



Why Jeremy Forrest is No Victim

When I think of the adults I developed crushes on at 14-15, I cringe at my naivety & lack of judgment. I am sure that I am not alone in this.

Thank goodness that I was fortunate enough not to fall foul of exploitative teachers and other adults.

The girl whom Jeremy Forrest abducted and groomed was not so fortunate. This man, who was twice her age, preyed upon a 14 year old girl, who was away from home on a school trip, as she struggled with bulimia. Could this possibly be any more abusive and exploitative? It is almost text book stuff. It doesn't matter how it is framed or portrayed as some tragic 'love story', it is abuse.

What kind of person, a supposed adult, declares his 'romantic love' for a child? One who at best has an arrested development and is sorely lacking. At worst, one who clearly enjoys and exploits the powerful position he is in, is on an ego trip, possibly a narcissist whose grandiose sense of self is gratified to have the adoration of a child whom she sees as her rescuer.

The UK has been hit by the exposés of a series of child abuse cases, many of which are historic and in the wake of Savile, have only just been finally acknowledged by the media and other authorities. Alongside the celebrity cases there has also been a number of high profile 'Asian grooming' ones involving vulnerable girls. Quite rightly, most people have expressed revulsion at the behaviour of these powerful men and finally, it appeared that the general public was gaining an insight and understanding of the MO of these devious, manipulative and exploitative groomers of children. They target the vulnerable, isolate them, make them feel special and/or loved then attack, buying secrecy and silence in the form of gifts and/or threats.

In light of all of this, one would hope for a responsible and sensitive reporting of the issues around child abuse, however, instead of which, this weekend, the British media has been subjected to headlines relating to the case of Jeremy Forrest, where the schoolgirl he abducted believes that she groomed him and today's latest, that if it weren't for her jealousy about a flirtatious barmaid (a trap designed to flush them out when they were in France), then they would never have been found.

I am not about to preach to the girl in question how she must be feeling, as I imagine there will be a range of conflicting emotions that she is experiencing, however this is horrible and so damaging to have such a huge sense of responsibility on such young shoulders, when the blame lies solely with the abductor and abuser, Jeremy Forrest. That is beyond question, he was the adult in this scenario and not only that, one in a position of power and authority, being her school teacher.

The media is totally wrong to report this and if the girl in question is struggling with these feelings, I hope that she does get help and support to process them and realise that none of this her fault. She is not responsible, no matter how guilty she feels. [Guilt is a very common](#)



[emotion of survivors of abuse](#), partly because of the way in which as girls and women we are socialised into believing that men are uncontrollable when it comes to their sexuality, we are evil temptresses and it is our duty to protect ourselves from the uncontrollable male and if we are unable to, we have clearly lured them, siren- like into our wicked paths.

Secondly, manipulative behaviour of child abusers is part of the grooming process; they convince the abused that they are complicit in or even wholly responsible for their behaviour. This is part of a pattern with all types of abuse, including domestic violence and abuse and rape.

In my view, the girl has not only been exploited by Forrest but is now being exploited and abused by the press. Where is the public interest in this angle? What purpose does it serve? To exonerate the behaviour of a male adult, in a position of power and authority who abducted a vulnerable child, took her away from her friends and family, isolating her in an unknown country where they would forever be 'on the run'. A child who had a history of eating disorders and self-harm. A child whose family had been lied to by Forrest and who were desperate about her wellbeing and whereabouts when she was abducted.

There will be survivors of child sex abuse who are triggered by the appalling manner in which this has been reported and may well be blaming themselves all over again for the behaviour of their abusers, dealing with the torment that they were somehow responsible.

This reporting also reinforces all the worst and most damaging stereotypes about the so called provocative and hyper-sexualised teenage girls who set their sights on an adult male and nothing will get in their way of 'ensnaring him'. It is a variation of the 'groupie myth' used to let MEN off the hook for exploiting and abusing the teenage adoration of their child fans.

There will be abusers for whom this reporting is music to their ears. 'S/he made me do it and enjoyed it to boot.' This reporting is surely designed to legitimise, normalise, glamorise and romanticise child sexual abuse.

Finally, the lowering of the Age of Consent lobby will adopt this as a cause célèbre. Just a reminder to anyone reading this who thinks that the age of consent in these situations is 16, it isn't, it is 18 and clearly stated in the [Sexual Offences Act 2003](#).

Anyone who works with survivors of child sexual abuse will attest that it can take years, if not a lifetime in some cases, for survivors to stop blaming themselves. There is never ever any justification or excuse for abuse. Do not fall for this trope. The media is playing a dangerous game.