

# Grandmother and the Smelly Girl

Southern African Folktale  
English





Tasneem was a very beautiful girl  
and her grandmother was very  
kind.

Her grandmother spent many hours making a handsome makgabe for Tasneem. Tasneem loved to wear that apron.





The other girls in that place were jealous of Tasneem's makgabe. They thought that it would be better to get rid of it. But it is a difficult thing to take a person's clothes when that person is wearing them.

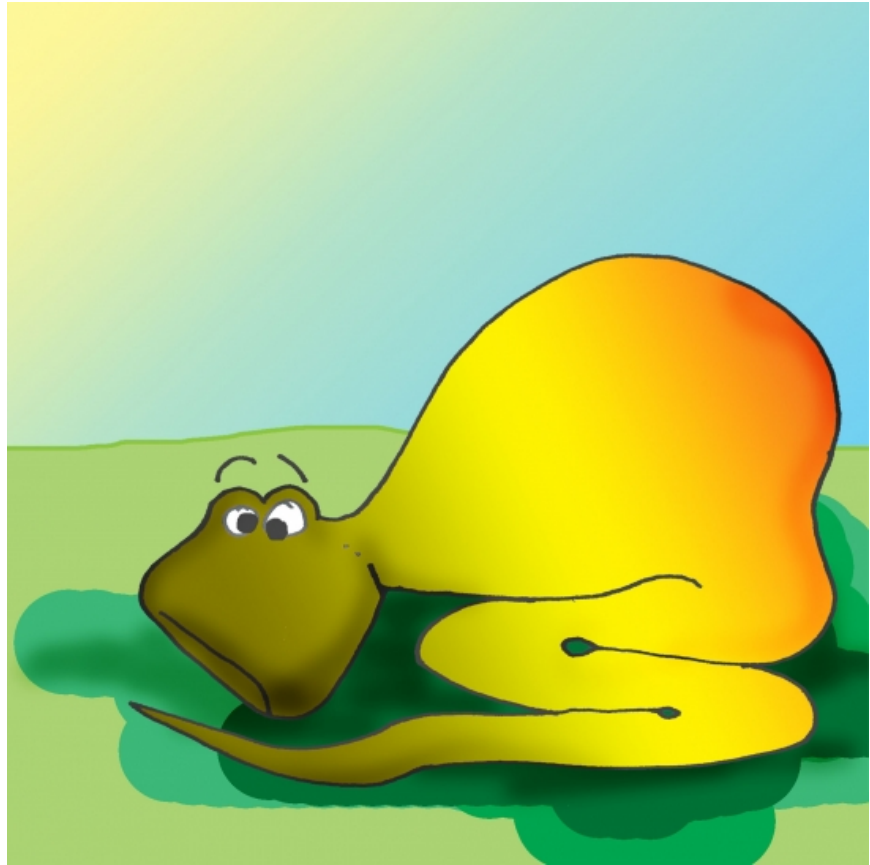
One morning the girls invited Tasneem to go swimming with them in a river nearby. At the river bank, they all took off their makgabses so that the cloth would not be damaged. Then they jumped into the water and splashed around for some time.





They finished swimming. The leader of the jealous girls threw Tasneem's makgabe into the river, near the place of a very large snake. Then all the other girls left Tasneem crying by the river.

The large snake heard someone weeping. He slithered out and saw the beautiful Tasneem. He swallowed the makgabe and Tasneem whole.







Fortunately for her, the snake did not like the taste of the makgabe. He spat it and Tasneem out. They lay on the river bank, covered with slime from the snake's stomach. This slime smelled very bad.



The smelly Tasneem put on her  
smelly makgabe and ran home to  
her parents.  
She sang ...



Mother, open the door for me, I am smelling;  
Mother, open the door for me, I am smelling,  
I am smelling very bad.

The mother heard Tasneem's song and ran out of the house.

She sang back to the girl:

Go away, you are smelling,  
Go away, you are smelling,  
Go away, you are smelling very bad.

Tasneem was very upset.  
She ran off to the house of her aunt  
and uncle.  
They heard her singing ...



Open the door for me, I am smelling;  
Open the door for me, I am smelling,  
I am smelling very bad.

They ran out of their house. They sang back:

Go away, you are smelling,  
Go away, you are smelling,  
Go away, you are smelling very bad.



Tasneem had only her grandmother's house to go to. Her heart was heavy. She thought nobody wanted to look after a bad smelling girl.

But she was wrong. Her grandmother did not send her away. She washed Tasneem, and her makgabe, making everything smell sweetly.





Tasneem stayed with her grandmother for many years. One day the son of a very rich chief asked Tasneem to marry him.



Tasneem's parents heard about the marriage and asked her to come back to live in their house.





Tasneem remembered how she had smelled so bad. She told them that she would never go back to their house. "Parents must love their children," she said, "even if their children smell very bad."

Instead Tasneem invited her grandmother to come and live with her in the house of this rich chief and his son.



The grandmother was very happy, and very comfortable, and very important.



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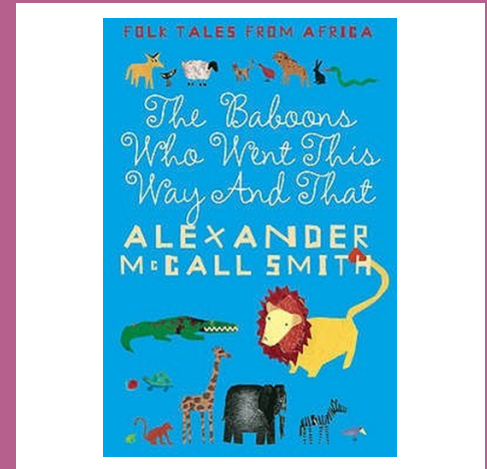
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An excellent read aloud version of  
this story is Alexander McCall  
Smith's retelling in *The Baboons  
Who Went This Way and That*,  
Canongate, 2006.



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