The Patches That Made Me Shine

By Dr. N Raboobee

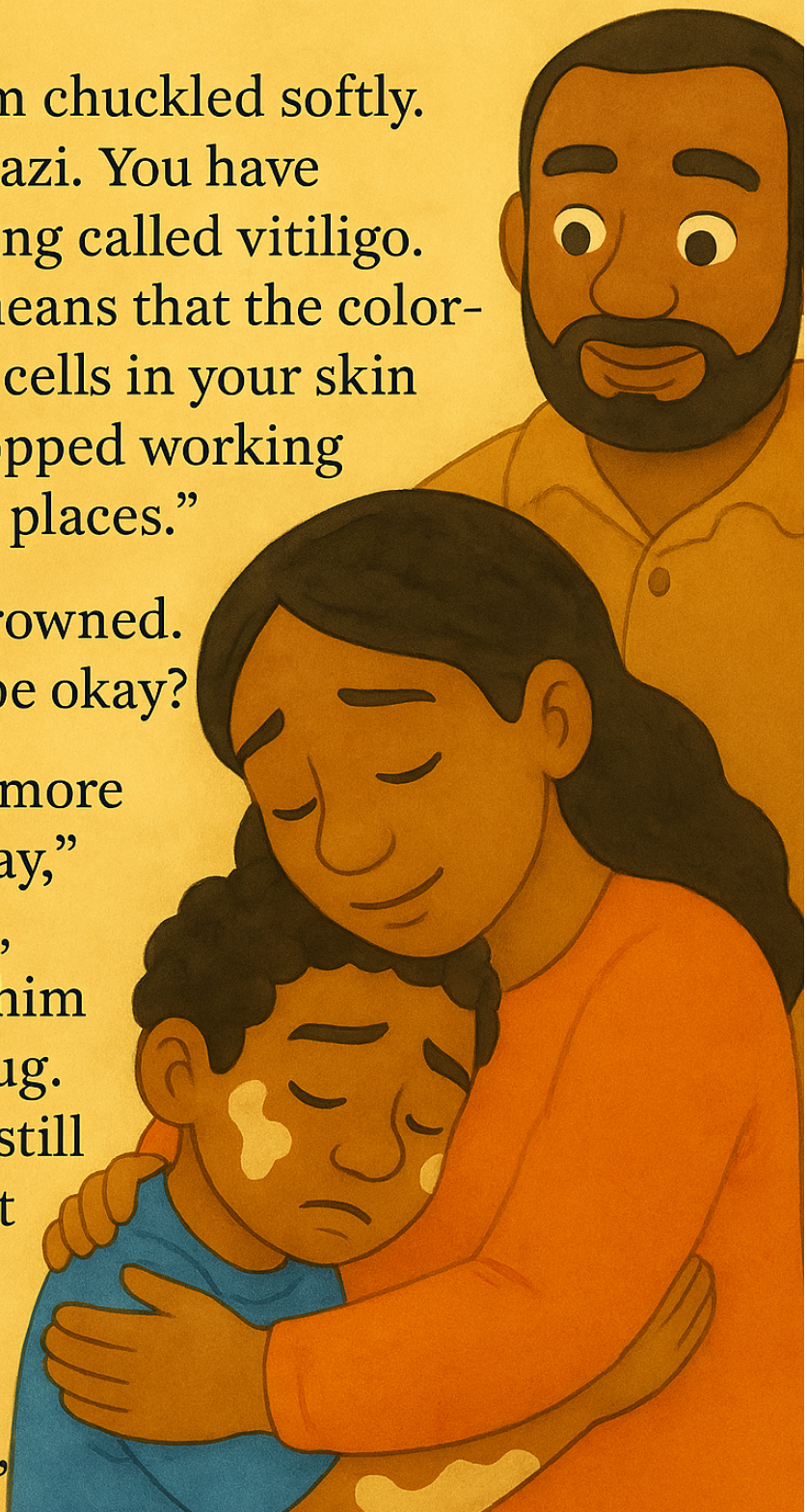



Ten-year-old Lwazi stood in front of the mirror, poking at the white patch on his cheek. It had started as a small dot, but now it looked like a cloud had landed on his face. Another patch was growing on his hand.
“Mom,” he whispered, “am I turning into a zebra?”

His mom chuckled softly. "No, Lwazi. You have something called vitiligo. It just means that the color-making cells in your skin have stopped working in some places."

Lwazi frowned. "Will I be okay?

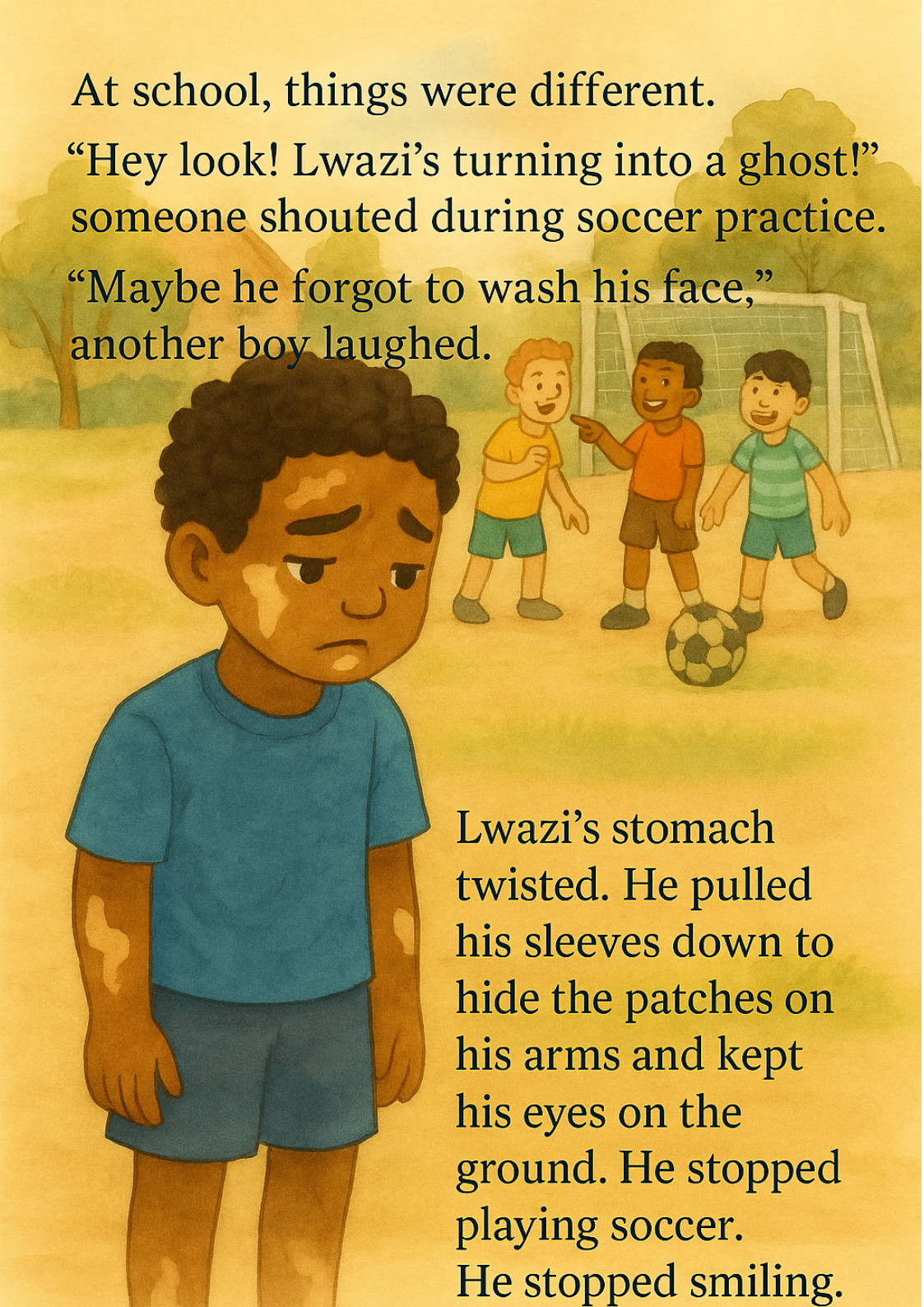
"You're more than okay," she said, pulling him into a hug. "You're still you. Just with a little more sparkle."



At school, things were different.

“Hey look! Lwazi’s turning into a ghost!” someone shouted during soccer practice.

“Maybe he forgot to wash his face,” another boy laughed.



Lwazi’s stomach twisted. He pulled his sleeves down to hide the patches on his arms and kept his eyes on the ground. He stopped playing soccer. He stopped smiling.

One day, Mrs. Mthembu, his teacher, asked him to stay behind after class.

“Lwazi,” she said gently. “I’ve noticed you’re not your usual self lately. Want to talk about it?”

He shrugged, his eyes filling with tears. “They laugh at me... because of the white spots.

Mrs. Mthembu knelt beside him. “Lwazi, those white patches are just one part of you. They don’t change how smart, kind, or strong you are. And teasing is never okay.”



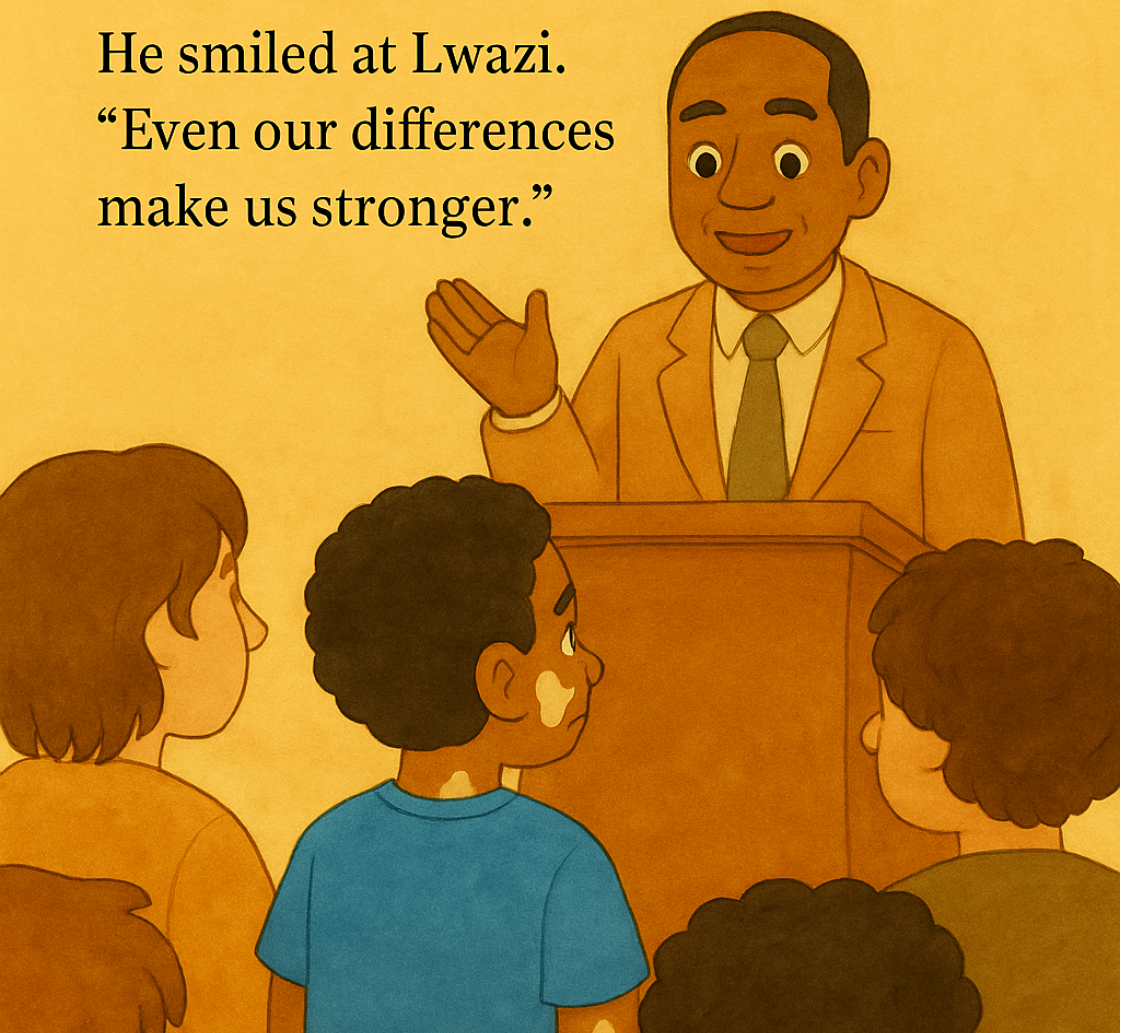
‘Did you know,’ she said, ‘that people can have unique skin patterns too? It’s called vitiligo. It’s not dangerous, it’s not dirty, and it’s not something you can catch. It just makes your skin look a bit different.



She then read a story about a famous soccer player with vitiligo, and showed photos of other role models who looked just like Lwazi.

At assembly, the principal spoke up. “This school is a family. And in our family, we lift each other up. Teasing someone because of how they look is not acceptable. From today, we celebrate what makes each of us special.”

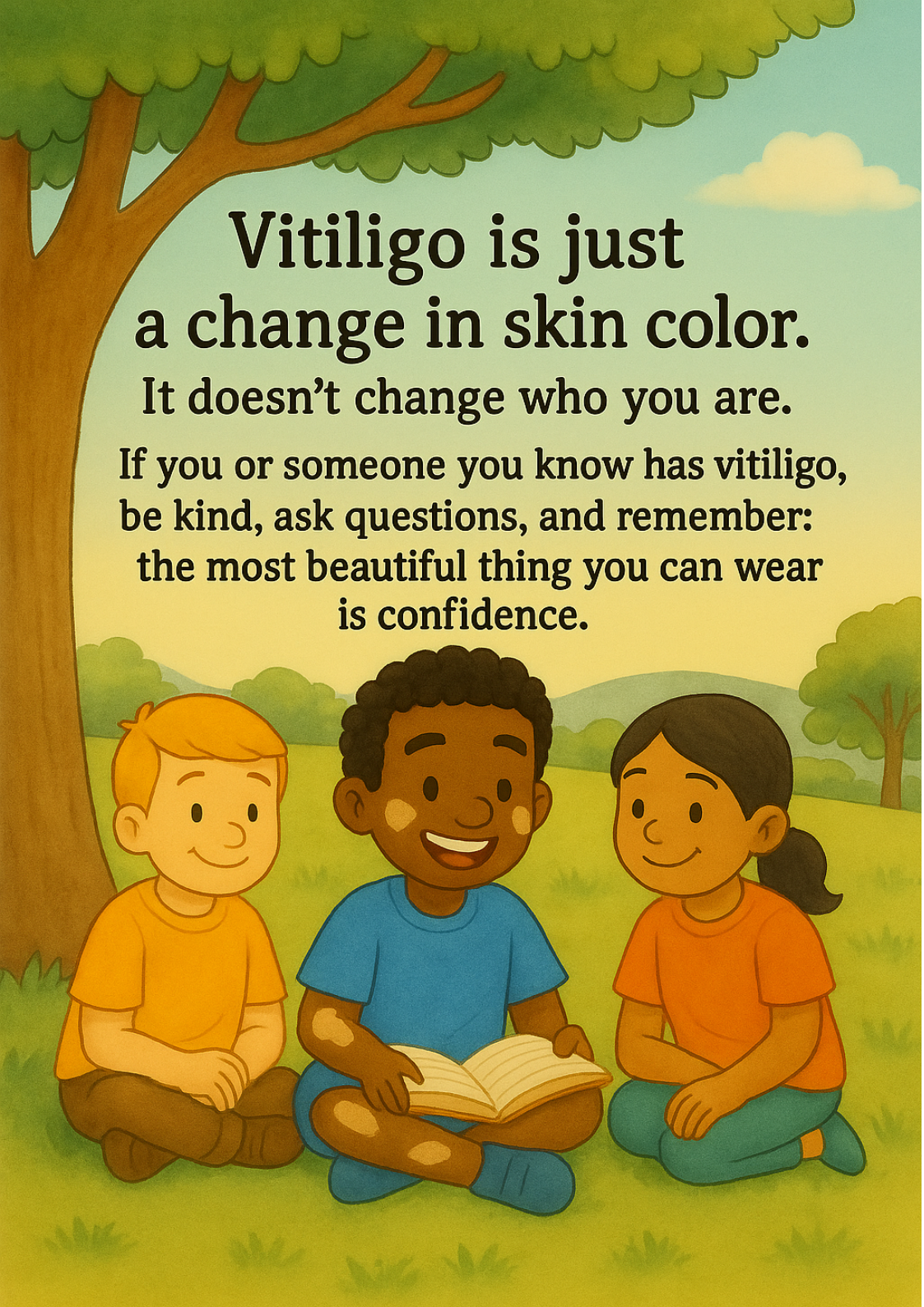
He smiled at Lwazi. “Even our differences make us stronger.”



Things didn't change overnight.
But slowly, the teasing stopped.
Some classmates even began asking kindly,
"Does it hurt?" – "Nope."
"Can you still play soccer?" – Want to see me score?

Lwazi was laughing again.
He started a school club called Shine Squad,
where kids shared what made them unique.
And every time he looked at his patches,
he didn't feel sad anymore.




Vitiligo is just
a change in skin color.
It doesn't change who you are.
If you or someone you know has vitiligo,
be kind, ask questions, and remember:
the most beautiful thing you can wear
is confidence.