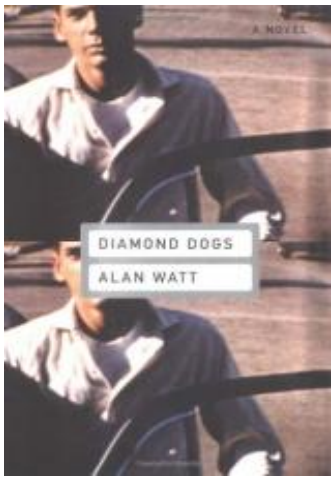
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Diamond Dogs: A Novel

by Alan Watt



About the Book

Reading Group Guide Press Release Free Chapter Diamond Dogs: A Novel by Alan Watt lso Available as an eBook I was playing chicken with the headlights. I'd turn them off and see how long I could drive in total darkness. It was as if I was floating, totally free, like nothing could hurt me, like I didn't exist. With the noise and the darkness and the cool air on my face I knew that I could do anything. As long as I didn't have to think about where I was going, as long as I didn't have to think about my father. --Diamond Dogs With the emotional resonance of This Boy's Life and the narrative power of White Oleander, Alan Watt's debut novel, Diamond Dogs, is an utterly original father-and-son drama about a crime and its cover-up.

Seventeen-year-old Neil Garvin lives in a small town outside Las Vegas. Abandoned by his mother when he was three, he blames his abusive father -- the local sheriff -- for driving her away. Neil is good-looking, popular, the quarterback of the high school football team -- and as cruel to his peers as his father is to him. Obsessed with Neil Diamond, Neil's father is a charmer in the eyes of strangers, but a monster to those closest to him. Neil plans to get out of town on his "million dollar arm," until the night when he accidentally commits a terrible crime, which his father, unasked, covers up for him. Over the course of the three days that follow, Neil returns to school and attempts to go through the motions of his everyday life. But when the FBI arrives and begins to close in, Neil and his father become locked in a confrontation that will break them apart -- and set them free.

Discussion Guide

1. In the first chapter of the book, we see the main character behaving in ways that are not necessarily likeable. How do we become sympathetic to Neil?

2. What is meant by the title of this book, Diamond Dogs? Who does the title refer to?

3. Neil's ability to play football and his "million dollar arm" provide him with a group identity that serves as a protection for him. It also makes the relationship with his father easier. Despite these advantages Neil quits the football team. Why does he do this? What is it about the accident that triggers his desire to quit?

4. Neil rebels against his father by rejecting the things that his father values such as his own name, Neil, and by embracing the things that his father hates, for example, Nirvana. Why is football the exception?

5. How do Sheriff Garvin's obsessive behaviors affect Neil? How does their shared passion for football relate to this?

6. Describe the conflicted relationships that develop between Burden, Neil, and Sheriff Garvin.

7. After Ian's death, Neil allows himself to become inappropriately intimate with the entire Curtis family. What is his motive for doing this?

8. Sheriff Garvin tells Neil "Like father, like son," which Neil says "scared me more than anything" because Reed's father is an ex-convict. Though this statement is designed to keep Neil away from the Banks family it has the opposite effect. It causes Neil to reform Reed through football and to believe that "a parent could return," as Reed's father did after six years in prison. In this way Reed both terrifies and inspires Neil. How does the accident change this relationship? What is lost? What is gained?

9. How did his mother's leaving affect Neil's relationship with his father? How does it shape them individually?

10. Neil tends to see what he wants to see in regard to his mother. How does his discovery of the truth affect his perception of her?

11. Describe Neil's relationships with women. What purpose does Mary serve for him? For what purpose does he serve her? How do Lenore's actions contribute to Neil's feelings of guilt?

Author Bio

Alan Watt was born in Aberdeen, Scotland in 1965. At the age of three he moved with his family to North America, finally settling on a strawberry farm in Guelph, Ontario when he was ten. At eighteen he moved to Toronto to pursue a career as a standup comic. He has spent much of his adult life working as a comedian. He now writes full-time. **Diamond Dogs** is his first novel.

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