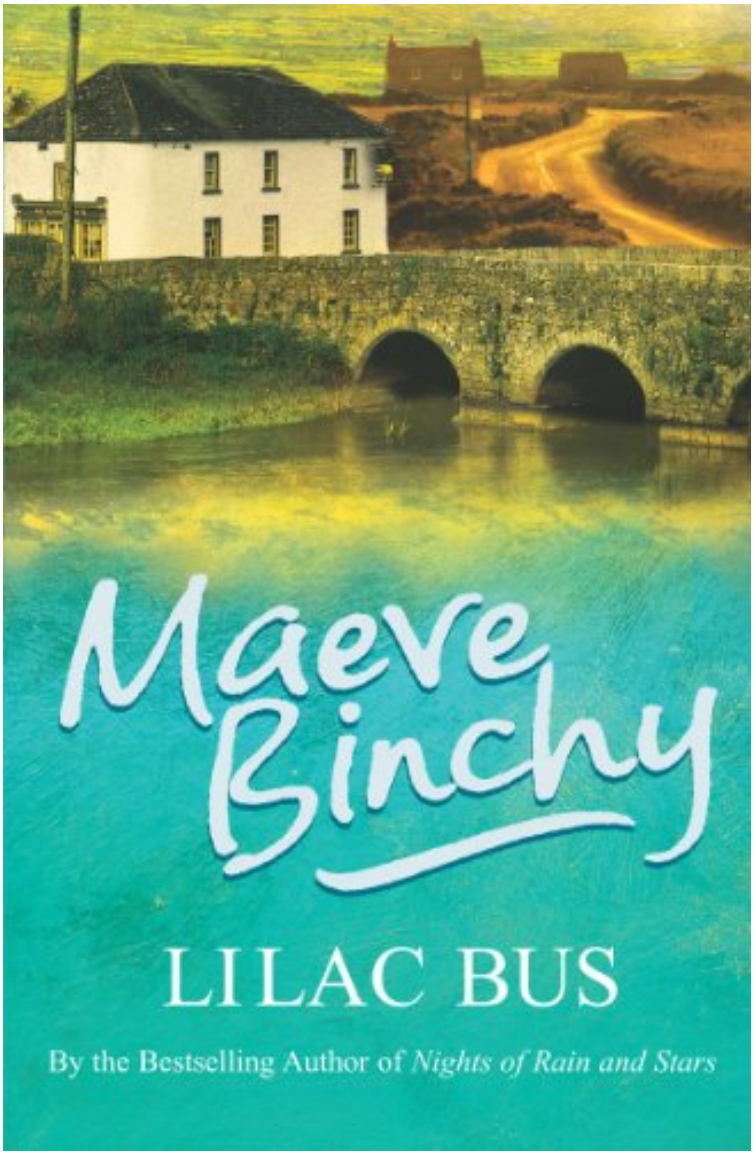
Lilac Bus



Par Maeve Binchy
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Par Maeve Binchy : Lilac Bus before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Lilac Bus:

Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurAn unforgettably warm novel from the bestselling author of Light a Penny Candle and Circle of Friends.Each Friday, Tom Fitzgerald drives the same people home from Dublin to spend the weekend in Rathdoon. Nancy, Dee, Kev and Celia - each has their own secret story, unknown to their fellow passengers. And of course Tom himself has his own reasons for returning home so regularly...Once again, Maeve Binchy has conjured up a cast of very human characters with real joys and real sadnesses, portrayed with her trademark wit, compassion and warmth.ExtraitNancyNancy was early, but then she always was, and she didn't like being seen there too soon. It looked as if you had nothing else to do if you arrived far too early for the bus home. The others all arrived rushing and panting and afraid they'd miss it, because if they

missed it then they really did. Tom turned the key in the ignition at 6:45 and swung the Lilac Bus out into the road. That way he had them all home before ten o'clock and that was his promise. No point in going home for a weekend if you aren't in the pub by ten, that was his philosophy. It wasn't Nancy's, but she was compulsively early for everything. It was just her way. She went into a shop that sold magazines and cards. She knew a lot of the cards by heart from studying them on a Friday. There was the big one with tears falling down it: "Sorry I missed your birthday." They had the country papers in this shop, too, but Nancy never bought one. There'd be a paper at home and she could catch up on everything then.She examined her new perm in the big round mirror that was not meant so much as a mirror as a deterrent to shoplifting. It was set high on the wall and at a funny angle, or she hoped it was. Otherwise the perm looked very odd indeed. She stared up at her reflection anxiously. Surely she didn't look like some small worried animal with fuzzy hair and huge terrified eyes. That's what she saw in the mirror, but of course that's not what people down at her own level would see? After all, everyone looked silly from this point of view. She patted her head and had another pang about the perm. It looked to her dangerously like those old-fashioned perms that people like her mother got in Rathdoon. The summer perm and the Christmas perm. Frizz, fuzz . . . tight curls growing out into what looked like flashes of lightning or electric shocks as the weeks went by. The girls in the salon assured her that she was mad to think this. She had got a modern perm, one of the newest on the market. Think what she'd have paid if she had to pay for it! Nancy had smiled grimly. Paid for it! At that price! Nancy Morris wouldn't have paid half that price or a quarter of that price for a perm. Nancy Morris had crossed Dublin to go to a salon where she heard they needed people to practice on. Models was the expression, but Nancy was more realistic. They needed heads with hair and smart people like Nancy found out which were the big salons with lots of trainees and on what nights their classes and demonstrations were. She had only paid for two visits to a hairdresser since she came to Dublin six years ago. That wasn't bad going, she smiled proudly. Still, it was done now, this perm, no point in peering up at herself and worrying. Better go across and get on the bus. Surely some of the others would be there by now, and it was well after half-past six.Tom was sitting there reading an evening paper. He looked up and smiled. "Evening, Miss Mouse," he said pleasantly, and lifted her big suitcase up onto the roof rack with one easy movement. She got in crossly. She hated him calling her Miss Mouse, but it was her own fault. When she had rung to ask for a place in his minibus she had given her name as Miss Morris. Well, she was used to being formal on the phone--that was what her job was about, for heaven's sake. How was she to know that she should have said her first name and that he genuinely misheard the Morris bit. But it was very galling that he still refused to call her Nancy, even though he always called old Mrs. Hickey Judy and she could have been his mother."It's light for such a big case," he said pleasantly. Nancy just nodded. She didn't feel like telling him it was her only suitcase and she had no intention of going out and spending over a fiver on some kind of nylon holdall like the others had. And anyway she needed a big case: there were always things to take back to Dublin, like potatoes and whatever vegetables there were, and anything else that turned up. There was the time that her mother's friend, Mrs. Casey, was getting rid of her curtains: Nancy brought them back and they were lovely in the flat.She sat down in one of the middle seats, straightened her skirt under her so that it wouldn't crease and took out her glucose sweets. They had jars of them in the hospital, and they always told her to help herself. She didn't eat them normally but it was nice on a bus journey to have something; the others often bought barley sugar or toffees, but what was the point of spending money on sweets when they were there for the asking? She unfolded a newspaper that one of the patients had left behind in the waiting room. She got a lot of her reading material this way--people waiting for the specialists were inclined to be forgetful about papers and magazines, and there was rarely an evening she didn't have something to read. And it was nice to have a variety, she told herself. It was like a surprise. Mairead didn't understand. Nancy's brow darkened when she thought of Mairead. All that had to be sorted out. It had been so unexpected and so unfair.She held up the newspaper so that Tom would think she was reading and she went over it all again. Mairead coming in on Wednesday and walking around restlessly picking things up and putting them down. You didn't have to be a genius to know there was something on her mind. Nancy thought she was going to ask about the television again. They had a perfectly good black and white set, which was a bit snowstormish now and then but usually got a terrific reception. What on earth was the point of paying out a fortune renting a color set? And even a video: Mairead had once mentioned this as if they were some kind of millionaires. She had looked up from the telly, which was admittedly having one of its bad nights and you had to guess a lot from the soundtrack; but Mairead had wanted to talk about something much bigger."I've been thinking all week at work how to say this, Nancy, and I can't think of any proper way, so I'll just say it straight out. I

want to share the flat with someone else, and I am going to have to ask you to leave. In your own time, of course, I'm not throwing you out on the road . . ." She had given a little nervous laugh, but Nancy had been too astounded to join in. "You see," Mairead had gone on, "it was never permanent. It was just to see what we thought. . . . That was the arrangement. That was what we said. . . ." Her voice had trailed away guiltily."But we've been sharing for three years," Nancy said."I know," Mairead said miserably."So why? Don't I pay the rent in time always and the electricity? And I contribute to the food from home and I got curtains for the hall windows and--""Of course, Nancy, nobody's saying you didn't.""So why?""It's just . . . no, there's no reason, can't we do it nice and easily now, without quarrels and questions? Can't you just find another place and we'll still meet now and then, go to the pictures, you come over here one evening, me go to your place? Come on, Nancy, that's the grown-up way to do things."Nancy had burned with rage. Mairead, who worked in a flower shop, telling her what was the grown-up way to do things. Mairead, who hadn't got one honor in her Leaving Certificate, ordering Nancy out of her flat. Her flat. True, she had found it, and when she needed someone to share the rent her aunt, Mrs. Casey, the friend of Nancy's mother, had suggested Nancy. Where had Mairead got these notions and more important, why? Who did she want to share with?The worst thing was that Mairead didn't seem to know or care, she just said she would like a change. At this point Nancy had turned off the flickering telly and had settled in for what she thought was going to be a heart-to-heart where Mairead would tell her all about some star-crossed love. But no. Mairead was busy looking at the calendar. Would we say just over a month, like the middle of October? That would surely give her time to find somewhere."But who will I share with?" Nancy had wailed.Mairead had shrugged. She didn't know, maybe Nancy could get a bed-sit on her own. She didn't do much cooking or entertaining, a bed-sit might be just as good. But they cost a fortune! Mairead had shrugged again as if it didn't concern her.The following morning Nancy was having her tea in the kitchen--she never bothered with a breakfast since there was always food in the hospital, and what was the point of being a receptionist for all these doctors unless you got some perks like a canteen and glucose sweets? Mairead rushed in late as usual and Nancy asked her had she forgiven her."Forgive you, Nancy? What for? What in heaven's name for?""Well, I must have done something, otherwise you wouldn't be asking me to leave our flat.""It's my flat and don't be such a clown. We're not married to each other, Nancy. You came in here to share my rent, now that bit's over. Right? Yes. That's all there is to it." She was gulping down a bowl of cornflakes and trying to pull on her boots at the same time. Mairead loved these boots; they horrified Nancy--they had cost a week's salary. For a pair of boots."What'll I tell them in Rathdoon?" Nancy asked solemnly. Mairead was startled."About what?" she had asked, bewildered."About us breaking up?""Who would want to know? Who even knows we share a flat?""Everyone: your mother, my mother, your aunt--Mrs. Casey--everyone.""Well, what do you mean what will you tell them?" Mairead was genuinely surprised."But your mother, what will she think? What will I tell her?"Mairead had lost her temper suddenly. Nancy still felt a shock just thinking about it."My mother is a normal woman; she's like everyone else's mother, including your mother. She doesn't think...Revue de presseTouching, gossipy and as warm as a feather bed.Sunday TelegraphFrom the Trade Paperback edition.