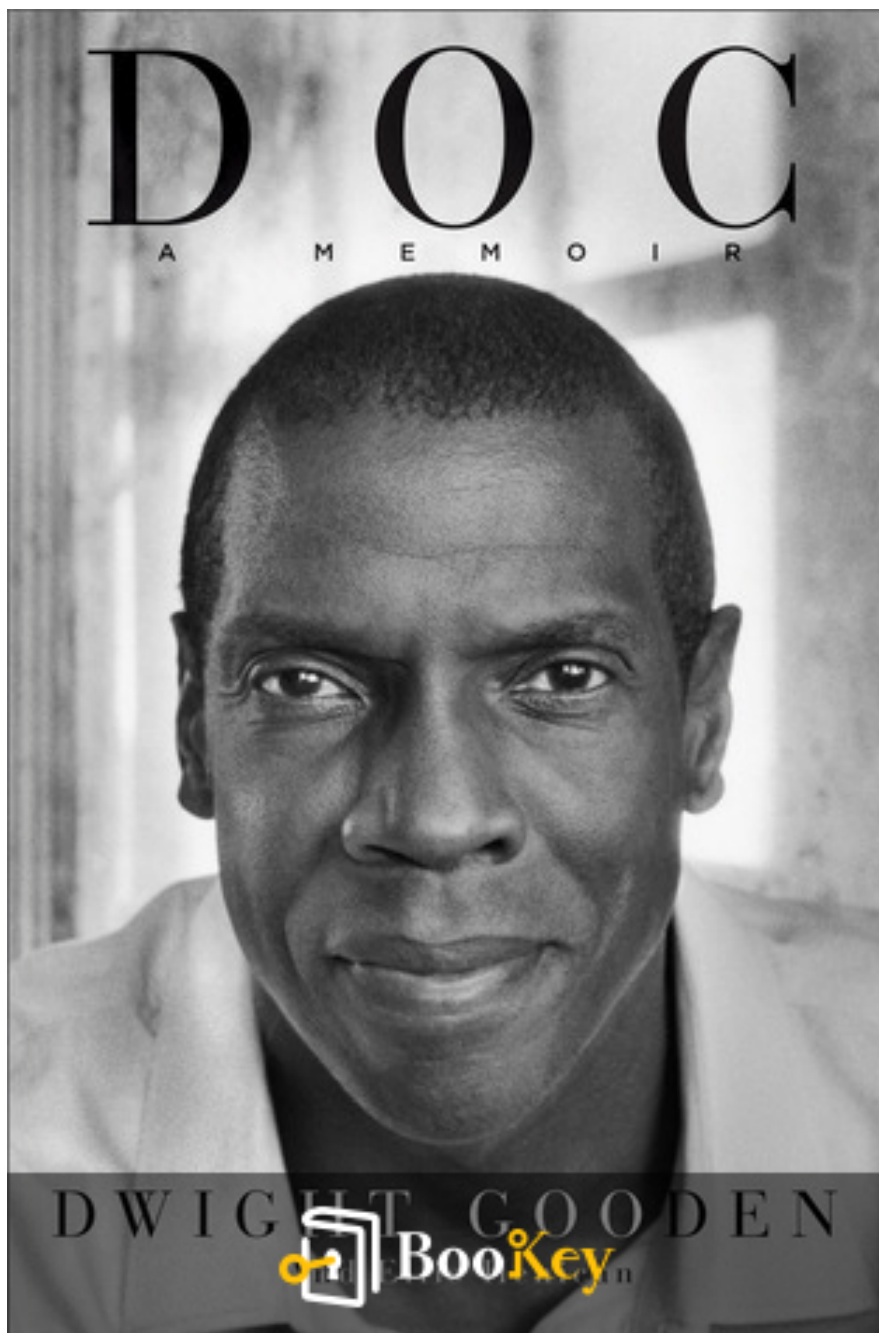


# Doc PDF (Limited Copy)

Dwight Gooden



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## **Doc Summary**

"A Raw Journey Through Stardom and Redemption."

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## About the book

In "Doc," legendary Major League Baseball pitcher Dwight Gooden takes readers on a gripping journey through the trials and triumphs of his remarkable life, both on and off the field. This compelling memoir peels back the layers of Gooden's early life as a baseball prodigy, thrust into the spotlight with the New York Mets at a mere 19 years old. With candor and introspection, he reveals the exhilarating highs of professional sports—a world brimming with fame and fortune—coupled with the harrowing lows of addiction and personal struggles. "Doc" is not just an eye-opening exposé of the challenges within America's favorite pastime, but also an inspiring testament to resilience, recovery, and redemption. Eye-opening and deeply human, this story will resonate with sports enthusiasts and anyone who appreciates a tale of courage and transformation—a must-read for those seeking the raw truth behind the often-gilded veneer of professional athletics.

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## About the author

Dwight Gooden, affectionately known by fans as "Doc" or "Dr. K," is a legendary figure in the world of professional baseball, renowned for his exceptional skills as a pitcher. Born on November 16, 1964, in Tampa, Florida, Gooden rose to fame during Major League Baseball's 1980s golden era. As a member of the New York Mets, he burst onto the scene with a remarkable debut season in 1984, quickly becoming a household name and securing the National League Rookie of the Year award. Known for his formidable fastball and devastating curveball, Gooden played a pivotal role in the Mets' 1986 World Series Championship. Beyond his athletic prowess, his career was marked by triumphs and challenges, providing inspiration and cautionary tales alike. His autobiography, "Doc," offers an unfiltered look at the exhilarating highs and sobering lows of his journey, solidifying his place as not only an icon on the field but also a figure of undeniable resilience. As an integral part of baseball history, Dwight Gooden's story is a testament to talent, perseverance, and the complexities of fame.

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# Summary Content List

Chapter 1: 1 Whose Dream

Chapter 2: 2 Dark Side

Chapter 3: 3 Young Phenom

Chapter 4: 4 Getting There

Chapter 5: 5 Rookie Season

Chapter 6: 6 Cy Season

Chapter 7: 7 Party Time

Chapter 8: 8 Series Season

Chapter 9: 9 Off-Season

Chapter 10: 10 Dusting Off

Chapter 11: 11 Burning Out

Chapter 12: 12 Sliding Back

Chapter 13: 13 Suicide Squeeze

Chapter 14: 14 No-Hitter

Chapter 15: 15 Pushing It

Chapter 16: 16 Some Dad

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Chapter 17: 17 Behind Bars

Chapter 18: 18 High Low

Chapter 19: 19 Room Service

Chapter 20: 20 Fame Game

Chapter 21: 21 Candid Camera

Chapter 22: 22 Cast-Offs

Chapter 23: 23 Show Time

Chapter 24: 24 Staying Strong

Chapter 25: 25 Judgment Day

Chapter 26: 26 Ready Steady

Chapter 27: 27 Why Now?

Chapter 28: 28 Forward March

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# Chapter 1 Summary: 1 Whose Dream

## Whose Dream: A Baseball Legacy

The story begins with the narrator's deeply ingrained childhood memory of sharing baseball moments with his father, Dan Gooden, in their Tampa home. His father, a keen analyst of the game, would watch the Cincinnati Reds on TV while simultaneously listening to other games on the radio. From an early age, the narrator, even without fully understanding the intricacies, absorbed his father's passion, starting with players like Johnny Bench and Jim Maloney.

This baseball enthusiasm was not born out of nowhere; it was intergenerational, handed from father to son. The family's origins trace back to the Black Belt of southwest Georgia, renowned for its rich soil but also its history of racial segregation and limited opportunities for black families. Here, Uclessee Gooden, the narrator's grandfather, left a legacy as a formidable pitcher for the local Negro sandlot team, the Albany Red Sox. Although the narrator never met Uclessee, his father's stories about him painted a vivid image of a powerful player who drew crowds with his impressive fastball.

Dan Gooden, born in 1927, naturally gravitated towards baseball, albeit



without the same physical dominance as his father. Growing up in a time and place where opportunities for black athletes were scant, Dan honed his skills in informal games, dreaming of escaping through baseball. Although a path to the Negro Leagues seemed possible, Dan's journey was rerouted by circumstances, leaving him to wonder if race or ability curtailed his dream as he settled into a life working at Cargill's production line. Yet, he remained dedicated to baseball, coaching local teams and nurturing the dream through his sons.

The family moved to Tampa in 1956, lured by Cargill's job offer and the abundant baseball culture of Florida. There, Dan rekindled his baseball aspirations through coaching, and soon enough, a new son, the narrator, joined the family. This arrival invigorated Dan. From infancy, the narrator was immersed in the baseball world, absorbing skills and knowledge through practice sessions at Robles Park, bonding with his father over their shared passion.

As the narrator grew, baseball became his own aspiration, encouraged by his father's unique training methods that emphasized total physical conditioning and mental acuity over mere muscle building. His nephew, Gary Sheffield, also joined the scene, sharing in the family atmosphere driven by a love for the game.

Despite initial concerns from his mother about the intensity of the training,



the narrator embraced baseball fully, dreaming not just of playing professionally but also of one day providing for his family with his success.

This chapter illustrates an enduring passion for baseball, weaved through the family's history and passed down from grandfather to grandson, with the narrator inheriting not just a love for the game, but a sense of legacy and the realization that fulfilling his promise required both dedication and an understanding of his familial roots.

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## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** Family Legacy Fuels Your Passion

**Critical Interpretation:** In reading this chapter, you can embrace the idea that your passions, much like the narrator's love for baseball, often come inherited, echoing through the corridors of family history. Just as Dan Gooden infused baseball into the narrator's life, drawing from a legacy his father Uclesee had nurtured, you too can find inspiration in your family's stories. Recognize the deep-seated passions that have been handed down to you and understand that pursuing them is both a tribute to your roots and a personal journey. Much like turning every catch at Robles Park into a memory shared across generations, you can create a path that honors both your past and shapes your future. Realizing this can empower you to pursue your dreams with a sense of purpose and connection, knowing that your dedication makes you an integral part of a broader, enduring narrative.



## Chapter 2 Summary: 2 Dark Side

Chapter 2, "Dark Side," explores the complexities and contradictions within the narrator's family life growing up. On the surface, the family offered a strong sense of security and love. The narrator adored his father, admired his mother for her role as the family's anchor, and appreciated the secure environment they created in their Belmont Heights home. However, beneath the veneer of stability, chaos and dysfunction simmered, often erupting in unsettling ways.

The narrator's father, while a loving parent, was unfaithful and blatant about his infidelities, even involving the narrator in his trysts to some extent. These clandestine visits with a woman and her daughter seemed innocuous to the young narrator until an unintentional revelation to his mother led to a violent confrontation between his parents. These episodes of betrayal and tension underscored the discord in the household, despite the public facade of unity.

The narrator also recalls the volatile personalities in the extended family. His mother's side had a penchant for physical altercations, while his father's three older sons from a previous relationship struggled with alcohol and drug abuse, leading them into legal troubles. These half-brothers were a stark contrast to their half-sibling in terms of life choices, occasionally serving as cautionary tales or bad influences, depending on one's perspective.



The narrative further delves into a particularly traumatic incident involving the narrator's sister, Mercedes, and her husband, G.W., known for his unpredictable and violent behavior. One chilling day, G.W. shot Mercedes multiple times in front of the narrator and her young son, Derrick. Although Mercedes survived the attack, it left her with lasting physical and emotional scars. The incident highlighted the dangerous volatility lurking in their family dynamic, yet it also showcased the swift and decisive protective instincts of the narrator's mother.

The narrator reflects on these experiences, acknowledging that despite the turmoil and unpredictability of family life, the love and support from his parents formed the bedrock of his childhood. Yet, he grapples with the notion that his family's darker aspects may have silently influenced his own adult struggles, questioning the extent to which inherited patterns or personal choices contributed to his life's trajectory.

In revisiting these memories, the narrator comes to terms with the duality of his upbringing. While the chaos may have set certain traps, the unwavering love provided by his family laid a sturdy foundation for his achievements. He maintains a hopeful perspective, believing that the inherent resilience of a child is bolstered by the love they receive, however imperfect the environment might be—a belief he wishes to impart to his own children despite acknowledging his shortcomings as a father.



## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** Inherent Resilience Bolstered by Love

**Critical Interpretation:** Despite growing up amidst chaos and dysfunction, the narrator's story from Chapter 2 sheds light on how unwavering love and support, however imperfect, can provide the resilience needed to navigate life's challenges. Even when surrounded by volatility from both immediate and extended family, it's the sense of security and warmth from the loving guise of parents that nurtures inner strength. Thus, in your life, remember that while external circumstances might occasionally be tumultuous, maintaining a core of love and support can foster resilience. This inner reservoir of strength can propel you through trials and tribulations, nurturing your achievements and helping you build a supportive foundation for those around you.

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## Chapter 3 Summary: 3 Young Phenom

In "Young Phenom," we follow the journey of a young Dwight Gooden as he discovers and hones his talent for baseball. By the age of seven, Dwight learns to throw a curveball—a skill that is both a blessing and a burden, given the potential strain on young arms. Taught by his father, Dwight's ability to throw a curveball sets him apart from his peers, igniting his interest and hinting at his potential in the sport.

Despite his early talent, Dwight is shy and hesitant to join organized baseball. He eventually plays for a local team, the Larkin Giants, but becomes frustrated with losing and contemplates quitting. His father advises him against giving up, instilling a sense of commitment that Dwight carries forward. As he grows, Dwight balances practicing baseball with schoolwork, driven by his father's subtle encouragement and his mother's insistence on education as a backup plan.

Transitioning into a higher skill level, Dwight faces older, more physically intimidating players, yet his unique pitching style begins to shine.

Nicknamed "Doc" for his precision, his reputation grows as he becomes a standout pitcher. In high school, under Coach Billy Reed, Dwight finally joins the baseball team and moves from a backup player to a key pitcher, garnering the attention of scouts.



Throughout this coming-of-age narrative, Dwight's father plays a critical role. He not only provides baseball guidance but also orchestrates Dwight's negotiation with the New York Mets. After Dwight is unexpectedly drafted as the fifth overall pick during the major-league baseball draft, his father's steadfast negotiation skills secure Dwight a substantial contract, despite initial low offers. Dwight's journey from practicing with his dad to achieving recognition as a top draft pick highlights his growth in confidence and skill while capturing the unwavering support and influence of his family.

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## Chapter 4: 4 Getting There

### Chapter 4: "Getting There"

In this chapter, we delve into the emotional journey of a seventeen-year-old dreamer who leaves the comfort and familiarity of his family in Tampa to pursue a career in baseball with the New York Mets' rookie team in Kingsport, Tennessee. Overwhelmed by homesickness, he has to navigate the complexities of living on his own for the first time, which includes making do with limited financial resources and adjusting to a new environment where language barriers are evident, especially with the Dominican players who don't speak English.

Upon arrival, the protagonist reconnects with Floyd Youmans, a friend and fellow draftee, and together they begin their first season in the Appalachian League. Despite the team's lackluster performance, he stands out with his skills, earning a spot in the Appalachian League All-Star Game. His struggles with shyness and homesickness continue, evident through frequent phone calls home, which prompts a gentle admonition from his father about costly phone bills, contrasting with his mother's encouragement to stay connected.

During this time, the young pitcher makes an impression on Davey Johnson,

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a roving instructor within the Mets organization, by showcasing his knowledge and skills, particularly his curveball. His journey from fledgling rookie to standout pitcher is marked by struggles, including a discouraging 0-3 start with the high-A Lynchburg Mets, where he meets the gruff pitching coach, John Cumberland. Cumberland introduces him to the concept of intimidating batters through aggressive pitching, a strategy he initially finds uncomfortable but soon sees the benefits in as his opponents become more cautious.

The narrative highlights his first foray into Shea Stadium for an exhibition game and the pressure of living up to his first-round pick potential. Despite impressing with multiple strikeouts, a few missteps during a key game leave him dissatisfied. Returning to Lynchburg, he continues to build on his skills while exploring personal independence, including an introduction to alcohol.

A significant incident occurs when he and his roommate miss a team bus due to a night spent drinking, which results in a stern reminder about professional responsibility from Joe McIlvaine, a Mets executive. This moment marks the first time alcohol interferes with his career, something he views as a valuable learning experience.

As the season progresses, the protagonist's performance secures his reputation, with Lynchburg winning their division and him achieving a remarkable 19-4 record. Despite his initial reluctance to leave Lynchburg, he



is promoted directly to the AAA team in Tidewater under Davey Johnson, displaying consistent excellence and contributing to winning the AAA World Series.

The chapter concludes with Davey Johnson's promise of advancement coming true as he is selected to join the major leagues for the 1984 season. After enduring anxieties about making the team, he finally earns his place in the Mets lineup. With pride and a sense of achievement, the protagonist stands on the precipice of fulfilling his lifelong dream, ready to embark on a new chapter in Major League Baseball. His story is a testament to the hard work, determination, and growth necessary to reach the pinnacle of professional sports.

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## Chapter 5 Summary: 5 Rookie Season

In "Rookie Season," we embark on the riveting journey of a young baseball player who has just been called up to the major leagues. Our protagonist, despite being only 19, is heralded as a potential savior for a struggling New York Mets team amid a city grappling with social and economic challenges in 1984. The city of New York, known for its vibrant sports culture and history of two professional baseball teams, is in dire need of a new hero to uplift the spirits of its inhabitants.

This chapter vividly captures the protagonist's awe and excitement as he transitions from the minor leagues to the grand stage of major-league baseball. The opening of the season at Riverfront Stadium in Cincinnati serves as his first encounter with the glamour and enormity of the sport at this level, meeting legendary players like Pete Rose further cements the surreal nature of his new reality.

Despite the overwhelming environment, the rookie quickly adapts, making his first major-league start against the Houston Astros. The team, understanding the pressure of this transition, flies his parents to witness the milestone. The victory in Houston marks the beginning of a promising journey, but an encounter with the Chicago Cubs shortly thereafter humbles him, reminding him of the volatile nature of professional sports. The sage advice from Cubs' shortstop Larry Bowa about managing media interactions



hints at the challenges of maintaining composure on and off the field.

As he becomes acclimated to life in New York and takes on the moniker "Dr. K" due to his impressive strikeout capabilities, the protagonist experiences a sense of empowerment and belonging. His confidence soars as he becomes a fan favorite, his strikeouts celebrated by a dedicated group known as the "K Korner." However, the pressure to meet these growing expectations begins to weigh on him. Nonetheless, he receives invaluable guidance from seasoned players like Keith Hernandez, Mike Torrez, and Rusty Staub, who coach him in both athletic and life skills essential for survival in the majors.

While navigating the complexities of fame and performance, the protagonist forms relationships with fellow teammates, most notably Darryl Strawberry. Strawberry, though talented, embodies a contrasting personality, highlighted by a more tumultuous personal background and a less reserved demeanor. This dynamic showcases the diverse tapestry of player interactions within a professional team.

The chapter also addresses the social dynamics of life on the road, with seasoned players offering the rookie advice on how to manage newfound attention from adoring fans and groupies alike, emphasizing the need for clear boundaries and professionalism.

As the young player's reputation grows, he is selected for the 1984 All-Star



Game, where he continues to prove his worth by striking out the side in his debut. The event is both a personal triumph and a realization of the immense expectations placed upon him, solidifying his presence among the greats of the league.

"Rookie Season" effectively captures the protagonist's journey from wide-eyed novice to a burgeoning star, underscored by a mosaic of mentorship, self-discovery, and the relentless pursuit of success in the high-stakes world of Major League Baseball. It paints a vivid picture of the pressures, triumphs, and transformative experiences that accompany a young player's rise to fame.

Section Summary	Details
Introduction to Major Leagues	The protagonist, a young baseball player, begins his journey in the major leagues at 19, spotlighted as a potential savior for the New York Mets. In 1984, New York City was amid social and economic challenges.
Transition to Major Leagues	The protagonist transitions from minor leagues, with the season opening at Riverfront Stadium where he meets baseball legends, highlighting the enormity of his new reality.
First Major League Start	His debut against the Houston Astros leads to a victory, but facing the Chicago Cubs soon after offers humility. Advice from Larry Bowa indicates challenges in managing media interactions.
Adapting to New York Life	Known as "Dr. K," he gains power and fans' support with his striking-out capabilities celebrated by the "K Korner." Guidance from experienced players aids his adaptation.



Section Summary	Details
Relationships and Mentorship	Forms significant relationships with teammates, like Darryl Strawberry, who possesses a contrasting personality. Learns from veterans about managing fame and maintaining professionalism.
Experiences on the Road	Addresses social dynamics, with senior players advising on managing attention from fans and setting clear boundaries.
All-Star Game Selection	Selected for the 1984 All-Star Game, he impresses by striking out the side, marking a personal triumph and underscoring the high expectations.
Conclusion	"Rookie Season" encapsulates the protagonist's growth from a novice to a rising star, characterized by mentorship, self-discovery, and pursuit of success in Major League Baseball.

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## Chapter 6 Summary: 6 Cy Season

In "Cy Season," the narrator concludes his rookie year in Major League Baseball with outstanding statistics and newfound confidence, telling his father, "I guess I can play at this level." His achievements earned him the National League Rookie of the Year title, with a record 276 strikeouts as a rookie. However, his father was unimpressed by the actual trophy, expecting something more elaborate. Although the Mets performed well against the Cubs, they ultimately fell short, yet provided fans with hope for the following season. Despite thriving professionally, the narrator returns home to Tampa to live with his family. While this might seem surprising given his newfound fame, he misses the comfort of home and enjoys spending time with family and friends. This chapter emphasizes the contrast between the public perception of athletes' glamorous lifestyles and the narrator's more down-to-earth reality, as he often spends time watching TV shows with his parents rather than living lavishly. The off-season introduces complications, such as incessant phone calls and the strain of fame, leading the narrator and his parents to opt for an unlisted number. Amid these changes, his new agent, Jim Neader, secures a lucrative contract, leading to financial stability and meaningful purchases, like a new house for his family.

As the story progresses towards the 1985 season, the Mets trade several players for renowned catcher Gary Carter, an acquisition the narrator deeply values. As spring training approaches, his lucrative contract is signed, and he



makes extravagant purchases. The narrator forms close bonds with teammates and acquaintances, including his girlfriend, Carlene, and Lenny Dykstra, a rookie who stays with him temporarily. Lenny's arrival prompts humorous incidents, reinforcing his nickname, "Nails," known for his resilience and intensity on the field. The narrator recounts the joy of competing, collaboratively working with Gary Carter, whose energetic and demanding style enhances his performance.

The chapter highlights the excitement of rising stardom in New York. Beginning the season with a 6–3 record, the narrator embarks on an impressive 18–1 run, capturing the hearts of Mets fans. His public persona grows, with fans recognizing him and increased attendance at games he pitches. Advertisers seize the opportunity to sign endorsement deals, elevating him beyond the realm of typical sports stardom. The fame escalates with various appearances in commercials and media outlets, and even acknowledgment from surprising places like Playgirl magazine, which humorously includes him among the "ten sexiest men" despite featuring unlikely figures like John Candy.

The attention isn't always easy to handle. Despite the accolades, the narrator's humility makes him question the lavish praise. His family, who provide background stories for inquisitive journalists, describe him as calm and level-headed even under pressure. The juggling act of navigating newfound fame while maintaining a sense of self is portrayed through



interactions with teammates like Keith Hernandez, who ensures the narrator enjoys social outings despite being underage. By August 25, he becomes the youngest player to achieve twenty wins in a season. Ultimately, the 1985 season concludes with him winning the Cy Young Award and earning the elusive pitching Triple Crown. However, the chapter closes on a reflective note. Despite his prowess on the field, the narrator remains the same reserved, uncertain young man from Tampa, grappling with the duality of celebrity persona and personal identity. His story is a testament to navigating success while remaining true to oneself, underscoring the personal challenges behind professional triumphs.

Chapter	Summary
"Cy Season"	<p>Rookie Year Success: Narrator excels in rookie MLB year with 276 strikeouts, earning National League Rookie of the Year.</p> <p>Family and Home: Despite fame, he returns to Tampa for family comfort. Prefers mundane activities over lavish lifestyle.</p> <p>Fame Challenges: Newfound fame introduces privacy issues, but financial stability follows with agent Jim Neader's help.</p> <p>Spring Changes: Mets trades and bonding with rookie Lenny Dykstra mark the onset of 1985.</p> <p>Rising Stardom: Narrator achieves impressive 18–1 record, becomes public idol, and secures endorsement deals.</p> <p>Humility and Challenges: Despite success, doubts fame, and maintains humility. Family supports him amidst the hype.</p> <p>Milestones: By August, he's the youngest with 20 season wins, finishing 1985 with a Cy Young Award and a pitching Triple Crown.</p> <p>Reflection: Concludes with a personal conflict between professional success and personal identity.</p>



## Chapter 7 Summary: 7 Party Time

In the chapter "Party Time," Dwight Gooden, a rising star in Major League Baseball, grapples with the newfound pressures and temptations of fame during the off-season in January 1986. After achieving monumental success with the New York Mets, including winning Rookie of the Year and Cy Young Awards, Gooden finds himself restless back in his hometown of Tampa. Despite his previous contentment with a slower pace, the hiatus from baseball leaves him with a void he struggles to fill.

Gooden describes his life back in Tampa as monotonous, contrasting sharply with the thrilling lifestyle he experienced in New York during the season. He had become accustomed to the structured demands of baseball and the vibrant energy that came with it. Now, his days consist of driving aimlessly with friends, drinking beers, and engaging in idle activities. Despite his growing stardom, he feels a lack of purpose and excitement.

This sense of aimlessness leads him to his cousin Bo's house, where Bo—a known supplier of drugs and women—promises to fetch him some marijuana. However, while waiting, Gooden encounters a new temptation. He witnesses two women, seemingly older and more experienced, indulging in cocaine. Drawn in by their allure and the mystery of the drug, Gooden decides to experiment for the first time. His initial hesitation soon dissipates as he experiences the euphoria and confidence cocaine provides, a feeling



both novel and compelling.

The experience marks a turning point for Gooden, whose shy demeanor dissolves in the rush of cocaine. This experimentation sets off a gradual descent into occasional use, spurred by the pressure of maintaining his high-caliber performance in the upcoming season. Despite lingering awareness of cocaine's dangers and his mother's warnings against drug use, the stress-relief he finds in the drug becomes alluring.

As spring training approaches, his casual experimentation morphs into a preoccupied fixation. Though he avoids daily use, cocaine becomes a lingering thought, an escape he anticipates. Despite his success, the pressure to replicate his 1985 achievements weighs heavily on him, adding layers to his internal conflict.

Gooden's narrative reveals the tension between the expectations of others and his own internal struggles. Despite maintaining a public persona of accomplishment and talent, he privately grapples with insecurities and the desire for an escape from the weight of fame. The chapter closes with Gooden's realization that despite external success, his vulnerabilities and the pressures of his rising career leave him susceptible to destructive choices—a theme that foreshadows future challenges in his life and career.



## Chapter 8: 8 Series Season

In 1986, the year marked a pinnacle for the New York Mets while simultaneously heralding the beginning of personal troubles for me, Dwight Gooden. It started subtly, with small incidents that gradually accumulated. Early in the year, an innocent ankle sprain while playing ball with my nephew turned into a source of suspicion from Frank Cashen, the Mets' general manager, who publicly questioned the severity of my injury. This incident set the stage for a year of heightened scrutiny and pressure.

As the season began, things seemed to spiral. A minor car incident that caused me to miss a preseason game resulted in a \$500 fine from Davey, the team manager, for not informing him promptly. Then, the media frenzy truly began when I appeared on the New York Daily News cover after a heated argument at a rental car counter exploded into public view. This incident was a wake-up call; I realized my private life was no longer private.

Despite these off-field issues, my performance on the mound was exceptional. Statistically, I was among the best in baseball, winning 17 games, starting the All-Star Game, and maintaining the lowest ERA on the team for portions of the season. However, the shadow of my phenomenal 1985 season loomed large over me, casting these achievements in a less favorable light among fans and sportswriters alike. A mid-season slump and rising pressure contributed to anxiety and self-doubt, exacerbated by media



critiques focusing on my strikeout numbers.

During this time, I began using cocaine, a decision that provided temporary relief from the mounting stress but inevitably led my life off the field astray. My post-game partying escalated, with frequent involvement in nightclub scenes and new relationships that caused personal and professional turmoil. One notable incident involved an encounter in St. Louis that seriously damaged my relationship with my girlfriend, Carlene.

Rumors about drug use circulated, with figures in the baseball community, such as the MLBPA's Gene Orza and Donald Fehr, confronting me amidst increasing allegations. Despite their concerns, I denied any substance abuse, although privately, my addiction led me further away from the family values I had been raised on and deeper into a lifestyle of excess.

On the field, the Mets' performance mirrored my own journey of highs interspersed with adversity. We clinched the National League East with a victory that witnessed fans storming the field in euphoria—a moment that physically buried me beneath a pile of excited supporters. This triumph led us to a challenging playoff series against the Astros, notably against the daunting yet mysterious pitching of Mike Scott, whose "scuffed" balls perplexed and intimidated us.

We faced the formidable Boston Red Sox in the World Series, where my

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fatigue manifested in lackluster performances. Despite personal struggles and a grueling NLCS, my teammates pulled through extraordinary circumstances to win the title. The decisive game six, highlighted by Mookie Wilson's iconic grounder through Bill Buckner's legs, defined our comeback spirit.

Reflecting on my journey, the physical and emotional toll had left me exhausted by the series' end. After celebrating our victory in a parade, I found myself seeking the temporary escape cocaine offered. It was a celebratory moment tainted by a growing dependency, contrasting sharply with the triumphs achieved on the field, revealing the complex interplay of success, pressure, and the personal battles that follow.

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I've learned. Highly recommend!

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## Chapter 9 Summary: 9 Off-Season

In Chapter 9, titled "Off-Season," we follow the life of Dwight Gooden post-World Series—a period marked by self-destructive behavior and an increasing spiral into addiction. After the celebratory high of winning the World Series, Dwight returns home to Tampa but not to the familiar space of family and grounding activities as in previous years. Instead, inspired by a mixture of rebellion and a need to prove his continued 'regular guy' status to his hometown friends, Dwight embarks on a series of reckless benders, marked by heavy partying and drug use.

Dwight's relationships and responsibilities begin to fray; his connection with family fades as he invests more in fleeting social highs rather than meaningful relationships. This period sees Dwight's actions manifest in personal turmoil as he distances himself from his supportive father, nurtures superficial relationships with women like Monica Harris and his ex, Carlene Pearson, and unwittingly drifts from crucial familial bonds. His partying extends into substance abuse, prompting rumors and concerns about drug use. Attempting to deny these rumors, Dwight gives an interview claiming he doesn't use drugs or alcohol, but the truth remains starkly different.

A significant altercation with the police marks a turning point. After a softball charity event, Dwight and his friends, driving through Tampa, attract police attention, leading to a violent encounter. This incident is emblematic



of racial tensions and police overreach but also starkly highlights Dwight's vulnerability and erratic lifestyle. The encounter results in hospitalization and arrest, ultimately leaving Dwight with a criminal reputation in the media, overshadowing his sports achievements.

The severity of Dwight's lifestyle catches up when, during spring training, he tests positive for cocaine during a drug test mandated by the Mets. The realization hits hard, not for the need for help, but for being caught. Faced with suspension or rehab, Dwight opts for rehabilitation. This decision comes as much from pressure as from a genuine desire to change—almost more as a getaway from immediate repercussions than a heartfelt commitment to sobriety. The narrative comes full circle as Dwight struggles with how to break the news to his family, eventually revealing his situation to his disappointed parents, cementing the chapter's theme of a talented individual lost in the turbulence of fame, struggling to reconcile his identity amidst addiction. This chapter sets the stage for potential redemption or further decline, leaving readers to anticipate Dwight's next steps.



# Chapter 10 Summary: 10 Dusting Off

## Chapter 10: Dusting Off

As the New York Mets kicked off the 1987 season against the Pittsburgh Pirates at Shea Stadium, I found myself in quite a different setting—Smithers, a high-end rehabilitation center in Manhattan. Although it was staffed with dedicated professionals and housed about a hundred beds, my half-hearted commitment to overcoming addiction meant I was merely marking time, not making meaningful progress. I lacked any real understanding of my addiction's origins or how treatment might benefit me. My primary concern was the clock—counting down the 28-day stint meant to show I'd been humbled, when in reality, my only desire was to get back to baseball.

During my time at Smithers, the facade of following rules was flimsy. Unlike most residents who shared rooms and adhered to cafeteria dining, I had a private room, ordered Chinese food, watched TV, and read newspapers, all against the center's regulations designed to help patients focus inward. My dinners defied the mundane cafeteria ritual, and the world's news constantly streamed into my secluded bubble, deterring any introspection or acknowledgment of personal issues.



Group therapy sessions felt alien, where others' stories only emphasized how I perceived myself as less troubled. Some counselors and fellow patients were fans, which only reinforced my denial. I was aware they knew my reputation, but none confronted my lack of commitment. Denial was a fortress I wasn't ready to leave, and they knew well enough an addict can't be helped unless they wish to change.

Visits from friends and family punctuated my stay. Notably, Jay Horwitz, the Mets' public relations director, visited often, and my family, including Monica, my girlfriend, turned up intermittently. Despite my seeming disconnect from reality, I made persistent phone calls to Monica, proposing marriage without the foundation such a decision usually entails. Despite initial hesitations, she agreed after a week, although I wasn't prepared to share this with my parents. My immaturity was evident upon returning to Tampa, where my parents met me with a mix of support and skepticism about my abrupt engagement revelation.

My so-called rehabilitation was followed by a brief warm-up with the Triple-A Tidewater Tides before returning to the Mets. My first game post-rehab saw an outpouring of support from fans, a stark contrast to some media skepticism, epitomized by Dick Young's disapproving columns. Despite Young's criticisms, Mets fans embraced me, standing and cheering as I took the mound for my season debut. The love and support from New York worked better than any cure prescribed at Smithers.



However, sobriety didn't fully stick. After a triumphant game, I reverted to drinking during the team's flight to Chicago—a collective oversight underscored by teammates' toasts. Major League Baseball's drug testing kept me away from cocaine for a while, but failing to see alcohol in the same light posed an unseen threat.

That season, I pitched outstandingly, achieving a record of 15 wins despite missing the season's first two months. Our team's dynamics began to shift with trades and injuries, but camaraderie lingered enough for the Mets to perform credibly. We contended fiercely but fell short due to injuries, missing another World Series opportunity.

On November 21, Monica and I married in Tampa amid a large gathering of friends and colleagues, including my Mets teammates. Settling into married life seemed to prompt stability, pleasing team management while offering a semblance of personal growth.

Despite the positive note of marriage, ongoing personal challenges emerged. Custody issues over my son, Dwight Junior, highlighted unresolved tensions, exacerbated by my past actions. Moreover, a salary arbitration skirmish early in 1988 revealed the lingering impact of my behavior on career negotiations, resulting in a pay cut rather than the raise I sought.

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Even as the strong form of key players suggested potential for Mets' success, our ultimate disappointment against the Dodgers in the National League Championship Series was marked by painful baseball memories, including a crucial home run hit off me. It was emblematic of missed opportunities, underscoring the 'season that got away.'

This chapter of my life is a mosaic of public and private reckoning, where personal battles and professional expectations intertwined, offering lessons in humility, accountability, and the complexities of redemption.

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## Chapter 11 Summary: 11 Burning Out

Chapter 11 of the narrative, "Burning Out," depicts the gradual deterioration of a once-great baseball team, underscored by interpersonal conflicts and the physical toll of constant performance. By 1989, the New York Mets, whose energy once electrified the field, were unraveling under the weight of their internal discord and personal challenges. The chapter opens with a revealing incident on team picture day, where tensions come to a head; Darryl Strawberry's refusal to sit with certain teammates underscores the growing division within the team.

This animosity had been brewing, with Darryl vocalizing dissatisfaction over his contract and escalating confrontations with teammates, especially Keith Hernandez. This divide mirrored broader fractures, as other team members including Gary Carter and the narrator himself faced professional challenges, such as injuries and the struggle to maintain performance as age and stress inevitably took their toll.

By July, the narrator—a standout pitcher celebrated for his seemingly impeccable mechanics—faced the harsh reality of a small muscle tear. Despite a return attempt late in the season, his arm never quite recovered, symbolizing the physical and psychological exhaustion permeating the team. His subsequent rehabilitation was both painful and necessitated an acknowledgment of his limitations, prompting a shift from youthful



aggression to strategic pitching—a metaphor for the team’s need to adapt amidst dwindling synergy.

As these personal battles unfolded, the Mets also faced external pressures. Partying and substance abuse affected team dynamics; however, the narrator refrained from drugs despite ongoing alcohol use. The issue of discipline and scandal became a theme, particularly as Darryl faced his own public struggles, leading to speculation about his future with the team.

The management, meanwhile, appeared incapable of halting their decline. Frank Cashen's decision to fire manager Davey Johnson—despite the Mets' relatively strong prior seasons—highlighted an organizational failure to stabilize the team. The chapter suggests a systemic issue, where prioritizing individual redemption clashed with professional aspirations.

By 1991, as personal lives evolved, including the birth of the narrator's daughter and more time spent with his ailing father, the narrator reflected on the evolving nature of success and personal fulfillment. Yet again, professional concerns persisted amid injuries and inconsistencies within the team’s lineup, underscoring the broader instability within the organization.

The narrative captures a shift to a more conservative approach resembling a veteran adapting to change, echoing the need for restructuring within the team. However, the off-field drama continued with new accusations and



media scrutiny, further complicating personal and professional relationships. Notably, Darryl's autobiography reignited tension with claims affecting his reputation and friendships.

By 1992, these compounding stresses ushered a sense of inevitability about leaving the Mets, alongside broader reflections on faded glory and opportunities elsewhere. As the narrator navigated these challenges, new management under Dallas Green symbolized a definitive turn towards closing this chapter of both team and individual history, paving the way for new beginnings beyond the familiar, turbulent confines of the Mets.

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# Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** Adaptability amidst adversity

**Critical Interpretation:** Chapter 11 of "Doc" centers around the realization that success isn't static; it's an ever-evolving journey that demands adaptation, especially when faced with adversity. As key players like you confront both the physical limitations imposed by injuries and shifting team dynamics, the narrative encourages you to embrace change rather than resist it. Just as the protagonist learns to adjust from an aggressive to a strategic pitching style to prolong his career, you can draw inspiration to pivot your strategies in the face of personal or professional hurdles. This shift in mindset, from clinging to past glories to committing to incremental adaptation, can become a powerful tool for resilience, teaching you that growth often arises from the courage to change direction and embrace new methodologies.

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## Chapter 12: 12 Sliding Back

### Chapter 12: Sliding Back

April 4, 1994, marked Opening Day at Wrigley Field for the Mets, with an uncomfortably chilly wind for a pitcher accustomed to Tampa's warmth. Despite past successes against the Cubs, the Mets had been struggling since their playoff glory in 1986. Undergoing a challenging transition with injuries and a revolving door of managers, the narrator found himself at a crossroads, trying to redefine his pitching style and regain his former prowess.

The game against the Cubs began on an ominous note. Tuffy Rhodes, an underdog, unexpectedly hit three home runs against the pitcher, making baseball history. Frustrated by the outcome, the pitcher let his emotions get the best of him, injuring his toe by kicking a bat rack. This incident led to a cascading series of personal and professional challenges.

Forced onto the disabled list, the pitcher spiraled into a period of self-destructive behavior, indulging in drinking and late-night escapades, planting a dangerous seed for his addiction to resurface. A minor-league assignment brought him to Norfolk, where lax oversight rekindled his old habits, leaving him vulnerable to temptation.



The relapse happened spontaneously during a night out at a strip club in Queens, driven by the illusion that he could evade testing in the minor leagues. Despite his initial resistance, he succumbed to the seductive allure of cocaine, rationalizing that he had time to clear his system before the next drug test. An unexpected visit from a drug tester on game day shattered his flawed calculations. Panic ensued, but he managed to provide a sample, clinging to hope for a miraculous reprieve.

After embracing the illusion of getting away with his relapse, the cold reality set in when he was summoned by MLB officials to address a positive drug test. The conversation with league representatives laid bare the gravity of his situation. Acknowledging his fall, he faced a 60-day suspension that shattered his family's tranquility and the professional hopes of returning to the field that season.

Conversations with his parents underscored the disappointment and concern they felt, while his father urged him to prioritize his health and family over baseball. Yet, the suspension pushed him deeper into addiction instead of rehabilitation. Despite being sent to the esteemed Betty Ford Center, his commitment to recovery was half-hearted.

The chapter closes with the narrator navigating through an offseason filled with more arrests and attempts to deceive the league's surveillance. Fearing further consequences but unable to resist, he continued to self-destruct. A



profound moment of clarity came while waiting for yet another test, but even this could not halt the deteriorating cycle.

As he failed a third drug test post-rehab, baseball's tolerance wore thin. The Mets publicly outlined future plans that no longer included him, signaling a final, harsh blow. What began as a hopeful attempt to reclaim past glory ended with harsh realities and uncertain prospects, reminding him of a time when baseball—and life—resided in a place so far from the chaos he'd become entrenched in.

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# Chapter 13 Summary: 13 Suicide Squeeze

## Chapter 13: Suicide Squeeze

In "Suicide Squeeze," Dwight Gooden finds himself spiraling into a deep personal and professional crisis. The chapter opens with a harrowing scene where Dwight, overwhelmed by his addiction and struggles with Major League Baseball, stages a mock suicide attempt. While his actions are not a genuine attempt on his life, they reveal his desperation and desire for attention and sympathy. Dwight's wife, Monica, and his mother intervene, removing the gun from his hands and urging him to seek help.

This incident takes place in November 1994, shortly after Dwight files for free agency, frustrated with Major League Baseball's and the New York Mets' lack of support during his struggle with addiction. However, any hope of reclaiming his glory on the mound is shattered when he receives a letter from Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig, announcing his suspension for the entire 1995 season due to drug violations. This means no job, no salary, and, more critically, an assault on his sense of identity and manhood—a failure to live up to his father's standard of providing for one's family.

Despite repeated reassurances to his family that he wants to change, Dwight repeatedly succumbs to his addictions. His relationship with his family is



strained as he prioritizes drug use over responsibilities, missing crucial moments like the birth of his son Devin. The chapter also highlights his struggle to confront his demons and the false promises made to himself and his family.

Throughout the chapter, Dwight starts to explore new possibilities for his career, driven by baseball writer Bob Klapisch's suggestion of playing in Japan. However, these prospects are dampened by Dwight's continued substance abuse. He meets Ray Negrón, a former Yankees batboy turned sports executive, who urges Dwight to clean up his act. Negrón encourages him to attend Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meetings, introducing Dwight to Ron Dock, a Vietnam veteran and former addict, who becomes Dwight's NA sponsor.

Unlike previous rehab attempts, Dwight finds a genuine desire to recover through these meetings. However, his path to sobriety is not without setbacks, illustrated by a speeding incident involving alcohol. Despite the mishaps, Dwight remains committed to overcoming his addiction, finding solace in church and focusing on repairing his family bonds.

As Dwight works to rebuild his life, his friend Ray helps facilitate interest from various baseball teams, although struggles persist as Ray faces a decertification issue with the players' association. Amid these professional challenges, Dwight remains focused on his recovery, leaning heavily on



newfound spirituality and community support.

Eventually, Dwight meets George Steinbrenner of the New York Yankees, through Ray's influence. Although skeptical about Steinbrenner's intentions, Dwight's persistence and Ray's encouragement result in the Yankees offering him a contract. The chapter closes on a hopeful note for Dwight, as he commits to playing winter ball and revitalizing his baseball career, reflecting a newfound determination to overcome his past and forge ahead.

This chapter captures the twin tensions in Dwight's life: the pull of addiction and the push toward redemption. It paints a picture of a man caught in a web of personal failings yet striving to reclaim his place not just in baseball but in his family's life.

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## Chapter 14 Summary: 14 No-Hitter

In Chapter 14, titled "No-Hitter," the protagonist heads to New York with a fresh perspective, embracing a second chance at playing major-league baseball with the New York Yankees. He has moved back to Roslyn, despite the long commute to Yankee Stadium in the Bronx, to stay grounded. Determined to avoid past errors, he distances himself from nightlife and drugs, prioritizing his sobriety and the opportunity to rebuild his reputation. Regular drug testing becomes a welcome assurance.

Summer brings his family—his wife Monica and their kids—to New York, offering a heartwarming contrast to his previous chaotic lifestyle. Despite the familial bliss, his pitching suffers; he begins with losses, and the possibility of being sent to AAA looms large. However, with guidance from pitching coach Mel Stottlemire, progress ensues, and he gradually regains his pitching form.

While tackling his professional challenges, he grapples with a familial crisis. His father, in Florida, faces multiple severe health issues. The narrative captures a difficult period of contemplation as his mother informs him of the urgent need for open-heart surgery—a procedure marked by uncertainty. Faced with a choice between attending his father's surgery or fulfilling his duties to the Yankees, he heeds his father's lifelong advice that "everything else comes after baseball." He interprets this as a sign to honor his father by



playing.

As he prepares to pitch against the Seattle Mariners, memories of his father's support and lessons flood his mind, solidifying his decision to stay. Despite his wife Monica and Yankees manager Joe Torre advising him otherwise, the protagonist chooses to honor his father's influence by playing the game they both cherish.

During the game, he starts apprehensively, reflecting over whether he has made the right decision. But as the innings pass, aided by spectacular plays, especially by teammates Gerald Williams and Derek Jeter, he perseveres. Despite not immediately realizing it, he is on the path to pitching a no-hitter, a rare feat in baseball.

As the game progresses, the pressure mounts. His stamina wanes, but determination and the support of his teammates propel him. With each batter retired, the realization of achieving a no-hitter becomes tangible, until finally, Derek Jeter catches a crucial pop fly, sealing the game.

The no-hitter holds profound significance—not just for his career, but as an homage to his father. As his teammates celebrate and lift him, he reflects on his arduous journey and the shared triumph with his family. After the game, he contacts his father's hospital room, learning that, albeit intermittently conscious, his father witnessed the historic game.



Acknowledging the fleeting time, he takes the earliest flight to Florida, wanting to be with his father before surgery. Despite his father's diminishing condition, the shared grasp of a game ball symbolizes their deep bond and shared legacy. The chapter closes with a poignant moment of love and acknowledgment before his father undergoes surgery.

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## Chapter 15 Summary: 15 Pushing It

Chapter 15, titled "Pushing It," offers a profound glimpse into the twilight of a storied baseball career fraught with personal challenges and a gradual descent into substance abuse. The protagonist recounts the waning days of his time in Major League Baseball, reflecting on fleeting glimpses of former glory interspersed with long periods of physical and emotional struggle.

In 1996, after achieving a remarkable no-hitter with the Yankees, he experienced a resurgence in performance, winning 11 out of 12 games. However, by September, the cumulative weight of two decades of pitching took its toll, rendering his arm ineffective and necessitating sitting out the crucial playoff games. The Yankees triumphed in the World Series, but he recognized that his contribution, although significant, was becoming increasingly sporadic.

In January 1997, the protagonist faced the personal loss of his father, who had always been a source of support and pride despite their complicated history. George Steinbrenner, the venerable Yankees owner, visited his father in the hospital, showcasing a rarely seen compassionate side that seemingly extended his father's life, if only for a short while.

His return to baseball in 1997 was marred by a hernia, requiring surgery and relegating him to minor league rehab stints. Performance inconsistencies led

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him to part ways with the Yankees, ultimately joining the Cleveland Indians. It was during this time that he met Monique Moore, a colorful and spirited flight attendant, through an old childhood friend. Their connection was immediate, though complicated by his ongoing marital issues with Monica and his relapsing substance abuse.

By the late 1990s, his pitching career was visibly declining, exacerbated by age and reduced performance. A brief, unsuccessful stint with the Houston Astros led to a trade to the Tampa Bay Devil Rays, where local connections offered a semblance of comfort. However, poor team performance and personal struggles remained constant. The culmination of these troubles came when the Rays bluntly suggested retirement, with little regard for his personal aspirations.

In 2000, a glimmer of hope emerged when Ray Negrón invited him back to the Yankees. Despite initial doubts regarding his readiness, he rose to the occasion, rekindling memories of his prime by effectively pitching against the Mets. This brought forth a momentary resurgence, punctuating his career with a bittersweet satisfaction before retirement loomed indefinitely.

The chapter poignantly narrates his renewed battles with addiction, exacerbated by discontinuing Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meetings and increased drinking, heralding a relapse into cocaine use. Woven with the narrative is the shadow of George Steinbrenner, a steadfast yet formidable



figure who, notwithstanding the protagonist's repeated failures and absences, maintained a supportive stance, portraying addiction as a disease rather than a crime.

Despite attempts to stabilize his life post-retirement, his shortcomings permeated his personal relationships, exemplified by recurring disappointment for his children and a complex relationship with Monique. Even during moments of potential redemption, he was caught in the throes of his dependency, impacting his family life and career opportunities.

The narrative underscores a pivotal intervention led by Ron Dock and Monique, which ultimately persuaded him to enter rehab after another profound relapse. Here, he oscillated between resistance and acknowledgment of his addiction's impacts, demonstrating the deep-seated challenges of recovery. His time at the treatment facility confronted him with harsh truths, catalyzing a temporary cessation of drug use, albeit driven more by external pressures than an intrinsic commitment to transformation.

Chapter 15, encapsulated within the context of a once-brilliant career now overshadowed by personal trials, presents an intimate portrait of resilience beset by recurring struggles with substance abuse, accompanied by the steadfast, albeit tough love from figures like George Steinbrenner and personal relationships challenged by his inner demons.



## Chapter 16: 16 Some Dad

In Chapter 16, titled "Some Dad," the narrative centers on Dwight Gooden, a former Major League Baseball player, as he strives to reclaim his role as a father after stepping back from drug abuse. Gooden, having drifted through years of addiction and the demanding lifestyle of a professional athlete, finds himself finally engaging more actively in the lives of his children—Dwight Jr., Ashley, Ariel, Devin, and Darren—as well as his newborn son, Dylan. His efforts reflect a newfound commitment to fatherhood, yet the road is fraught with challenges that come from years of absence and the fragmented family structure involving different mothers.

Gooden's attempts to be present, however, stir tensions at home, particularly with Monique, Dylan's mother. The stress of long parenting hours and her partner's divided attentions culminates in a heated argument, during which an accusation of Monique's disdain for his other children escalates the situation. Tempers flare, leading to an unfortunate physical altercation that results in Monique calling the police and Dwight spending a weekend in jail.

Despite the setback, Gooden is reluctantly reintegrated in domestic life while his professional obligations with the Yankees begin to dissipate. His struggles compound when a seemingly minor traffic stop escalates into a police chase, renowned in the media as a dramatic manhunt. Gooden's anxiety and a latent distrust of law enforcement—spurred by past



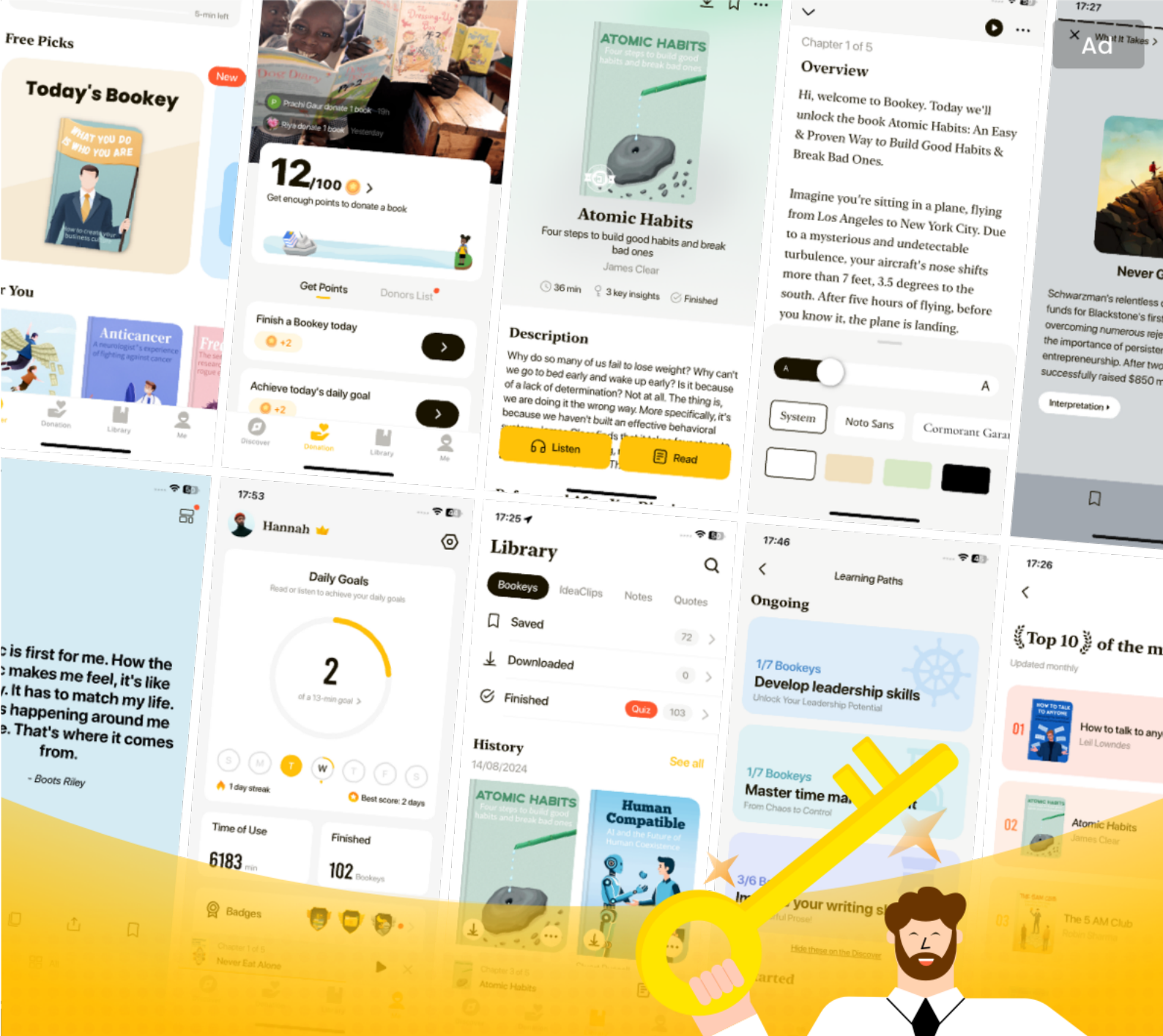
clashes—lead him to flee, an act that only heightens public and legal scrutiny.

During subsequent legal proceedings, Gooden is hit with a sentence for past domestic violence charges—missing a mandated class added to his

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## Chapter 17 Summary: 17 Behind Bars

In Chapter 17, "Behind Bars," the narrative delves into the gritty reality of hitting rock bottom for Dwight Gooden, a former baseball star struggling with addiction. Addiction experts often talk about "hitting bottom" as a pivotal moment for recovery, but for Dwight, it felt like being trapped in a nightmare, his own version of rock bottom far removed from any cemetery, and perhaps more haunting than the idea of death itself. His journey through addiction has seen him bounce in and out of treatment programs, missing monumental events like the World Series parade, and even leading the police on fugitive hunts.

At this point in his life, the closest he felt to hitting that metaphorical bottom was not during one of these public spectacles, but rather in a Tampa courtroom where the sight of his mother, seemingly aged by stress and sadness, marked his deepest moment of shame and guilt. Dwight had managed a three-month stint of sobriety, trying to rebuild his life with his family, only to crumble one night in March 2006 under the weight of longing and isolation, cracking open a beer and spiraling back into addiction.

This relapse set off a chain of regrettable choices, from cocaine use to a confrontation with his wife, Monique, which led her to decide to leave with their young son, Dylan. Desperate to regain some control, Dwight contacted a counselor, and while he initially felt hopeful about returning to treatment,



his subsequent interaction with his probation officer quickly turned the tide. Unlike the counselor, she wasn't interested in helping; her focus was on the violation of his probation. Dwight found himself back in court facing Judge Daniel Perry, who presented two stark options: a reinstated five-year probation or a year and a day in prison.

Faced with the decision, Dwight turned to his mother for guidance. Her inability to give him an answer was a painful indication of her exhaustion from years of providing moral support. Eventually, Dwight opted for the year-and-a-day sentence, mistakenly believing it would lead to rehabilitation rather than incarceration. However, the harsh reality hit when a friend informed him that this sentence was indeed for prison.

Finding himself in the Florida Department of Corrections' system, Dwight quickly realized the severity of his situation. The intake process was a humiliating reminder of his fall from grace. Initially sent to Lake Butler, a maximum-security facility with its notorious reputation, Dwight was confronted by hardened guards and the daunting environment, feeling like a rookie in a perilous game. The conditions forced introspection and adaptation, with Dwight striving to survive the ordeal by avoiding involvement in prison dynamics and maintaining his composure.

Eventually, Dwight was transferred to the Gainesville Correctional Institution, a minimum-security facility focused on drug rehabilitation. Here,



alongside fellow inmates who had also hit their personal low points, he engaged in a stringent program aimed more at social skills than addiction recovery. Dwight observed the forgotten souls around him, contrasting his own situation with the unwavering support from his family and friends.

Drawing strength from letters and visits, Dwight resolved to turn his time inside into a period of growth. He shared his story with other inmates, fostering a sense of commonality among those who battled similar demons. The chapter concludes with Dwight's reflection on the path he's walked, illustrating a man not defined by his past achievements but characterized by his ongoing quest for redemption and a renewed connection with his life beyond the confines of addiction and incarceration.

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## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** Resilience in Adversity

**Critical Interpretation:** In Chapter 17, the moment Dwight Gooden chooses to transform his time in prison into an opportunity for growth reverberates as a powerful testimony to the human capacity for resilience. Despite being thrust into a milieu that signifies his lowest point, you can draw inspiration from Dwight's realization that this adversity is not a determinant to chisel away at your spirit. Instead, it might carve out a profound introspection that propels you towards transformation. This chapter challenges you to view setbacks, no matter how steep, not purely as imprisoning moments of despair, but as potential catalysts for inner growth and redemption. It's in recognizing your untapped strength amid trials that you can craft a narrative of perseverance and hope, reshaping your life's trajectory towards a more purposeful existence.

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## Chapter 18 Summary: 18 High Low

The chapter "High Low" from the memoir conveys Doc Gooden's unexpected induction into the Mets Hall of Fame in January 2010 and a subsequent incident revealing his ongoing struggles with addiction. The story unfolds with a call from Jeff Wilpon, the Mets' chief operating officer, informing Gooden that he, along with notable figures connected to the 1986 World Series-winning Mets team, would be inducted that August. Despite not being the Baseball Hall of Fame honor many once expected for him, the moment was significant for Gooden, bringing him deep emotion and a sense of belongingness with the Mets—a team central to his career and personal history.

Since moving to Citi Field in 2009, the Mets faced criticism for not celebrating their own storied past, often overshadowed by tributes to the Brooklyn Dodgers. The induction ceremony aimed to address these concerns, honoring figures like Darryl Strawberry and manager Davey Johnson alongside Gooden. This gesture felt like an embrace from the franchise, acknowledging his contributions despite the troubled aspects of his career.

The narrative also recounts Gooden's relationship with the Mets and the enduring legacy of the 1986 team. There were past reunions and events at which he couldn't be present due to personal troubles, adding a poignant



context to his Hall of Fame honor. Though welcomed by fans and the organization, a subsequent controversy—when Gooden’s autograph on a stadium wall sparked debate—highlighted the complex sentiment around his iconic yet tumultuous figure.

However, the tumult in Gooden's personal life continued. Despite the Hall of Fame honor serving as a spark of recognition, his life behind the scenes was unraveling. Gooden was reverting to old patterns, including drug and alcohol use, which underscored the ongoing battle with addiction. The situation reached a crisis point on March 22, 2010, when Gooden, under the heavy influence of Ambien and cocaine traces, crashed his car while driving his son to school. The incident endangered both their lives and resulted in a litany of charges against him.

Despite his checkered path, Gooden's value to the Mets and the mutual affection between him and the fans remained palpable. Even as he faced legal consequences and scrutiny regarding his fitness as a parent, the Hall of Fame induction stood as a significant yet bittersweet acknowledgment, amidst his continuing battle with substance abuse and looming personal challenges.



## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** The Power of Acknowledgment

**Critical Interpretation:** In Chapter 18 of "Doc," Dwight Gooden's induction into the Mets Hall of Fame represents a significant moment of acknowledgment for his contributions, despite his past struggles and ongoing battles with addiction. This pivotal point shows that recognition and validation can be powerful motivators in a person's life. It reminds you that even amidst personal challenges and setbacks, being honored for your achievements can instill a sense of belonging and renewed hope. Much like Gooden, you might find that being recognized for your efforts can be a catalyst for positive change, encouraging perseverance when faced with adversity. The chapter inspires us by suggesting that while our journey may be marked with highs and lows, the acknowledgment of our accomplishments can fuel our resilience and motivate us to continue improving and striving forward.



## Chapter 19 Summary: 19 Room Service

In Chapter 19, "Room Service," we enter a tumultuous period in the life of former Major League Baseball star Dwight "Doc" Gooden—a period marked by intense personal and legal struggles. The chapter opens with Doc facing a slew of reporters at his home following a recent accident, which has only compounded his tumultuous life. Despite the lecture he received from his mentor, Rusty Staub, about always engaging with the media, this incident leaves him unable to say much, especially as he is still processing everything and consulting with his lawyer. The accident has not only put Doc in the public eye for the wrong reasons again but has also jeopardized his relationship with his family and his future.

His manager and friend, Ron Goldstein, steps in to manage the media narrative, emphasizing Doc's character as a good father and friend. The Mets, aware of the arrest, choose to maintain a neutral stance, indicating that Doc's planned induction into the Mets Hall of Fame would proceed, despite the circumstances.

As the chapter unfolds, the personal fallout from the accident becomes devastatingly apparent. Doc's relationship with his partner, Monique, deteriorates rapidly. They argue frequently, primarily about the perceived risks he poses to their children. Monique moves their children, Dylan and baby Milan, back to her parents' house. The emotional and physical isolation



takes its toll on Doc, leading him into a downward spiral characterized by substance abuse and depression.

Attempting to escape, Doc checks into a Comfort Inn in Paramus, retreating from the world as accusations and guilt weigh heavily on him. Despite his earlier resolve to stay away from drugs, he relapses, using cocaine to numb the emotional pain and guilt. This self-imposed isolation is punctuated only by the occasional public appearance, which he struggles to endure due to his fragile mental and physical state.

Amid this struggle, Ron Goldstein remains a constant presence, offering support and urging Doc to change his environment. However, Doc resists these efforts until a pivotal moment of introspection leads to a spiritual awakening. Listening to gospel music in his hotel room, Doc experiences a profound emotional breakthrough, which galvanizes him to take significant steps towards recovery.

On an impulse, he contacts Ron, stating his intention to leave the hotel room and seek refuge in Ron's home. Ron's unwavering support is soon at the hotel, responding to Doc's plea for help. With Ron's arrival, a palpable sense of hope emerges; it signifies the beginning of a positive transformation in Doc's life. The chapter closes on this hopeful note, marking a turning point as Doc decides to confront his addictions and get his life back on track.



## Chapter 20: 20 Fame Game

In Chapter 20, titled "Fame Game," the narrative captures a transformative period in Dwight "Doc" Gooden's life as he gradually emerges from a tumultuous past. After moving in with Ron Goldstein and his family in Old Tappan, New Jersey, Dwight finds a supportive environment that allows him to begin rebuilding his life. Despite feeling awkward about intruding into their family space, the Goldsteins' hospitality instills confidence in him as he begins to improve his lifestyle by eating better, working out, and reconnecting with his family. His son, Dwight Junior, joins him from Tampa, seeking to enhance his music career in New York.

However, Dwight remains far from perfect, as he struggles with alcohol and cocaine addiction. He attempts damage control by attending the Addiction Institute of New York, a day program in Manhattan, to keep his worst impulses at bay. Although progress is not smooth and he continues to battle internal demons, Dwight's situation improves considerably compared to his lowest points.

The chapter is marked by two significant events on Dwight's horizon. The first is his induction into the Mets Hall of Fame on August 1, a monumental achievement he views as a form of personal vindication. The second is an impending court date related to his legal troubles, which he hopes won't interfere with his Hall of Fame moment. He worries about the impact of



negative press surrounding his arrest that rehashes his past mistakes. Yet, a more immediate concern arises when his ex-wife Monique unleashes a public tirade against him through the New York Post, accusing him falsely of abandoning their children.

Further complicating matters is tension with his nephew Gary's manipulative accusations, suggesting Dwight relapsed into drug use. Particularly troubling is Darryl Strawberry's propensity to exaggerate Dwight's struggles publicly, partly due to their shared history of both collaboration and rivalry. This pattern of creating sensational stories often leaves Dwight feeling frustrated and betrayed, especially since Darryl himself struggled with similar issues.

Despite these potential obstacles, the Mets organization remains steadfast in their decision to honor Dwight. His induction weekend is a celebratory affair, bringing together family and friends, including his mom, ex-wife Monica, children, and nephew Gary. The event is replete with nostalgia, as former teammates and esteemed members of the Mets Hall of Fame gather to celebrate the legacy of Mets alumni.

The ceremony at Citi Field is marked by poignant reflections and Dwight's heartfelt expression of gratitude to the fans who supported him. He acknowledges his past shortcomings but emphasizes the unwavering support he's received from fans and family alike. Describing his induction as a "homecoming," Dwight addresses the crowd with sincerity, attributing his



success on the field to the fans' encouragement.

Amidst the accolades and personal acknowledgments to family, Dwight experiences genuine warmth from the crowd, cementing a sense of belonging and redemption. He pledges to work towards a life that aligns with the recognition he has received, underscoring a hopeful trajectory for his future after navigating the peaks and valleys of fame and personal struggle.

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## Chapter 21 Summary: 21 Candid Camera

In Chapter 21, titled "Candid Camera," the author provides an introspective account of how they became involved with VH1's "Celebrity Rehab with Dr. Drew," despite their initial reluctance. The show is known for chronicling the rehabilitation journeys of semi-famous individuals grappling with substance abuse, led by Dr. Drew Pinsky at the Pasadena Recovery Center in Los Angeles. Although the author, who has a history with drug addiction, had never imagined participating in such a public forum, a chain of events led them to reconsider.

The chapter opens with the author discovering their name in the New York Post, suggesting that they would be part of a new season focused on celebrities from Long Island. This was surprising since, although the author had lived in that area during their New York Mets days, they now identified more with New Jersey and Tampa. The headline also mentioned other potential participants like Amy Fisher and Michael Lohan, both known for their troubled backgrounds.

The surprise stemmed from the author's close friend Ron, who, concerned about the author's downward spiral and impending court appearance, secretly coordinated with the show's producers to get them involved. Despite Ron's covert intervention, the author began contemplating the opportunity. It represented a chance to confront their addiction openly, shedding the secrecy



that had shrouded their life for over two decades.

A subsequent call from Ben, a booking agent for reality TV, outlined the show's benefits, including free world-class treatment and financial compensation. Given the author's financial constraints and the looming possibility of a prison sentence, the offer represented a unique opportunity for recovery. After some soul-searching and discussing the decision with family and legal counsel—who viewed it as a positive move for both personal recovery and the legal case—the author decided to participate in the show.

The author realized this could be a powerful step towards accountability, both to themselves and the public. Despite misgivings, largely driven by the addict's mindset seeking escape, the author recognized the declining number of second chances left.

Upon arrival at the rehab center, it became clear they still faced challenges. A positive test for cocaine usage shortly before entering signaled the difficult road ahead. Yet, the chapter closes with the author stepping onto this new path, recognizing the need for change while accepting the reality of their addiction. This chapter does an effective job of showcasing the tension between public exposure and personal redemption, highlighting the complex journey of confronting addiction openly.



## Chapter 22 Summary: 22 Cast-Offs

In Chapter 22, titled "Cast-Offs," the narrator shares a profound and candid account of his experience on the reality TV show \*Celebrity Rehab with Dr. Drew\*, where he confronts his longstanding battle with substance abuse and its impact on his family. The chapter begins with a poignant conversation between the narrator and Dr. Drew, where they explore the narrator's troubled relationship with his eldest son, born during the peak of the narrator's drug abuse. This relationship is marred by guilt, particularly due to an incident in 2005 when both father and son were incarcerated on drug charges.

\*Celebrity Rehab\* is revealed to be more than just a spectacle for TV audiences; instead, it offers genuine treatment. While the show features moments of drama and conflict, there is real therapy happening—a stark contrast to typical addiction programs. The narrator highlights his sense of urgency in treatment, as legal pressures and the potential for prison loom over him. This time, the stakes are much higher, and there is a newfound readiness to embrace recovery.

The narrator describes the diverse and dramatic cast of season five, including figures like Sean Young, Michael Lohan, Steven Adler, Bai Ling, and Jeremy Jackson, each battling their demons in the public eye. Despite the chaos around him, the narrator focuses on his own journey, finding the



unexpected public nature of the process to be surprisingly liberating, pushing him to confront his issues head-on.

One powerful moment arises when Jennifer Gimenez, a rehab tech with her own addiction struggles, encourages the narrator to write a letter to his children, expressing guilt and regret for his failures as a father due to drugs. Although the task is daunting, the narrator pours his heart into the letter, apologizing for his absence and promising to be a better father. This emotional exercise is a breakthrough, compelling him to face his past mistakes and the people he has hurt.

The chapter closes with the narrator acknowledging that this exercise and the revealing nature of reality TV are intensely challenging, but necessary. By exposing his vulnerabilities on national television, he hopes to mend relationships, find personal redemption, and inspire others facing similar struggles. It is a moving testament to the power of vulnerability and the hope for sobriety as a gift not only to himself but to everyone who cares about him.



## Chapter 23 Summary: 23 Show Time

Chapter 23, "Show Time," captures a pivotal moment in a celebrity rehab setting, where the narrator, presumably a former baseball player, navigates the complexities of addiction recovery amidst various dramatic occurrences. The chapter opens with the unexpected appearance of Lenny Dykstra, the narrator's former Mets teammate, who arrives with the intent to "rescue" him from the rehab facilities, suspecting him of being manipulated or hypnotized. Despite Lenny's skepticism and refusal to participate in the reality show's filming, the narrator feels a growing trust in the rehab team, especially the counselor Bob Forrest.

Bob, a seasoned musician with a history of addiction, offers more relatable guidance than the educated but less experienced Dr. Drew. Their discussions delve into the narrator's traumatic childhood, revealing a significant but forgotten memory of seeing his sister shot. This realization, linked by Dr. Drew to his substance use habits, marks a breakthrough in understanding the roots of his addiction.

A poignant family moment unfolds when Dr. Drew orchestrates a surprise reunion with the narrator's son, Dwight Junior. The father-son dialogue unveils layers of guilt and unspoken expectations between them. Dwight Junior expresses the burden of having to be emotionally strong for his father, illuminating the complex dynamics of their relationship. This honest



exchange propels an emotional apology from the narrator, who acknowledges the impact of his addiction on his son's life and the dreams they once shared.

The chapter also captures a chaotic family day where tensions flare among the rehab participants' families, leading to a near-violent altercation. Dr. Drew manages to intervene and calm the situation, emphasizing the volatile nature of the environment and the challenges of dealing with addiction.

In seeking closure, Dr. Drew suggests writing letters to addiction itself, prompting a reflective moment for the narrator. His letter, addressed to himself, is a heartfelt plea for self-forgiveness and a commitment to recovery. It underscores the journey towards self-acceptance and the resolve to become a better father and person.

This chapter weaves together personal redemption, the intricacies of familial bonds affected by addiction, and the unpredictable journey towards healing. It encapsulates the transformative potential of acknowledging one's past traumas, fostering open communication, and embracing vulnerability in the path to recovery.



## Chapter 24: 24 Staying Strong

Chapter 24, "Staying Strong," delves into the struggles and uncertainties faced by an individual battling addiction and attempting to rebuild their life post-rehab. After leaving Celebrity Rehab, the protagonist receives cautious encouragement from Bob Forrest, a counselor concerned about their journey to sustained sobriety. The prevailing fear is not about quitting drugs but maintaining a drug-free life—a challenge marked by numerous previous failures. With the support of Bob and the rehab team, they feel hopeful yet anxious about the future.

The protagonist returns to New Jersey and immediately dives into ongoing recovery efforts at the Evergreen Substance Abuse and Addiction Treatment Program. This new regimen, akin to their time at Celebrity Rehab, reinforces the importance of continuous counseling and support but lacks the round-the-clock supervision they previously experienced. Making additional strides, they engage in frequent AA and NA meetings, drawing strength from their sponsor, Gerry Cooney, a former boxer and fellow addict who shares his insights on fighting addiction.

Reintegrating into daily life proves difficult. The protagonist must distance themselves from old habits and relationships that revolved around drugs and alcohol. Their marriage with Monique is strained, further complicating their home life. However, with the encouragement of people at public events and



a busy schedule to stave off boredom, they feel a sense of community support.

Family remains a focal point for motivation. They prioritize repairing relationships with their children and mother, recognizing past neglect. This

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## Chapter 25 Summary: 25 Judgment Day

In the chapter "Judgment Day," the narrative unfolds on April 15, 2011, at the Bergen County courthouse in Hackensack, New Jersey, where the protagonist faces the possibility of up to three years in prison. The setting, described as a daunting gray building with a dome, foreshadows the tension of the day. The atmosphere is heavy as the protagonist, flanked by his lawyer Neal Frank and friend Ron, awaits a court decision that will shape his future.

As the court proceedings begin, the protagonist is reminded of a previous disturbing encounter in Florida that left a lasting impression on his mother, hence his decision to shield his family from this ordeal. The skewed focus of the protagonist's mind during such high-pressure moments is humorously highlighted by his contemplation of the lawyers' first-name-sounding last names—an unusual thought amidst such grave circumstances.

The heart of the courtroom drama centers on a prior incident over a year ago—an impaired driving episode involving drugs and the presence of his five-year-old son, Dylan, in the car. This incident, which miraculously caused no harm, now places the protagonist at the mercy of Judge Donald Venezia, who will soon decide his fate.

The defense begins with lawyer Neal Frank arguing for leniency, articulating

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the protagonist's recent successes in rehabilitation programs at Pasadena Recovery Center and New Jersey's Evergreen Substance Abuse and Addiction Treatment Program. Frank presents a compelling case for probation under the state's drug-dependency law, emphasizing the protagonist's newfound commitment and accountability.

When given the chance to speak, the protagonist reaffirms his dedication to his rehabilitation, expressing lifelong commitments to overcoming his addiction and underlining the sincerity of his intentions. This heartfelt plea, however, is countered by Prosecutor Kenneth Ralph, who paints a bleak picture of the protagonist's history with addiction and attempts to capitalize on his rehabilitation for personal gain through appearances on the reality show *Celebrity Rehab*. Ralph pushes for a three-year prison term, stressing that past opportunities failed to curb the protagonist's risky behavior, which had endangered his own child's safety.

Judge Venezia, a relatable figure with a penchant for baseball metaphors, delivers his verdict creatively. He compares the protagonist to a struggling pitcher, teetering on the brink of getting ejected from the game of life. He warns of the dire consequences of continued missteps while acknowledging the potential for change and the humanity within the protagonist. His eventual ruling—to grant special probation instead of prison time—comes with stringent conditions but also extends a lifeline.



The chapter concludes on a high note as Judge Venezia, intertwining compassion with stern advice, hands the protagonist a baseball with an inscribed message: “GOOD LUCK. FINISH THE GAME.” This gesture not only epitomizes the judge's empathy but symbolizes new beginnings and the opportunity to rewrite his life's path, echoing the primary theme of redemption and resilience inherent in the narrative.

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## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** The Opportunity for Redemption

**Critical Interpretation:** The heart of the pivotal courtroom moment lies in recognizing that second chances are as precious as they are rare. In the story, the protagonist stands at a crossroad, one decision away from an irreversible path. This chapter serves as a poignant reminder of the undying human spirit and its capacity for change, even when draped in shadows of past mistakes. You are inspired to seize those moments of potential redemption with both hands, for they offer the unique chance to redefine your journey and reshape your destiny. Embrace the hurdles of life with resilience and determination, crafting each new day into a step towards a brighter future.

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## Chapter 26 Summary: 26 Ready Steady

In Chapter 26, titled "Ready Steady," the protagonist continues to navigate the challenging path of addiction recovery, under the guidance of the Evergreen program at Bergen Regional Medical Center, as mandated by Judge Venezia. However, he commits to this journey not just for the court's sake, but for his own well-being. The sessions and group meetings provide a critical support system, connecting him with fellow recovering addicts. This sense of community fosters a shared celebration of victories and the development of strategies for a clean and sober life, helping him believe in the possibility of successful recovery.

The protagonist learns that the ultimate goal of recovery is to develop tools for living outside the protective treatment environment. Balancing the pace of progress is key: moving too slowly risks stagnation, while moving too quickly can jeopardize hard-won progress. With Dr. Sharp's approval, he reduces his treatment frequency, buoyed by commitments to Narcotics Anonymous (NA) and Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings and daily contact with his sponsor, former boxer Gerry Cooney.

A critical lesson comes when a simple text fails to suffice as daily check-in, teaching him the value of voice communication in revealing true emotions. This emphasizes the necessity of honesty and prevents isolation, a common risk for those in recovery. With solid support systems in place, he surrounds

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himself with his children, family, friends, and fans, forming a network capable of holding him accountable.

Despite the progress, temptations surface, triggered by seemingly innocuous events like liquor commercials. These moments underscore the importance of reaching out for support, a lesson he learns through reflection. His internal battle exemplifies a broader truth about addiction: the person most in danger of self-deception is oneself.

Throughout this time, Bob Forrest, a counselor from his TV treatment program, remains a vigilant ally, emphasizing the risks inherent in the recovery timeline and the importance of staying vigilant. Bob's candid conversations help him confront and recognize the guilt associated with past behavior, encouraging him to remain committed for diverse reasons—his family, fans, friends, and most importantly, for himself.

Transitioning into the Bergen RENEW aftercare program, the protagonist continues personal growth, focusing less on substances and more on life's daily challenges. Here, accountability and honesty remain paramount, bolstered by a network that supports lifelong recovery. Comparing recovery to ongoing cancer treatment, aftercare and group meetings serve as "chemo," essential for maintaining health and sobriety.

Ultimately, this chapter reflects a journey of resilience and self-discovery

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where support, commitment, and honesty pave the road to lasting recovery. Each day demands focus and mutual support, but the protagonist is buoyed by the positive changes in his life and the promise of a healthier future.

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## Chapter 27 Summary: 27 Why Now?

In this chapter, Dwight "Doc" Gooden reflects on his journey through addiction and recovery, focusing on why his stint at Celebrity Rehab marked a turning point in his life. Unlike previous rehab attempts at places like Smithers and Betty Ford, something profound occurred in Pasadena that initiated his change. While these earlier facilities provided caring counselors and thoughtful treatment plans, Celebrity Rehab offered experiences that resonated deeply with Dwight. A key factor was his readiness for change, which had not been present in earlier stages of his life. He acknowledges that he was finally mature enough to recognize the destructive patterns in his life and commit to breaking them.

Dwight recounts touching moments, including a reunion with Dwight Junior and an insightful revelation from Dr. Drew and Bob about his tendency to hide from pain, particularly in bathrooms. These experiences illuminated the connections between his early trauma and later drug usage, helping him face his truths without secrets.

Key to his transformation was an internal shift—Dwight had finally decided to take control of his life. He realized he was no longer living up to the values his parents instilled in him, such as striving for greatness and respecting oneself and others. Despite reaching middle age and the death of his father, Dwight still desired to make his parents proud, particularly for his



aging mother.

Reflecting on family interactions, he shares a meaningful conversation with his cousin, Roy White, who likened Dwight's readiness to overcome addiction to opening a door and stepping in when the time was right. Dwight promises to those who have supported him that he will try his utmost to maintain sobriety, acknowledging that actions over time build trust and that his efforts will prove his sincerity.

Dwight outlines the steps he's taken to create a stable environment, distancing himself from negative influences and avoiding situations where temptation might arise. His decision to divorce Monique is presented as a mutual, necessary step for both their children's well-being and their personal growth.

The chapter also explores Dwight's reflections on his once-close friendship with Darryl Strawberry, a fellow baseball player with whom he shared early success but whose relationship deteriorated over the years. Dwight describes the evolution of their bond, marked by jealousy and misunderstandings, culminating in a strained and distant association. Despite past kindnesses toward Darryl, including showing support during legal and personal troubles, Dwight admits the relationship has irreparably changed. He now understands that the vital positive relationships necessary for his recovery do not include Darryl.

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In concluding, Dwight highlights the significance of actions over words, emphasizing that trust and belief in his recovery come with time. He has accepted that rebuilding trust with loved ones, like his mother, will be gradual but is committed to demonstrating his change through consistent, positive actions.

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## Chapter 28: 28 Forward March

Chapter 28, "Forward March," reflects the author's journey of redemption and self-discovery after overcoming addiction. Two years clean from drugs, the author describes himself as a devoted family man, sports enthusiast, and former baseball star finding a new path in life. He remains a passionate admirer of New York sports teams, like the Mets and Yankees, and idolizes players such as Derek Jeter and Mariano Rivera.

Despite a successful career as a professional baseball player, the author acknowledges struggling with various addictions, including sports watching, and reflects on past excesses involving drugs, alcohol, and luxury living. Sobriety has brought a new perspective, focusing on the positive aspects of his career and personal legacy rather than accolades like Hall of Fame induction.

The chapter highlights the author's commitment to his family, including his seven children, whom he truly cherishes. Despite financial setbacks, he speaks about learning to live more frugally and the satisfaction of supporting loved ones. A major goal is to be a better father, ensuring his presence and accountability for his children's well-being.

Actively involved with baseball, the author participates in events like Yankees pregame reports, luxury box meet-and-greets, and fantasy camps.

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He cherishes sharing his experience and knowledge with fans and newcomers to the sport, aiming to contribute as a coach or mentor.

A central theme is using past mistakes as lessons to inspire young people. The author shares his story with wide-ranging audiences, from schools to

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