



Magus of Stonewylde

Kit Berry

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How far would you go to save your child?

Exhausted single-mum Miranda is prepared to try anything. Suffering from baffling allergies and illnesses, her teenage daughter Sylvie has been written off by doctors. An offer of alternative therapy at a grand Dorset estate may be her last hope and so, against her better judgement, Miranda grabs this life-line.

Stonewylde is a beautiful and magical place, a sanctuary free from modern taint. The retreat is remote, hidden away behind high walls and iron gates, and soon the rat-race outside fades to insignificance. Stonewylde is ruled by the charismatic Magus, who vows to cure Sylvie and give both their hearts' desires. He promises the earth and it seems he can deliver.

But everything comes at a price. Life at Stonewylde is too idyllic, too wholesome, too perfect. The ancient rituals in the stone circle are not quite what they seem and neither is the Magus, whose sinister sensuality hides a darker secret. Sylvie and Miranda join the community and both fall in love for the first time. But their arrival triggers a brutal chain of events that could destroy the unique world of Stonewylde.

Mother and daughter will eventually discover the truth: Stonewylde may cure, but it can also kill.

Magus of Stonewylde Details

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Author : Kit Berry

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From Reader Review Magus of Stonewylde for online ebook

Andy Angel says

Wow!! I picked this book up on recommendation from several online book sights, not thinking it would be 'my thing' - and I am so glad I did. You can pick up the general gist of the story from other reviews on here so I'll concentrate on the writing. In a nutshell, Kit Berry's narrative skills blew me away.

The descriptions of the people, environs and flora and fauna of Stonewylde mean you don't just read this book you live it. Ms Berry obviously has a feel for the 'old ways' and Pagan beliefs because the attention to detail is that good. The book gets a lot darker towards the end and I actually found myself worried for Yul, the male lead character (yeah, I know he's the hero and everything will be alright but the stuff he has to endure is tough)

Loved this book and would highly recommend it to anyone. Thankfully book 2 will be out soon because this ended on not so much a cliffhanger as a major turning point so midnight on release day it'll be heading straight to my kindle.

Hannah (Sakurahan or ForeverBooks18) says

I've just finished Magus Of Stonewylde by Kit Berry and I really loved it! It was a reread but the first time I read it, I was only 16/17, so it's been a while.

Magus Of Stonewylde is about a young girl, Sylvie who might die without getting the opportunity to go to Stonewylde, a magical place of healing and happiness. When she's there, however things happen that make her question her values and who she is as a person. Our other main character, Yul is a poor villager who experiences abuse and anger at him from his father as well as other characters.

5 Stars!

Magus Of Stonewylde fulfils the challenges of:

- The Fae Readathon! Reading a book with a different magical creatures - Stonewylde is all about the magic of nature. As well as Moongazyness - <https://www.facebook.com/events/17455...>

- * Reading Rivalry, for a book with a feather on the cover. ACOFAS didn't count towards this as the feather is just going off of the book. Instead there's a bird on The Magus Of Stonewylde cover so there are loads of feathers! - <https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?...>

- * Popsugar 2018 Challenge - A book by a local author. Kit Berry lived in Dorset when she was writing the books, which is closer than London is to me so I'm counting it - <https://www.popsugar.co.uk/smart-livi...>

- Book Bingo on Facebook! It completed the goal of reading a book of Spring, as Magus Of Stonewylde is set in the spring months, if you live in the northern hemisphere, like I do - <https://m.facebook.com/events/1442935...>

Magus Of Stonewylde has some abusive elements as well as some talk of sex. I therefore wouldn't recommend this to anyone who's been in an abusive situation or anyone below the age of 17.

Spoilers below...

“Tiny lambs skipped amongst the sheep, dotted throughout the hills. She saw acres and acres of woodlands stretching away, still brown in winter guise.”

This lets us know that Spring is coming to England, where the story takes place. This is how the story meets the prompt for the Book Bingo.

At Stonewylde there are two separate groups of people, the Hallfolk and the villagers. The Hallfolk are the high and esteemed people, when the villagers are basically the dregs of society. Sylvie has very blonde hair, just as other Hallfolk characters do. This makes her Hallfolk, according to the Hallfolk characters.

When Sylvie gets to Stonewylde with her mum she's at first happy to have found a place where she can be healed.

“Magus was very attractive and he appeared like a knight in shining armour at Miranda's darkest hour.”

This simile is significant the further we get into the novel because Magus isn't all he seems to be. At first he seems to be a very caring, light and happy guy, when he heals Sylvie for example, but it's revealed later that he's actually quite twisted. I don't want to reveal exactly how but he does some very questionable things. He claims that the society of Stonewylde is separate from everyone else in the world so the laws and customs that we have don't apply there. Miranda is Sylvie's mother and she falls head over heels in love with Magus. Does Magus feel the same way about her, though?

Magus is a name that reflects the character's leadership. His actual, birth name is Sol. Sol has a sexual relationship with Sylvie's mother Miranda, as well as several of the other younger girls. Again as the real world laws don't apply in Stonewylde, sex is allowed when the young characters have their Rite Of Adulthood.

“Oh Sylvie, he hasn't got a wife! He's the magus. Every girl, Hallfolk or villager dreams of having him for their Rite Of Adulthood. They all choose him for their initiation. He certainly couldn't perform his role as magus if he were married.”

The Rite Of Adulthood is generally at age 14. Magus is seen coming back from a night in the hills with a girl who had had her Rite Of Adulthood the night before. This sickens Sylvie, as it would anyone today, I think. Magus just claims that she's not accustomed to the ways of Stonewylde, yet.

Yul, our other main character, is just older than Sylvie. He explains the rules of Stonewylde to her and helps her when she has problems. He's her only friend.

“Yul felt he would burst, being so close to her.”

Yul is attracted to Sylvie, just as she is to him. Can they find a way to be together in a world that tries to stop that?

One of the characters that has a problem with Yul, is Buzz or Buzzard. Buzz is a boy who's just older than Yul. Because of this he thinks he can act like he's the leader, when that's not the case.

“But you must never become friends with him. Magus is watching him carefully and he'll be furious. You don't want to see Magus when he's angry, believe me. So you must have nothing more to do with the boy. Okay?”

This one of is Buzz's attempts at putting an end to Sylvie's fascination with Yul. There are a few different ways he tries to get Sylvie to think of him, the way she thinks of Yul. Buzz wants Sylvie scared of Magus.

That's the only way he can perhaps intercept their relationship.

Miranda has words with Sylvie warning her away from Yul, too.

"Far better for someone like Buzz as your first boyfriend than that nasty village boy."

Of course Sylvie disagrees with this. She and Yul are the only ones who can see Magus and Buzz for the evil men that they are. Buzz is also Magus's son, which doesn't help Yul as Magus also hates him. When Buzz starts talking to Sylvie it angers Yul, as he can see just what Buzz is doing. Sylvie is however, blind to Buzz's flirty behaviour until about half way through "Magus Of Stonewylde", when Holly, a Hallfolk girl who fancies Buzz sees how Buzz acts towards Sylvie and wants to end her. I found Holly to be a villainous character because she never had anything nice to say. Everything was about her and her pleasures. She didn't care about anyone else.

I said above that "Magus Of Stonewylde" involves some abusive scenes. These are accredited to Alwyn, Yul's father who hates him. I'm not going to describe any of them or write any more about this but the scenes themselves are quite disturbing.

Sylvie has a special power. This is where the "other magical creatures" prompt from above comes in because she can become something else at the rising of the full moon.

"Nobody understood what happened to her at the rising of the full moon."

Magus is also jealous of this. He wants Sylvie to be his as well, I think, as well as her mother.

There is also a magical old crone, Old Mother Heggy in the story. She prophesies things that will happen in Stonewylde. Magus really doesn't like her but both Sylvie and Yul become close to her.

"Beware of Magus for he is out to destroy you."

Mother Heggy says this to Yul about Magus. What happens though, you'll need to read to find out!

The last thing I'll note here is that Sylvie and Yul start a forbidden relationship at the end of this book. Magus forbids it, as he claims, its wrong for Hallfolk and villagers to be together.

"What have you done? Have you hurt Yul?"

Magus chuckled.

"That village boy's no good Sylvie and you must forget him. There'll be no more contact between the two of you."

"What have you done to him?"

This is Sylvie, very worried about what's happened to Yul during the novel. He's been taken away because of his "relationship" with Sylvie. Magus sickeningly wants her for himself, eventually as I said above. He's just using her mother until he can get Sylvie. Of course Sylvie doesn't want Magus, only Yul. She wants and needs to know that he's okay. Is he though? What will happen in the next book?

What did I like about "Magus Of Stonewylde"?

I liked the growing relationship between Yul and Sylvie. They don't just instantly fall in love. Sometimes I like that but other times it's nice to get to know the characters first.

I liked how the author wasn't afraid to write quite brutal scenes. On the front of my book it says "disturbing

and dramatic” and I quite agree with both of these facts. It certainly doesn’t hold back.

I liked that Stonewylde is like a village from olden times set in a modern day world. The only time the outside world is spoken of is when the Hallfolk go to Exeter, a city in southern England, along with direct comparisons of course. It’s like a fantasy novel set in modern times.

To go along with the fantasy bit, I liked the moongazy magic. It wasn’t in your face but it was still there. I’ve forgotten how present it is in the next books but I believe it still happens.

I liked how there were both good and evil characters. We’re not supposed to be sure of a few personalities until deeper into the series, I think. But our hero and heroine were both well developed characters. As was the main villain.

I liked reading about the setting of “Magus of Stonewylde” because I live close to where the Stonewylde would be if it existed. This means I can relate more to the characters experiences as the series goes on.

What didn’t I like about “Magus Of Stonewylde”?

When I first read Stonewylde, over 10 years ago, I didn’t know how to say “Magus.” I said it like Magic so majus, when I’ve just found out it’s a hard G. I WISH there was a pronunciation guide, as when I read it when I was younger I was saying the word wrong.

I’m obviously giving Magus Of Stonewylde 5 Stars! I loved the story and the characters! It’s only the pronunciation factor that I didn’t so much like, which is my own fault. Will you be reading this? If you’ve already read it let me know you’re thoughts below!

Stand by for my next read coming soon...

Gary Colcombe says

This is the first book in a series of three (although the author does say at the back of the book that there will be five!) centred on the magical village of Stonewylde, hidden within a private estate deep in the heart of Dorset in the West Country. Stonewylde is a pagan community that has survived almost untouched since the Norman Conquest and jealously guards its independence from the outside world. Sylvie and her mother are invited into this community and the story revolves around Sylvie, her mother, and two other very strong characters: one of whom, a boy of Sylvie’s years has many problems to contend with and the other, the leader of the community, is a very-complex, multi-faceted character.

The book seems squarely aimed at young adults and the plot seems to rush along with the strength and gay abandon of running youths. There is always something happening that keeps them all on their toes. Sylvie’s slow awakening (no spoilers here) is enthralling and I’m sure that Kit Berry has invented a new word in this book that definitely should be in the English language.

To the adult reader, many of the plot elements may seem predictable (the obligatory bully, for example) but they are deeply involved with the plot and I’m anxiously waiting the next two books to see how the situations resolve.

Where this book really shines is in its depiction of the pagan society of Stonewylde. Rarely does the author resort to the raw displays of power that are found in works of fantasy, but instead, she draws the reader into a

world where the energies of the Earth, Moon and Sun interweave in the lives of the participants at an almost subconscious level, only surfacing in a tremendous outpouring of joy at the time of the great Festivals. These are depicted as a mixture of surviving, and recently faded, folk-customs blended together with the beliefs and practices of modern pagans.

I really enjoyed this book - it was a lot of fun. For a book targeted at the young adult audience, I was half-afraid to find it a mixture of Buffy-esque monsters, displays of magic and angst-ridden romance. This, however, could not be further from the truth. The story is very much plot-driven, and in superlative fashion all of the above elements are present and correct, but understated rather than taking centre-stage leaving the reader to be carried along with the relentless rush of the story itself.

A very worthy read!

Mariah says

I thought this was an interesting and suspenseful read, but at the same time the writing quality seemed to be only so-so. The author is British and it is set in modern Britain. The premise is that Sylvie, a young girl who doesn't fit in, has become very ill. Her doctors believe that she has become ill due to her environment, and simply given up on life. One of the doctors, Hazel says if only you could go to Stonewylde, the isolated country community where she comes from. Sylvie and her mother investigate this and are welcomed into the community. It is a society that has preserved Pagan religion and old farming traditions and seems like a quaint utopia.

But after a while Sylvie realizes that Stonewylde isn't so perfect- she wonders about the motivations of the Magus who rules it, and gets in trouble for breaking the class divisions by hanging out with a friend.

The problems I saw with it were, the characters were relatively flat, the set up seemed contrived that someone just conveniently mentioned Stonewylde, and they are let in so easily. That a community like that would go undisturbed and unknown for so long is not believable.

It was somewhat reminiscent of the Wicker Man film, though not quite as dark.

For those who are still interested, (and are outside of Britain) since it's a small British press, you may need to either buy it at a New Age/Metaphysical/Pagan shop, or online.

Amanda says

I honestly don't know how to review Magus of Stonewylde. I know it is one of the self-publishing phenomena that has now garnered a traditional publishing deal. I know that many people rate the Stonewylde series incredibly highly (of which Magus of Stonewylde is the first). There were many favourable aspects of the book for me, but a lot of it simply didn't work in my opinion.

I will say that Kit Berry writes with great skill and warmth. Despite my issues with Magus of Stonewylde, I still had an enjoyable reading experience and looked forward to when I could pick up the novel. The simplicity and grace of the prose is a great strength.

Berry also clearly has respect for the English countryside. Where her descriptions of the flora and fauna dominated, I felt all my scepticism receding and thoroughly enjoyed the read.

I also want to remark on the characterisation. Sylvie is a sweet and passionate young girl; Yul is an incredibly well-drawn protagonist for whom I felt an enormous sympathy; and, in the form of Magus, we have a wonderfully sinister individual who professes to have the best interests of his people at heart (much like Mayor Prentiss from the Chaos Walking trilogy by Patrick Ness).

My issues stemmed with certain aspects of the plot. First of all, I think that the Stonewylde series would have succeeded thoroughly as a YA fantasy, rather than as some odd mish-mash of contemporary and mysticism. If the community of Stonewylde had been a place from a fantasy world, I would have had no issues whatsoever. I found it very difficult to reconcile the idea of this remote community with our modern day. There were glaring references to the Internet and computers in a place where a feudal system is still in place; I did not like this.

I also disliked the contrived manner in which Sylvie is brought to Stonewylde. Her mother, Miranda, is presented as a clever individual, and yet succumbs in a naive fashion to the blandishments of a man she has never met before. She gives up every aspect of her ordinary life and the access to doctors on the words of someone who tells her that her daughter might be okay by moving to the countryside. I'm afraid my scepticism abounded at this point.

Miranda, herself, is one of my issues. SO frustrating! I guess this could be equated to good writing on the part of Berry, if it is intended, but it damaged my reading experience. Miranda seems so strong and capable, but then becomes this lovelorn woman whenever Magus is around – despite his cold treatment of her, and his use of her as a broodmare to bear his children. I never appreciate doormats in my reading.

Speaking of the broodmare aspect – ye gods! This book was just FULL of inappropriate sexual references. The idea that these Villager women were being used by the Hallfolk to bear their children. Sure, it was presented in the form of pagan ceremonies, but it made me feel enormously uncomfortable. As did the fact that everyone seemed fixated on menstruation. Oh, and don't get me started on the fact that Miranda was raped to bear Sylvie – this was referenced casually and never brought up again. I sincerely hope that this is explored in a later novel, otherwise Berry is just using it for sensationalism, which is appalling.

This last point might be very much a personal problem, but Berry also uses the word 'moongazy' a lot, which I find incredibly cutesy, and I ended up gritting my teeth every time it was referenced. This might just be me, however!

Altogether, I found myself reading avidly, but at times not being entirely sure why, hence my very mixed-up review. I definitely think that Kit Berry has talent as a storyteller, but the Stonewylde series requires just TOO much suspension of disbelief for my liking. D'you know the problem? I liked it *just* enough that I want to read the second book in the series, but I suspect I shall find the same irritating issues with plot in that one! Worth reading in terms of writing skill, and to judge whether this self-published author should have been picked up by Orion.

Maria (Discuss It Book Group) says

After beating `Anansi Boys` and `Oranges are not the Only Fruit` in the January 2011 vote, this was the first indie novel which Discuss It Book Group selected as our main read. It received mixed reviews though provoked a very interesting discussion earning an overall group rating of 3.4 out of 5.

`Anansi Boys`:

<http://www.goodreads.com/review/show/...>

To add my personal review:

Short review:

Magus of Stonewylde: An interesting combination of eco-conscious, contemporary fiction and subtle, pagan-themed fantasy by an Indie author.

The Stonewylde community is closeted away within the Dorset countryside and ruled over by the master and shaman, known as the Magus. While there are wonderful benefits for chronically ill teenager Sylvie, when she and her mother move to Stonewylde - and a new world of eco-awareness, spirituality and magic to explore - all is not as rosy as it first seems.

Sylvie gradually uncovers a dark undercurrent within her little paradise. Beautiful it may be, but the community is also a place of inequality where the majority live medieval lives and accept their master's word as law. The Magus overlooks teenage bullying, encourages domestic violence and participates in sex rituals with the local teens. It is however, the horror of discovering that Yul - the only real friend Sylvie has made at Stonewylde - is its master's favourite victim, which opens her eyes to the true darkness within the Magus.

I initially found the novel slow and it took me a while to let go of my irritation at some of the weaknesses in the portrayal of female characters and the occasional, jarring dialogue. Not perfect but an entertaining read and after a few chapters I stopped caring about the flaws.

Longer review:

In Stonewylde there is no church - there never was. We're told that when churches were being built on Pagan sacred sites, the unusual community at Stonewylde were somehow able to resist the religious and cultural transition which forever altered the rest of Britain. It was for this reason that Christianity never reached Stonewylde and it retained its Pagan religion and rootedness to the earth and its seasons.

Magus of Stonewylde is essentially the story of two unhappy adolescents. Yul is a 15 year old village boy who has never visited the outside world; he is an apprentice woodsman, living in constant terror of his brutal father and the Magus' draconian punishments. Sylvie is 14 and it seems, allergic to life in the modern world - the very London air and pesticide coated food she eats, trigger severe allergic reactions. She is exhausted, depressed and covered in severe eczema. Sylvie also suffers from what she thinks of as a monthly `madness`, when the moon is full.

When a young doctor meets Sylvie, she convinces the Magus to meet the girl also. The Magus is immediately aware that Sylvie is special and belongs among Stonewylde's hall folk. Sylvie's mother fears that her daughter will die unless something in their situation changes. Her desperate need for help combined with past traumas, makes Miranda easy prey for Magus' seductive charms; he persuades them both to move to his private estate where he is sure Sylvie will recover.

Unfortunately, this rural idyll of organic, eco-living is not quite the sanctuary Sylvie longs for, nor is Magus the benevolent saviour she initially takes him for. Magus reins over Stonewylde as its autonomous master; he may be charismatic but he is also a sadistic man with considerable power. He enjoys not only the fruits of his workers' labour, living in comfort with modern amenities, among his elite `hall folk`, but takes his pick of the community's teenage girls in ritualistic, coming-of-age ceremonies.

The Magus maintains a strict, feudal system by which the community is divided into the ruling class - hall folk - and the workers - villagers. While some hall folk do venture into the outside world, villagers have little more understanding of modern society than their ancestors who worked the land and kept the hall folk and Magus in luxury hundreds of years before. In fact, village children are not even taught basic literacy; instead they are taught skills to aid their lives of hard toil and service to the community.

Sylvie falls in love with Stonewylde despite its flaws - and really does recover her health. However, when Magus punishes Yul, he inadvertently brings the boy to Sylvie's attention. As Sylvie and Yul's relationship develops, so her eyes gradually open to the realities of Stonewylde and its tyrannical master. While Miranda feels that a Machiavellian attitude towards injustice and cruelty is acceptable - if it means that they stay in Magus' good books - Sylvie's is not so sure.

Yul - for reasons unknown to him, but which will unfold as the story develops - is always in trouble; it seems as though the Magus has a vendetta against him and relishes causing his suffering. As Sylvie and Yul grow closer, she witnesses the extent of Yul's suffering and is determined to save him from the dreadful fate that befalls those who defy the Magus' authority.

There is a lot to praise about the first instalment in Kit Berry's Pagan-fantasy series, set to include five novels. The author's treatment of genre, world-building skills and ability to hook the reader - eventually - are worth mentioning.

The fantasy element of the story is explored through the subtle combining of eco-spirituality and the idea of earth and moon magic - a sort of regenerative, mind-opening strength which fills the Magus during certain seasonal celebrations. Sylvie is healed body and mind, not only through fresh air and good food, but because she finds a place - and a friend in Yul - through which to explore her connection to the moon. To be fair, I am a fan of fantasy fiction, but I did find it very easy to suspend my disbelief and accept the combining of the subtly supernatural with the eco-spiritual.

The story is almost exclusively set within the Stonewylde community; this setting is richly woven and there is a sense at times that the author could easily have chosen to transport her narrative to a historical novel. However, the modern day setting brings originality. Also, the question of how feasibly a little community could retain its Pagan roots and independence from the outside world today, is an important question in this novel. It is one often at the centre of what the characters are prepared to accept/enforce in exchange for the lives they want.

My personal criticism would be that at times I found some of the custom words used in the novel ('Moongazy' being an obvious example, though I'm told that it has roots in the local mythology) a little childish. The use of dialogue is also somewhat unrealistic and grating, particularly in the first couple of chapters. This may be why it took me a while to warm to Sylvie, who I found too naïve and proper. I also found Miranda very frustrating. In contrast, Yul, as the male protagonist, was well drawn and engaging as a character.

In general, I felt that male characters were better crafted than their female counterparts. This may just be my experience of the characters, but it will be interesting to see how the author's treatment of gender evolves as her series progresses. At present I suspect that she may just be better at writing male characters than female. I also suspect that the maturity of the series will develop with the age of the characters and many of the adult themes touched upon in the first book, will be addressed with greater depth as the teenage protagonists mature with their story.

Series reading order:

Book 1: Magus of Stonewylde

Book 2: Moondance of Stonewylde

Book 3: Solstice at Stonewylde
Book 4: Shadows at Stonewylde
Book 5: Shaman of Stonewylde

Carole-Ann says

Previously printed as a self-publish book in 2005, this story fits in well with current YA genres.

Stonewylde is a gated manorial village in Dorset on the south coast of England. Sylvie and her mother move there to help cure Sylvie of her allergies to towns and 'normal' living, and she meets Yul, a villager, who always seems to be in trouble. However, Magus, the Lord of the Manor, forbids their association, and the story is about how Sylvie and Yul persevere in their friendship.

Stonewylde, its Villagers and Hallfolk, is actually a pagan community, celebrating the equinox and quarterday rites in their worship of Mother Earth. There are various types of magical/spiritual things happening, along with the usual Them (Villagers) and Us (Hallfolk) differences, and the occasional bullying amongst the young boys and girls.

The premise of pagan rituals and 'organic' living is a good plot and they are woven into the story quite well.

However, two things bothered me - and are perhaps NOT YA in essence, so I would be reluctant to actually recommend this to a *young* teen.

The first is the Rite of Adulthood which each boy and girl undergoes at the age of 16. This is just another name for loss of virginity, either consensual or not; and there is no mention of birth control. Also, along these lines is the subtle indication that at each equinox celebration, boys, girls, men and women have unlimited sex with the sole intention of procreation - indicated several times in the story by the number of families with a large number of children, as well as mothers having children by different fathers.

The second worry is the rather harrowing descriptions of the bullying suffered by Yul; primarily by his drunken, sadistic father; then by a group of older boys; and both encouraged by Magus. These are not easy scenes to read, and would probably upset anyone of tender inclinations. Yes, Yul is the hero who survives because of his great spirit and love of the natural world, but I would much rather have had him achieve his ascendancy without the really horrid things he goes through.

I'm also a glutton for punishment so I'll read the following 3 books in this series :)

Blodeuedd Finland says

There is a hidden place within England, a place of magic where people follow the old ways. And that's where this story takes place.

Sylvie is poisoned by modern society and comes to Stonewylde. She is weak, but she slowly finds strength and her way. Still at one time I did fear her going tstl on me as she become friends with someone she had seen do something bad. But then again she is just that nice.

Yul, is a village boy who I felt sorry for. This is not a nice society. I quickly saw the faults through his eyes. The Magus who is in charge can say whatever he wants to but this is a feudal society where some reap the benefits of the sweat of others backs. Poor Yul, he is just so broken.

Yes this may seem like the perfect place, but there is a darkness over it all too. I also felt like some are pushed too much when it comes to a certain ritual. But I shall say no more. It's the old ways and it makes it to one good story. Darkness and light.

The book may end with a glimmer of hope but it's far from over and it made me want to jump at the next one at once.

A YA fantasy/paranormal story that will bring you friendship, injustice and budding romance.

Wildbriar says

Magus of Stonewylde, you have the honour of being my first 2012 book. But I wish I'd started the year off on a better note. This is a book I disliked on two main levels:

1. It's not badly written *as such*. It's just disgustingly, sickeningly sweet, a lot of the nature/magic words repeated ad nauseam. What was quite an interesting story was drowned in a dripping syrupy goo of pagan rituals and nature-loving. It's a shame, because the prose actually does conjure up quite vivid pictures, it's just a slog to wade through.
 2. This was not at all a fault of the author's. In fact, perhaps Kit Berry has done her work too well. It's a disturbing story which at its base is very cultish, and it contains some of my least favourite things to read about: injustice and brainwashing. The idea of a figure of authority hiding evil and sadism under a shiny exterior that blinds people, twisting words and motives and brainwashing people closest to the protagonist...urgh. Just urgh. *shudder* Warping the way people and society are perceived and controlling who trusts who is just appalling. Again, this was not a problem with the book, simply it turned out to be a book I didn't enjoy.
-

Christopher says

Magus of Stonewylde is a book primarily set in a fictitious estate known as Stonewylde! :D The story follows the characters of characters of Yul and Sylvie as their different upbringings bring them together to become the new power in Stonewylde! :D

The book is full of three-dimensional characters which are both good and bad and some the bad characters of the classic so bad you really want to see them get their comeuppance! :D Yul and Sylvie have to fight against these characters at the same time as discovering their own powers! The way that this is the trade is very smooth style which leads you into a gradual building up attention of the characters as things start to spiral and they and use the reader become aware of just how evil some of the other characters are! :D

The world of Stonewylde is portrayed as a two tier society with the elites, the Hallpeople, keeping it the people known as the Villagers in a almost feudal society reminiscent of the early mediaeval period! This leads to a very different society than one we would normally recognise for a story set in this period! :D This

leads to many cultural shocks for Sylvie at the same time her entry into the world of Stonewylde shake things up a bit for them with her sudden seen the injustice in their system but also wanting to elevate the villagers to whether should be which course of upsets many of the establishment who are both arrogant and petty! :D Though many of the characters are very good people which compensates and it is for sure that this will be further explored in sequels! :D

The magic system in the books is very different and is based very much on ancient British mythology and is a very subtle form! :D Throughout most of the book is not entirely clear whether the actual magic actually exists though towards the end of the book it becomes very clear that it is a actual physical presence rather than a side effect of eating to many of the 'special' cakes that pop up throughout the book! :D This is a very subtle form of magic and adds to the almost ethereal feel of many of the scenes in the book which gives the overall book a style that is very suited to the story being told! :D

The book also has a very clever way of mingling modern technology with ancient practices and eludes to more deeper mysteries which again will be covered in later books! :D The other eerie thing about the books is that many of us who've lived in the South West of England is the common recurrence of recognisable place names so makes you wonder exactly where Stenwold is located! :D All of these aspects of the book continent brilliantly to create a mystery as well as a coming-of-age story rolled up with the classic fight against evil and power creating a very brilliant blend of intrigue, heroics, cruelty and triumph! :D

Awesome book with clever pacing that never lets up for a second excavation! :D Brilliant and highly recommended! :D

Lucy Powrie says

You can read more of my reviews at [Queen of Contemporary](#)

Lying in a hospital bed, on the verge between life and death, it is clear that Sylvie doesn't have long left. With allergies, painful eczema and asthma, she is pushing the twenty-first century away and the environment in which she lives in is killing her. But then she is offered a lifeline. Deep in the heart of rural Dorset, the walled community of Stonewylde could offer Sylvie comfort in her last days, or even promise to heal her... As my favourite book of all time, Magus of Stonewylde and the rest of the Stonewylde series hold a very special place in my heart. These books have changed the way I look at life and inspired me to write myself.

Our two main characters, Yul and Sylvie, are both inspiring and invoke a feeling of sympathy so great that the reader's heart will break for them. It's not often that in a book with two protagonists of different genders that the reader gets a balance of the two perspectives but this was an aspect that was written perfectly and the reader grows attached to both characters equally.

The book is full of villainous characters that will make you want to hurl the book in anger, but please don't do that because this book does not deserve to be harmed.

The use of foreshadowing in this book means that the reader gets hints about the future novels in the series. Written in third person, this book sees many different perspectives which means that a wider part of the novel is revealed and the reader can get intimate with the less important characters (even though they're all special to me!).

I cannot end this review without mentioning the descriptive and beautiful way that the author writes. When I close my eyes, I can picture the Village Green, with its magnificent yew, and the Great Barn, with the many Villagers gathered around. Stonewylde is as real to me as my own home is.

Magus of Stonewylde deals with many harsh subjects- segregation, abuse, tyranny- and all were dealt with

very well. There wasn't an uncomfortable moment when reading this book. Please, if you don't do anything I say again, buy this book and read it. It will definitely be worth your time.

GaryandRuth says

This is the first book in a series of three (although the author does say at the back of the book that there will be five!) centred on the magical village of Stonewylde, hidden within a private estate deep in the heart of Dorset in the West Country. Stonewylde is a pagan community that has survived almost untouched since the Norman Conquest and jealously guards its independence from the outside world. Sylvie and her mother are invited into this community and the story revolves around Sylvie, her mother, and two other very strong characters: one of whom, a boy of Sylvie's years has many problems to contend with and the other, the leader of the community, is a very-complex, multi-faceted character.

The book seems squarely aimed at young adults and the plot seems to rush along with the strength and abandon of running youths. There is always something happening that keeps them all on their toes. Sylvie's slow awakening (no spoilers here) is enthralling and I'm sure that Kit Berry has invented a new word in this book that definitely should be in the English language.

To the adult reader, many of the plot elements may seem predictable (the obligatory bully, for example) but they are deeply involved with the plot and I'm anxiously waiting the next two books to see how the situations resolve.

Where this book really shines is in its depiction of the pagan society of Stonewylde. Rarely does the author resort to the raw displays of power that are found in works of fantasy, but instead, she draws the reader into a world where the energies of the Earth, Moon and Sun interweave in the lives of the participants at an almost subconscious level, only surfacing in a tremendous outpouring of joy at the time of the great Festivals. These are depicted as a mixture of surviving, and recently faded, folk-customs blended together with the beliefs and practices of modern pagans.

I really enjoyed this book - it was a lot of fun. For a book targeted at the young adult audience, I was half-afraid to find it a mixture of Buffy-esque monsters, displays of magic and angst-ridden romance. This, however, could not be further from the truth. The story is very much plot-driven, and in superlative fashion all of the above elements are present and correct, but understated rather than taking centre-stage leaving the reader to be carried along with the relentless rush of the story itself.

A very worthy read!

Rebecca says

This book may at first reading seem to be directed more towards the teenage reader but it deals with some deep adult issues of power, love, freedom, rules of society, right and wrong and more importantly childhood. This of course is all discussed through some very fascinating characters (although having read first person narrators for so long it took me a while to adjust to this omniscient narrator) and set within the 'backwards' seeming village society and reclusive world of Stonewylde. A place set in the Dorset countryside with all the majestic beauty and dark magic that lingers within the New Forest today. A place where the powers of the early druids still rule the hearts and minds of the villagers and Hallfolk (the aristocracy of Stonewylde) today.

The entire story was captivating right through to the end and I finished it within five days eager to grasp my hands on the three books which follow this wonderful tale. If you love the old ways, star crossed lovers, twists and turns and ancient powers and a web of secrets in a world set within our own but follows the ways of centuries past then you will LOVE this book as much as I did.

Freya says

Recommended to me by a friend, and was on my to-read list forever until I finally got around to getting a copy.

I enjoyed reading this a lot. It helps that I have a soft spot for Dorset and stories about magic and folklore, plus a healthy dislike for big, smelly cities!

Reading about Sylvie's illness, living in a city and her 'rescue' to be brought to the peaceful countryside that seems a world apart is really well described and shows the contrast between the two places. Magus seems quite friendly at first but then very quickly starts to become quite sinister and the peaceful community of Stonewylde starts to seem more like a cult. The story mainly revolves around Sylvie and Yul, and while certain individuals' treatment of Yul is horrible, his and Sylvie's friendship helps to keep them both afloat.

I have the next two books sitting on my shelves and I am looking forward to reading them, however I am somewhat nervous about starting the next one as Magus is still a threatening presence on the scene and I know that there may be some vengeance ahead!

Emma Cooper says

Magus of Stonewylde is the first book in the Stonewylde series by Kit Berry. It opens in the real world - with the noise, pollution and lack of community in the inner cities making young Sylvie ill. But one of her doctors is Hazel, who comes from Stonewylde, and because of Sylvie's unusually blonde hair she and her mother are invited to join the Stonewylde community.

Stonewylde is a closed, rural community in Dorset that has remained virtually unchanged for centuries. The Villagers work the land as their ancestors have, but Sylvie joins the Hallfolk, who have more contact with the Outside World. She and her mother are enchanted by their news lives in this paradise, but when she meets Yul Sylvie realizes that Stonewylde may not be as idyllic as it seems.

Stonewylde is ruled over by Magus, a hugely charismatic and much-loved leader who channels the earth magic that runs through Stonewylde. But does he really have everyone's best interests at heart? As the story unfolds it becomes apparent that human greed and suffering are everywhere in the world, even somewhere as outwardly peaceful as Stonewylde.

This is an absolutely captivating book and I recommend it to anyone who has an interest in fantasy or pagan magic. Kit Berry makes Stonewylde sing, and escaping there will be the highlight of your day.
