



The Last Days of Dogtown: A Novel

By Anita Diamant

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A New York Times Bestselling Author

The bestselling author of *The Red Tent* resurrects an entirely forgotten sector of society in an engrossing book packed with some of the most vivid characters in recent fiction.

A simultaneous publication with Scribner's standard print edition.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Fans of Diamant's *The Red Tent* who were disappointed by her sophomore effort (*Good Harbor*) will be happy to find her back on historical turf in her latest, set in early 1800s Massachusetts. Inspired by the settlement of Dogtown, Diamant reimagines the community of castoffs—widows, prostitutes, orphans, African-Americans and ne'er-do-wells—all eking out a harsh living in the barren terrain of Cape Ann. Black Ruth, the African woman who dresses like a man and works as a stonemason; Mrs. Stanley, who runs the local brothel, and Judy Rhines, an unmarried white woman whose lover Cornelius is a freed slave, are among Dogtown's inhabitants who are considered suspect—even witches—by outsiders. Shifting perspectives among the various residents (including the settlement's dogs, who provide comfort to the lonely), Diamant brings the period alive with domestic details and movingly evokes the surprising bonds the outcasts form in their dying days. This chronicle of a dwindling community strikes a consistently melancholy tone—readers in search of happy endings won't find any here—but Diamant renders these forgotten lives with imagination and sensitivity.

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

In *The Last Days of Dogtown*, Diamant paints a vivid and gripping historical setting as she delves into a lost crevice of human drama in 19th-century Massachusetts and renders it with a modern slickness. There are no novel revelations about love, however. Instead, she takes us alongside the drunkards, whores, and witches (the strongest character is Black Ruth, who rarely speaks), and, in the end, she evokes the tragic silliness of humanity in the grays and pale sunshine of Cape Ann.

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From [Booklist](#)

In a radical departure from the biblical setting of her best-selling *The Red Tent* (1997), Diamant turns her attention to the windswept shores of Cape Ann, Massachusetts. In the early days of the nineteenth century, a declining hamlet nicknamed Dogtown by detractors houses a pack of semi-feral dogs and an eclectic group of residents too stubborn, too poverty stricken, too worn down, or too old to relocate. As the interrelated stories of these unfortunate souls are recounted, the reader is irresistibly drawn into their orbit, becoming emotionally invested in both their individual and their collective lives. Widows, witches, spinsters, whores, abused and neglected children, freed slaves, and one particularly odious villain populate the ramshackle dwellings that dot the ruggedly stark landscape. At the center of these heart-wrenching sagas is Judy Rhines, a kindhearted middle-aged maiden who harbors a secret so passionate and so scandalous its revelation would bring her instant ruin and tear the moribund town apart. One by one, both the animal and the human characters die or move away, sealing the inevitable fate of the doomed community. Basing this novel loosely in fact, Diamant adeptly manages to evoke the minutiae of everyday living in an all but forgotten place and time in history. *Margaret Flanagan*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

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