



The Uncommon Thread

R. Scott Anderson

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One thing we know for sure is that laughter is the best remedy for small and large-scale blues. *The Uncommon Thread*, Dr. R. Scott Anderson's new collection of essays, compiled from his longtime column in the respected *Mississippi State Medical Association Journal*, provides bite-size laughs, aha moments, and surprises perfect for consuming in short jags.

Doctors are strangers to their patients today and it is no wonder, with the average office visit lasting between thirteen and sixteen minutes, during which the doctor barely looks up, dictates a stream of unintelligible medical lingo into his/her computer, consults their smart phone and rushes out the door (a minimum of seventeen patients per day is reportedly needed to make ends meet in 2012). At least some of the mystery is being revealed as we're afforded a peek behind the stethoscope, with the surge of memoirs, essay collections, and daily newspapers and literary journals printing personal essays by physicians. *The Uncommon Thread* is a highly readable and personal collection by a doctor who rolls up his sleeves, bares his soul, and takes the reader along for a raucous, contemporary, and unique ride.

In "Envy," Anderson introduces us to two patients in a VA hospital—both suffering from respiratory illness. In less than two pages we meet Mr. Kless and Mr. Thomas, mourn one and berate the other. "According to Plan" includes excellent parenting and life advice, though almost by accident, and humanizes Anderson in his quest for understanding through counseling.

Anderson is a son of the south but his drawl peeks out only now and again as in "Occupy Bourbon Street," where we meet his buddy Gordon. Essays take the reader to Africa, Italy, and around the United States but Anderson wraps himself in his flag of "Ameriphilia" happy to return home: "I love the USA, I love hamburgers, and I sure do love ice in my Coca-Cola."

There is not a boring, doctor-ly moment among the forty-plus essays here, all written in friendly, jargon-free prose. Funny but without typical hackneyed doctor jokes, *The Uncommon thread* sews together a full life's experience of family, friends, patients, travels, and just plain living in entertaining snippets.

Dr. Anderson is a Radiation Oncologist and the Medical Director of the Anderson Cancer Center in Meridian, Mississippi. As a screenwriter under the name R.S. Anderson, he has worked on feature films; he penned novels as Russell Scott including *Time Donors Wanted* and *The Hard Times*.

DINDY YOKEL (August 2, 2012)

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