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The Last Days of Dogtown: A Novel

Anita Diamant

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The tiny rural backwater of Dogtown, nestled on Cape Ann and hugging the Massachusetts coast line, is a place that is reputedly dying, but its few remaining inhabitants show an enduring spirit that keeps a small flame of life alight. For here, in this forgotten hamlet, lives a cast of dignified, yet utterly eccentric characters. Black Ruth is one of only two Africans still living in the area; she dresses as a man, speaks to no-one, and continues her craft as the local stonemason, casting love and care over the stones she hews. Mrs Stanley is blousey, blonde and the local madam; a woman of total self-absorption, who cares nothing for her young grandson, coming of age amid the sights and sounds of a wretched rural brothel. Oliver Younger, a man with ambition, overcomes a cruel and miserable childhood to marry the woman of his dreams and create a family infused with love. At the centre of it all is Judy Rhines, a fiercely independent woman, generous and wise, but also heartbroken and lonely, whose taboo love for Cornelius, a former slave, burns at the core of her soul. Loosely based on the true story of a community, "The Last Days of Dogtown" is a rich, compassionate and compelling novel which illuminates a small, but vivid, chapter of nineteenth century America.

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