



# Foxglove Copse

*Alex Beecroft*

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## **Foxglove Copse** Alex Beecroft **A Porthkennack Contemporary Novel**

After a massive anxiety attack, Sam Atkins left his high-powered job in the City and committed himself to life on the road in a small van. Six months in, he's running out of savings and coming to the conclusion that he might have to go home to his emotionally abusive family.

Needing time to think, he takes a walk through a copse by the Cornish roadside, only to stumble upon the body of a ritualistically killed sheep. As he's trying to work out what the symbols around the animal mean, the sheep's owner, Jennifer, and her nephew, Ruan Gwynn, come upon him.

Ruan is a kind-hearted young man with a large supportive clan, and since he and Sam feel almost instant attraction, he doesn't want to believe Sam is a sheep-killing cultist. In fact, the moment he lays eyes on Sam's miserable solitary life, he wants to rescue the man. But as the killings escalate, he and Sam need to stop whoever is actually to blame before they can concentrate on saving each other.

## **Foxglove Copse Details**

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# From Reader Review Foxglove Copse for online ebook

## Lisa The Novel Approach says

Sam Atkin is escaping from his wealthy family and their lucrative business. He could no longer bear the thought of investing people's money, never knowing what the outcome would be. Investing became terrifying to him and caused him to have a massive anxiety attack. Now, he lives a solitary life on the road, and finds himself in Cornwall, in Foxglove Copse, where he settles in for the time being. When he becomes overwhelmed he still suffers from panic attacks, but his expertise with computers and developing applications help him to keep calm.

After traveling for so long, Sam takes a walk—and finds a mutilated sheep with sigils that would suggest witchcraft. It's at the scene of the crime that he first meets Ruan Gwynn, which leads to Sam being considered a suspect. When he is cleared of any wrongdoing, he and Ruan find themselves in more than a mystery. The case turns interesting in not only the witchcraft but in the mysterious caves, Sam's missing laptop, suicides, cyberbullying, and the mysterious Lusmoore family and what they hold over the clans of Foxglove Copse.

Ruan and Sam make a special connection which grows into a sweet romance. Ruan's life is the very opposite of Sam's, with a loving and supportive family that Sam, at times, doesn't understand. As Sam becomes more familiar with Ruan and his family, he knows this is what he really wants. But, he questions if Ruan wants him to stay around or to move on. Ruan is such a charmer, easy going and humorous at times, which is very different from the shy and nervous Sam.

I haven't read any of the other novels in the Porthkennack series, but the blurb for this one caught my interest. I didn't get the feeling that I would have to read any of the previous books, as it holds firm as a standalone. I have to say I enjoyed Alex Beecroft's writing style in this novel set in the small Cornish seaside town. It's somewhat mystical, with suspense and danger, magic and a few scenes that are a little gory. Besides a fairly good mystery, the storyline also has some interesting characters and friendships, as well as covering acceptance, family dynamics and love. This may not be to everyone's liking, but I found this to be a unique and enjoyable read.

Reviewed by Maryann for The Novel Approach

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## Meep says

Really didn't get far before figuring this wasn't for me so take this 'review' with a pinch of whatever.

The start grabbed me, Sam clearly eaten up by his anxiety and choosing to live off-grid promised to be interesting. Some mystery with nasty goings on, again good. The rituals and Sam's interest in the symbols instead of the more natural reaction of panic and/or upchucking threw me a bit, but ok. The anxiety is well written and tangible.

Then the next chapter is a complete scene change, when I wanted the linear story. I found the conversations unrealistic - the fourteen year old girl seems to have heard of things while her cousin and the rest of the community haven't. Again the reactions; if this was news I'd be asking more questions - like where are the

police?

But it was the funeral stopped me reading. How people acted, what the teachers said and it being within the hearing of parents and students... Ruan assuming the girl was gay - why? He knew literally nothing about her. Since when is acknowledging a cousin wrong?

Ruan possibly has some sensitivity but the way it's conveyed felt off, could just as easily be a nice looking oddball.

As far as I read I was thinking this would work as a YA.

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## Chris, the Dalek King says

So the first half of this book I really loved.

We have Sam—who clearly is dealing with some *major* anxiety issues—driving around in a tricked-out camper because he can't even deal with life at home anymore. Not with his super judgmental family, not with his high-pressure job, not with anything, really. So he is clearly dealing with shit. And on top of all that he is getting close to broke, despite the fact that his family is clearly in the money. He has no real destination, but when he sees a chance to camp out in a deserted field for a bit—free of charge and human interaction—he takes it. It is just too bad that he happens to find the body of a dissected sheep and an irate farmer with shotgun not long after. Luckily her nephew is a bit more level-headed and keeps his aunt from shooting Sam.

This part of the story was just great. Sam may be a bit of a mess, but he was an interesting mess. And I'm clearly in the kind of mood to be kicked in the feels, because I just loved watching him trying to deal with all this shit and falling a bit apart. The bits with Ruan—the irate farmer's nephew—were also just damn good. I liked them, and how they worked. Neither of them had it all together, but when they were together they certainly had something. For the first half of this story I was thinking this was going to be one of my favorites. The atmosphere, the writing, the characters...it was just working for me.

And then...

Then we get to the whole "mystery" part of the story, where there are a group of teenage girls being harassed online and in real life by some absolute douche. And on top of that someone is clearly going after Raun and his aunt by leaving dead animals in ritual poses around their homes. Had it just been that I probably would have been fine. I tend to not enjoy bullying subplots, but the mystery of whodunit was halfway decent, so I didn't mind so much.

I...I just...look. I love books with magic. I love books without magic. Yet despite that, I absolutely do not do well with books set in places/worlds where magic doesn't exist but the book tries to make you think it does. It just makes the characters seem a bit nuts, to be honest. The whole occult aspect of this story didn't work at all for me. My brain does not do well with stories that try to mesh the two concepts together without clearly defining the book world as one where magic is a thing that can happen. Things kept happening, and all I could think is: *He is clearly mental ill. Why is no one bring that up?*

Which leads me to my biggest issue with the story. The ending. This is a bit **SPOILERY**, though, so might want to look away now...

(view spoiler)

This book was very much like going from one side of the emotional spectrum to the other, for me. I loved the first half, had issues with the middle, and hated the ending. It wasn't horrible, on the whole, and I will admit to personal feeling getting in the mix here, but I can't see me recommending it to people. I have no doubt some people will like it. I just can't say it was something I got real pleasure out of reading.

*This book was provided free in exchange for a fair and honest review for Love Bytes. Go there to check out other reviews, author interviews, and all those awesome giveaways. Click below.*

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## **Karen says**

*Sometimes it's the family that you make that truly gets you...*

'Foxglove Copse' is the 5th book in the 'Porthkennack' series. I haven't read all the books in this series and while I hope to do so at some time I'm really enjoying being able to pick and choose the ones I read without feeling like I've missed anything in the ones that I do chose to read.

This is actually my first time reading a book by this author and I really enjoyed this story. Sam Atkins had the life...the money, the home, the job all the material things that are often taken as signs of success but for Sam the price that he's paid for this has been extracted from his heart and soul and when he finds he can no longer pay that price he runs. Divesting himself of his material gains he begins to live the life of a wanderer and six months into his vagabond life he finds himself on the road to Porthkennack. It's a road that not only leads him to the place he'll ultimately call home but the man who will help him begin to heal.

Whatever flaws this story may have contained were by far outweighed by the heart of this story. 'Foxglove Copse' is more than a love story it's a story about love. I know it seems like semantics but love is probably the most complicated four letter word in any language and while it has can be defined by just a few words there can be a zillion different meanings and in this story we get to see some of those meanings through the eyes of Sam a man whose family has abused him mentally and emotionally leaving him floundering for a place to seek shelter and call home until he meets Ruan.

Ruan is a man whose family loves him unconditionally. Ruan knows what it's like to have that surety that no matter what he will always be loved...he will always have a shelter from the storms that life may bring his way.

Together Sam and Ruan discover that home is where the heart is and both men realize that they can trust each other to protect their heart. But there's more to this story than just the romance between Sam and Ruan there's a mystery because someone's trying to scare Ruan's Aunt Jennifer and as things escalate Sam and Ruan get drawn into the heart of events whether they want to be or not. People are being stalked, harassed and bullied...people that Ruan cares about, people that Sam is beginning to care about. Somehow events at Aunt Jennifer's farm are connected to things even more sinister and if Sam and Ruan are going to have a future than they need to work together to figure out what's happening and why.

While I love a good mystery and this one was more than a little interesting what enchanted me the most about this story was Sam. For Sam this was about more than falling in love. This was Sam's second chance...his chance to find himself and reclaim the part of him that he believed was gone. His faith and confidence were shaken to the core if not non-existent and while Ruan may have helped him. In the end it was Sam who had to dig down deep and believe in himself again if he wanted a chance at a life with Ruan and the promise of home and family that it offered and Ruan came to realize that in Sam, he had a partner and that together they could shelter each other from life's storms.

Equally as important is the role played by family and community in this story. Ruan's parents are loving and supportive of their children which is a real contrast to Sam's family, whom we only get glimpses of through Sam's conversations with his mother and yes, I am using this term loosely and then there is Sam's sister and I'll just say here yes, I wanted to slap-a-bitch here. Seriously she opened her mouth once in this book and it was one time too many.

In the end yes, the mystery gets solved but it's Sam who made me love this book so much. It's seeing him go from a broken man who ran from his family...from an environment that was robbing him of his heart and soul to a man who found love, who was finding himself again and who was creating a family for himself the kind of family that would love him and believe in him...a family that would always have his back. This was the story that enchanted me.

'Porthkannack' is quickly becoming one of those places that I enjoy visiting and I'm sure I'll be going back again soon.

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A copy of 'Foxglove Copse' was graciously provided by the publisher via Net Galley in exchange for an honest review.

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## **Barb ~rede-2-read~ says**

A copy of this ARC was provided by the publisher through NetGalley.

Of all the books I've read in this series, this one ranks near the top. I enjoyed the writing style, the exploration of anxiety/panic attacks and all its implications, and the return visit to Porthkennack with several of the characters mentioned in past stories by the various authors who are doing this series together.

Sam Atkins comes from a very wealthy and powerful family of finance gurus. In fact, he was once one of them, advising his clients on which investment strategies would work best for them, but the more he learned about the upper echelon in the banking and investment industry, the more he felt the losses suffered by his clients personally and the more it affected his own health and mental state. In short, Sam was too sensitive to live among the tigers and his panic disorder increased until he was physically incapable of continuing to pretend. Selling and/or donating everything he owned, he outfitted a van for living on the road and he took off to start his life unencumbered by other people.

Now, six months into this new life, he's pretty much running out of money and regretting the fact that he didn't keep more as a fallback. So instead of finding a rental location to park his van, he pulls into a little copse near the town of Porthkennack. It will turn out to be the best move he ever made.

Ruan Gwynn is out helping Auntie Jennifer trace what's bothering her sheep herd late one night when they come across a slaughtered sheep with runes and sigils placed around its head—and a young man leaning over the body. The young man is, of course, Sam, and they're hard-pressed to believe his story of simply hearing a commotion and stumbling upon the dead sheep. But Sam knows a bit about the occult, having all the time in the world to pursue interests other than his coding and app development hobby on the Internet, and he informs them that these signs don't make sense as they don't follow the pattern one would expect. Interested, and eventually believing him when they find evidence his van has been pilfered while he's been helping them, they decide to explore the issues further.

Over time, the two young men work together not only to find the source of the slaughters that continue after that night, but also to track an IP address of someone who has been bullying Ruan's sister and her high school friends, one of whom recently committed suicide after the bullying became too much to bear. It turns out the two issues are connected and they are connected in some way to the infamous Lusmore family—a family of smugglers we met in *House of Cards*, an earlier story in this series. And while Ruan and Sam are working to solve the mystery, Ruan relentlessly pursues Sam, encouraging him, loving him, helping him get grounded, and ultimately giving Sam a new role in life and a new place to call home.

As I said earlier, I enjoyed the author's writing style, and I enjoyed both the mystery and the romance. I especially resonated with Sam, having suffered several extreme, and embarrassing, public panic attacks in the past. The author's treatment of the disorder was thoughtful, well-informed, and respectful. Showing Sam's inner core of strength and commitment to Ruan at a time he most needed it was a very positive move, and allowing Ruan to show his soft underbelly, while outwardly seeming to be so strong, grounded, and focused provided a sweet opportunity for Ruan to lean on Sam as his lover and chosen life partner.

I highly recommend this story. Though several of the family names have been used throughout the series, the book is certainly a standalone. If anything, it may pique the interest of readers who decide to explore more in the series. I do have my favorites, and as I said, this is one of them. Those who enjoy UK contemporary romance, with a bit of the rural Cornish countryside thrown in, a little late night witchcraft, and a mystery to solve along the way should definitely enjoy this one.

**\*\*4.5 stars rounded up\*\***

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## **Wart Hill says**

### **Things I Find While Shelving**

*I Received a free ARC Via NetGalley*

Sam has been living a nomadic life since having an anxiety induced break down and falling out with his parents. He finds himself in Porthkennack, a small seaside town in Cornwall. He figures he'll squat for a day or two, rest up and try to find a job to get some money for the next leg of his journey. But things don't go according to plan when he finds a mutilated sheep on the property where he's parked.

He didn't do it, but Jennifer, the land owner, needs to make it clear that this isn't something she tolerates. So since he's the only available suspect, she decides she'll file charges against him. Even though she and her nephew, Ruan, don't believe he did it.

Still, Sam has some knowledge that proves useful as Ruan and Jennifer try to figure out what's going on. Plus, Sam's good with computers, so when Ruan finds out there's a cyberbully going after his cousin and her friends, he turns to Sam. As they work to uncover the culprits in both cases, Sam and Ruan grow closer, their relationship developing slowly and sweetly.

Alex Beecroft is a beautiful writer. She has such a way with words, all vivid imagery and depth of feeling. I always love reading her work, and Foxglove Copse was no exception. While it's heavy on the mystery - something I was quite happy about - the romance is sweet and beautiful and does not suffer for not being the focus of the plot.

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### **Truuss says**

Sam and Ruan

They meet under a somewhat bloody circumstances. They like each other.

Sam, suffering anxieties attacks and having a big one in front of Ruan, knows things about tarot and witchcrafts. He finds in Ruan a friend and even more.

Sam living in a van, alone without income, is getting thinner and thinner and Ruan wants to feed him with food and love.

There are things happening in the village that can't face the daylight....

Online young ones get bullied....sheeps are found dead, witchcraft is also playing a role. With help from Sam they all try to get rid of them/it whatever whoever it is.

A good written story with many aspects in it. Friendship, love, tattoos, magic, angst, a bit of mafia family business, some times it's just down to earth and some between fantasy and magic.

It was a busy 'hassle' and Sam and his anxiety attacks were for me the moments to hold on to all of it, he was it who kept this story real and tangible, I could breathe with him...

Endearing personalities in a very lovable environment. No steam at all for the ones who want to know. Some sweet kisses is all you get but for me it was more than enough, for me it was all about acceptance, family not by blood, friendship and love.

Copy received through Netgalley

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### **Heather K (dentist in my spare time) says**

DNF with no rating. Realized early on it wasn't for me.

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### **Alisa says**

3.5 stars

So apparently I somehow missed writing my review when I first read this. (bad, bad reviewer) I enjoyed this installment to the Porthkennack series. I always enjoy this author's work. She has a unique style of writing.



Her characters are unique and humanly flawed but they feel so real. I'm not sure how to express her style properly, but to me it feels quiet. The story just slowly unfolds in a simple manner but that's the magic of it to me. No big drama and angst like in many books (which I love too but sometimes it's just a nice change up to have a mellow book).

I loved Ruan and Sam together. I also enjoyed the mystery that surrounded this quirky little town. And the appearance of Brix and his shifty family was especially a happy thing for me.

**\*\*ARC received through Netgalley in exchange for an honest review\*\***

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## **Annie says**

### **3.5 stars- The story was good, the romance fizzled a little**

I've become quite hooked on the Porthkennack series and get a little giddy when I see a new release announced. I love the mystic, storied history of the small Cornish town, and always wonder where the next author will take it. While they are all written as standalones, the fact that Foxglove Copse worked in elements and characters from another book in the series, House of Cards, was a surprising bonus. Foxglove Copse itself is a little harder to rate. Initially, I liked the characters and was really interested in Sam's story and how he had come to leave his wealthy lifestyle behind for a more transient, off-the-grid existence. However, the pairing of Ruan and Sam felt a little forced and too convenient. I found myself more invested in the suspense and mystery element of Ruan and Sam attempting to solve the origin of the cyberbullying and curses, with the romance being relegated to a background plot.

The backstory of both characters had a lot of promise, and in many ways it eventually delivered. While I understood the emotions both characters worked through on their own and enjoyed seeing much of it play out on page, I found myself wishing it carried over to their time together. In my opinion, the chemistry between Ruan and Sam fell flat. I didn't feel a simmering attraction and the sexual tension was minimal. The physical chemistry also was lacking, with all the intimate scenes taking place off page. While that in and of itself isn't a deal breaker for me, the lack of physical connection combined with not feeling the emotional chemistry build between characters made it difficult to really believe in this love story. Thankfully, towards the end of the book, there was much more of that connection playing out on page and it was readily apparent just how much Ruan and Sam meant to one another.

Although the romance didn't draw me in that much, the main plotline and conflict was intriguing. The action scenes flowed well and there was a nice air of suspense that built throughout the book. The different elements- the occult, cybertracking, tattoos, tarots, etc- were all very interesting. There were a good number of unexpected moments and I found the resolution satisfying. I also thought Sam's personal growth as he dealt with his anxiety was handled pretty well and added a good deal of depth to his character. Unfortunately, I think the development of the different layers of this mystery and the personal struggles Sam and Ruan faced meant the relationship didn't get quite as much energy at the beginning. So while I was invested in the story, I wasn't as taken by the couple. That said, I think there are plenty of readers who will enjoy Foxglove Copse, as long as they aren't particularly looking for the romance to steal the show.

**\*Received ARC via Netgalley. The author and publisher had no influence over this review\***

Reviewed by Annie from Alpha Book Club

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## **Kaje Harper says**

I loved most of this book a whole lot, and the main characters were great throughout. I really liked that Sam's anxiety was not due to some major trauma or abuse, but just part of him and the pressures in his past life. His family was cold and unkind, and his escape was understandable. The way he was clearly searching for a place to belong was poignant. Ruan was kind and warm and impulsive and not brilliant, but so much what Sam needed.

The mystery was well done in its development. The resolution of the mystery was... realistic. But frustrating and symptomatic of the ills that beset our society, with injustice, and the almost-certain risk of worse to come a few years down the road. I shouldn't penalize the book for realism. This is, in fact, how the world tends to work. But it left a little nagging anger in me, despite the lovely warm ending to the romance arc.

I do like this author's writing style. The descriptions are vivid and clear, the setting becomes a part of the story, and the characters matter to me. So while this is not my favorite Beecroft, I enjoyed it a lot.

(content warning for crimes involving animal abuse.)

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## **Jess says**

[Brix Lusmoore and the rest of the Lusmoore clan from House of Cards (hide spoiler)]

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## **Tracy~Bayou Book Junkie says**

4 Stars

Sam was a professional, as well as a whiz at computers. He led a good life and earned great money, but it all came at a steep price: His sanity. After a major anxiety attack brought on by work and family pressure, Sam has had enough. He quits his job and buys a van that has been custom outfitted with everything he'll need to start a new life, living off the grid. He's been traveling for a while when he lands in the small Cornish town of Porthkennack. He finds a small hideaway to park his van and settles in for a bit, but his peace doesn't last long when he discovers a gruesome satanic ritual, and as he is examining it he is in turn discovered by Ruan and his Aunt Jennifer, who owns the land he's set up camp on. They assume he is to blame for the dead sheep and have him arrested. Now that the police are involved, Sam will be forced to stay in town until he can be cleared of any wrong doing.

Ruan is lolling through life. He wants to be a tattoo artist, but isn't sure how to break into the business. He's pretty sure the only tattoo shop in town is just a front run by the the Lusmoore's, the local crime family. From the moment he and his aunt discover Sam, he believes him to be innocent and when his niece needs help with some online bullying, Ruan thinks he knows the perfect person for the job, plus it'll give him the chance to get to know the intriguing young man he finds himself attracted to.

I'll be honest, I wasn't so sure about this story at first, and truthfully, I continued to feel that way throughout a

good portion of the story. While I love a good mystery, I'm not into gore and I found some of the descriptions of the satanic rituals to be described quite vividly and this is so not my thing. Although the author tied all the mysteries up nicely at the end, throughout the story it felt like there was too much happening, too many side stories taking place and it was all a bit overwhelming and confusing at times. But I can't deny the mysteries were interesting and well done. The author threw in some twists and turns that I never saw coming and kept me sitting on the edge of my seat biting my nails. At one point I thought I might join Sam in having an anxiety attack.

As for the romance portion, I loved both Sam and Ruan and I thought that they fit together very nicely. They had wonderful chemistry and while there is no on page sex, the romance was done well. Sam and Ruan brought out the best in one another and encouraged each other. They were likable characters you could really root for.

The story is fast-paced and well-written. It was interesting and the storyline was unique, to me anyway. Although I wasn't so sure about the story at first, it turned out to be an enjoyable read I'd definitely recommend, just beware of the gore.

\*copy provided by author/publisher via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review\*

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## **K says**

Just about getting to 3 stars

Nice enough story of Sam, a former high flying investment banker who has left the day firm suffering from anxiety and has taken to the road in a converted van. When he rocks up in Porthkennack he finds himself drawn into a local matter due to finding a ritually slaughtered sheep.

Ruan, nephew of the owner of the land where Sam has parked just seems to insinuate himself into Sam's life, though I am still lost as to how that happened, and the pair of them start to investigate not only what appears to be satanic rituals aimed at Ruan's family but also a spate of extremely serious bullying of local school girls.

By the end their in love and Sam's anxiety seems to have magically disappeared ... oh and Ruan has scored himself a job as a tattoo artist but no idea where in the story he trained for that..

There were so many holes in this - the lack of police involvement due to fear of a local family for one, nothing about the school at least investigating bullying (the attitude of the teachers at the funeral, just no, I know a lot of teachers and none would say or think that sort of thing particularly not in that situation), the solution regarding the perpetrator was so far fetched...

Overall this made me think of a very, very second rate copy of one of Harper Fox's Tyack and Frayne stories both in setting and content

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## CrabbyPatty says

I'm enjoying the Porthkennack Series from Riptide Publishing, all set in the same small seaside Cornish town, but each with a stand-alone plot. While *Foxglove Copse* is not my favorite book in the series, it has some interesting elements that kept my interest.

Sam Atkins lives a lonely existence, given to crippling anxiety attacks, traveling around Britain in a small converted van (think tiny *tiny* house) and faking normality during his infrequent contact with others. He has just settled in a small secluded woodland outside of Porthkennack when he comes upon a gruesome ritualistic sheep killing, and is immediately suspected of carving up the sheep (with a *chainsaw*) and placed under police investigation. The landowner's nephew Ruan is fascinated by Sam and once he learns that Sam is not a "sheep-mutilating cultist" they work together to find the culprit, as well as the person who is cyberbullying young people in the area .... to death.

*Foxglove Copse* works as a mystery / suspense with two intertwined plot lines, and the unraveling of what exactly is going on is intriguing. Where the story fails, for me, is the romance between Sam and Ruan. Ruan is firmly entrenched in the bosom of his family, and it's almost alien to him that Sam is so estranged from his family and their influence. We get glimpses of what may be the root cause of Sam's anxiety, but Sam's personality seems so intangible and undeveloped:

**“He’s like he’s got one foot in fairyland, you know? Like he’s too special for this world.**

With the sex scenes off page and not a lot of character development, there just isn't enough chemistry between the two lads to make you feel invested in their relationship. Also, the pace of this story seems so *slow* - with a very melancholy feel - until the ending finally pulls everything together in a somewhat unexpected way.

I ended up very much on the fence about *Foxglove Copse* and gave it 3 stars. I think the story will appeal to some readers, but it did not work for me.

*I received an ARC from Riptide Publishing, via NetGalley, in exchange for an honest review.*  
Review also posted at Gay Book Reviews - check it out!

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