





# SUBURBAN BLISS

Despite her zany sense of humour, comedian Tumi Morake is down to earth when it comes to home and family. The married mom of two is living her dream life with hubby Mpho



MAIN PICTURE: Tumi and Mpho with Bonsu (3) and eight-week-old Lesedi. ABOVE: The Osei-Tutus are a jolly, close-knit bunch who can't get enough of each other.

HER conventional house with its standard suburban picket fence comes a bit of a surprise given that she's one of South Africa's funniest, wackiest women.

But besides her crazy antics on stage and screen Tumi Osei-Tutu, better known as Tumi Morake, is a committed, loving wife and a mother of two.

The award-winning comedian, actress and writer says getting married three years ago was one of the best things that's ever happened to her. She had fantasised about the white picket-fence existence complete with two-and-a-half kids and the mandatory marital Gomma Gommass.

It didn't pan out exactly the way she imagined but the bubbly star couldn't be happier. "I've got a green picket fence instead," the 30-year-old quips when we meet in her Kensington house, in the east of Joburg.

“We've got God's stamp of approval on our relationship”

"It'll be two and a half kids with the dog that we're going to get. That's such a symbol of suburban existence, isn't it?" she jokes. "And we didn't exactly buy the mandatory Gomma Gommass but our leather couches are as Gomma Gommass as it gets."

Tucked somewhere off the N3 highway close to Eastgate Mall, the house is a little haven for Tumi, her writer and actor husband Mpho Osei-Tutu (30), their children Bonsu (3) and Lesedi (8 weeks) and their helper Mabela.

The lived-in, Tuscan-themed house with its tranquil surroundings is a world away from the modest apartment in Yeoville where the couple lived before.

(Turn over)





Doting husband Mpho and Bonsu look on as Tumi cradles the newest member of the family, Lesedi, who is just two months old.

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"We moved here about a year ago," Mpho says as he swaggers into the room. "I just like the old houses with their pressed ceilings and wooden floors. And besides that the neighbourhood is quite cosmopolitan."

Tumi interjects, "What he won't admit is that he's a true eastern boy – he grew up in the East Rand."

The pair admit to feeling quite nostalgic

for their former address in Yeoville – if only for their favourite food. "We still go to Yeoville," Tumi says. "The reason I still go there is to get Ghanaian cuisine because my husband is Ghanaian. Anyway, Ghanaian food is great, and it's low-GI."

The spacious living room has trendy wallpaper and is lavish with its giant leather couches and state-of-the-art home theatre and sound system.

Adjacent to the living room is another

cozy lounge with a different set of sofas. We sit there with a dated Chuck Norris action movie playing in the background.

"Of course I'm not watching that. I just arrived home for the shoot," Tumi quips. "On second thought, who doesn't enjoy action? This is like a trip down memory lane for me."

Mpho nods in agreement. "True that, Chuck Norris is the future. You can never get tired of Chuck Norris."

LEFT TO RIGHT: The living room where they like to relax is chock-full with memorabilia; framed photographs of the couple's 2009 wedding and family members; cherished artefacts collected from their travels around the world; and their favourite books.





THE pair met 12 years ago while studying drama at Wits University in Joburg. They had to work together on a production project required for the course and hit it off immediately.

"In first year, one of the requirements of the course was to work behind the scenes on a production," Mpho says. "That's how we met."

"We had to build a set for a musical," Tumi recalls. "At the time he was sporting a big hairdo. I got to know him and he was too sweet."

It was love at first sight for the lovebirds but there were complications. "We were seeing different people at the time," Mpho explains. "But there was always a mutual attraction. So we decided to be just friends."

"I loved his eyes," Tumi remembers. "They kind of pull you in. The chemistry really kicked in when we were rehearsing for Shakespeare's Twelfth Night. It didn't help matters that we worked together. I didn't want to tell him how I felt about him because I was worried there was a chance I might lose him as a friend."

It then happened that they both ended their relationships around the same time. "We both broke up with our partners in the space of about a month," Mpho says. "And that changed everything."

Tumi continues, "It was an interesting coincidence. Then I was like, 'Wait a minute, an opportunity knocks'. We dated for seven years until we got married in 2009. But I knew three years into our relationship that he was the one."

Mpho nods. "I knew she'd make a great mother," he says. "She had a certain fire in her and she was a hard worker."

Tumi says married life has been a blessing. "Married life is so cool, Joe. It's like ukujola (dating) without having to remind



ABOVE: The home swimming pool, they insist, is not a mere water feature as they use it regularly.

people of their place. You don't have to shriek things like, 'Hey, that's my man!' There are some tough decisions you have to make when you're on your own and marriage helps you with that sort of stress. I'm loving it because I married my friend.

"It's easier because I'm not in the pre-paid mode ya ukujola. I have that comfort of knowing where I'm going, we've got God's stamp of approval on our relationship. What I like about being married to

**“ The chemistry really kicked in when we were rehearsing for Shakespeare ”**

Mpho is that he's never asked me to grow up – he lets me be.”

It also helps that she's a mother of two now. "Motherhood's made me softer," she says. "When I was pregnant with my first baby I thought motherhood would make me aggressive because there'd be a bigger sense of purpose, but it didn't. In fact it made me hit serious ABS brakes. I wasn't impulsively jumping into life anymore."

Mpho manages to get in a word. "Something about the birth of our kids changed the relationship," he says. "It made me love her more. It's such an emotional thing and when both of you are committed it's impossible to get out of it. "She's my best friend. She's someone who will always listen to me – a shoulder to cry on, someone with whom I know I can build a future."

The sitcom Askies was Tumi's last TV acting gig. Since then she's immersed herself in a lot of stand-up comedy.

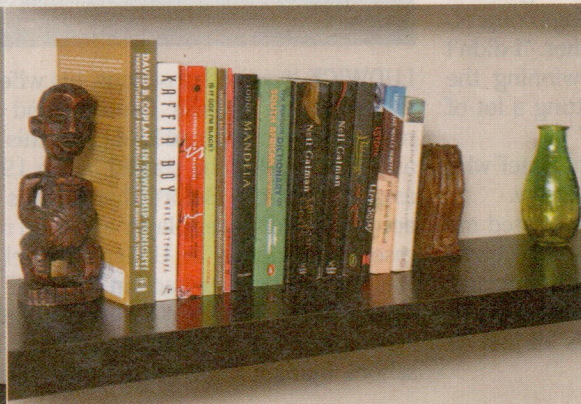
"Stand-up comedy just took over," she says. "So I just focused on stand-up comedy and writing for other TV shows. I've been writing for SABC 2's Ga Re Dumele, Mofereferi Lenyalong and Gauteng Maboneng.

"Last year I did Laugh Out Loud on Mzansi Magic and I was part of the writing team as well."

The rest of the year ahead is chock-a-block with comedy gigs and Tumi can't wait to do her one-woman show taking place in a couple of months. "I'm currently working on that," she says. "Sisters must back a sister up and buy tickets."

Her story will be at The Lyric Theatre at Gold Reef City on 11 August and we're sure, coming from Tumi, it will be a story like no other. □

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RIGHT: Tumi's Speakers of Note Entertainer of the Year Award.

