porgy, I hates to go an' leave you all alone.

PORGY

Bess, my honey, I so glad to have you go, I been wantin' you to be so happy here in Catfish Row.

BESS

Yes, Porgy, I know.

PORGY

Go, chile, go.

MARIA

Come on, chile! Get into dese clo'es. You stay roun' here an' you'll die of de lonesome blues.

Come on now, hurry up. We'll be late for dat boat.

BESS

Goodbye, Porgy.

PORGY

Goodbye, honey.

(Maria and Bess leave)

BESS

Goodbye, Porgy goodbye.

PORGY

Oh, I got plenty o' nuttin',

An' nuttin's plenty fo' me,

I got my gal, got my Lawd, got Hebben de whole day long.

Got my gal, got my Lawd, got my song!

CURTAIN

ACT II

Scene 2

KITTIWAH ISLAND

(General gaiety-all well-fed-some few, well-liquored. Some dancing.)

ALL

I ain' got no shame doin' what I like to do!

I ain' got no shame doin' what I like to do!

Sun ain' got no shame; moon ain' got no shame.

So I ain' got no shame, doin' what I like to do!!

So I ain' got no shame, doin' what I like to do!!

Ha da da, Ha da da, etc.

SPORTING LIFE

It ain't necessarily so,

SPORTING LIFE AND CHORUS

It ain't necessarily so.

SPORTING LIFE

De t'ings dat yo' li'ble

To read in de Bible,

It ain't necessarily so.

Li'l David was small, but oh my!

SPORTING LIFE AND CHORUS

Li'l David was small, but oh my!

SPORTING LIFE

He fought big Goliath

Who lay down an' dieth,

Li'l David was small, but oh my!

SPORTING LIFE AND CHORUS

Wadoo-Zim bam boodle-oo,

Hoodle ah da wa da - Scatty wah.

SPORTING LIFE

Yeah! Oh, Jonah, he lived in de whale,

SPORTING LIFE AND CHORUS

Oh, Jonah, he lived in de whale

SPORTING LIFE

Fo' he made his home in

Dat fish's abdomen.

Oh, Jonah, he lived in de whale.

Li'l Moses was found in a stream.

SPORTING LIFE AND CHORUS

Li'l Moses was found in a stream

SPORTING LIFE

He floated on water

Till Ole Pharaoh's daughter

She fished him, she says, from dat stream.

SPORTING LIFE AND CHORUS

Wa-dooZim bam boodle-oo,

Hoodle ah da wa - Scatty wah.

SPORTING LIFE

Yeah! It ain't necessarily so,

SPORTING LIFE AND CHORUS

It ain't necessarily so,

SPORTING LIFE

Dey tell all you chillun
De debble's a villun
But 'tain't necessarily so.
To get into Hebben,
Don' snap for a sebben!
Live clean. Look at me! Don' have no fault.
Oh, I takes dat gospel
Whenever it's pos'ble,
But wid a grain of salt.
Methus'lah lived nine hundred years,

SPORTING LIFE AND CHORUS

Methus'lah lived nine hundred years,

SPORTING LIFE

Say, but who calls dat livin'
When no gal'll give in
To no man what's nine hundred years?
I'm preachin' dis sermon to show
It ain't nessa, ain't nessa, ain't nessa, ain't nessa

SPORTING LIFE AND CHORUS

Ain't necessarily so.

SPORTING LIFE AND CHORUS

I'm preachin' dis sermon to show
It ain't nessa, ain't nessa, ain't nessa, ain't nessa
Ain't necessarily so.

SERENA

(breaking into circle)
Shame on all you sinners.
You call yourselves Church-members,
you goes on a decent picnic of
The Sons an' Daughters of Repent Ye Saith the Lord.
An' when the Christians turn their back
you start behavin' like Sodom an' Gomorrah.
It's a Gawd's wonder de Lord don't sen' His livin' fire
to burn you offen de face of de earth.
An you, Jake, always so loudmouth at church-meeting,
Tell me when did you start workin' for de devil?
Take them baskets an' get on de boat.
all you wicked chillen of de devil!
(Steamboat whistle sounds in the distance)
Hear what I tell you, It's high time you was goin'.

(Calls to Maria)

You bes' hurry up, you goin' miss dat boat.

MARIA

If dat boat go without me,
there's gonna be some blue lightning
in Catfish Row when I gets home.

(Boat whistles)

Hey there! Hold yo' holt. I's acomin!

(Boat whistles)

Hurry up, Bess! Dat boat's gettin' de whoopin' cough.

(Bess enters, hurrying after Maria)

CROWN

(calls from thicket)

Bess!

BESS

Crown!

CROWN

You know very well dis Crown.

I seen you lan' an' I been
waitin' all day for see you.

I mos' dead on this damn island.

BESS

You ain' looks mos' dead, you bigger'n ever.

CROWN

Oh, I got plenty to eat, bird egg, oyster an' such.

But I mos' dead of the lonesome
wid not one Gawd'person to swap a word wid.
Lord! I's glad you come.

BESS

I can't stay, Crown, or de boat'll go without me.

CROWN

Damn dat boat! Got any happy dus' wid you?

BESS

No, Crown, no mo' happy dus'.
I done give up dope, an' besides, Crown,
I got something for to tell you.

CROWN

You bes'lissen to what I gots to tell you.
I waitin' here till de cotton begin comin' in.
Den libbin 'll be easy.
Johnny'll hide you an' me on de ribber boat

fur as Savannah. Who you libbin' wíd now?

BESS

I livin' wid de cripple Porgy.

CROWN

Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.

You sho'got funny tas' in men, but dat's yo' business.

I ain' care who you takes up wid while I's away.

But membuh, what I tol' you. He's temporary.

I reckon it'll be just a couple ob weeks now 'fore I comes for you.

BESS

Crown, I got something to tell you.

CROWN

What dat?

BESS

I...I livin' wid Porgy now, an' I livin' decent.

CROWN

You hear what I tol' you,

I say in a couple ob weeks I's comin' for you,

an' you is goin' tote fair, lessen you wants to meet yo' Crowd

you gets dat?

(Boot whistles)

BESS

Take yo' han's off me, I goin' miss dat boat.

CROWN

You tellin' me dat you'd rather have dat cripple dan Crown?

BESS

It's like dis, Crown, I's the only woman Porgy ever had,

an' I's thinkin' now,

how it will be tonight

when all these others gets 'em go back to Catfish Row.

He'll be sittin' an' watchin' the big front gate,

acountin' 'em off, waitin' for Bess.

An' when the las' woman goes home to her man

an' I ain' there. . .

(Crown laughs)

Lemme go, Crown! You can get plenty other women.

CROWN

What I wants wid other woman?

I gots a woman an' dat's you, see!

BESS

Oh... What you want wid Bess?

She's gettin' ole now;

Take a fine young gal
For to satisfy Crown.
Look at this chest
An' look at these arms you got.
You know how it always been with me,
These five years I been yo' woman,
You could kick me in the street,
Then when you wanted me back,
You could whistle, an' there I was
Back again, lickin' yo' hand.
There's plenty better lookin' gal than Bess.

Can' you see, I'm with Porgy,
Now and forever
I am his woman, he would die without me.
Oh, Crown, won't you let me go to my man, to my man.
He is a cripple an' needs my love, all my love.
What you want wid Bess? Oh, let me go to my man. . .

CROWN
What I wants wid other woman,
I gots a woman, yes,
An' dat is you, yes, dat is you, yes,
I need you now an' you're mine jus' as long as I want you.
No cripple goin' take my woman from me.
You got a man tonight an' that is Crown, yes, Crown, yes
Crown.
You're my woman, Bess, I'm tellin' you, now I'm your man.
(Pressing her very close)

BESS
What you want with Bess?
(Boat whistles)
Lemme go, Crown dat boat, it's goin' wi• out me!

CROWN
You ain't goin' nowhere!

BESS
(Weakening)
Take yo' hands off me, I say, yo' hands, yo' hands, yo hands.
(Crown kisses her passionately)

CROWN
I knows you' ain' change - wid you and me it always be the
same. Git in dat thicket.
(Bess backs into woods; Crown follows.)

CURTAIN

ACT II
Scene 3

CATFISH ROW

The cocrrt before dawn. Bells herald the new day.
Fishermen loll about sleepily.

JAKE

Honey, dat's all de breakfast I got time for. It's gettin' late,
the weather's fine. I'm on my way. Come on, you fishermens,
it's time to trabble.

NELSON

All right, Jake.

JIM

All ready, Jake, we bes' be off.

MARIA

Goodbye, boys.

JAKE

Goodbye, Maria.

NELSON

It looks to me like it goin' storm today.

JAKE

Don't you know dat ain' de way to talk 'fore my woman.
So long, Clara, gangway for de Sea Gull.
(Kisses Clara)

JAKE AND MEN

It take a long pull to get there, huh!
It take a long pull to get there, huh!
It take a long pull to get there, but
I'll anchor in de Promise' Lan'
In de Promise' Lan'.

(Group continues singing as they go off)

BESS

(Deliriously...in Porgy's room)

Take yo' han's off me, I say. Yo' han's, yo' han's, yo' han's!

SERENA

She still out of her head.

BESS

Eighteen mile to Kittiwah, eighteen mile to trabble,
Lord, what a long road, ain' nobody to help me.

Ain' nobody to help me!

MARIA

(seeing Peter enter courtyard)

Well, if it ain' ole Peter!

PETER

De white folks put me in
an' de white folks take me out
an' I ain' know yet what I done,
what I done, done, done. . .

BESS

Oh, there's a rattlesnake in dem bushes

Oh, Lord, ain' nobody to help me.

PETER

What's de matter?

MARIA

Porgy woman very sick more'n a week now;
she gone to the picnic ain' get los' in de jungle.
She ain' come home for two day.

PORGY

(Comes out)

I think dat maybe she goin' to sleep now; a whole week gone
now an' she ain' no better. Hello, Peter, welcome back home,
ole frien'.

PETER

I advise you to send her to de white folks hospital.

PORGY

Oh, Gawd, don' let 'em take Bess to the hospital!

SERENA

Hospital! Mus' be you is all forget how I pray Clara' baby
out of the convulsions. There ain' never been a sick person
or corpse in Catfish Row dat I has refused my prayers.

PORGY

Dat's right, sistuh, you pray over her.

SERENA

(kneeling)

Oh, doctor Jesus, who done trouble de water in de Sea of Gallerie.

PORGY

Amen!

SERENA

An' likewise who done cas' de devil out of de afflicted time
an' time again.

PORGY

Time an' time again.

PETER

Oh, my Jesus!

SERENA

Oh, doctor Jesus, what make you ain' lay yo' han' on dis po'
sister head?

LILY

Oh, my father!

SERENA

An' chase de devil out of her down a steep place into de sea
like you used to do time an' time again.

PORGY

Time an' time again. Oh, my Jesus!

SERENA

Lif' dis po' cripple up out of de dus'!

PORGY

Allelujah!

SERENA

An' lif' up his woman an' make her well time an' time again,
an' save us all for Jesus sake, Amen.

PORGY AND PETER

Amen.

SERENA

All right. Now, Porgy, Doctor Jesus done take de case.

By five o'clock dat woman goin' be well.

(It is now full morning and Catfish Row is full of activity with street vendors calling.)

STRAWBERRY WOMAN

Oh dey's so fresh an' fine

An' dey's jus' off de vine

Strawberries, strawberries, strawberries,

Oh, dey's so fresh an' fine

An' dey's just off de vine,

Strawberries, strawberries, strawberries,

PETER

Here come de honey man,

Yes mam, this de honey man.

WOMAN

Oh, honey man, honey man!

PETER

(Not hearing her, keeps walking)

You got honey in the comb.

Yes mam, I got honey in the comb.

WOMAN

Hey there! I wants some honey!

PETER

An' is yo' honey cheap?

ANNIE

Peter, honey man!

PETER

Yes mam, my honey very cheap,
here come de honey man.

ANNIE

Gawd amighty, I's jus' wasting my breath on you,
'Cause you ain' never goin' to hear no how.

CRAB MAN

I'm talkin' about devil crabs

I'm talkin' about devil crabs

I'm talkin' about de food I sells

She crab, she crab.

PORGY

On yo' way, brother.

CRAB MAN

Devil crab!

MARIA

Hey, crab man!

CRAB MAN

I'm talkin' about de food I sells

When I done talkin' about de food I sells

Talkin' about devil crab.

(Maria picks crab, counts out money, pays Crab mon,
who then leaves.)

Now I's talkin' about yo' pocketbook

I'm talkin' about devil crabs, she crab, she crab,

Devil crab, I'm talkin' about de food I sells.

(Bell chimes five times. - Looks at Porgy)

PORGY

Now de time, oh Gawd, now de time.

BESS

(Within the shanty)

Porgy, Porgy, dat you there, ain' it?

PORGY

Thank Gawd, thank Gawd!

(Bess appears in the doorway)

BESS

I lonesome here all by myself, it's hot in there, let me sit here with you in the cool.

PORGY

Oh, Bess! Bess!

BESS

I been sick, ain't I?

PORGY

You been very sick. But now I got you back, Bess.

BESS

How long I been sick?

PORGY

Over a week now. You come back from Kittiwah with eye like fireball, an' Maria get you into bed, an' you ain' know me.

(She sobs)

What de matter, Bess?

PORGY

I guess I ain' know nuttin' wid de fever, or I ain' come back at all.

PORGY

Dat's all right Honey, don't you worry, Honey, I know you been with Crown.

BESS

How you know?

PORGY

Gawd give cripple to understan' many things he ain' give strong men.

BESS

You ain' want me to go 'way?

PORGY

No, no, I ain' want you to go. How things stan' between
you an' Crown?

BESS

He's comin' for me when de cotton come to town.

PORGY

You goin'?

BESS

I tell 'im, yes.

Porgy, Gawd, man!

Why yo' muscle pull up like that?

It make me afraid.

PORGY

You ain' got nuttin' to be afraid of;

I ain' try to keep no woman what don't want to stay.

If you wants to go to Crown, Dat's for you to say.

BESS

I wants to stay here,

But I ain't worthy.

You is too decent to understan'.

For when I see him he hypnotize me.

When he take hold of me with his hot hand.

Someday I know he's coming back to call me.

He's goin' to handle me an' hold me so.

It's goin' to be like dyin', Porgy, deep inside me -

But when he calls, I know I have to go.

PORGY

If dere warn't no Crown, Bess, if dere was only jus' you an'

Porgy, what den?

BESS

I loves you, Porgy,

Don' let him take me,

Don' let him handle me an' drive me mad.

If you kin keep me,

I wants to stay here wid you forever,

An' I'd be glad.

PORGY

There, there, Bess, you don' need to be afraid no mo',

You's picked up happiness and laid yo' worries down.

You goin' to live easy, you goin' to live high.

You goin' to outshine every woman in dis town.

An' remember, when Crown come that's my business, Bess!

BESS

I loves you, Porgy,
Don' let him take me
Don' let him handle me
With his hot han'
If you kin keep me
I wants to stay here wid you forever.
I got my man.

PORGY

What you think I is, anyway,
To let dat dirty houn' dog steal my woman?
If you wants to stay wid Porgy, you goin' stay.
You got a home now, Honey, an' you got love.
So no mo' cryin', can't you understan'?
You goin' to go about yo' business, singin' 'cause
You got Porgy, you got a man.

(Clara enters)

MARIA

Why you been out on that wharf so long, Clara?
You got no cause to worry 'bout yo' man.
Dis goin' be a fine dây.

CLARA

I never see de water look so black.
It sits there waitin', holdin' its breath,
list'nin' for dat hurricane bell.

MARIA

Hurricane bell! Lawd chile, dere ain' goin' be no hurricane.
I's gettin' ole now an' I ain' hear dat bell
but fo' time in my life.

Go 'long to de baby now an' quiet down.

(The wind rises. Heads appear at windows and faces show terror. People pass, shouting warnings. The deep ominous clang of a bell is heard. It keeps striking. Wind increases- clouds deepen - People from court move about in terror.)

CLARA

(Falling in a faint)

Jake! Jake!

CURTAIN

ACT II

Scene 4

SERENA'S ROOM. STORM.

(Everyone huddles in fear from the tremendous storm outside. They try to drown out the storm with singing.)

SECOND SOPRANO SOL

On, Doctor Jesus, look down on me wit' pity.
Put Yo' lovin' arms thru de roof of dis house
an' lif' me to Yo' bosom till de storm is over.
Oh, Doctor Jesus, look down on me
Why is You angry wit' dis po' sinner?
Why is You cryin' dose tears,
an' mumblin' dat thunder
When I ain' got nuthin' but rev'rence in me heart for you,
Lawd.
Oh, Doctor Jesus, look down on me.
If You is lookin' down on me wit' disfavor
I ain' know what to do
'cause if worshippin' You ain' stoppin' dose tears an' dat
thunder,
Lawd, I ain' know jes' what to do, Lawd.
Oh, Doctor Jesus, look down on me I's beseechin' You
to look down on me wit' pity
an' I's hopin' You's about to put Yo' lovin' arms
thru de roof of dis house an' lif' me to Yo' bosom, Amen...

TENOR SOLO

Oh, Lawd above, we knows You can destroy,
But we also knows You can raise,
an' we's beseechin' You to raise Yo' fallen chillen.
Oh, Lawd above, You got de pow'r to feed us,
You got the pow'r to clothe us,
an' You can lead us out of de wilderness.
Yes Lawd, but we's not hungry now, an' we's got clo'es,
but we is askin' You to lead us out of de wilderness.
Oh, Lawd above, lead us out of de wilderness, into de
Golden Meadows an' de Silvery Streams.
Oh, Lawd above, we know You can destroy,
but we knows You can raise, too,
an' we's askin' You for Yo' assistance in dis time of storm;
an' thunder an' lightnin'.
Oh, Lawd above, we warrants Yo' assistance
an' we's beseechin' You to raise Yo' fallen chillen, Amen...

FIRST SOPRANO SOLO

Oh, Hev'nly Father, hab mercy on we,
look down wit' grace an' sympathy,
You whose po'chillen we is, show we how
You can protect Yo'chillen when dey is deserving.
Oh, Hev'nly Father, hab mercy on we
when de clouds an' de storms start raisin' hell upon dis earth.
We knows dat You can fix' em,
'cause You is de great fixer

Oh my Father fix dat Satan,
Tie up his hands an' his feet
An' t'row him back where he belong.
Oh, Hev'nly Father, hab mercy on we, 'cause we is Yo'
deservin' chillen. Amen.
Oh, Hev'nly Father, hab mercy on we wit' grace an' sympathy
an' understandin' of which we knows You got plenty.
Oh, my Lawd, Amen.

ALTO SOLO

Professor Jesus, teach Yo' ignorant chillen
how to combat de fires an' torments
of dat black visitation from below.
We leans on You Professor Jesus, what die on Calbery.
Dispense Yo' blessings on Yo' needful
An' Yo' grateful followers.
Cast away dose black clouds an' de darkness
an' show we de golden sunshine gleaming once again.
Professor Jesus, teach yo' ignorant chillen, cast away dose
black clouds etc.,
An' show we de golden sunshine
Shin' on de fields an' de meadows
an' de mountains an' de plains, Amen.

FIRST BASS SOLO

Oh, Captain Jesus, find it in Yo' heart to save us,
I's given You six chillen to add to Yo' legions,
my po' wife is now wid You three year dis October,
Oh, Captain Jesus, but we is seven left to tell
Dat Satan man where he get off at.
We has all lived sweetly an' sweetly
We is willin' to die for You.
Oh, Captain Jesus, we knows how sweetly You treats
Yo' soldiers, when You opens the gates for dem.
Oh, Captain Jesus, find it in Yo' heart
To save us worshippers
'Cause there is no truer followers of de Lawd
Den what's prayin' to You now.
Oh, Captain Jesus, we has all lived sweetly an' sweetly
We is willin' to die for You, Amen.

SECOND BASS SOLO

Oh, Father, what die on Calbery, we's dependin' on You
we's leanin' on You to ease the rocky way,
we's been trablin' de straight an' narrow path
Dat ends in glory.
Oh, Father, what die on Calbery, darkness has descended,
we all knows it's temporary, Lawd,
but' de sooner it disappears, de sooner we gets goin' to You,
Lawd.
Oh, Father, what die on Calbery,

maybe we is po' misable sinners,
but we certainly tries all de live long day
to follow Yo' teachings.

Lawd, Oh, Father, if we ain' been doin jus' what You is
wishin' us to do
it ain' because we ain' been tryin',
'Cause we is been tryin' to follow Yo' sacred teachin's
all de live long day, Amen.

CHORUS

Lawd, hab mercy.

ALL

Oh, de Lawd shake de Heavens an' de Lawd rock de groun'
Ah - An' where you goin' stand, my brudder an' my sister,
When de sky come atumblin' down.
Oh, de sun goin' to rise in de wes'

MAN

My Jesus.

ALL

An' de moon goin' to set in de sea -

WOMAN

My Saviour.

ALL

An' de stars goin' to bow befo' my Lawd, bow down befo'
My Lawd Who died on Calvarie.

Oh, de Lawd raise de water an' de hypocrite drown
An' where you goin' stand, etc.

PORGY

Clara, come sing wid us, sister, ain' you know, song make
you forget yo' trouble. An' lif' up dat burden of sorrow
offen yo' heart.

CLARA

I 'mos' lose my mind wid yo' singing only dat one song
over an' over since daylight yesterday.

SERENA

We got to be ready singin' praises to de Lawd when Gabriel
soun' dat trumpet an' de graveya'ds spew up de dead.

SPORTING LIFE

We had storm befo', I ain't so sure this is Judgment Day.

SERENA

Well, anyhow, it ain' no time fo' takin' no chances.

(There is a sudden burst of wind, lightning and thunder)

CLARA

(holding her baby close)

One of dese mornings you goin' to rise up singin',
Den you'll spread yo wings an' you'll take de sky,
But till dat morning dere's a nothin' can harm you

Wid Daddy an' Mammy standin' by.

CHORUS

Lawd hab mercy on our soul.

Oh, de sun goin' to rise in de wes' etc.

PORGY

What make you so still, Bess,
You ain' sayin' nuttin'
You ain' afraid, is you Honey?

BESS

I jus' thinkin', an' you know what I's thinkin' about?

PORGY

You's thinkin' what dis storm mus' be like
atramplin' over de sea islands,
Dese waves mus' be runnin' clean across Kittiwah.
Ain' nobody could live on dat damn island in a storm like dis.

BESS

I guess you got me for keeps, Porgy.

PORGY

Ain'I tell you dat all along?

(Lightning flash and the roar of storm drown out singing. There is fearful screaming and shouting)

ALL

Oh, dere's somebody knockin' at de do',
Oh, dere's somebody knockin' at de do',

Oh, Mary, Oh, Marta, dere's somebody knockin' at de do'.
Oh, dere's somebody etc.

PETER

I hear Death knockin' at de do'.

LILY

What you say, Daddy Peter?

PETER

I hear Death knockin' at de do'.

LILY

It mus' be death or Peter can't hear 'im. He can't hear no livin' pusson.

MINGO

He ain't hear nuttin', ain' nobody knock.

PETER

Death knockin' at de do'.

MARIA

Open de do', Mingo, an' show Peter dere ain' nobody dere.

MINGO

Open um up yo'self.

MARIA

All right, I'll show you.

(Suddenly - several sharp knocks on door. Cries of terror. More knocks - the door shakes violently. Men leaning against it)

WOMAN

Dat ain' no use, if he's Death, he comin anyway.

MARIA

Oh, Gawd, Gawd, don't let 'im in.

(The door slowly gives way inward, pushing men back. Wind, shrieks, prayers, men fall back. Crown enters)

CROWN

You is a nice parcel of Christians! Shut a friend out in a storm like dis!

SERENA

Who' frien' is you?

CROWN

I's yo' frien', Sister.

(Sees Bess)

Oh, here's de woman I's lookin' fo'.

Why you ain' come an'

say hello to yo' man?

BESS

You ain't my man!

CROWN

It's sho' time I was comin' back for you, sweet Bess! You

ain't done much for yo'self while I been gone. Ain' dere
no whole ones left?

BESS

You keep yo' mouth off Porgy.

CROWN

Woman, do you want to meet yo' Gawd? Come here!

BESS

Porgy my man now!

CROWN

(Laughs)

Well, for Gawd sake, does you call dat a man? Well don' you
min', I got de forgivin' nature an' I goin' take you back.

(He grabs Bess. Porgy rises to defend her, but Crown throws him back to the floor)

PORGY

Turn dat woman loose!

BESS

Keep yo' han' off me.

SERENA

You bes' behave yo'self in dis sturm! Don' you know, Gawd
might strike you dead!

CROWN

If Gawd want to kill me, He had plenty of chance 'tween here
an' Kittiwah Island. Me an' Him havin' it out all de way from
Kittiwah, firs' Him on top, den me on top. There ain' nothin'
He likes better den a scrap wid a man. Gawd an' me is frien'!

(Thunder)

Hear dat? Gawd's laughin' at you!

(Excited ad libs)

WOMAN

(On knees)

Oh, de Lawd shake de Heavens an' de Lawd ruck de groun'

ALL

Ah, ah, ah,

An' where you goin' stan', my brudder an' my sister,
when de sky come tumblin' down, etc.

CROWN

Here, cut dat out! Stop it!

I didn't come all the way from Kittiwah
to sit up wid no corpses.

Dem dat is in such a hurry to meet de Judgement,
All dey gots to do is kiss dereselves goodbye
an' step out dat door.
Daddy Peter, here's yo' chance.
De Jim-crow's leavin' an' you don' need no ticket.
(To Serena)
How about you, ole lady? What, dere ain'no travellers?
Don' you hear Gawd a'mighty laughin' at you?
Dat's right, Gawd laugh an' Crown laugh back.
Ha, ha, ha, ha Dat s right, drown em out,
don let em sing. Ha, ha, ha, ha!
How 'bout dis one, Big Frien'?

A red-headed woman makes a cho-choo jump its track.
A red-headed woman she can make it jump right back.
Oh, she's jus' nature's child,
She's got somethin' dat drives men wild.
A red-headed woman's gonna take you wedder you're
White, yellow or black.
But show me the red-head that kin make a fool of me!
Oh, she ain' existin' on de lan' or on de sea.
Oh, you kin knock me down
If dey don't fall for Brudder Crown.
Oh, show me de redhead dat kin make a goddam fool of me.

ALL

Lawd, Lawd, save us, don t listen to dat Crown, Lawd,
Jesus, oh, pay no min' to dat Crown
Oh, Lawd, strike him down, strike him down.
Oh, Lawd, don't listen to dat Crown.

CROWN

Oh show me de redhead that can make a fool of me,
Oh, she ain't existin' on de land or on de sea.
Oh you kin knock me down if they don't fall for
Brudder Crown.
Oh, show me de redhead dat can make a goddam fool of,
I said a fool out o' me!
(Clara, at the window screams and falls back)

BESS

Jake's boat in de river, upside down!

CLARA

Jake! Jake!
(Turns to Bess)
Bess, keep my baby for me till I get back!

(Bess reaches out for baby)

(Clara rushes out)

BESS

Clara oughtn't to be out dere all by herself.
Won't somebody go to Clara?
Ain't dere no man here?

CROWN

Yeah, where is a man? Porgy, what you sittin' dere for?
Ain't you hear yo' woman callin' for a man? Looks to me
like dere ain' only one man 'roun' here! All right, I'm goin'
out to get Clara, then I'm comin' back to get you.

PORGY

No, you don't!

CROWN

All right, Big Frien', we's on for another bout!

(Crown opens door and plunges out. Roar)

SINGERS

Oh, Doctor Jesus, look down on me wit'pity, etc...
Oh, Lawd above, we knows You can destroy, etc...
Oh, Captain Jesus, find it in Yo' heart to save us, etc...
Professor Jesus, teach Yo' ignorant chillen, etc...
Oh, Father what die on Calbery, etc...
Oh, Hev'nly Father, hab mercy on we, etc...
Amen!

CURTAIN

ACT III

Scene 1

CATFISH ROW

(The storm has ended. It is dusk.)

CHORUS

Clara, Clara, don't you be downhearted,
Clara, Clara, don't you be sad an' lonesome.
Jesus is walkin' on de water.
Rise up an' follow Him home.
Oh, Lawd, oh my Jesus, rise up an' follow Him home.

Jake, Jake, don't you be downhearted,
Jake, Jake, don't you be sad an' lonesome, etc.

Crown, Crown, don t you be downhearted,

SPORTING LIFE

(laughs under Serena's stairs)

Ha, ha, ha, ha,

MARIA

You low-lived skunk, ain' you got no shame, laughin' at those po' womens whaf's singin' for their mens los' in the storm !

SPORTING LIFE

(Laughs)

I ain't see no sense in makin' such a fuss over a man when he's dead; when a gal loses her man dere's plenty o' men still livin' what likes good lookin' gals.

MARIA

I know it ain' dem gals you is after, ain' you see, Bess got no use for you, ain' you see she got a man?

SPORTING LIFE

(Laughs)

I see more'n dat, Auntie, I see she got two men.

MARIA

What you mean by dat? Bess got two men. Crown dead ain' he?

SPORTING LIFE

(Laughs)

I ain' tellin' you nothin', but a woman who got jus' one man, maybe she got him for keeps, but when she got two mens, there's mighty apt to be a carvin', den de cops comes in an' takes de leavin's. An' pretty soon she ain't got none.

(Maria enters shop. Sporting Life goes off.)

BESS

(Singing to Clara's baby ot window)

Summertime an' the livin' is easy,
Fish are jumpin' an'the cotton is high.
Oh yo' daddy's rich an yo' ma's good lookin'
so hush, little baby, don' you cry, Ah.

(Bess leaves window)

(Crown enters the empty courtyard and picks his way stealthily across the court. Dropping to his hands and knees he crawls toward Porgy's door. Above Crown, the shutter opens slowly. An arm is extended, the hand grasping a long knife. The arm descends plunging the knife into Crown's back. The knife is withdrawn and hurled into court. Crown staggers upright as Porgy leans from window and closes both hands around his throat. They struggle at the window, and Porgy kills Crown, hurling the body into the, courtyard.)

PORGY

(Laughing triumphantly)

Bess, Bess, you got a man now, you got Porgy!

CURTAIN

ACT III

Scene 2

CATFISH ROW

DETECTIVE

(Appears at gate with Coroner)

Wait for us at the corner, Al. We'll put the widow through first.

(Climbs steps to Serena's window knocks and descends to court.)

Come on down Serena Robbins, and make it damn quick!

(Slight pause. Then shutter pops open)

ANNIE

(At the window)

Huh! Serena been very sick in her bed three day an' I been here with her all de time.

(Pops back in - closes shutters)

DETECTIVE

The hell she has. Tell her if she don't come down wagon and run her in.

(Serena appears at the window. Groans.)

DETECTIVE

Where were you last night, Serena Robbins?

SERENA

I been sick in dis bed three day an' three night.

ANNIE

An' we been nursin' her all dat time.

LILY

Dat's de Gawd's truth.

CORONER

Would you swear to that?

ALL

Yes, boss, we swear to that.

CORONER

There you are, an air-tight alibi.

DETECTIVE

Just two months ago right here Crown killed your husband, didn't he?

(Pause)

Answer me, you'll either talk here or in jail.
Did Crown kill you husband, yes or no?

WOMEN

We swear to dat, boss.

DETECTIVE

And last night Crown got his right here, didn't he?

ANNIE

(Laughs)

Go 'long, boss, ain' dat gentleman say we is "alabi"?

DETECTIVE

(Shouting with rage)

Was Crown killed here - yes or no?

SERENA, ANNIE and LILY

We ain' see nuttin' boss. We been in dis room three day an' night an' de window been closed.

DETECTIVE

Look at me, Serena Robbins. Do you mean to tell me that the man who killed your husband was bumped off under your window, and you didn't know it?

SERENA, ANNIE and WOMAN

We ain' see nuttin' Boss. We been in dis room

Three days an' nights.

DETECTIVE

(Exasperated)

Three days and nights!

ANNIE

An' de window been closed.

(They close shutters)

DETECTIVE

You needn't do that one again.

Oh hell! You might as well argue with a parrot,
but you'll never break their story.

But I'll get you a witness for your inquest.

Step over here an' I'll put the cripple through.

(Goes to Porgy's door and kicks it open violently.)

Come out both of you there, step lively now!

(Bess helps Porgy to the doorstep, then she stands by him, the baby in her arms. Sporting Life enters court and silently watches.)

CORONER

What is your name?

PORGY

Jus' Porgy. You knows me, boss,

You done give me plenty of pennies on Meetin' Street.

CORONER

Of course - you're the goat man,

I didn't know you with no wagon.

I'm the coroner, not a policeman.

Now this dead one, Crown, you knew him by sight, didn't
you? You'd know him if you saw him again?

PORGY

Yes, boss, seems like I remember him,

when he used to come 'round' here long time ago.

But I ain' care none' bout seein' him.

DETECTIVE

Well, you've got to see him anyway. Come along.

CORONER

You needn't be afraid. All you've got to do is to view the
body as a witness, and tell us who it is.

PORGY

(Terror stricken)

I got to go an' look at Crown's face...

CORONER

Yes, that's all.

PORGY

With all dem white folks lookin' at me?

CORONER

Oh cheer up. I reckon you've seen a dead body before.

It'll all be over in a few minutes.

PORGY

There ain' goin' be nobody in dat room 'cept me?

DETECTIVE

Just you an' Crown, if you can still call him one.

PORGY

Boss, I couldn't jus' bring a woman with me?

I...I couldn't even carry my woman?

DETECTIVE

No! You can't bring anyone. I'll send an officer to help you out.

PORGY

Boss, boss...

DETECTIVE

Now get this... I have summoned you an' you have to go.
or you'll go to jail for contempt of court.

(Leaves with Coroner)

(Porgy turns to Bess)

PORGY

Oh, Lawd what I goin' do?

BESS

You've got to go Porgy,
maybe you can jus' make like to look at him
an' keep yo' eye shut;
You goin' be alright, Porgy.
You only goin' be a witness.

SPORTING LIFE

(Who has been enjoying it)

I ain' so sure of that. All I know is that when the
man that killed Crown go in that room - an' look at him
Crown' wound begin to bleed!

PORGY

(Terror-stricken)

Oh, my Jesus!

SPORTING LIFE

That's one way the cops got of tellin' who killed him.

PORGY

I can't look at Crown's face
Oh Gawd, what I goin' do?

POLICEMAN

(Entering with a second policeman.)

Hey, you there, come along!

(They start dragging Porgy to the gate.)

PORGY

I ain' goin' look on his face!

POLICEMAN

Oh, you'll look all right.

PORGY

Turn me loose, turn me loose you can't make
his face! Ain't nobody can make me look on Crown's face!

(He is dragged out)

BESS

Oh, Gawd! They goin' make him look on Crowns's face!

SPORTING LIFE

(Laughs)

Sister, that Porgy ain' goin' be no witness now. They goin'
lock him up in jail

BESS

Lock him up? Not for long, Sportin' Life!

SPORTING LIFE

Not for long. Maybe one year, maybe two year, maybe--
just like I tol' you, ain' nobody home now but Bess and ole
Sportin' Life.

(He takes her hand)

But cheer up, sistuh, Ole Spurtin' Life givin' you de stuff for
scare away, dem lonesome blues.

BESS

Happy dus'! I ain' want none of dat stuff, I tells you. Take
dat stuff away, Buzzard!

(Sporting Life almost forces Bess to take the dope. She suddenly yields and clops her hand over
mouth)

SPORTING LIFE

That's the thing, ain' it? An' membuh there's.
where that come from. Listen: There's a boat dat's
leavin' soon for New York. Come wid me, dat's where
we belong, sister.

You an' me kin live dat high life in New York.

Come wid me, dere you can't go wrong, sister.

I'll buy you de swellest mansion

Up on upper Fi'th Avenue

An' through Harlem we'll go struttin',
We'll go astruttin',
An' dere'll be nuttin'
Too good for you.
I'll dress you in silks and satins
In de latest Paris styles.
And de blues you'll be forgettin',
You'll be forgettin',
There'll be no frettin'
Jes nothin' but smiles.
Come along wid me, Hey dat's de place,
Don't be a fool, come along, come along.
There's a boat dat's leavin' soon for New York
Come wid me, dat's where we belong, sister,
Dat's where we belong! Come on, Bess!

BESS

You low, crawlin' hound! Get away from my door, I tells
you, leave it, you rattlesnake. Dat's what you is,
a rattlesnake!

(Sporting Life hands her a second paper. She knocks it out of his hand and runs to her door and inside)

SPORTING LIFE

Don't want take a second shot, eh! All right, I'll leave it
here. Maybe you'll change yo' mind.

(Sporting Life tosses paper with dope on the doorstep. He smiles, lights a cigarette, starts sauntering off blowing smoke rings, sure that Bess will come back for the dope.)

CURTAIN

ACT III

Scene 3

CATFISH ROW

(It is one week later)

MAN

Good mornin' sistuh!

WOMAN

Good mornin', brudder

MEN

Good mornin', sistuh!

WOMEN

Good mornin', brudder.

(Everybody waves)

ALL

Good mornin', Good mornin'
How are you dis very lovely mornin'? How are you dis
very lovely mornin'?

CHILDREN

La, la, la, la, la, la, la. Sure to go to Heaven,
Yes, you boun' to go to Heaven, sure to go to Heaven.
If yo' good to yo' mammy an' yo' pappy, wash yo'
face an' make dem happy. Den you'll be St. Peter's
loveable chile. La, la, la, la, la, la, la.

ALL

How are you dis mornin'?
Feelin' fine an' dandy
Tell me how are you dis mornin'?
Feelin' fine an' dandy
Tell me how are you dis mornin'?
Feelin' fine an' dandy.
Tell me how are you on dis lovely
Mornin' - How are you dis lovely day?

(Clang of patrolwagon is heard)

MINGO

It's Porgy comin' home.

(Crowd breaks up into groups and gazes apprehensively at the gate.)

PORGY

Thank Gawd I's home again!

CHORUS

Welcome home, Porgy. We're all so glad you is back again.

PORGY

(Crossing over to Maria's table.)
Dem white folks sure ain' put nuthin'
over on this baby.
Ain' I tell you, I ain' goin' look on Crown's face.

LILY

You ain' look on um Porgy?

PORGY

No, no, no, no, I keep dese e yes shut in dat room 'til they
done put me in jail for contemp' of court.

(Not noticing any of the embarrassed behavior of his friends)

Sh...Don' anybody let on I's home again.
I got a surprise for Bess. Sweet Bess,
an' I ain' wants her to know, 'til I get ev'rything ready.
Bring dem bundles here, Scipio!
Here, boy, look what I brought for you.
Throw away that ole mouth organ you got
an' start on this one.
See, it got a picture of a brass band on it
Work on that an' the firs' thing you know
you'll be playin' wid de orphans.

(Still not noticing how the crowd is sneaking away.)

Lily Holmes, Lily Holmes!
Here gal, hol' up yo' head. Dat's right.
I never did like dat ole funeral bonnet
Peter buy for you... Get down, sistuh;

(Presenting her with o gorgeous feather trimmed hat)
Dere now, get underneath dat,
an' make all de redbird an' de bluejay jealous.

(Unwrapping a dress)

Now dat's de style for my Bess.
She's one gal what always look good in red.

(Noticing how his friends are leaving, he tries to pull them bock with an interesting story.)

Listen to this, ev'rybody; I reckon I's de firs' fella
roun' here what go to jail po' and leave there rich;
All de time I got my lucky bones hid in my mout',
see,...An' I jus' got t'ru dem other crap-shootin' polecats
like Glory Hallelujah!

Now, ain' dis de thing?
'Course de baby ain' big enough
to wear a dress like dis yet,
but he goin' grow fast. You watch,
he goin' be in dat dress by de first frost.
An' now it's time to call Bess.
Bess, oh, Bess, here Porgy come home!

(Aside to Maria)

Jus' you wait till dat gal see me. Oh, Bess!
Here Mingo, What's de matter wid you all?
Where you goin'? What kind of a welcome
is dis for a man what's just been in jail
for contemp' of court?

(Seeing Serena holding Clara's baby)

Why, hello, if dere ain't Serena

You sho' work fast, sistuh.
I jus' been gone a week,
an' here you are wid a new baby.
(Seeing who the baby is...)

Here, hol' on, let me see dat chile
dat's Bess' baby ain'tit,
where you get it? Where Bess anyhow?
She ain' answer me.

(Everyone has left except Maria and Serena. Porgy crawls to his door ond enters.)

Bess, ain' you here? Bess!
(Comes out of his door, frantic)
Maria, Maria, where s Bess,
tell me quick where's Bess,
Tell me quick... Where's Bess. Where is Bess!
Oh, Bess!

MARIA

Ain' we tell you all along, Porgy,
Dat woman ain' fit fo' you?

PORGY

I ain' axin' yo' opinion.
Oh, Bess, oh where's my Bess,
Won't somebody tell me where?
I ain' care what she say,
I ain' care what she done,
won't somebody tell me where's my Bess?
Bess, Oh, Lawd,

My Bess! I want her now,
Widout her I can't go on.
I counted de days dat I was gone
Till I got home to see her face.
Won't somebody tell me where's my Bess?
I want her so, my gal, my Bess,
where is she?
Oh Gawd, in yo' big Heav'n
please show me where I mus' go,
oh give me de strength, show me de way!
Tell me de truth, where is she, where is my gal,
where is my Bess!

MARIA

Dat dirty dog Sportin' Life make believe
dat you lock up for ever.
He tol' her dat you would be gone
for de rest of yo' days.
Yo' woman been very low in her mind
she believe ev'rything Sportin' Life say to her,

dat's how it was.
She been very low, yo' woman misunderstand,
she t'ink you never come back to her;
Sportin' Life fool her, fool yo' Bess.
She is gone.
Man, don't you let it break yo' heart 'bout dat gal.
We told you all along dat dat woman ain' worthy of you.
She was no good, Porgy,
or she'd never go 'way.
Try forget 'bout Bess.

SERENA

She gone, but you very lucky;
she gone back to de happy dus'.
She done throw Jesus out of her heart.
Bess dat kin' of gal,
I told you dat all along.
Porgy, you is better off
widout dat woman hangin' 'roun' an' makin' trouble.
She give herself away to de debbil.
Porgy, you is better off
widout dat woman hangin' 'roun';
there's plenty better gals than Bess.
Bess is gone, She worse than dead, Porgy,
she gone back to de happy dus',
she gone back to de red eye wid him
an' she's headin' fo' Hell.
Thank God she's out of yo' way.
Try forget 'bout Bess.

LILY

Bess is gone. An' Serena take dis chile
to give 'im a Christian raisin'.

PORGY

You ain' mean Bess dead?

SERENA

She worse than dead, Porgy,
She gave herself to de debbil,
but she still livin', an' she gone far away.

PORGY

Alive, Bess is alive!
Where Bess gone?

MINGO

Noo York.

PORGY

I hear you say Noo York. Where dat?

MINGO

A thousand mile from here.

PORGY

Which way Noo York?

MARIA

It's way up North pas' de custom house.

PORGY

Bring my goat!

MARIA

What you wants wid goat, Porgy?

You bes' not go any place.

PORGY

Bring my goat!

SERENA

You better stay wid yo' frien', Porgy,

You'll be happy here.

PORGY

Won't nobody bring my goat?

MARIA

Ain't we tell you, you can't find her, Porgy?

SERENA

For Gawd sake, Porgy, where you goin'?

ALL

Where yau goin' Porgy? ;

PORGY

Ain't you say Bess gone to Noo York?

Dat's where I goin',

I got to be wid Bess.

Gawd help me to fin' her.

(Mingo leads goat and cart over. Porgy holds up arms and is helped into cart)

I'm on my way.

(Cart is led off)

Oh Lawd, I'm on my way.

PORGY AND ALL

I'm on my way to a Heav'nly Lan',

I'll ride dat long, long road.

If You are there to guide my han'.

Oh Lawd, I'm on my way.

I'm on my way to a Heav'nly Lan'-
Oh Lawd. It's a long, long way, but
You'll be there to take my han'.

END OF OPERA