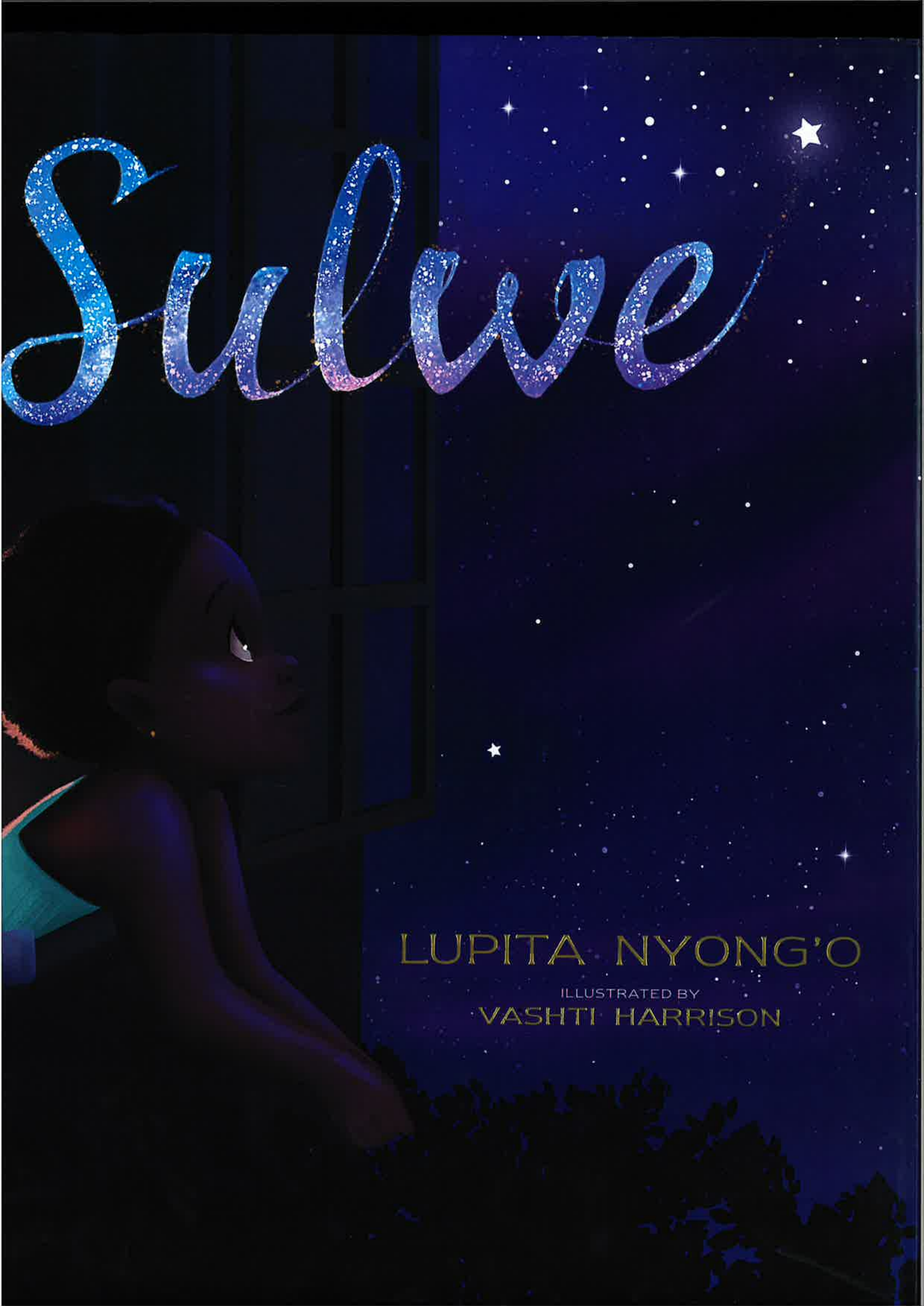


An illustration of a young girl with dark skin and hair, seen from the side, looking out of a window at a starry night sky. The sky is a deep blue with many small white stars and a few larger, brighter ones. The girl is wearing a green top. The window frame is visible on the left side of the image.

Sulwe

LUPITA NYONG'O

ILLUSTRATED BY
VASHTI HARRISON

For Sekai, the newest star in our night sky

—L. N.



For Lupita

—V. H.

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Sulwe

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Sulwe was born the colour of midnight.



She looked nothing like her family.
Not even a little, not even at all.

Mama was the
colour of dawn,



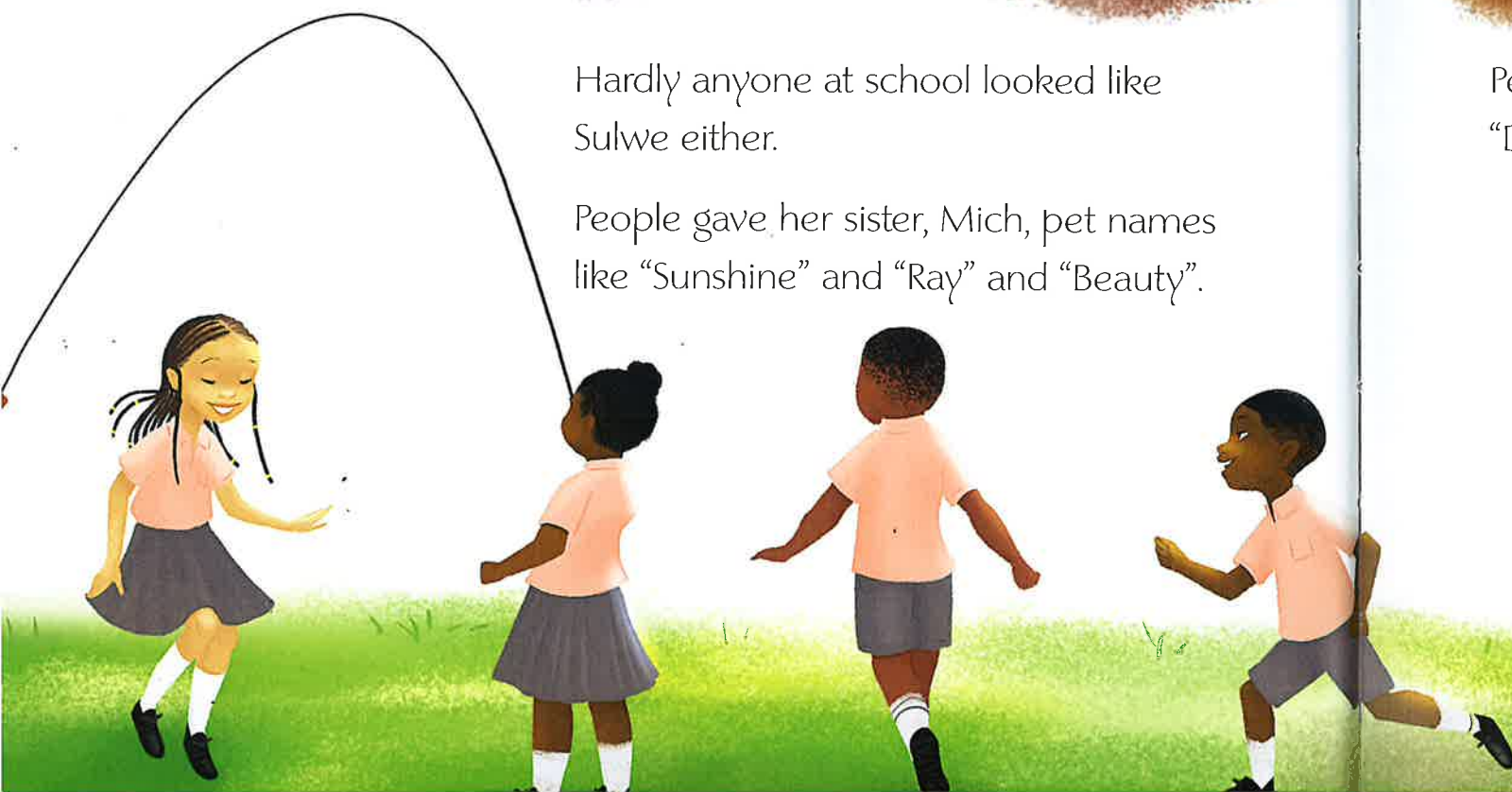
Baba the
colour of dusk,

and Mich, her sister, was
the colour of high noon.



Hardly anyone at school looked like
Sulwe either.

People gave her sister, Mich, pet names
like "Sunshine" and "Ray" and "Beauty".



People gave Sulwe names like "Blackie" and
"Darky" and "Night". Sulwe felt hurt every time.

So she hid away while her
sister made lots of friends.



we dreamed of being the same colour as her sister.

She wanted real friends too.



he got the biggest eraser she could find and
l to rub off a layer or two of her darkness.

hurt!



crept into Mama's room

and helped herself to her makeup.

Oh no! She would hear about this from Mama.

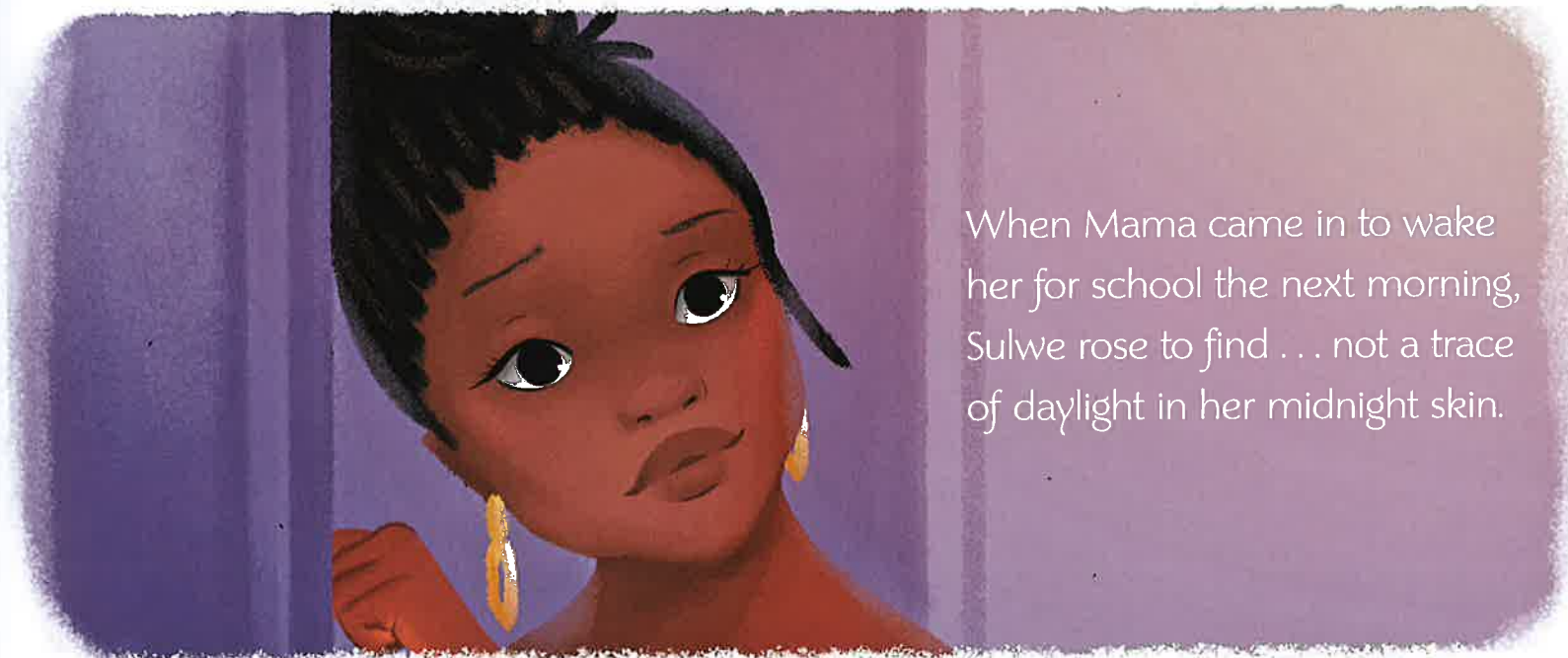


Sulwe decided to work from the inside out
and ate only the lightest, brightest foods.

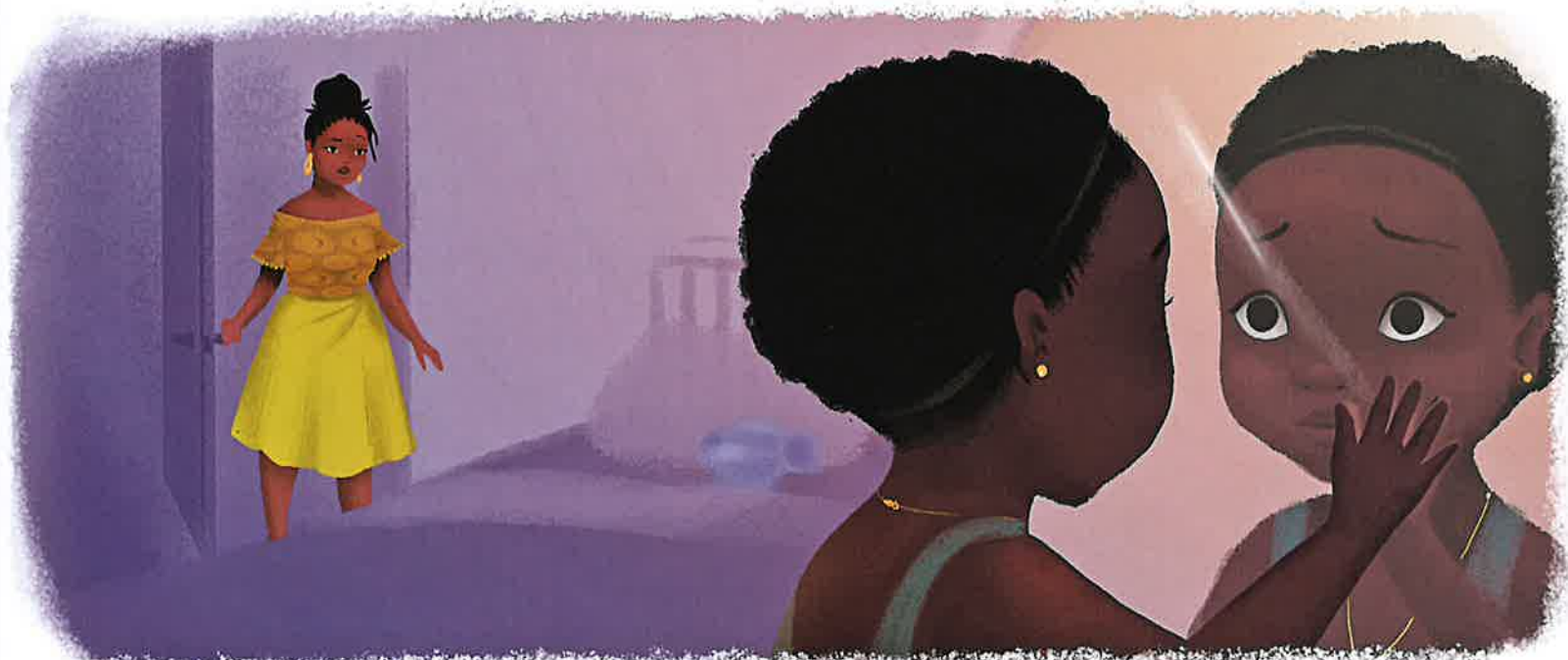


stomach ache, she went to bed
and turned to God for a miracle.

Dear Lord,
Why do I look like midnight,
When my mother looks like dawn?
Please make me as fair
as the parents I'm from.
I want to be beautiful,
not just to pretend.
I want to have daylight.
I want to have friends.
If you hear me, my Lord,
and would like to comply,
may I wake up as bright
as the sun in the sky.
Amen."



When Mama came in to wake
her for school the next morning,
Sulwe rose to find . . . not a trace
of daylight in her midnight skin.



Sulwe told Mama everything.