

The Gershwins' PORGY *and* BESS



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Charleston, South Carolina, 1920s

The inhabitants of Catfish Row are enjoying a good-natured game of dice when tragedy strikes: Crown, a violent dockworker, kills a man and abandons his girlfriend, Bess, at the scene of the crime. No one is willing to help the terrified Bess—no one, that is, except for the kind beggar Porgy. With Porgy, Bess finds a life of stability and love that she could never have imagined. But when Crown returns unexpectedly to Catfish Row, Bess finds herself facing a choice that will forever alter both her future and Porgy's.

Main Characters



Porgy



Bess



Crown



Clara



Jake

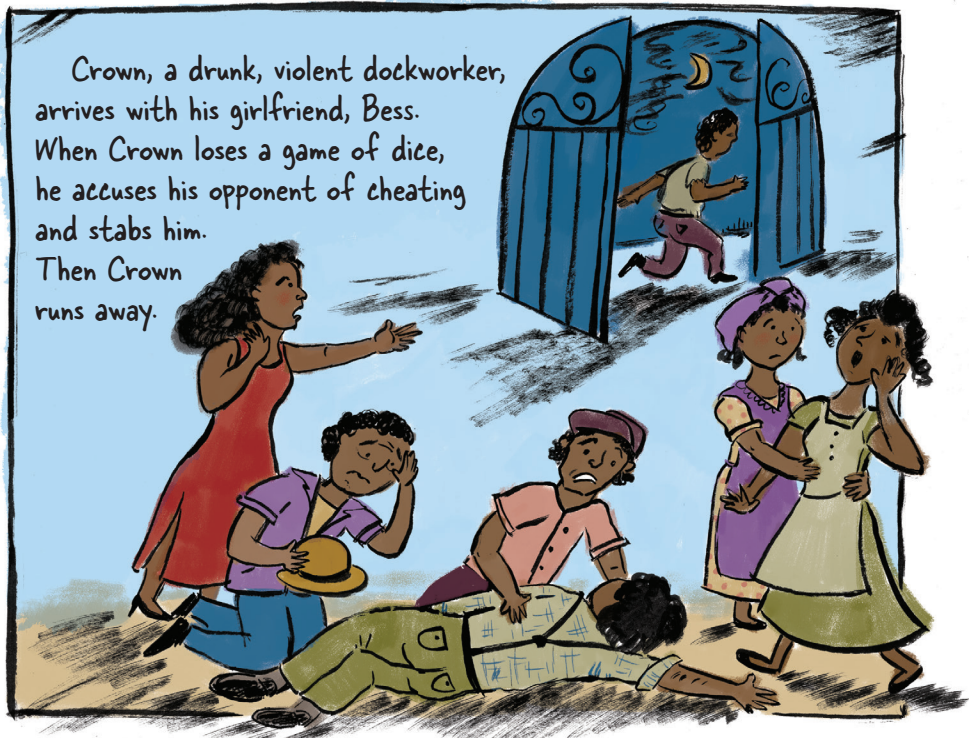


Sportin' Life

On a warm summer evening,
the residents of Catfish Row
sing and play dice.



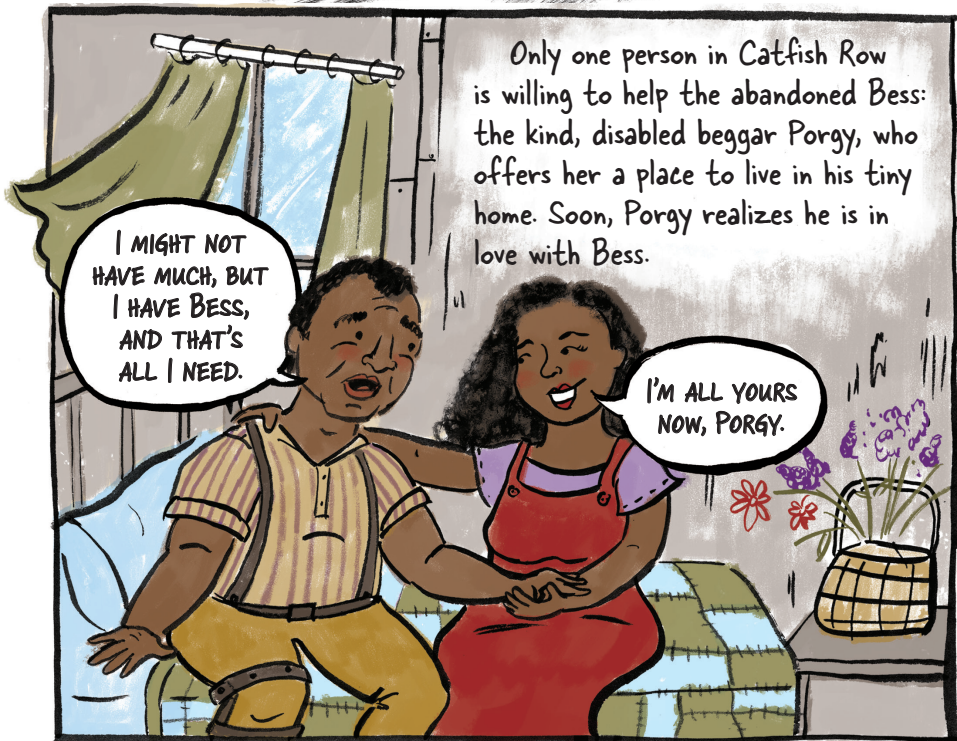
Crown, a drunk, violent dockworker, arrives with his girlfriend, Bess. When Crown loses a game of dice, he accuses his opponent of cheating and stabs him. Then Crown runs away.



Only one person in Catfish Row is willing to help the abandoned Bess: the kind, disabled beggar Porgy, who offers her a place to live in his tiny home. Soon, Porgy realizes he is in love with Bess.

I MIGHT NOT HAVE MUCH, BUT I HAVE BESS, AND THAT'S ALL I NEED.

I'M ALL YOURS NOW, PORGY.



Everyone from Catfish Row
(except for Porgy) goes to nearby
Kittiwah Island for a picnic. The day
is full of songs and good cheer.



But as her friends are
heading back to the boat, Bess sees Crown
lurking in the woods nearby. Bess is terrified.



Bess returns to Catfish Row and tells Porgy about her fears.

CROWN WANTS
TO TAKE
ME AWAY!

DON'T WORRY,
I'LL PROTECT
YOU—BECAUSE
I LOVE YOU!

The sky looks dark and ominous, but the fishermen of Catfish Row decide to go fishing anyway.

PLEASE DON'T
GO—IT LOOKS
DANGEROUS.

WE NEED MONEY
TO GIVE OUR BABY
A HAPPY FUTURE.

Soon, however,
the storm turns into
a mighty hurricane.

Everyone gathers together to wait out the hurricane. As the storm reaches its height, Crown enters. He mocks Porgy. Then Clara sees something awful.

I SEE JAKE'S
BOAT UPSIDE DOWN
ON THE WATER!
SOMEONE PLEASE
HELP HIM!

I'M BIG AND
STRONG—NOT
LIKE THAT PORGY
FELLOW. I'LL GO!

The following morning, Jake and Clara's bodies are found in the water. Everybody assumes that Crown has died, too.



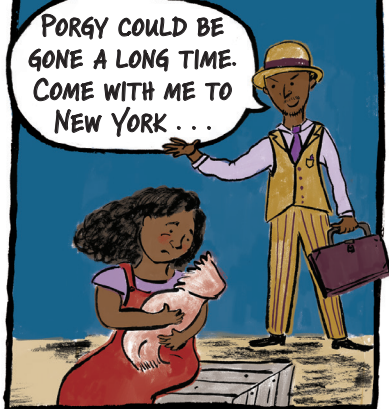
But Crown didn't die, and
when he returns to Catfish Row
to reclaim Bess, Porgy stabs and
kills him.



The next morning, police ask Porgy to identify Crown's body, but he refuses.



Sportin' Life has been eyeing Bess. With Porgy gone, he sees a chance to make his move.



At first, Bess refuses—but, desperate, she finally agrees to go.



Five days later, Porgy returns to Catfish Row. He has made money playing dice in prison, and he can't wait to shower Bess with gifts. His friends sadly tell him she has gone to New York. Grabbing his crutch, Porgy declares that he will find Bess—whatever it takes.

DON'T WORRY, BESS,
I'M COMING!

