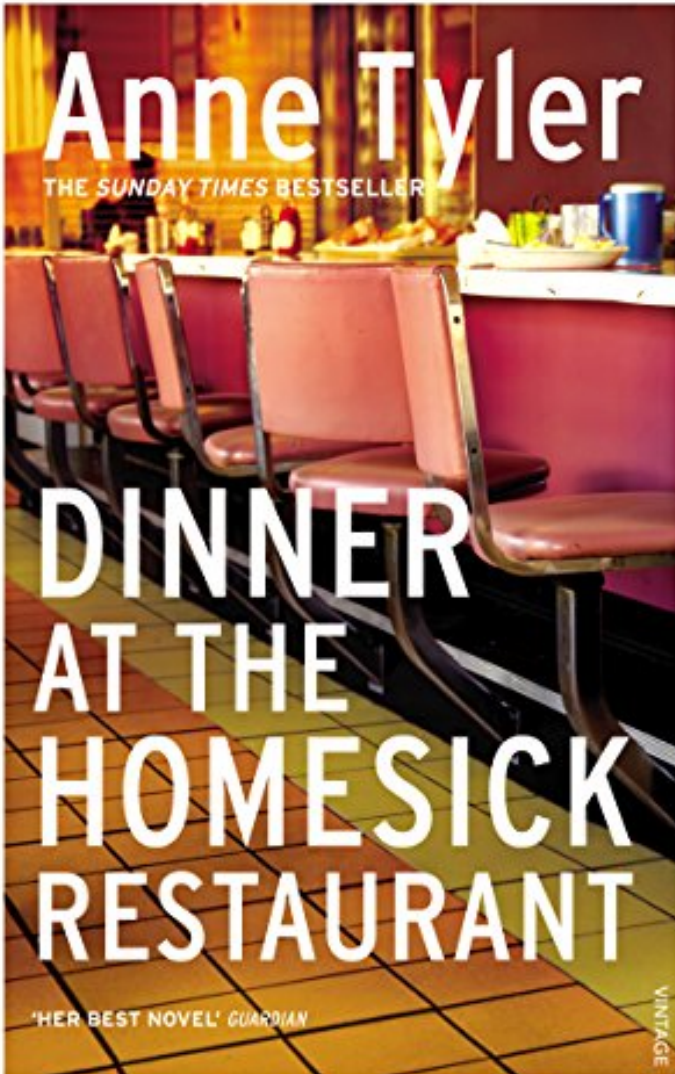


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# Dinner At The Homesick Restaurant



Par Anne Tyler  
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Par Anne Tyler : **Dinner At The Homesick Restaurant** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Dinner At The Homesick Restaurant:

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**Description :** Description du produit"A book that should join those few that every literate person will have to read."THE BOSTON GLOBEPearl Tull is nearing the end of her life but not her memory. Ever since 1944 when her husband left her, she has raised her three very different children on her own. Now grown, they have gathered together--with anger, with hope, and with a beautiful, harsh, and dazzling story to tell....

Prsentation de l'diteurThrough every family run memories which bind it together despite everything. The Tulls of Baltimore are no exception. Abandoned by her salesman husband, Pearl is left to bring up her three children alone Cody, a flawed devil, Ezra, a flawed saint, and Jenny, errant and passionate. Now, as Pearl lies dying, stiffly encased in her pride and solitude, the past is unlocked and with it its secrets.Extrait1 Something You Should Know While Pearl Tull was dying, a funny thought occurred to her. It twitched her

lips and rustled her breath, and she felt her son lean forward from where he kept watch by her bed. Get she told him. You should have got You should have got an extra mother, was what she meant to say, the way we started extra children after the first child fell so ill. Cody, that was; the older boy. Not Ezra here beside her bed but Cody the troublemaker a difficult baby, born late in her life. They had decided on no more. Then he developed croup. This was in 1931, when croup was something serious. She'd been frantic. Over his crib she had draped a flannel sheet, and she set out skillets, saucepans, buckets full of water that she'd heated on the stove. She lifted the flannel sheet to catch the steam. The baby's breathing was choked and rough, like something pulled through tightly packed gravel. His skin was blazing and his hair was plastered stiffly to his temples. Toward morning, he slept. Pearl's head sagged in the rocking chair and she slept too, fingers still gripping the ivory metal crib rail. Beck was away on business came home when the worst was over, Cody toddling around again with nothing more than a runny nose and a loose, unalarming cough that Beck didn't even notice. I want more children, Pearl told him. He acted surprised, though pleased. He reminded her that she hadn't felt she could face another delivery. But I want some extra, she said, for it had struck her during the croup: if Cody died, what would she have left? This little rented house, fixed up so carefully and pathetically; the nursery with its Mother Goose theme; and Beck, of course, but he was so busy with the Tanner Corporation, away from home more often than not, and even when home always fuming over business: who was on the rise and who was on the skids, who had spread damaging rumors behind his back, what chance he had of being let go now that times were so hard. I don't know why I thought just one little boy would suffice, said Pearl. But it wasn't as simple as she had supposed. The second child was Ezra, so sweet and clumsy it could break your heart. She was more endangered than ever. It would have been best to stop at Cody. She still hadn't learned, though. After Ezra came Jenny, the girl such fun to dress, to fix her hair in different styles. Girls were a kind of luxury, Pearl felt. But she couldn't give Jenny up, either. What she had now was not one loss to fear but three. Still, she thought, it had seemed a good idea once upon a time: spare children, like spare tires, or those extra lisle stockings they used to package free with each pair. You should have arranged for a second-string mother, Ezra, she said. Or she meant to say. How shortsighted of you. But evidently she failed to form the words, for she heard him sit back again without comment and turn a page of his magazine. She had not seen Ezra clearly since the spring of '75, four and a half years ago, when she first started losing her vision. She'd had a little trouble with blurring. She went to the doctor for glasses. It was arteries, he told her; something to do with her arteries. She was eighty-one years old, after all. But he was certain it could be treated. He sent her to a specialist, who sent her to someone else, to make a long story short, they found they couldn't help her. Something had shriveled away behind her eyes. I'm falling into disrepair, she told the children. I've outlived myself. She gave a little laugh. To tell the truth, she hadn't believed it. She had made the appropriate sounds of dismay, then acceptance, then plucky cheer; but inwardly, she'd determined not to allow it. She just wouldn't hear of it, that was all. She had always been a strong-willed woman. Once, when Beck was away on business, she'd walked around with a broken arm for a day and a half till he could come stay with the babies. (It was just after one of his transfers. She was a stranger in town and had no one to turn to.) She didn't even hold with aspirin; didn't hold with depending, requesting. The doctor says I'm going blind, she told the children, but privately, she'd intended to do no such thing. Yet every day, her sight had faded. The light, she felt, was somehow thinning and retreating. Her son Ezra, his calm face that she loved to linger on, he grew dim. Even in bright sunshine, now, she had difficulty making out his shape. She could barely discern his silhouette as he came near her, that large, sloping body settling into softness a bit in his middle age. She felt his flannel warmth when he sat next to her on the couch, describing what was on her TV or going through her drawer of snapshots the way she liked to have him do. What's that you've got, Ezra? she would ask. It seems to be some people on a picnic, he would say. Picnic? What kind of picnic? White tablecloth in the grass. Wicker basket. Lady wearing a middie blouse. Maybe that's Aunt Bessie. I'd recognize your Aunt Bessie, by now. Or Cousin Elsa. She favored middie blouses, I recall. Ezra said, I never knew you had a cousin. Oh, I had cousins, she said. She tipped her head back and recollected cousins, aunts, uncles, a grandpa whose breath had smelled of mothballs. It was peculiar how her memory seemed to be going blind with the rest of her. She didn't so much see their faces as hear their fluid voices, feel the crisp ruffling of the ladies' shirtwaists, smell their pomades and lavender water and the sharp-scented bottle of crystals that sickly Cousin Bertha had carried to ward off fainting spells. I had cousins aplenty, she told Ezra. They had thought she would be an old maid. They'd grown tactful insultingly tactful. Talk of others' weddings and confinements halted when Pearl stepped out on the porch. A college education was offered by Uncle Seward at Meredith College, right there in Raleigh, so she

wouldnt have to leave home. No doubt he feared having to support her forever: a millstone, an orphaned spinster niece tying up his spare bedroom. But she told him she had no use for college. She felt that going to college would be an admission of defeat. Oh, what was the trouble, exactly? She was not bad-looking. She was small and slender with fair skin and fair, piled hair, but the hair was growing dry as dust and the strain was beginning to show around the curled and mobile corners of her mouth. Shed had suitors in abundance, more than she could name; yet they never lasted, somehow. It seemed there was some magical word that everyone knew but Pearl those streams of girls, years younger than she, effortlessly tumbling into marriage. Was she too serious? Should she unbend more? Lower herself to giggle like those mindless, silly Winston twins? Uncle Seward, you can tell me. But Uncle Seward just puffed on his pipe and suggested a secretarial course. Then she met Beck Tull. She was thirty years old. He was twenty-four a salesman with the Tanner Corporation, which sold its farm and garden equipment all over the eastern seaboard and where he would surely, surely rise, a smart young fellow like him. In those days, he was lean and rangy. His black hair waved extravagantly, and his eyes were a brilliant shade of blue that seemed not quite real. Some might say he was well, a little extreme. Flamboyant. Not quite of Pearls class. And certainly too young for her. She knew there were some thoughts to that effect. But what did she care? She felt reckless and dashing, bursting with possibilities. She met him at a church at the Charity Baptist Church, which Pearl was only visiting because her girlfriend Emmaline was a member. Pearl was not a Baptist herself. She was Episcopalian, but truthfully not even that; she thought of herself as a nonbeliever. Still, when she went to the Baptist church and saw Beck Tull standing there, a stranger, glossily shaved and wearing a shiny blue suit, and he asked within two minutes if he might be allowed to call, she related it in some superstitious way to the church itself as if Beck were her reward for attending with the Baptists. She did not dare stop attending. She became a member, to her familys horror, and was married at Charity Baptist and went to one Baptist church or another, in one town or another, her entire married life, just so her reward would not be snatched away.

(Didnt that maybe, it occurred to her, imply some kind of faith after all?) Courting her, he brought chocolates and flowers and then more serious pamphlets describing the products of the Tanner Corporation. He started telling her in detail about his work and his plans for advancement. He paid her compliments that made her uncomfortable till she could get off alone in her room and savor them. She was the most cultured and refined little lady that he had ever known, he said, and the best mannered, and the daintiest. He liked to place her hand to his, palm to palm, and marvel at its tiny size. Despite the reputation of salesmen, he was respectful to a fault and never grabbed at her the way some other men might. Then he received his transfer, and after that things sped up so; for he wouldnt hear of leaving her behind but must marry her immediately and take her with him. So they had their Baptist wedding both of them out of breath, Pearl always pictured later and spent their honeymoon moving to Newport News. She never even got to enjoy her new status among her girlfriends. She didnt have time to show off a single one of her trousseau dresses, or to flash her two gold rings the narrow wedding band and the engagement ring, set with a pearl, inscribed To a Pearl among Women. Everything seemed so unsatisfying. They moved, and they moved again. For the first six years they had no children and the moves were fairly easy. Shed gaze at each new town with hopeful eyes and think: This may be where Ill have my son. (For pregnancy, now, took on the luster that marriage had once had it was the treasure that came so easily to everyone but her.) Then Cody was born, and moving seemed much harder. Children had a way of complicating things, she noticed. There were the doctors and the school transcripts and this, that, and the other. Meanwhile she looked around and saw that somehow, without her noticing, shed been cut off from most of her relatives. Aunts and uncles had died while shed been too far away to do more than send a sympathy note. The house where she was born was sold to a man from Michigan; cousins married strangers with last names shed never heard of; even the street names were changed so shed be lost if she ever went back. And it struck her once, in her forties, that she really had no notion what had become of that grandpa with the mothball breath. He couldnt still be living, could he? Had he died and no one thought to inform her? Or maybe theyd sent the news to an out-of-date address, three or four years behind times. Or she might have heard but simply forgotten, in the rush of some transfer or other.

Anything was possible. Oh, those transfers. Always there was some incentive a chance of promotion, or richer territory. But it seldom amounted to much. Was it Becks fault? He claimed it wasnt, but she didnt know; she really didnt know. He claimed that he was haunted by ill-wishers. There were so many petty people in this world, he said. She pursed her lips and studied him. Why do you look at me that way? he asked. What are you thinking? At least, he said, I provide for you. Ive never let my family go hungry. She admitted that, but still she felt a constant itch of anxiety. It seemed her forehead was always tight and

puckered. This was not a person she could lean on, she felt this slangy, loud-voiced salesman peering at his reflection with too much interest when he tied his tie in the mornings, combing his pompadour tall and damp and frilly and then replacing the comb in a shirt pocket full of pencils, pens, ruler, appointment book, and tire gauge, all bearing catchy printed slogans for various firms. Over his beer in the evening (but he was not a drinking man; don't get her wrong), Beck liked to sing and pull at his face. She didn't know why beer made him tug his skin that waywork it around like a rubber mask, so by bedtime his cheeks had a stretched-out, slackened look. He sang Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen his favorite song. Nobody knows but Jesus. She supposed it must be true. What were his private thoughts, inside his spreading face, under the crest of black hair? She didn't have the faintest idea. One Sunday night in 1944, he said he didn't want to stay married. They were sending him to Norfolk, he said; but he thought it best if he went alone. Pearl felt she was sinking in at the center, like someone given a stomach punch. Yet part of her experienced an alert form of interest, as if this were happening in a story. Why? she asked him, calmly enough. He didn't answer. Beck? Why? All he did was study his fists. He looked like a young and belligerent schoolboy waiting out a scolding. She made her voice even quieter. It was important to learn the reason. Wouldn't he just tell her what it was? He'd told her, he said. She lowered herself, shaking, into the chair across from him. She looked at his left temple, in which a pulse ticked. He was just passing through some mood, was all. He would change his mind in the morning. We'll sleep on it, she told him. But he said, It's tonight I'm going. He went to the bedroom for his suitcase, and he took his other suit from the wardrobe. Meanwhile Pearl, desperate for time, asked couldn't they talk this over? Think it through? No need to be hasty, was there? He crossed from bureau to bed, from wardrobe to bed, packing his belongings. There weren't that many. He was done in twenty minutes. He drew in his breath and she thought, Now he'll tell me. But all he said was, I'm not an irresponsible person. I do plan to send you money. And the children, she said, clutching new hope. You'll want to visit the children. (He would come with presents for them and she'd be the one to open the doorperfumed, in her Sunday dress, maybe wearing a bit of rouge. She'd always thought false color looked cheap, but she could have been wrong.) Beck said, No. What? I won't be visiting the children. She sat down on the bed. I don't understand you, she said. There ought to be a whole separate language, she thought, for words that are truer than other wordsfor perfect, absolute truth. It was the purest fact of her life: she did not understand him, and she never would.

From 500 Great Books by Women; review by Caren TownAnne Tyler is known for her ability to explore and make real the ways in which "unexceptional" people create families out of what might be seen as a hopeless muddle of failed or failing relationships. The Tull family - frazzled and sometimes abusive mother Pearl, missing father Beck, jealous and manipulative son Cody, troubled but finally contented daughter Jenny, and loving, placid baby Ezra - resembles families most of us know. We first witness Pearl's memories as she wanders back through her life while lying on her deathbed; next, Cody takes over, and by the end of the book we have experienced each family member's perspective. Out of their often differing stories a picture emerges of Pearl: of how her travelling salesman husband left her with three children to care for, how she tried to provide both emotional and financial support, and how she failed (more or less, depending upon the perspective) to give them a loving and secure home. Her children create families for themselves with varying degrees of success - Cody with his brother's girlfriend, Jenny with a second husband and built-in family, Ezra with his restaurant - but never seem able to make it through a single dinner together without conflict. Lovable in the complicated way only family members are, they speak to us in the raucous chorus of guests at a dinner party, clamoring for our attention and inviting us to join in. -- For great reviews of books for girls, check out Let's Hear It for the Girls: 375 Great Books for Readers 2-14.