

LUPITA NYONG'O

Sulwe



ILLUSTRATED BY
VASHTI HARRISON



By Lupita Nyong'o



Sulwe was born the color of midnight.



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

Mama was the
color of dawn.

Baba the
color of dusk,

and Mich, her sister, was
the color 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.

e By Lupita Nyong'o

Sulwe dreamed of being the same color as her sister.

She wanted real friends too.





Sulwe By Lupita Nyong'o

Sulwe
has

She is d
She is d
Sulwe
bright, l
magical
her eye
In the
Academ
Lupita
and her
children

So she got the biggest eraser she could find and
tried to rub off a layer or two of her darkness.
That hurt!



She 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.



1:21 / 8:17



With a stomachache, she went to bed
early 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."

She is da
She is da
Sulwe
bright, le
magical
her eyes
In the
Acader
Lupita
and he
childre



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.

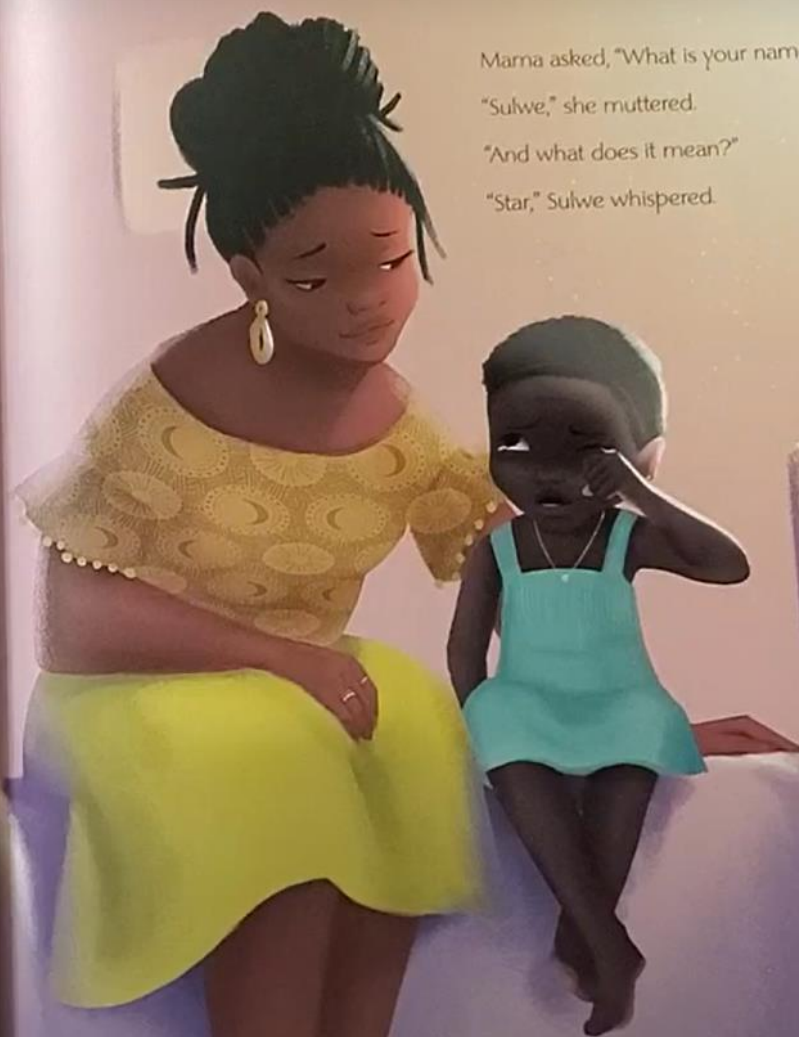


Sulwe told Mama everything

Sulwe By Lupita Nyong'o

Sulwe
has sh

She is dar
She is dar
Sulwe
bright, like
magical
her eyes
In thi
Academ
Lupita N
and hea
children



Mama asked, "What is your name?"
"Sulwe," she muttered.
"And what does it mean?"
"Star," Sulwe whispered.

Sulwe
has skin

She is dark
She is dark
Sulwe
bright, like
magical
her eyes
In this
Academy
Lupita Nyong'o
and her
children



"Brightness is not in your skin, my love. Brightness is just who you are. As for beauty," Mama said, rubbing Sulwe's stomach the way she always did to comfort her. "You are beautiful."
Sulwe sighed.



"Well, you are beautiful to me. But you can't rely on what you look like to make you feel beautiful, my sweet. Real beauty comes from your mind and your heart. It begins with how you see yourself, not how others see you. Now, up you get and out you go."

How could she, as dark as she was,
have brightness in her?



How could she have beauty when no
one but her mother seemed to see it?



How could she be a star?



Sulwe By Lupita Nyong'o

That night, a shooting star appeared at Sulwe's window.
"The night sent me," the star said. "Come with me."

Sulwe hopped onto the
star and off they went.



Sulwe
has

She is c
She is c
Sulwe
bright,
magical
her ey
In t
Acade
Lupita
and h
childr



"Long ago, at the beginning of Time," said the star,
"there was Night and Day, and they were sisters."



Su
has s

She is d
She is c
Sulw
bright,
magica
her eye
In the
Acade
Lupita
and he
childr

They loved each other very much.

But people didn't treat the sisters the same.

Sulwe By Lupita Nyong'o

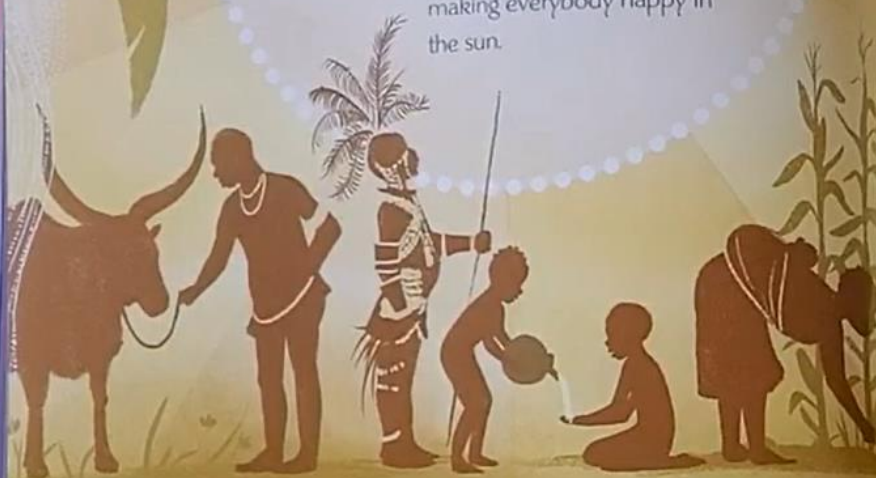


Sulwe By Lupita Nyong'o

S
has

She is
She is
Sul
bright
magi
her e
In
Acad
Lupit
and
child

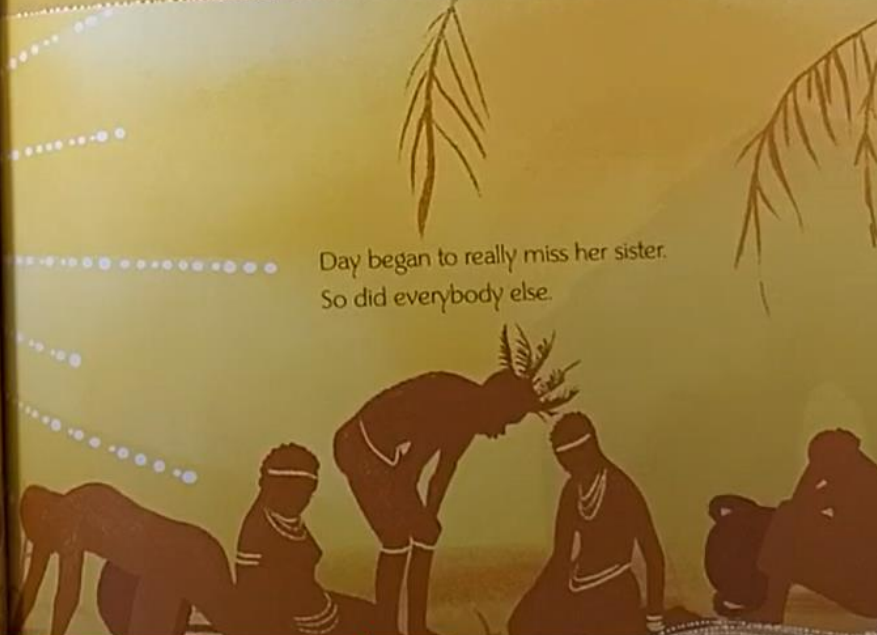
Day stayed behind and enjoyed
making everybody happy in
the sun.



But then Day grew too long.



Day began to really miss her sister.
So did everybody else.



S
has

She is
She is
Su
brigh
mag
her c
le
Aca
Lup
and
chil

There had to be a way to get her back.

Day set off to find Night.

And she did!

"I miss you," said Day.

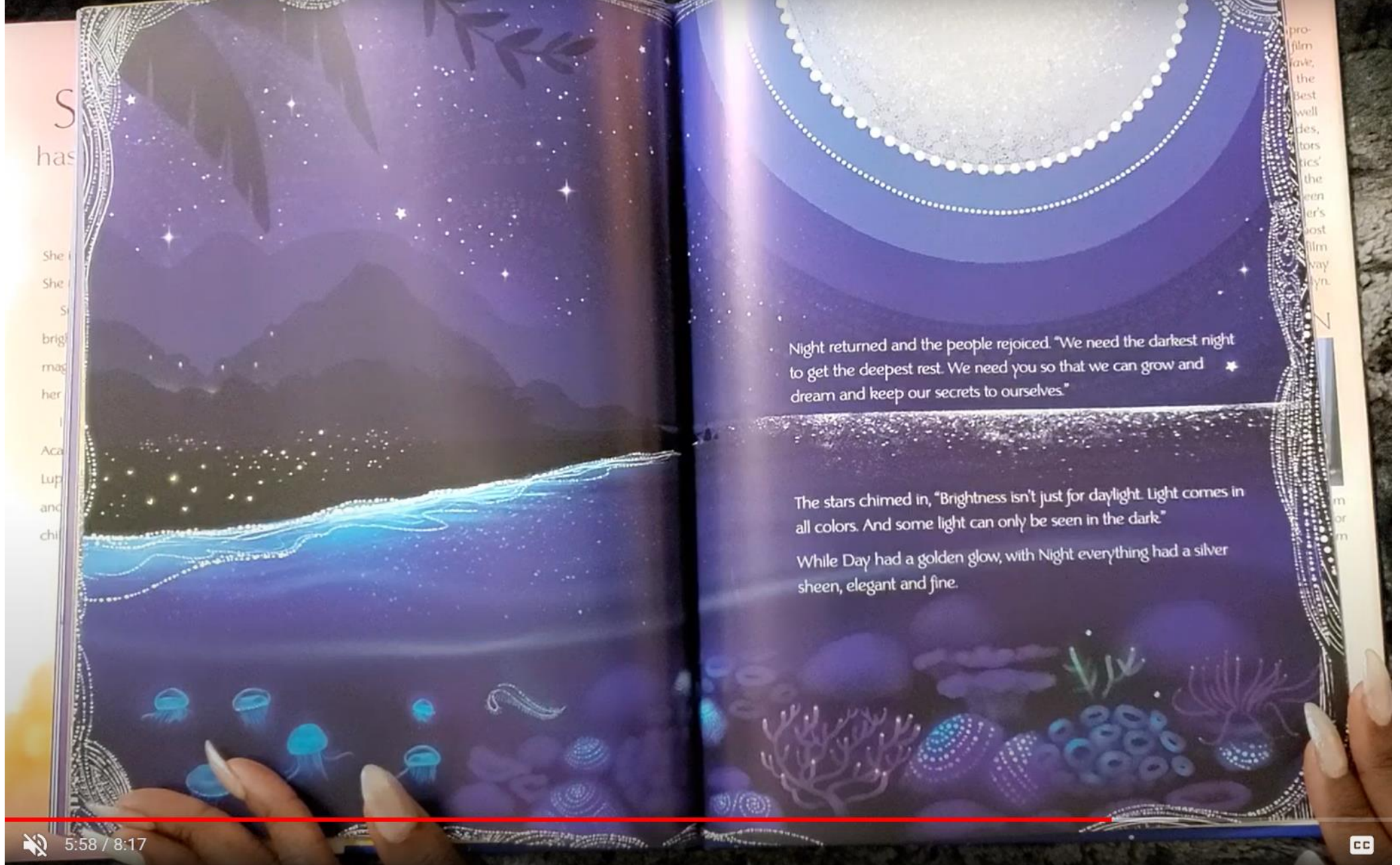
"I miss you, too," said Night. "But you don't know what it's like to be treated badly for being dark."

"You're right, I don't," Day replied. "But what I do know is that we need you just the way you are. Come and see."

pro-
film
we,
the
best
well
es,
ors
ics'
he
en
it's
ost
lm
ay
yn.

7

m
or
n



Night returned and the people rejoiced. "We need the darkest night to get the deepest rest. We need you so that we can grow and dream and keep our secrets to ourselves."

The stars chimed in, "Brightness isn't just for daylight. Light comes in all colors. And some light can only be seen in the dark."

While Day had a golden glow, with Night everything had a silver sheen, elegant and fine.

Sulwe By Lupita Nyong'o

★ Day told her sister, "When you are darkest is when you are most beautiful. It's when you are most you."
Could it be that Night did not need to change, not even a little, not even at all?



and pro-
film
slove,
d the
Best
well
ades,
ctors
itics'
the
een
ler's
most
film
way
slyn.

N
film
for
film

Sulwe By Lupita Nyong'o

S
ha

She

She

br

ma

he

Ad

Lu

an

ch

Now that Night and Day were back together,
a little bit of Night returned to Day in the form
of shadows. And a little bit of Day returned to
Night in the form of moonlight.

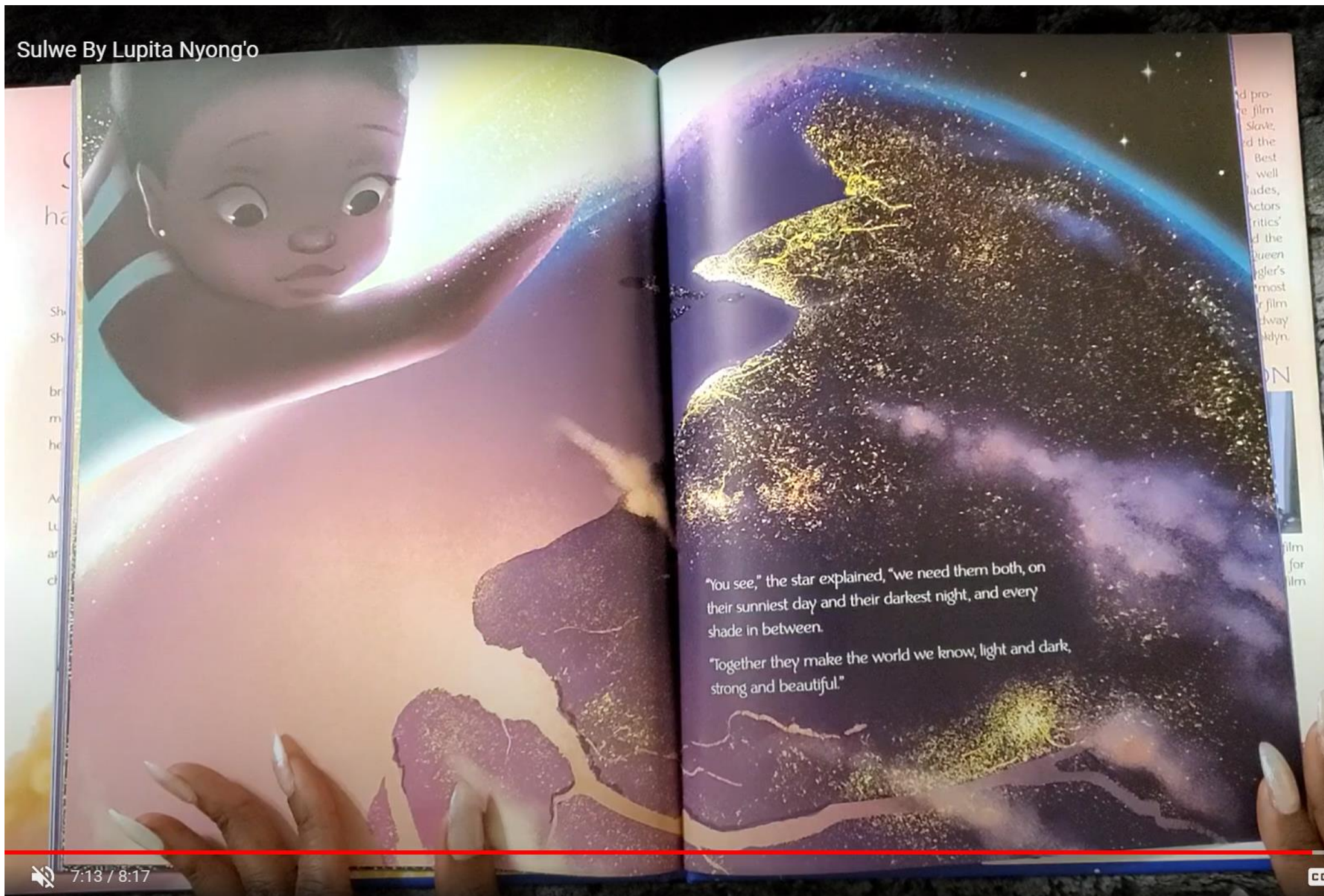
They were inseparable from that moment on,
and promised to celebrate the brightness in
each other, whether people chose to see it
or not.

and pro-
re film
a Slave,
ed the
r Best
is well
blades,
Actors
Critics'
nd the
Queen
ogler's
most
or film
adway
oklyn.

ON

film
e for
film

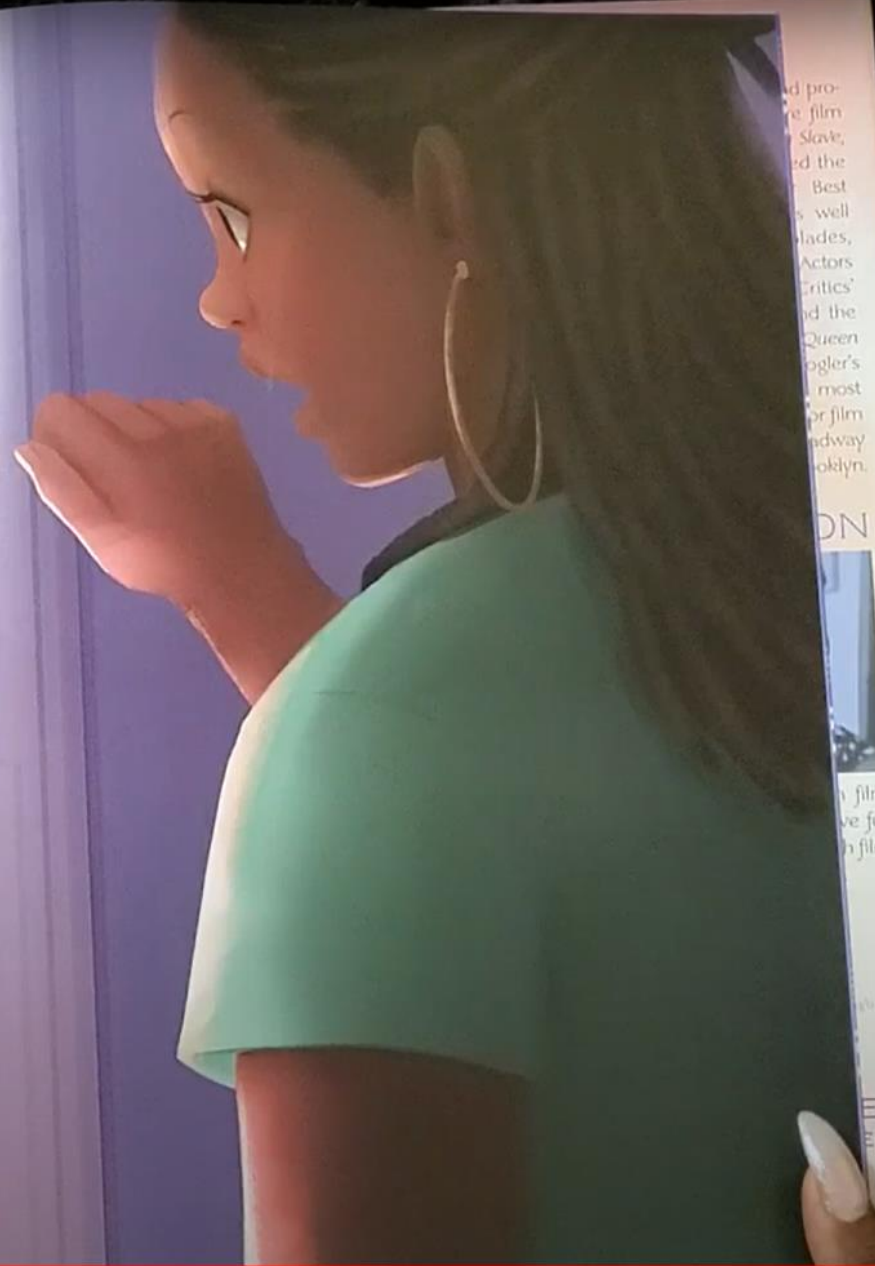
Sulwe By Lupita Nyong'o



Sulwe By Lupita Nyong'o

Sulwe rose the next morning, beaming

There would be no hiding anymore. She belonged out
in the world! Dark and beautiful, bright and strong





And if she ever needed a reminder of her brightness,
she could look up at the sky on the darkest night to
see for herself.

and pro-
fessionals
a slave,
ved the
or Best
as well
colades,
Actors
Critics'
and the
Queen
ogler's
d most
ror film
adway
oollyn.

ON

in fil
owe f
th fil
n.

Sulwe felt beautiful inside and out!



AUTHOR'S NOTE

Much like Sulwe, I got teased and taunted about my night-shaded skin. I prayed to God that I would wake up with paler skin. I tried all sorts of things to lighten my complexion. My mother told me often that I was beautiful, but she's my mother, of course she's supposed to think that!

It wasn't until I was much older that my feelings about my skin changed. It helped to see darker-skinned women being celebrated for their beauty. If they were beautiful, I could be too. I began to see myself differently.

While both Sulwe and I had to learn to see our beauty, I hope that more and more children begin their lives knowing that they are beautiful. That they can look to the beauty in the world and know they are a part of it.

And yet what is on the outside is only one part of being beautiful. Yes, it is important to feel good about yourself when you look in the mirror, but what is even more important is working on being beautiful inside. That means being kind to yourself and to others. That is the beauty that truly shines through.

The journey I went on was very different from Sulwe's nighttime adventure, but the lesson was the same: There is so much beauty in this world and inside you that others are not awake to. Don't wait for anyone to tell you what is beautiful. Know that you are beautiful because you choose to be. Know that you always were and always can be. Treasure it and let it light the way in everything you do.



Sulwe By Lupita Nyong'o



visit us at www.scholastic.com/kids



8:11 / 8:17