



A REAL LITTLE ROCK

**BEATEN, RAPED AND SET
ALIGHT – BUT THIS GUTSY
LITTLE GIRL HAS
SURVIVED**

By Pieter van Zyl

MENTION the name Little Rock and pride lights up the eyes

of the residents of Blue Downs and its surrounds near Cape Town. This little girl has become a symbol of hope in an often hopeless and violence-ridden community.

Little Rock – “Klein Rots” – is the nickname given to the nine-year-old girl who rose from flames and literally on fire, stumbled away from her rapist to safety 18 months ago.

But that was just the beginning of her story of courage. She was also prepared to go through the trauma necessary to face her attacker in court.

In the end this wasn't necessary. Abraham James struck a deal with the State and pleaded guilty to the vicious attack earlier this month. He was sentenced to an effective 28 years in jail.

It's hard to understand how the child survived that night of hell. She'll always bear the physical scars. When she goes out she usually wears a long black veil, leaving only her friendly brown eyes – the windows to her unquenchable, bubbly personality – visible. The cloth disguises the scars that stretch from the right side of her face to her chest and legs.

They haven't affected her fighting spirit or bravery though. She has had to drop her plans to be a model but now she has a new dream.

“I want to be a doctor,” she announces firmly.

Why?

Her brow furrows and her reply is a little annoyed. “Because I want to help other kids get better some day, of course.”

Little Rock perches on the couch amid the teddy bears given to her by well-wishers. She draws as we chat to her mom in their wooden shack in a Blue Downs backyard. She withdraws into another part of the house when her mother begins talking about that awful night.

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