From Don Winslow ("A writer so good you almost want to keep him to yourself"—Ian Rankin), an electrifying new novel of love and revenge, politics and influence, corruption and honor. Moving at breakneck speed, it tells a riveting, sometimes harrowing story set in the shifting nexus of power among the Latin American drug cartels, the American mob, and the U.S. government.

Spanning the years from the rise of the Mexican drug Federación in the 1970s to the Iran-Contra affair in the 1980s to the vicious drug wars of the 1990s, the action ranges from Manhattan’s Hell’s Kitchen and the halls of Washington to the streets of Tijuana and the deserts of the American Southwest.

The players: a DEA agent, a drug lord, a call girl, a hit man, a priest. Caught up in the war on drugs, willingly or not, each is trying to escape the sins of the past while negotiating the treacherous currents of the present. Their seemingly disparate lives—taking shape on one side of the law or the other, or straddling both—slowly converge as they struggle to overcome, in any way possible, the “power of the dog.”

From the jungles of Latin America to the vicious netherworld of the California–Mexico border, this is the war on drugs you haven’t seen—its devastations and deliriums, its alliances and betrayals, its pawns and kings.
A masterpiece of epic storytelling, The Power of the Dog is Don Winslow at the very top of his form.

My Personal Review:
I find two varieties of five-star reads. Page-turners both, there are those that hit you like the best action movies - a quick rush, great fun while they last, a lightning shot of adrenaline - and all but forgotten a month or so down the road. And then there are the very special books that deliver all the thrills, the action, all the suspense while at the same searing an unshakable image in your soul that you know will stay with you for a very long time. Don Winslows remarkable Power of the Dog is firmly in the latter camp.

Contemporary history buffs my remember US DEA Special Agent Enrique Kiki Camarena who, while assigned in Mexico in 1985, was abducted, tortured, and brutally murdered by Mexican drug lords. While Winslow changes the names, the events leading to and subsequent to Camarenas murder play a central role in this epic tale of the violence, corruption, love, betrayal, and vengeance surrounding three decades worth of the trafficking of cocaine and heroine by Mexican drug cartels. So grand in scope, so exhaustively researched, and so authoritative in its delivery of the facts, and comparisons or analogies are strained. But for a starter, consider a role up of Traffic, The Godfather, and Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia. Winslow manages to demystify the shady politics and clandestine operations of Nicaragua and the Sandanistas and the Iran-Contra affair, the 1994 assassination of Mexican Presidential candidate Luis Colosio, NAFTA and others in enough detail to qualify as a docudrama, while the unspeakable brutality, depravity, and evil that travels alongside the drug trade is, well, plainly spoken. Winslow weaves tight story lines from Mexicos deserts and poppy fields to the Tijuana/San Diego borderland battlegrounds to New York Citys Hells Kitchen and Bensonhurst. His characters are much too real to be expected between the pages of pop fiction - all too believable in their flaws, weaknesses, vulnerabilities, and failures.

In the end, it would not be giving anything away to say that the vaunted war on drugs is ultimately a war of futility. Drugs pour into the US in ever-greater quantities while drug lords get richer and the American taxpayer pours increasingly more money to fund corrupt politicians and dubious strategies. Notwithstanding, The Power of the Dog is a powerful and unapologetic tale of bitter fatalism, of redemption that rings ultimately hollow. If you are squeamish, or intend to keep naive delusions of our noble fight against drugs intact, this is probably not the book for you. But for what is bound to become a classic, plumbing the depths of evil in this dark history wed probably all prefer to ignore, you simply must read this novel.

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