



Proud to be Me

Leanne Raman

CHARACTERS:

S'BU:	High-school learner	PRETTY:	Jeff's sister
GOGO:	S'bu's grandmother	JEFF:	School bully
NKOSI:	Sbu's brother	SIYANDA:	S'bu's friend
FRIEND 1:	Old school friend of Sbu from the village	BOY 1:	Boy at Sbu's new school
FRIEND 2:	Old school friend of Sbu from the village	BOY 2:	Boy at Sbu's new school

SCENE 1

In Sbu's granny's village a smart car pulls up outside her old, dilapidated house. The paint is faded and the gutters are broken. Sbu, his brother Nkosi, and their mom Ester get out of the car. Sbu's granny comes out to greet them, then Nkosi runs off to play with the kids in the street.

GOGO: *(pinches S'bu's cheek affectionately)* Hawu! Look how you've grown, ngane yami.

S'BU: *(blushing)* Ah, I missed you too, Gogo.

GOGO: Oh Nkosi yami! You have become only bones, my boy. Don't they feed you in town? Maybe you need to come back and live with me again! Did I not teach your mother to cook properly? But listen to me. I can see you want to go and play with your old friends. Off you go – I'll have cooldrink for you when you come back.

S'bu runs to the park where he finds his friends from when he lived in the village.

S'BU: *(smiling)* I knew I'd find you guys here.

FRIEND 1: Hayibo! Look who's here, bafethu.

The four of them gather around S'bu. He shakes each of their hands and gives them manly hugs.

S'BU: I've missed you guys so much!

FRIEND 2: Asikaze sicabange. We never thought we'd see you again.

S'BU: I'm just back for this week because we're on school holidays.

FRIEND 1: Woza uhlale nathi. Come and chill with us.

S'BU: I'll stand, thank you.

FRIEND 1: Oh, now you are worried about messing your new clothes!

FRIEND 2: What's it like that side – in the big city?

FRIEND 1: The food?

FRIEND 2: Aikhona. Who cares? Tell us, S'bu. Kanjani amantombazane? I bet they are really cute and pretty.

They all laugh.

S'BU: It's different – very. But I've got used to it. It's nice. And the school – there are enough books for everyone – plus extras! We've even got laptops and we get to go to the beach and museums. It's fun ...

FRIEND 2: *(whistling)* That's ngca, ne?

S'bu nods enthusiastically.

S'BU: And forget Morabaraba. They have chess and hockey.

FRIEND 1: Eish, one day I'll live there too.

S'BU: Some things aren't easy though. The cost of living is extremely high. And the kids there – they're high class.

FRIEND 2: Uthini? Are we not good enough?

S'BU: N– no! That's not what I meant.

FRIEND 2: Noma yini. You think 'cause you go to a fancy school now and wear fancy clothes you're better than us, S'bu?

S'BU: I don't think that. You're being unreasonable. It's just that ... I can't explain. You wouldn't fit in there ...

FRIEND 1: Wow! You've changed, umngane.

S'BU: It's not easy. Ma worked hard to bring Nkosi and me to the city.

FRIEND 2: You think our parents don't work hard? Unenhlanhla. You got lucky. Coconut.

FRIEND 1: Asambe, guys. Let's go!

S'bu goes back to his granny's house and finds her in the kitchen. She gives him some cooldrink.

GOGO: Your mother says you have a machine now that washes your dishes. So now she has forgotten how to wash up! I love your mother, you know that, but lowo wesifazane – that woman she hates work.

Gogo looks at S'bu closely.

GOGO: Kwenzenjani, S'bu? What's wrong?

S'BU: My friends think I'm a coconut. It's not like I've changed ... But it's like I have to change who I am. At school I must speak English and act like the other boys or I get judged as a village boy. But here they think I'm too high-and-mighty and tease me too. What do I do, Gogo?

Gogo chuckles.

S'BU: What's so funny?

GOGO: Oh, son, uzolile manje. Be calm. Just breathe and remember who you really are. Be true to yourself. You don't have to change. You must just be you.

S'BU: Easier said than done. Sometimes I don't know who I am any more. I'm 'too white' for my home and 'too black' for school.

GOGO: Cha, ngane yami. If you keep pretending, you will lose yourself. Kufanele uzithole! – You must find yourself!

S'BU: Thanks, Gogo. I'm really tired now ... I think I'll go to sleep.

Gogo kisses him before he goes to find Nkosi who is lying on their mattress listening to the radio.

SCENE 2

It's a week later and S'bu is back at school in town. He is chatting to Pretty in the school quad.

PRETTY: Did you have a good holiday?

S'BU: It was OK. I went to my grandmother's place. There's not much to do there.

Jeff swaggers up to them, followed by some of his friends.

JEFF: What did you do on holiday, S'bu?

S'BU: I ... er ... went to my grandmother's house.

JEFF: Your grandmother? That doesn't sound very exciting.

S'BU: (*lying*) She lives up in Northcroft. You know, by the beach. We went swimming and jet-skiing ...

Jeff and his friends whistle in admiration. Pretty pulls S'bu aside.

PRETTY: Unamanga. You are lying. Why, S'bu?

S'BU: I'm not lying!

PRETTY: Ngiyazi, S'bu. I know, you told me before that your gogo lives in a village. Don't let Jeff and his cronies make you feel inferior, ngiyacela.

S'bu shrugs, and before he can say anything, a group of younger students come by, including Siyanda, who is short and skinny.

JEFF: Hey, look who it is! Siyanda the sissy.

SIYANDA: (*scared*) Please let me go to class.

BOY 1: Class? Go practise your singing skills before the talent show next week, Hannah Montana.

BOY 2: And where's your wig? And dress too.

BOY 1: Hey! What's in your bag?

One of the boys takes Siyanda's bag and holds it out of his reach. The boys throw it to each other.

SIYANDA: (*trying to jump to catch his bag*) Please give me my bag back.

NKOSI: (*runs up and shouts*) Leave my friend alone!

S'BU: Nkosi! What are you doing here? Go away, this does not concern you.

NKOSI: (*fearless*) Siyanda is my friend and you can't make me do anything, S'bu.

The boys whistle at the argument that has begun between the two brothers.

S'BU: (*pulling Nkosi away*) Sorry, guys, I need to speak to my brother. I'll meet you later.

JEFF: Whatever. Let's go, guys. Give the boy his bag back. We have better things to do.

Jeff and his friends walk away.

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