

"Don' yo' want 'o see little Sa'yan?" she asked, taking up the bundle.

Solomon jerked a chair up to the table and sat down. "Don't-know nuppin 'bout no Sa'yan," he growled, "gimme some beans."

Solomon kept his resolution to have nothing to do with little Sa'yan—never speaking to her—never looking at her if he could help it; merely acknowledging her existence by stepping over her or going-around her when she was old enough to crawl around on the floor in his way.

Now and then Sa'yan's pudgy, little, black hands caught hold of his flapping trowser's legs as they passed by her, but a quick jerk loosened the baby grasp and left a howling Sa'yan tumbled over on her little flat nose. In a moment the bumped nose would be smugged up in mammy Goshen's fat neck, and the cries smothered while Sa'yan was assured that she was mammy's lamb and dey berry purtiest pink ob dey whole flock, an' 'er poppy was jes' an ole hothum an' dat's all he was.

Mammy Goshen had no lack of affection for any of the little flock, but Sa'yan was the apple of her eye.

She smuggled half the eggs the hens laid—cutting short Solomon's tobacco money to buy Sa'yan's yellow frocks and pink aprons. She dug potatoes for farmers and fished onions and beans from Solomon's patch till she gathered money enough to buy Sa'yan a red cloak and hood, some pink shoes and blue stockings. Once she went hungry a week to save money enough to buy her a fifteen-cent doll and a white cotton dog.

The six others were clad in stout, blue jean frocks and pantallettes summer and winter, and went barefoot till snow came. Their dolls were cobs dressed in corn husks and rocked in bark cradles.

By the time Sa'yan was twelve years old, all the other girls were away at work for wages or board-and-clothes, and she was the only one at home with her mother. In spite of Solomon, Sa'yan had been, all her twelve years, as happy a little body as the sun shone on; but a shadow was coming. In the early fall of that year Sa'yan's mother died.

"Po' little Sa'yan! pink ob dey whole flock," was the last thing she said.

After the funeral the girls went back to their places and Sa'yan stayed in the lonesome house. Solomon ate his meals in silence and went away; coming home late at night and going to bed without a word.

Sa'yan fried pork and potatoes for breakfast, baked pork and potatoes for dinner, hashed pork and potatoes for supper day after day. After each meal there were the knives and forks for two, only two bowls, only two plates to wash and put away. It was lonesome. After the work about the house was done, came a long still time when Sa'yan had nothing to do but listen to the cricket scraping behind the broken window sill, and the shrill autumn voices in the dead grass outside. Sometimes a bird sang; sometimes the wind whistled over the chimneys.

What a wide, high, empty world it seemed to Sa'yan! One morning about a month after Solomon's wife died he went away, and did not return at night, nor the next night. The third day Sa'yan went over to the village to see her sister Polythy. The stars were out, and the moon was coming up over the trees in the colored people's cemetery when she reached home. There was a light in the house. "Pop's come home," Sa'yan said, hurrying up the path. A woman met her at the door.

"Be yo' Sa'yan?" she asked.

"Yes um, who be yo'?" Sa'yan answered.

"Missus Goshen, ma'm' an' Mister Goshen 'e sez tow tell yo' dey's no room fo' yo' heah no mo," an' heah's yo' clo'es," tossing Sa'yan a small bundle.

"But whar'll I go?" Sa'yan asked.

"How al'd I know—go an' fine out," the woman answered shutting the door.

Sa'yan went down the road till some trees hid her from the house. Hugging her bundle tightly she stood looking up and down the road.

"Dey haint no whar tow go," she said despairingly. "I can't go back tow Polythy's, case dere's dey witches' yholer—I wuld'n' go fro dat yholer ather dark fo' a fousan' dollars—ner eben fo' a blue fan wid fadders on dey top, I wuld'n'."

The daylight had faded out. A night-hawk swooped down with a hoarse cry, brushing the tip of his wings against Sa'yan's sun-bonnet. She watched him sail up towards a great, white star.

"How fur away dem stars be," she said slowly, "an' mammy's way behine um. How fur away! How fur away!" she suddenly cried, and throwing herself on the ground hid her face in the shabby bundle and sobbed and cried in a frenzy of desolateness.

The sobs and cries were spent after awhile, but Sa'yan still lay on the ground with her face in the old bundle, and knocked the heels of her ragged shoes together for company. She might as well lie there—if she got up there was nowhere to go—she thought.

By-and-by a wagon came rumbling up the road, and Sa'yan crept behind some bushes until it went by.

The moon was high over the trees now and shining full on the white-washed boards in the cemetery not far away. Sa'yan could count twenty white boards from where she stood.

"Guees dis yere one nighest must be ole Froggity's an' nez' one's Witchy Blimber's, an' deres unc' Jonahses, an' dem little ones is Ginsies' twins," she said trying to make them out.

"'f I cud git by dem users 'vout any ghos-sesses seein' me, I'd go an' stay by mammy," she continued.

She crept softly down the road to the cemetery fence and climbed the stile. She stood a moment at the top to gather courage, and then darted down the steps and sped like a wild creature along the path—past "ole Froggity's, past Witchy Blimber's and Ginsies' twins"—past all, to the farther corner and sank down with her arms thrown across a mound of new, damp earth.

"Oh mammy!" she cried, heah's yo' po' little Sa'yan haint no whar to go."

The mother in the grave seemed nearer than the mother "behind the stars," and pulling some things from her bundle, Sa'yan made a pillow, and spreading two old dresses over herself—covering her head tightly—she laid herself down for the night. With her face close to the cool earth, she whispered her troubles and fell asleep, not to awake until daylight.

She went to Polythy's that day and stayed until Polythy's mistress found her a place to work. Sa'yan kept her place until she was twenty when she married and went to a distant city to live. Four years after, her husband died, and she was obliged to go out to service again, hiring an old colored woman to care for her little Tim and the baby during the day. The next year, Mose Short who brought vegetables to the kitchen where Sa'yan worked, concluded she would better marry him.