

Queen of Soweto

The Story of Basetsana Kumalo

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Queen of Soweto: The Story of Basetsana Kumalo

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Basetsana Makgalemele was born in a township called Soweto. She was her parents' third daughter. They named her Basetsana, which means "girls". In Tswana culture, calling your daughter that means your next child will be a boy. This actually happened. Her parents' next child was a boy. Her parents, big sisters and younger brother all called her Bassie for short.

When she was a child, Bassie was very shy. She liked to sing and dance in her room on her own. One day at school netball practice, the coach told two girls to pick teams. Bassie stood on the edge of the field hoping someone would say, "Come play with us!" But nobody wanted her on their team.

Little did they know, Bassie would become one of the most popular girls in the country.





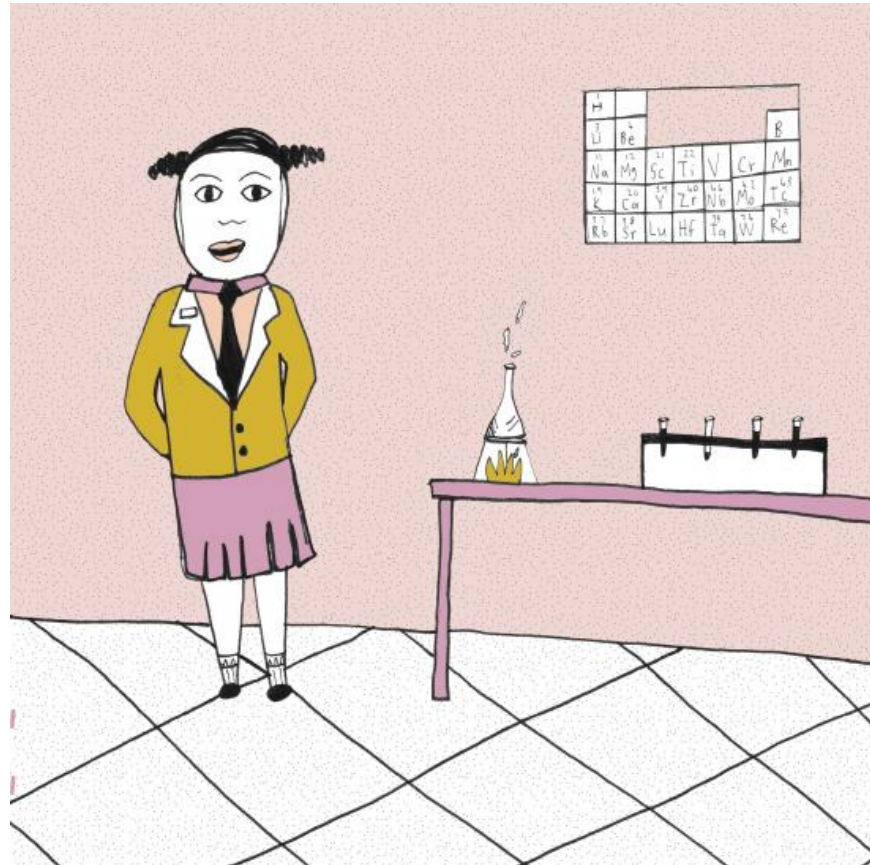
On weekends, she and her brother and sisters helped their teacher mom and bus driver dad to pay the bills. They made sandwiches to sell at local soccer matches. They tried to sell everything as fast as they could so they had time to play with the other children when the game was over.



By the time Bassie turned 16, she was a beautiful young woman. She was so beautiful that she won two beauty competitions in one year: Miss Soweto and Miss Black South Africa.

But Bassie was not only beautiful on the outside. She was also beautiful on the inside. Even though she was a beauty queen, she still cared about the community where she grew up.

Bassie was also very smart. She worked hard at school, especially on her favourite subject: science. Her hard work was rewarded when she was the top science student at her school in matric. That's not all, she was also Head Girl. The shy little girl was now one of the most popular girls in school.



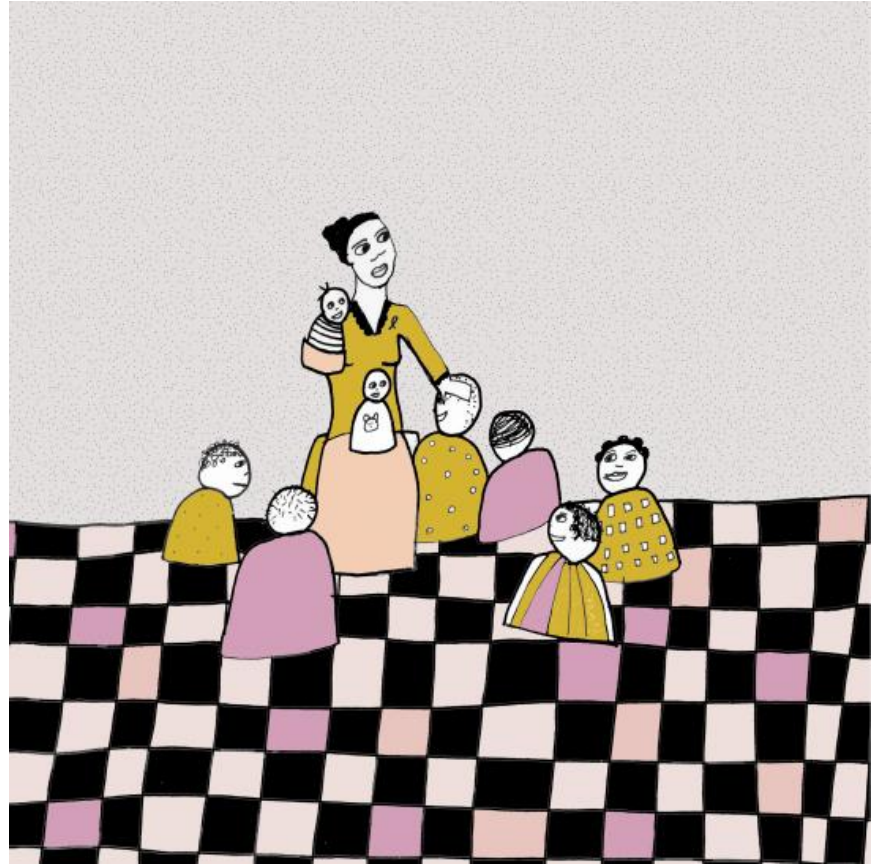
Bassie's father always encouraged his children to read. He gave her a book called *The Power of Positive Thinking*. From that book, she learnt that being optimistic is the key to making your dreams a reality. She dreamt of winning Miss South Africa. Not only did that dream come true, she was even crowned First Princess in the Miss World competition!





Bassie's mother was her role model. Bassie described her mom as a "fierce, hardworking Xhosa woman who did not suffer fools". She was a teacher and Bassie had plans to follow in her footsteps, but things don't always go as planned! After winning Miss South Africa, she became a TV presenter. She wasn't a teacher, but like her mom, she was hardworking. Her career in TV led to her opening her own television production company. She was now a successful business woman.

Bassie's motto is: "To whom much is given, much is expected." She believes that you are given a gift so that you can give to others. Bassie does this by volunteering, giving of her time and money and even creating jobs. She is involved with projects and charities to help people in her community. One that is very close to her heart is the Nelson Mandela Institute.



Bassie had a very close relationship with Nelson Mandela. When she was crowned Miss South Africa, Madiba wrote her a letter of congratulations. In the letter, he called her “our Queen”. They shared a passion for children and education and the belief that an educated nation can help fight poverty.



Bassie married Romeo Kumalo and became known as Basetsana Kumalo.

Together they established the Romeo & Basetsana Kumalo Family Foundation. The foundation looks after orphans - children who don't have a mom and dad.



Bassie has had to learn to balance her busy work and family life.

She has her own company called Basetsana Women Investment Holdings. She and Romeo have three children, two boys and a girl. Bassie sees her role as mother to her children as her “highest calling and greatest privilege”.





Bassie says the secret to her success is “courage, determination, passion and staying committed to the course”. Despite all her success, she remains humble while trying to make the world a better place.

Being beautiful on the outside is not what makes you a beautiful person. It’s a heart filled with love and generosity. And that’s why Bassie is our beautiful Queen.



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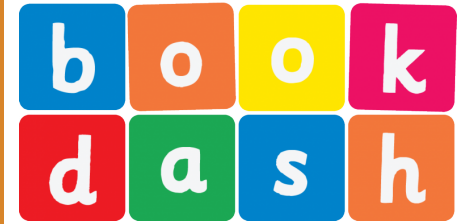
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