



A Spool of Blue Thread, by Anne Tyler
Reviewed by Cindy Kennedy, July 2015

A quarter of a century after she won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction, the prolific author Anne Tyler hasn't missed a step. Her latest novel, *A Spool of Blue Thread*, is as fresh and intriguing as her earlier books.

A Spool of Blue Thread tells the multigenerational story of the Whitshank family who "had a talent for pretending that everything was fine." Abby and Red, now in their 70s, live in a rambling Baltimore house that had been lovingly built by Red's father Junior in the 1930s. (The house itself is a constant presence, with disparate characters popping in and out.) Junior had founded Whitshank Construction, now the family's successful business.

Abby and Red have four adult children, and they fret about their errant son Denny who enters and leaves their lives at his whim. Denny, it seems, can never stick with a job or with a relationship. He resents his younger brother Stem, the model son who is everything Denny is not: patient, kind, involved in the family business, and devoted to their parents.

Denny's dismissive behavior toward Abby and Red exasperates his two sisters. Amanda, the oldest, berates him for "consuming every last little drop of our parents' attention leaving nothing for the rest of us."

But when Abby and Red each experience a health crisis and the siblings converge, Denny surprisingly shows up at the family home to help out. Soon, the root of the conflict between Denny and Stem is revealed. And then all the "threads" of the story come together in signature Anne Tyler style.