

The Perfect Scapegoat by Jessie Kyd

5 stars

A harrowing tale leaving me saying, "There but for the grace of God go I"

Jessie Kyd was still in school when she applied for part-time work in a wool shop owned by a couple; Sally and Jim. This part-time work soon included babysitting their three children; Sarah, Thomas and Milly.

A friendship was very quickly forged between Sally and Jessie. Jessie taking special interest in Sarah, who has learning difficulties. At the time of starting this part-time work, Jessie had not made up her mind about the course she'd like to study at university, but working with Sarah convinced her that she was ideally suited to work with children with learning difficulties. Jessie took working with this little girl very seriously. She helped at the school that Sarah attended and learnt Makaton sign language so that she could communicate with her. In fact, Jessie communicated with Sarah better than her own mother, Sally.

Jessie's parents were happy when she found the part-time job working in the shop, but then, when it started taking over all her free time after work and weekends, they became concerned as her school work was suffering. None of their concerns was treated with anything but rebellion by Jessie who was still a stroppy teenager. They also tried to appeal to Sally and Jim, saying that Jessie needed to cut down the time she spent with them, but this too fell on deaf ears.

Sarah was hospitalised for a suspected urinary tract disorder. Jessie spent all the time she could with her, often sleeping in a chair at the hospital so that Sally could go home to the other two children. Sarah needed someone to be there who could understand her needs as the nurses and doctors were unfamiliar as to how to communicate with her.

The paediatrician, who was looking after Sarah, told Sally and Jim that he felt sure that Sarah had been sexually abused. Jessie on hearing this, expressed her disbelief saying that she felt that it couldn't be possible and must be something with a far simpler explanation. For instance, when Sarah became extremely constipated she would behave in a certain way often trying to explain that it hurt "down there". However Jessie's opinion was ignored.

The first time that Jessie realised that something was very wrong was when two members of the police turned up at her house to arrest her for molesting Sarah.

From the very beginning, I wondered how this couple, Sally and Jim, could have influenced this young girl and manipulated her to go against everything her parents were saying. It felt like she had almost become brainwashed into feeling that she was the one and only person who could help them and support them. Is this not similar behaviour shown by people who join a cult?

Granted the incident took place about twenty years ago, so forensic science was not as sophisticated as today. Also, so much has happened in both social services and with the police when investigating abuse and possibly the child had not been molested at all, but

because NO ONE except Jessie completely understood Sarah's very restricted form of communication, they misinterpreted what the child was trying to say.

I also had other questions rushing 'round my head. Why was the social worker so hellbent on making Jessie look like the culprit? Why were her parents and particularly her father not questioned in detail about their own roles with Sarah? Why did Sally and Jim keep her on AFTER these allegations? Any "normal" parents would have insisted that she never darken their door again. Why was she allowed to carry on running the shop? She was alone in the shop. Surely it would mean that she might also be stealing from them? But most of all - why did Social Services not clear the slate once the police had realised that there was no evidence to charge her? Why did it take YEARS for her to get the allegations against her removed from social services records?

Jessie had to survive all through her university course and master's degree with this sword hanging over her head. Banned from working with children and, God forbid that in the event that she herself fell pregnant, her own children being removed from her.

My biggest and most troubling thought after reading this book was WHY did Jessie and her parents not think about suing this couple for blatant slander and for wrecking her life? Maybe it's just me, but I think if one of my children were arrested for something like this, I'd go after the people who had accused her with everything that I could. But that's just me - Jessie's mother took the stress badly and became ill. Jessie has suffered years of paranoia and pain and worse than that being made a pariah in the village where she lived while these parents carried on accusing her of this deed.

I always believe that good comes out of every bad situation. In this case Jessie has helped other people fight wrongful arrest and accusations. In fact, some of the money from the sale of this book goes towards funding such work.

I decided to look up the organisations giving help to people who may find themselves in a similar situation and hopefully, just by adding this information to my review, I might be able to help someone facing a similar wrongful arrest charge.

Here is a list of some organisations that can be contacted:

www.factuk.org

www.false-allegations.org.uk

Treebeard

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