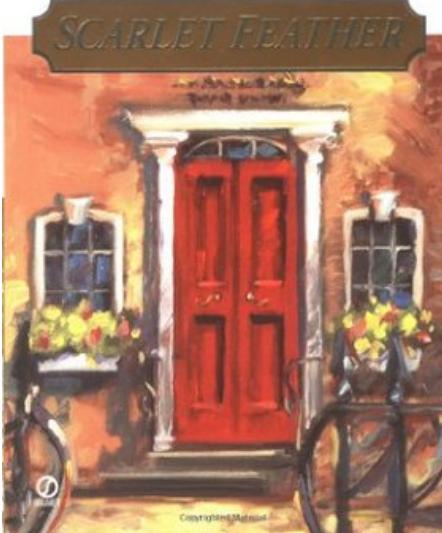


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Scarlet Feather

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Scarlet Feather

Maeve Binchy

Scarlet Feather Maeve Binchy

Set in contemporary Ireland, filled with warmth, wit, and drama, *Scarlet Feather* is the story of Cathy Scarlet and Tom Feather, their spouses, families, and friends, and the struggling new catering business that transforms their lives in ways big and small.

Scarlet Feather Details

Date : Published March 1st 2002 by Signet (first published 2000)

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Author : Maeve Binchy

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From Reader Review Scarlet Feather for online ebook

Georgie says

I have read three Maeve Binchy books so far - Tara Road, Quentin's, and Scarlet Feather. Scarlet Feather catering company and Tom and Cathy, and Simon and Maud are in 'Quentin's', so I was really excited to read this book and find out how it all began. I was not disappointed at all, in fact this is my favourite Binchy book so far.

Some people might have found all the stories about Tom and Cathy's catering jobs boring, but I really enjoyed reading about them, seeing how their company had successes and failures and their business grew, with lots of amusing moments and strange/annoying customers along the way.

As with her other books, Scarlet Feather includes lots of characters who all play a role of some sort in the story of Tom, Cathy and their company, whether good or bad or sometimes both. There are lots of interesting story threads going on throughout, and happening alongside the main plot line with Tom and Cathy.

Lots of funny moments, but quite a bit of the darker side of life too.

My favourite characters, besides Tom and Cathy, were Simon and Maud. They are nine year old twins who suddenly end up being a very important though unexpected part of everyone's lives. They are very strange and kind of eccentric, and very, very funny. They appeared in 'Quentin's' too, so it was great to see how they first came to be a part of the Binchy world, and they're even madder in this book.

Kellie says

I was a little nervous at the beginning of this book when more and more characters were added to the story. I was wondering if I should pull out an index card to keep track of them all. Well, Binchy does such a great job telling her story and developing her characters, no need for the index card. I absolutely adored this book. This has now become a rare gem in my library. This was so well told and so engaging, I couldn't wait to get back to it. Although there are several characters, the main one, Cathy, is the focal point. She has started up a catering business with her friend Tom. As she struggles to get the business off the ground she is also dealing with an extremely busy lawyer husband who never seems to have time for her, 2 children that have suddenly appeared in their lives and a sister who is planning a Scottish wedding from the states and wants Cathy's business to cater it. All the other sub-plots mixed in just add to the fun. It's been a while since I've read a Binchy and oh! How I've missed her.

Deb says

I am between 3 and 4 stars for this one but rounding up to 4 for sentimentality for Binchy and the foodie presence.

It has been a long time since I dug into a Binchy novel and although I have had a copy of Scarlet Feather sitting on my bookshelves, I had not gotten around to reading it. (In fact, I even forgot I had it and bought a hardback copy for \$1 at the thrift store. Whoops!) Scarlet Feather is the story of Cathy Scarlet and Tom Feather and their friends and family. Cathy and Tom met in culinary school and are launching a catering

company in Dublin. Cathy, who comes from a large working class family, is married to Neil Mitchell, a civil rights attorney from a wealthy family and Tom, also from a working class background, is living with Marcella, a manicurist looking to be a model. In the year the book covers, Cathy and Tom face many challenges--both personally and professionally in getting their business off the ground.

As in most Binchy novels, there are a ton of characters to keep track of, some get more development than others in the 549 pages. I especially liked Cathy's parents, her aunt Geraldine, and the young twins Simon and Maud--who are related to Neil, but get dumped on Cathy and her family. Cathy's mother (Lizzie) was Neil's mother's housekeeper which adds to the strain and complication of Cathy's relationship with her mother-in-law (who I mostly wanted to smack every time she made an appearance). I suppose Tom's family needed to be in the book too, but they were lacking development and didn't add much to the story. There are times that the book drug a bit, but overall, I enjoyed it. Circle of Friends and Evening Class remain my favorites out of the Binchy books I have read, but I did like the foodie frame of the story in Scarlet Feather. I rooted for Tom and Cathy and it further confirmed my decision to never become a caterer--way too much work and angst involved--even without all the family and life drama! ;-)

You can see my review and recipes for Cold Cream of Tomato and Peach Soup and Strawberry-Herb Cashew Cream Crostini inspired by the book on my blog post: <https://kahakaikitchen.blogspot.com/2018/08/scarlet-feather.html>

Nettie Cacossa says

?I like big books, and I cannot lie?

Chloe says

I really liked this book, but I did have a few issues with it. This is the story of Scarlet Feather, a catering company run by Cathy Scarlet and Tom Feather. The book follows their stories (Cathy and her attorney husband, Neil; Tom and his want to be model girlfriend, Marcella) and the rest of their families. Cathy married into a really wealthy family with a lot of demons and her parents end up taking care of Simon and Maude, Neil's 10 year old cousins. A lot of family drama goes on in this story, as well as business ups and downs, and it is really interesting and engaging. I really liked Cathy and Tom and got easily invested in their stories.

HOWEVER, the book had a ton of characters and it jumped around perspectives a lot. It was all written in 3rd person, but it would jump from Cathy to her aunt to Tom, etc. etc. and sometimes the different perspectives were only like a paragraph long so it got hard to remember all the story lines with just little blurbs here and there. I also didn't really like the ending. It was really cheesy.

Belle says

I've been on a reading hiatus for about two months. To get back in the habit, I've decided to go for another Maeve Binchy book. Agreeing to one of her critics' words, I was looking for something that feels like coming home. And Scarlet Feather did not disappoint in the "feels like home" category.

Scarlet Feather is a story about Cathy Scarlet and Tom Feather starting their own catering business. I liked reading about the challenges they faced and how much effort they all exerted to keep the business going. Gaining a bit of information on the things that go on within the catering business was also a plus for me.

Furthermore, similar to another Maeve Binchy book I've read (Quentins), the story also involves lives of many other people. In this case, we have Cathy and Tom's partners, parents, siblings, friends and other relatives. All the extra stories with diverse characters blended so well with each other. And the family dynamics have been shown realistically.

Unfortunately, the story seems a bit flat. It was simply about their challenges and rewards in the business and basically about their everyday lives. Yes, they encountered problems much bigger than others. But these harder challenges were highlighted as much as the other common business problems, making them seem less difficult.

Aside from reading about Cathy, Tom and the Scarlet Feather's staff giving all their best for the business, the parts that I liked were those related to Cathy's nephew and niece. These parts were like a break from all their concerns coming from different directions. And though limited, they added emotion to the story.

In general, the story is just okay. I'd still read other Maeve Binchy books though because I like her style... comforting and with just the right pace.

Marisa says

This is the story of two people who start a catering business called Scarlet Feather and all of the goings on of the people in their life and how that affects their business. I just love this author because she just tells a story about people's lives and their thoughts and I find myself engulged in their world the whole time I'm reading the book. It also made me think about the situation for children in foster homes and how we sometimes miss what is going on right in front of us because we're off trying to save the world. I found myself really hating some of the characters (Neil) and loving and identifying with others. It was a good read!

Ria says

A charming tale of Tom Feather and Cathy Scarlet, friends and business partners trying to get their fledgling catering business Scarlet feather off the ground.

Things are not as easy as they at first hoped when they try to juggle their private lives alongside their business lives.

Both have complicated family issues and personal issues to resolve.

Tom and his girlfriend Marcella are struggling to keep their relationship alive as they move in different circles, Tom with his catering and her with her budding modelling career.

Ironically Cathy is in the same boat with her well to do husband Neil who spends so much time working to support his legal causes in his own time and his daytime professional lawyer work that he doesn't realise they are drifting apart in different directions.

A heartwarming story of loss, love, personal struggles and acceptance helped along by a whole cast of loveable characters, Cathy's parents Muttie and Lizzie, the posh side of Neil's family, and also the lower "criminal" end of the Mitchell family including the adorable and hilarious twins Simon and Maud.

Can Tom and Cathy finally save the beloved business from going under and also the people who mean so much to them in their personal lives or is it all too late?

A great read.

Drebbles says

Set over a period of one year, Scarlet Feather is a novel featuring Cathy Scarlet and Tom Feather, who open a catering company together. As they deal with the joys and heartbreak of owning a business their relationship with each other changes as does their relationship with the other's around them, notably Cathy's husband, Neil, who is a lawyer who wants to save the world and Tom's beautiful girlfriend, Marcella, who will do just about anything to make it as a model. Also involved are Cathy's parents, Muttie, who knows that the next bet he places will be the winner, and "his wife Lizzie", who used to clean for Neil's mother. Neil's family also plays an important part in the novel, especially his cousin Walter, and Maud and Simon, Walter's neglected 8-year-old brother and sister. Other characters include Cathy's family in America, her Aunt Geraldine, and their accountant James Byrne. By the end of the year, each character's life had changed, many in ways they never would have imagined.

Maeve Binchy is a talented writer who can create many characters and make you care about each one, bad or good. Muttie, Maud and Simon are the characters that stood out the most to me. I wish Neil and Cathy's earlier relationship had been developed more, it's hard to understand what brought the two of them together. I do like the way the novel is set over the period of a year, it's amazing how much life can change in a year.

I like Maeve Binchy's books, but there is something a bit melancholy about them, that, while I enjoy reading them, after I've finished it's a long time before I read another one.

Cindy says

Reading Maeve Binchy novels is like taking a vacation. Scarlet Feather is full of rich characters and lovely Irish settings taking the reader from their comfy chair to Dublin. One of Maeve's best.

Helmisade says

This book promises that I will be "laughing and crying with Cathy, Tom and all their friends". Well, I was bored to tears if that counts?

Cathy and Tom, the main characters are clueless, stupid and completely lack the ability to stand up for themselves. You see, they are simple Irish folk who just want to make good food, have a solid marriage and make lots of Irish babies.

There are several other characters as well, but they are equally forgettable and annoying. Especially the couple of mistreated kids who were probably supposed to be the part that makes me cry. Sorry, but I think that would require some sort of emotional bond with the characters.

I think I might have been able to enjoy this book a bit if it wasn't so completely serious. The author has no sense of humour about the story or the characters. This is Serious Stuff! You must Cry! You must Laugh! You must think Deep and Meaningfull thoughts about life and relationships! And there is Nothing Funny about that, young lady!

And the cherry on top of this trainwreck? The ending of course, where two people sit together in silent understanding. Because in real and meaningfull relationships communication is unnecessary! Isn't is all just sooo amazing?

Maggie says

I found this a little slow and disjointed to get into but by halfway it had started to coalesce and I actually enjoyed it so much I read the second half of the book in a much quicker time (three days, compared to 2 weeks!).

The relationships in this book were more subtle and less predictable than I thought from the beginning of the book, and I liked the fact that not everybody's story was nicely tied up at the end, it leaves you to imagine what may come next instead of spoon feeding it.

Overall, I enjoyed this book and was left thinking about the characters for ages afterwards.

Mary Pessaran says

I have read many Maeve Binchy books, and I have to say I haven't met one I didn't like. I decided to just pick one, because this one had characters that were repeated in other novels. Quentins, Nights of Rain and Stars, Heart and Soul, Evening Class, Minding Frankie. I love seeing the characters reappear, not as primary, but as secondary in other stories. Ms. Binchy's characters are her real strength, because they always feels like friends. And of course, the setting in Ireland (also Italy, Greece, London) appeals to my wonderlust.

MajerEmma says

I loved this book from Page 1 to the last. It couldn't make you feel any cosier or warm your heart any better.

Book Concierge says

3.5***

Cathy Scarlet and Tom Feather met in culinary school and became fast friends. Now they've joined forces to start a catering company – Scarlet Feather. They're young, energetic, and talented and have made some good connections. They've found the prefect premises to make their new business the best in Dublin. They know it will be hard work but they are ready to pursue their dream, and with the support of friends and family they feel sure they will succeed.

Binchy excels at writing ensemble pieces that show ordinary people in some extraordinary circumstances. This novel covers a year in the lives of Cathy, Tom, their life partners, parents, employees, friends and family. They make mistakes, have emotional melt downs, overcome obstacles, find reserves of love and compassion, smile through adversity, and never stop working to achieve their dream.

One thing I like about Binchy's novels is that her characters are so real. They may be brilliant chefs but Tom and Cathy also have character flaws. They're both far too reticent when it comes to expressing their feelings, preferring to put off to tomorrow what should be faced today. But over the course of the novel, they do grow and mature. The rest of the ensemble cast is unevenly drawn ... Cathy's parents have a fairly significant role and are pretty complete, but Tom's parents are rarely seen and his mother, in particular, is somewhat of a caricature. Neil's father also was very simply drawn, though maybe his general absence from the story is indicative of his absence as a true father.

The book is written in a style that supports the ensemble cast. Each chapter covers a month in the year, but is divided into short vignettes jumping from character to character and scene to scene. The result is that the reader gets a more complete picture than any of the characters does.

Kimberly says

There are a couple of writers that I read anything they write, and Maeve Binchy is one of those readers. When you pick up Scarlet Feather, you notice 2 things. 1, that this work is part of a larger story and 2, that it is good enough to stand alone.

Maeve's characters are always FULLY developed and you will occasionally find yourself shaking your head as some of the characters are just like people you may know in your personal life, warts and all. When I read her books, my mind can seriously "see" the characters. They come in all shapes, heights and varying varieties of Irish backgrounds.

So without spoiling the story line, the Starlet Feather is a catering business. It touches the lives of just about everyone in town and has people from owners, to customers, to children and abuse recovery. The two main characters, Katy Scarlet and Tom Feather are individuals mentioned and written about in previous books and it is nice to see them enjoy the fruits of their labors in Scarlet Feather. What I enjoy also in this book is you witness the growth and development of personalities. For example without giving away the plot, The Twins burst into the scene as wild, unkempt run about children with no manners or thought of their surroundings or other people. Mid way the book you see them making attempts at polite conversation and interaction. Still sticking their foots in their mouths, but immediately making apologies and corrections, eager to learn. By the books end, they have transformed not into a Prince and Princess, but into polite, manageable children who have captured the hearts of some of the town folk who in turn praise Katy for her hand in turning them around despite their situation. Psst... my favorite side characters in this read are the twins and Walter.

Not of the plot is revealed, but I do believe that you will be drawn in before you have completed reading the first chapter.

This is the second time I have read Scarlet Feather and read 3 is in the future. Check out your local library for a digital copy to listen to, audio books make those car trips more enjoyable, plus you can "read" the book while doing gardening or other chores.

If Ms. Binchy write a travel book, I am definitely getting a copy!

So this is me, not the best review writer, signing off.

Lisa says

This is easy listening at its best - perfect for accompanying dreary chores and Christmas prep!

The story spans a year in the life of Tom Feather and Cathy Scarlet who are trying to get their catering company off the ground and keep their personal relationships going. We meet their family and friends and all their stories intertwine to entertain you.

There are no twists and turns - this is a family saga / drama and was very enjoyable.

Maeve always manages to create characters that I like and want to know what happens to them. If this appeals I would recommend the audio version which is read by Kate Binchy in her beautiful Irish accent.

Gemma Best says

Slow to start and sad in places, Maeve Binchy always makes her characters so interesting and real. Enjoyable.

Lorraine says

A visit in another world, colourful, funny, touching. Can't help getting involved and hoping that the protagonists survive and thrive in the turmoil. Slightly hindered by the numerous point of view/ voice changes. I'll read more of her books. Good escapistism.

Heather says

This is probably the 3rd or 4th book by Maeve Binchy that I've read... I read her books when I was in college and I have really loved her writing... She writes these intricate stories that involve a lot of characters and several story lines... they usually end up intertwined at the end in surprising ways... Often main characters of one book will end up as supporting characters in another... That being said... I didn't LOVE this book the way I loved the others... The beginning of the book was slow because there were so many story lines to set up... After the set up it began to follow Cathy and Tom starting up their catering business and taking on jobs... a large bulk of the book involved details of catering job, after catering job, after catering job and so forth... There were story lines that I thought were going to have a big dramatic ending that fizzled out at the end... I felt some of the others were resolved too quickly or too easily... The ending was the usual neat, clean ending... all the loose ends were being tied up... Despite the things I disliked, I did enjoy the book... I wouldn't NOT recommend it... but if you've never read Maeve Binchy's books before I'd probably

recommend Tara Road or Evening Class before I would recommend this book...

It's worth noting that it's been at least 5 or 6 years since I've read one of Maeve Binchy's books and I'm left wondering if I would love the others as much as I did back then if I re-read them today... It's been so long that I honestly couldn't say if this book is actually less enjoyable in comparison to the others I've read or if my taste in writing has changed that much over time...
