



A Week in Winter

Maeve Binchy

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Stoneybridge is a small town on the west coast of Ireland where all the families know one another. When Chicky Starr decides to take an old, decaying mansion set high on the cliffs overlooking the windswept Atlantic Ocean and turn it into a restful place for a holiday by the sea, everyone thinks she is crazy. Helped by Rigger (a bad boy turned good who is handy around the house) and Orla, her niece (a whiz at business), Chicky is finally ready to welcome the first guests to Stone House's big warm kitchen, log fires, and understated elegant bedrooms. John, the American movie star, thinks he has arrived incognito; Winnie and Lillian are forced into taking a holiday together; Nicola and Henry, husband and wife, have been shaken by seeing too much death practicing medicine; Anders hates his father's business, but has a real talent for music; Miss Nell Howe, a retired schoolteacher, criticizes everything and leaves a day early, much to everyone's relief; the Walls are disappointed to have won this second-prize holiday in a contest where first prize was Paris; and Freda, the librarian, is afraid of her own psychic visions.

Sharing a week with this unlikely cast of characters is pure joy, full of Maeve's trademark warmth and humor. Once again, she embraces us with her grand storytelling.

A Week in Winter Details

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From Reader Review A Week in Winter for online ebook

Nuala Reilly says

As posted on my blog: <http://nualareilly.wordpress.com/2013...>

It was in my stocking Christmas morning.

Maeve Binchy's last book; A Week in Winter.

I have mentioned before how much I loved her work. How much I identified with her characters and how reading her books made me feel like I was sitting down with old friends. Something about her words touched me in a way few other books do, and, like many of her fans, I have read (and own) every single book she ever wrote. When she died a few months ago, I actually cried. It felt like I had lost a friend.

And then the news: Maeve had written one more book and her editor was finishing up the last polish on it and was going to release it.

A Week in Winter is written in a style that Maeve was fond of in almost half of her books. We get the general idea of the story, and then she dedicates a chapter to each key character and tells us how they came to be a part of the story at large. This way we get a novel, but buried in it are several short stories and Maeve is still the queen of making me fall in love with a character in just a few short pages. Plus, her last book has a Nuala in it, so how could I not love it?

I was reluctant to start it at first. My husband commented that he was surprised that I didn't rip into it immediately, but starting this book was bitter sweet for me, since it was the last new book of hers I would ever read. Eventually though, I did pick it up, crack the pristine spine, and begin to read.

This time Maeve took us to the West of Ireland, which I loved, since that is the part of my father's homeland that I fell in love with when I was there two years ago. A small seaside town where people lived modest lives. Where young Chicky (as she is called) 'disgraces' her family by falling in love with an American visitor and running away with him to New York. To save face with her family and preserve her (and their honour) she invents, through her letters home, a marriage to him and a life very different from the bohemian one she is living.

Alas, as happens, the romance fizzles out, but Chicky, not wanting to go home in shame, carries on living her life in New York and keeping up the lie of her life with yearly visits home and letters.

Back in her hometown, the three Sheedy sisters who owned and lived in the large house on the hill begin to die. When the last Sheedy sister is left and with Chicky in town on a visit, the ladies strike a bargain to turn the grand home into a hotel and for Chicky to come home and run it. Her lover long gone, Chicky invents a tragic accident to her family, embraces life as a fictional widow and embarks on a journey to change her fate.

As the first opening week approaches, Chicky is nervous of getting the hotel off to a good start. It's hard to promote a Winter vacation in a seaside place, but she manages to fill the rooms.

Not wanting to spoil all the stories, I will tell you that the rest of the book goes into the lives of all the visitors in that first week of the hotel being open.

With no surprise, Maeve delves into the lives of these people with a grace and warmth that holds my attention and makes me want to meet them, be a visitor at that table in the dining room and hear the laughter and conversation that happens over the lovingly cooked meals. She makes me want to walk the cliff paths she describes, play with the baby twins and sit in the Sheedy sitting room with a hot cuppa tea and the fire roaring beside me.

I finished the book in less than a day, and, as happens when I close the back cover on one of her stories, I was sad to end it. Though, like most of her books, I know that I will pick it up again and again as the years go on and slip comfortably back into her characters like a pair of well worn slippers, the contours of which fit me so exactly its like they were made solely for me.

Thank you Maeve, for leaving us with this sweet parting gift. Your words will ever be a song in my heart.

Sue says

Notification from Goodreads that this book was published landed in my email box November 3, 2012. I didn't realize that Binchy had a book remaining to be published when she died in August, but it's very possible since the time from author completion to publication can be lengthy. What was more interesting to me is that the person who wrote the synopsis of the book for Goodreads did not include the fact that this book is being published posthumously.

Update 11/7/2013

When the book became available in ebook format from my local library, I placed a hold on it. Needless to say, the wait was long. Maeve Binchy has (had? no, has) many fans.

The story was sweet and kind, Maeve Binchy style. It was about a magical place where one could go and find solutions to life's problems. It was told only as Maeve Binchy could tell a story, in such a way that I was glad I didn't miss this last of her stories. And it confirmed something in me that I suspected was true. I will miss her style, her sweetness, her direct faith that we can enrich each other's lives simply by listening and loving. Maeve Binchy is something of that magical place, herself.

Dana says

A Week in Winter- Maeve Binchy's posthumous novel is achingly beautiful, so well written, a gift to any reader, and a sad goodbye to one of the world's most talented writers. Binchy has always held her readers gently in her grasp, telling them stories of people and places that capture our interest from the first few lines, and keep us fixated on her tales til the last page. I could not put this one down, and yet I dreaded finishing it, knowing there will be no more novels to follow. Binchy finished this one last summer, and then died, unexpectedly, a few weeks later. Each chapter is connected to the others, yet concentrates on the life of a different character, all of whom end up, in some capacity, whether as owner, staff or guest at Stone House, an old home, turned bed & breakfast, set high atop a cliff in small town Ireland, far from the bustling life in Dublin. Brothers and sisters, husbands & wives, children, friends, lovers and scoundrels all fill the pages to keep us glued to the words until the book is closed, and the story becomes a happy memory. Every character has some adversity to overcome (don't we all?) and most have love to give. I envy anyone who has not yet read this novel, because so much joy and beauty awaits them. There are not enough stars for me to give to A

Week in Winter. Binchy has never disappointed me, from her first, *Light a Penny Candle*, which I remember reading in my 20's, in 1982, until the last sentence in her final novel. I remember saying something similar in 2010 when I finished reading *Minding Frankie*. Binchy just "gets" people, and always makes me yearn for hot tea, a roaring fire, and a cat in my lap.

Cayla says

I started out really liking this book. I loved the premise of setting up a hotel in Ireland and found all the preparations exciting. The first half of the book largely focused on the life of the woman setting up the hotel, and it was enjoyable.

However, the book became very boring once the hotel was established. During the second half of the book, each chapter focused on a new character or characters, and their story that brought them to the hotel, and a sort of redemption from the time spent in Ireland during their week stay. It felt like a book of short stories. It also seemed a little shallow and forced when person after person had some major life problem when they arrived at the hotel, which was then resolved during their stay. My biggest disappointment though was that the book ended after the last character's story. I had hoped that stories would be revisited at the end and the story would circle back to characters, but that never happened. The end result was that I felt like I bonded with no one.

The book is a light-hearted, warm read and could be nice as a vacation book, but I was generally not very impressed.

Megan Baxter says

This book is decidedly cozy. I am not saying that as a bad thing, not remotely. What saves it is that it is not saccharine. Cozy, but not sickly sweet. Neither is it a challenging read, nor are there ideas that will occupy your brain for days, just a belief that taking time for yourself, in pleasant surroundings, surrounded by people who genuinely like people and take care of each other, in a gorgeous setting, is good for the soul.

It is not hard to convince me of this.

Note: The rest of this review has been withdrawn due to the recent changes in Goodreads policy and enforcement. You can read why I came to this decision [here](#).

In the meantime, you can read the entire review at [Smorgasbook](#)

?Susan? says

This was a great cozy. I love how MB can create such ingenious characters that really stick with you. This story is a walk through the lives and backgrounds of a group of people who have never met and are from different places in the world. One week they all end up at a magical bed and breakfast. Not a paranormal place, just a place where its history creates a sense and environment prone to healing. MB makes it easy to get to know, care about and take journeys with all her wonderful characters. Fantastic picturesque scenery

settings of the Irish coast helped bring long walks and cave adventures to life. The descriptions of the weather have spurred me onto starting some new fall and winter reads. Thank you Maeve Binchy, you are and will be missed.

Dianne says

I loved this unusual novel. Written more like a series of novellas than one long novel, this book deals with the different people who will eventually either work at Stone House or stay there for the inaugural week in the winter.

This book was written with Ms Binchy's usual style and grace. The story is a bit of a typical one for the author, as she had been known to do lovely things with words and writing about people going through hard times and seeing the hope at the end of the tunnel.

The varieties of people who will be making up the visitors to the Inn are eclectic indeed and entirely entertaining. With each story being different yet part of a whole, the reader will never get bored or overly annoyed with a character they did not like. And there is at least one character that everyone will not like! With every page turn in this book, there is something new and fresh to look forward to.

Those who enjoy reading about Ireland will whole-heartedly miss Ms Maeve Binchy. Those who enjoy interesting and unusual characters and exceptional story telling will have to look far and wide to find an author of this caliber.

Watchingthewords says

A Week in Winter was the last book written by Maeve Binchy before her death. Knowing that it was the last Maeve Binchy book made me a little melancholy before I even started reading, and a book set on the rocky and stormy Atlantic coast of Ireland will have plenty of melancholy already! I love books set in Ireland, and while this one offered no surprises to fans of Maeve Binchy, it transported me to Stone House, an inn opened by Chicky Starr with the help of Riggy (a troubled young man who needs to find his way) and Orla (Chicky's niece trying to find her place). Separate chapters focus on each of these characters as well as an American actor who ends up there on a whim, a couple of doctors that are trying to recover from the tragedies they've witnessed, a psychic librarian, a cantankerous school principal, a Swede torn between family duty and his love of music, a young girl and her not-happy future mother-in-law, and a prize-winning couple. Each has a different story and separate reasons for being at Stone House, where they will hopefully (mostly) find hope and a way forward in their lives.

Unfortunately, Maeve Binchy did not get a chance to finish editing the book before her death, and in places, it shows. There are several awkward transitions, some characters that are not as well-developed as in her previous works, and some storylines that seem to be left unfinished. However, it is still Maeve Binchy, comforting and thoughtful storytelling.

Check out my blog at www.watchingthewords.com

JoAnn Ross says

I've always loved Maeve Binchy and am going to miss her a lot. She's my writer hero and two of my high moments as a writer were having one of my Irish trilogy books appear in a display with her in the Shannon airport duty free shop, and last summer appearing on the New York Times bestseller list with her. Even with her weaker books (and this one wasn't), she's a better storyteller than most writers out there. Which, along with the fact that she kept me totally engaged and turning the pages, is why I gave *A Week in Winter* five stars.

One odd note, to me, was that the book seemed about 85% narrative. It worked for her voice, as if she was sitting across a table in an Irish pub, telling me the story over a foam-topped pint in front of a turf fire. And, as I said, I kept turning pages to find out what happened. But since books, at least in America, are so dialogue heavy these days, I couldn't help noticing it.

There was something else niggling me about the story that I didn't figure out until I puzzled on it a few days after finishing the book. All the guests who arrive at the guest house the main character has restored have their stories told in a few chapters. Then there are a few scenes where they all are shown having dinner together, but Binchy could have switched all those chapters around and it wouldn't have made a difference because they were more like short stories woven together by putting the characters in the same house at the same time.

Not that it didn't work. It did. But it wasn't a format most readers have come to expect from a novel. The worst part was getting to that last page and realizing it was the last new Binchy book I'd ever read.

Dem says

A Week in Winter by Maeve Binchy is what I would call a cosy and easy read but an uninspiring read.

I would sum it up as a collection of short stories about different people and how their problems were solved by a week in winter staying at an Irish Hotel.

The stories are pretty predictable with no real depth to them and the characters are quite bland and I could not really gel or care about any of them. I felt the writing was hurried and the novel concluded with the all problems solved. Just a bit too twee for my liking.

It is certainly readable and I found myself plodding along with each chapter but for me this is not a book that will stay with me and I don't think it will make a good book club read as discussion would be pretty limited.

I have enjoyed previous books by Maeve Binchy but this one is really not up to her normal standards. I will remember her more for her wonderful novels like *Circle of Friends* and *The Glass Lake* which although read years ago these stories still remain with me.

A 2.5 rating for me.

Patricia Fawcett says

Forget vampires, sado-masochism et al, the so-called 'in vogue' genres in the literature of today. Curling up with a Maeve Binchy novel is a bit like snuggling up on a cold winter's night with a big mug of hot chocolate. Like the chocolate, you never want the book to end, yet you cannot put it down until you do so. She gently pulls you into the plotline, introducing the characters one by one, each with their own agenda. The focal point in 'A Week in Winter' is Stone House, a newly-opened hotel, a project for Chicky, the central character, who carries a secret. The characters, from all walks of life, come together, ultimately finding things out about themselves and each other. A wonderful, warming descriptive narrative from the lovely Maeve, sadly no longer with us.

Danette says

So bittersweet to finish this Maeve Binchy book, knowing that there will be no more. Once again, it felt like coming home! Love all of the characters presented in this book, all of them traveling to Stoneybridge to either work or stay at Stone House. I think that if you want to read this book, you should first make sure that you've read many books she has written before, because old characters are mentioned, places are returned to, and it just gives that much more pleasure! So if you want to read this, go back and read her earlier works, including Quentin's, Heart and Soul, Minding Frankie, and maybe others. They're all so good anyway. Ah. Maeve.

Maggie61 says

I bought this book as soon as it came out but put off reading it since I knew it would be her last. Someone put on here that they didn't enjoy it as it just seemed like short stories. I am not a fan of short stories normally and this book does have a little of that feel but in each segment the other characters are all woven in. Each chapter focuses on a certain guest, giving a "history" of sorts and how they ended up at stone house but as the chapter progresses, the other guests are brought in. I did think though that at some point chicky's secret about Walter would be revealed, although I am glad it wasn't. I have always wanted to go to Ireland, and stone house sounded like a place I would love to get away to. I did really enjoy this last book of hers, not as much as some of her earlier works like Tara road (which started me reading her books) and circle of friends and others that I found amazing. As I enjoyed it though I read with some sadness and wanting the book not to end as I knew there'd be no more.

Sharon Chance says

The literary world took a huge hit when it lost one of Ireland's best and most beloved authors, Maeve Binchy, last year. But one shining light was that Maeve had completed her final novel, "A Week In Winter," before her death, and what a beautiful tribute to this amazing author this final book is.

In her brilliant way of spinning a story, Maeve takes her readers to the west coast of Ireland to the village of Stoneybridge where hometown girl Chicky Starr has returned home to open a holiday hotel. As the story opens, readers are welcomed into the life of Chicky and the people who are helping her making her dream of creating a place of rest for others possible. There is Rigger, the bad boy who turns out to become a good man; Orla, Chicky's niece, who is brilliant with figures and computer skills; and Miss Queenie, the matriarch of the house who spread her delighted joy in all the proceedings.

But it's the guests who make their way to Stone House for its first week of business who make this story sing. John, the American movie star who is incognito; Winnie and her future mother-in-law Lillian (if they don't kill each other first); Anders, the Dutch businessman who is facing a crossroads in his life; the Walls, the prize-winning couple who aren't too pleased with their prize; Freda, the psychic librarian; and Miss Nell Howe, the most unpleasant retired school headmistress anyone has ever met. It's this group of people and their individual stories that give the warmth and compassion that Maeve Binchy's books are so famous for. There are even references to a few of the other characters from Maeve's previous novels that make an appearance, although brief, in this tale.

The setting of the book is inspiring, the characters are personable and real, and the story flows from one chapter to another with such ease that it is a joy to read.

If an author's life can have a cherry-on-top at the end of their life's work, then "A Week In Winter" is certainly Maeve Binchy's cherry!

Nancy says

Made Me Want to Spend a Week at Stone House

Chicky falls in love with Walter. He convinces her to leave Stoneybridge in Ireland and come to New York with him, promising that they will always be together. Forever turns out to be a couple of months. Chicky is left alone in New York with no friends and no job. Luckily she finds work at Mrs. Cassiday's boarding house. Chicky doesn't want to go home and confess what a mess her life turned out to be, but Mrs. Cassiday finally convinces her and to her amazement, she loves being back. She loves it so much that she makes arrangements to buy Stone House from Miss Queenie Sheedy. Thus starts the plan to turn Stone House into a select hotel.

This is a delightful, sunny story that makes you feel good inside just reading about Stone House and all the marvelous characters, guests and staff, that help to make the hotel a reality. The book is actually a series of short stories all tied together by the theme of preparing Stone House to become a hotel and welcome guests. Each story is complete, but they build on each other to compose the picture of the hotel and its guests.

I highly recommend this book if you're a fan of Maeve Binchy, or if you just want to curl up and take a journey of the imagination to Stone House on the coast of Ireland.

I reviewed this book for the Amazon Vine Program.
