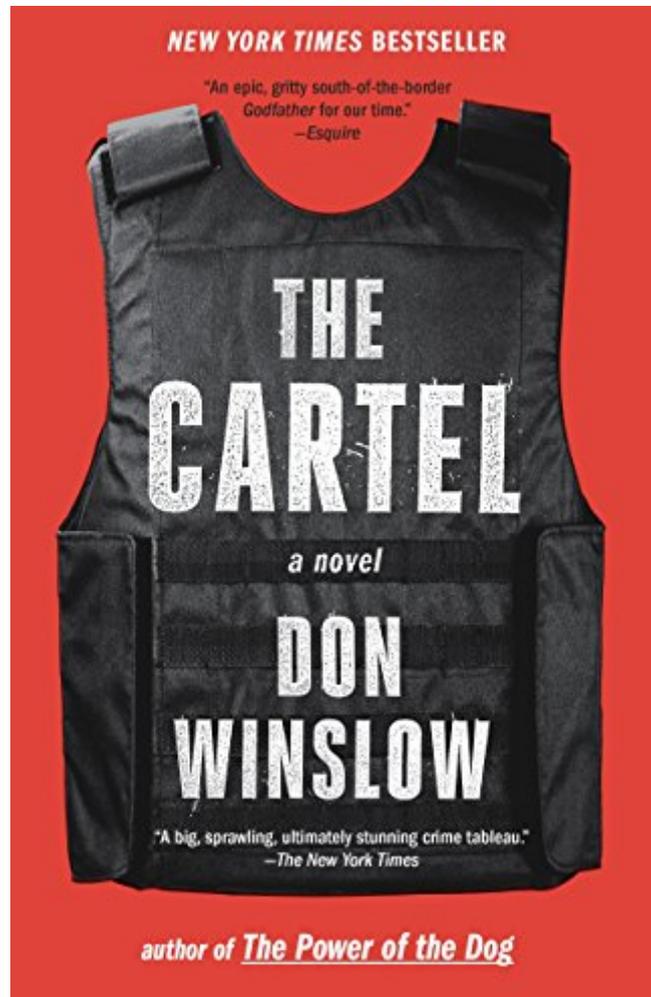


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The Cartel: A Novel



Synopsis

A NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER From the internationally best-selling author of the acclaimed novel *The Power of the Dog* comes *The Cartel*, a gripping, true-to-life, ripped-from-the-headlines epic story of power, corruption, revenge, and justice spanning the past decade of the Mexican-American drug wars. It's 2004. DEA agent Art Keller has been fighting the war on drugs for thirty years in a blood feud against Adán Barrera, the head of El Federación, the world's most powerful cartel, and the man who brutally murdered Keller's partner. Finally putting Barrera away cost Keller dearly—the woman he loves, the beliefs he cherishes, the life he wants to lead. Then Barrera gets out, determined to rebuild the empire that Keller shattered. Unwilling to live in a world with Barrera in it, Keller goes on a ten-year odyssey to take him down. His obsession with justice—or is it revenge?—becomes a ruthless struggle that stretches from the cities, mountains, and deserts of Mexico to Washington's corridors of power to the streets of Berlin and Barcelona. Keller fights his personal battle against the devastated backdrop of Mexico's drug war, a conflict of unprecedented scale and viciousness, as cartels vie for power and he comes to the final reckoning with Barrera—and himself—that he always knew must happen. *The Cartel* is a story of revenge, honor, and sacrifice, as one man tries to face down the devil without losing his soul. It is the story of the war on drugs and the men—and women—who wage it. From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

[Buy this book at IndieBound] [Buy this book at] [Buy this for Kindle] [Buy this book at Barnes and Noble] Full disclosure: I've become obsessed recently with the border noir subgenre of crime fiction; this, as I grow ever older (that's not a complaint) and harder to please (that's not a complaint, either). I wasn't very worried about liking Don Winslow's drug-and-blood-soaked opus THE CARTEL, which is not so much a sequel to THE POWER OF THE DOG as a continuation of it. Given that it was published a decade ago, I felt duty-bound to circle back and read that awesome novel before digging into the follow-up. I'm glad I did, if only to report that the brilliant, violent magic of the previous book is continued, enhanced and increased in this one, almost as if it is one giant novel divided into two parts. One problem with getting on in years: It becomes harder to keep track of characters or storylines within a novel. Thus it was a surprise for me that THE CARTEL, with its sprawling plotlines that radiate from and circle around and come back on themselves, and its hundred or so characters who are constantly double-crossing each other never once got me lost. I didn't suddenly recover brain cells that I lost in the 1970s, either; this state of affairs is due entirely to Winslow, an amazing, almost deific literary talent who should be a household name and eclipses, well, just about everybody. Along with its predecessor, THE CARTEL is the magnum opus of crime fiction. It concerns, as one might guess, a cartel --- specifically, a Mexican drug cartel.

Wow! This sprawling novel narrates the bloody advance of the narcotics trade in Mexico and the decline of any alternative government or policing as the narcotrafficantes bribe or terrify the elected and appointed officials between 2004-2014. In 2010 alone, 15,273 people die in drug-related deaths in Mexico. In Juarez alone, 7,000 die, 10,000 businesses fail, 130,000 people lose their jobs and 250,000 people leave the province, fearing for their lives and those of their families. This is a fierce novel on a grand scale. In the process of fighting the narco traffickers, the few good guys quickly lose their cherry: no one is innocent by the end of the story. The protagonist is Art Keller, Mexican father, American mother, DEA super star but in disgrace because he's ruffled too many feathers in the agency with his cowboy tactics (which work!). His biggest coup? The arrest and conviction of Adan Barrera, patron of El Federacion, the union of drug cartels that rules Mexico. In the process,

Keller was responsible for the death of Barrera's two brothers (also both lowlifes). The US government extradites Barrera to a Mexican prison and Keller's life is at risk again: Barrera has placed a two million dollar bounty on his head. Barrera escapes prison and Keller is drawn back into DEA business. From then on, it's non-stop action and non-stop killing - "insane Barrera struggles to regain control over a terminally fractured landscape of cartels, dealers and private armies. A lot of good guys die in this novel. Even more innocents - "even passersby" die too. The death rate among the drug traffickers and their troops (many of whom are state or federal policemen) and among the uncorrupted cops who are trying to bring them down is prodigious.

The story of the Italian Mafia and its beginnings was well told by Mario Puzo in the 1969 book, 'The Godfather', and then the Godfather films became some of the best films of the era. We learned the term Cosa Nostra, and the Mafia became a real entity. After reading this book, 'The Cartel', I can see the story of the Mexican Cartels in the same light. This book tells the story of the El Federacion, the most powerful Cartel gives us the individual families and personalities, the Mexican and the U.S. Government involvement in the war on drugs, and two main characters on opposite sides of the fence. It is a stunning storyline and kept my interest for all 623 pages. Yes, it is a big book, packed with fascinating characters, and this book has all the makings of a huge hit. We move from 2004 to the 1980's to 2014 in the telling of the lives of two men and their connecting families. Art Keller, a DEA agent has been fighting this drug war for thirty years. He is after the head of the most powerful cartel, Adan Barrera, the man who killed his partner and has brought more bloodshed to hundreds of families. Adan is a ruthless man, leading a large Cartel, making millions of dollars. A man so powerful he cannot trust many men who work for him. He is a wanted man with a two million dollar bounty on his head. Art Keller is a man on a mission, he wants Adan Barrera's head on a platter. His job for thirty years was to put this man behind bars, and he succeeded. Barrera was set up by his wife and sent to prison. Prison for Barrera is nothing like any other prison, it is more like a country club. And, Adan, the powerful man he is, has made plans to escape. Money talks as we all know.

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