

BROKEN PROMISE

Written by
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ACT I

THE PROMISE

FADE IN:

EXT. INTRO -- DARKNESS

A dirty BASEBALL floats in blackness. A NARRATOR -- a reporterly voice of authority -- breathes heavily. Maybe smoking a cigar. Stock footage of faces in the crowd, then of Americana on the ball field.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

We always think of baseball as being grounded in stats and hard fact. Wins and losses. Averages, ERAs, LOBs, OPS and Ks. It's supposed to be so basic in that way: nine innings, nine players, certain truths, always the same. That's why it makes so much sense to so many of us.

(beat)

It isn't really, though, so simple. There's all sorts of stories, and real-world hopes and dreams tied up in it, both fulfilled and disappointed. Like the game of life, no one ever said it was supposed to be just about the stats.

(beat)

And, like life, outside the hard facts, there have always been plenty of lies and half-truths, sprinkled generously throughout. For most of the game's modern era, the dishonesty even included who invented it, and where and how and when. You see, in 1905, a commission headed by Al Spalding, the robber baron of sporting goods, somehow wrongly credited

(MORE)

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Abner Doubleday with making up the
 rules one bright day in 1839, in
 Cooperstown, New York.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Unfortunately, it later came out
 that when he was said to be
 chalking off the first baseball
 diamond there, Abner was actually
 a cadet at West Point, from which
 he graduated in 1842 to embark on
 a distinguished military career.
 In truth, it probably wasn't until
 the late '40s or early '50s that
 New York City sportsman Alexander
 Cartwright came up with pretty
 much the rules we use today, and
 wrote them down. And yet, the
 hallowed ground of the Hall of
 Fame remains in that charming
 little Washington Irving upstate
 town. And "The Doubleday Baseball"
 still resides there.

INT. INTRO -- RUTH'S CALLED SHOT

Stock footage: Wrigley Field, 1932. Babe Ruth at the plate.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 It was during Game Three of the
 '32 World Series, with one out in
 the top of the fifth, a 2-2 count,
 and a 4-4 tie, that Babe Ruth --
 whose legend probably needs a
 whole hall of its own -- pointed
 past Charlie Root and over the
 pre-bittersweet-and-ivy-flanked
 walls at Wrigley, calling the shot
 he hit on the next pitch, his last
 in World Series play. That's the
 lore at least, though maybe not
 the truth. Root, nicknamed
 "Chinski" for his lack of timidity
 when it came to buzzing batters,
 denied it ever happened that way,
 with occasional vehemence, until
 his death.

CHARLIE ROOT IN OLD AGE, in some sportswriter's living room.

ROOT
 If he had tried to pull anything
 of the sort, I would have knocked
 (MORE)

ROOT (CONT'D)
him down with the next pitch.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Ralph Branca was always more generous. On October 3, 1951, Bobby Thomson's shot off him was heard 'round the world -- a phrase better known today for that association than its Revolutionary War antecedent. But the home run, and the amazing season-ending streak preceding it, the one that made up a 13-game deficit in less than two months, may have all been a lot of cheating, if recent reporting is to be believed. The 'Gints were stealing signs, using an elaborate buzzer system.

INT. INTRO -- "WE TELL LIES WHEN WE ARE AFRAID"

NARRATOR (V.O.)
There are other mysteries, born of both lies and lives: How many homers would Bonds have really hit? Was Steinbrenner a tyrant or a saint? Which records don't deserve asterisks? Why did Charlie hustle so hard? Why was it so Joe? Weren't they supposed to be Brooklyn's Bums forever?

(beat)
Then there is the biggest lie of all: that winning even matters. That the moment it's over, we don't start all over again with every chance of losing. That last year makes any difference at all. That All-Stars aren't mortal, too. That their demons don't make it to the big leagues with them.

(beat)
This much is gospel: Darryl W. Strawberry, of that amazing

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Crenshaw High team, and Dwight "Doctor K" Gooden, of Tampa, could have been two of the best there ever was. Instead, agonizing words, whispered stories and formal allegations document the pain that followed. Some are true.
(MORE)

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Some probably not. Heck, one record the Straw Man himself held was being the first person to say he was misquoted in his own autobiography. Some of the murkiness stems from shame; some from jealousy; some fear. Don't they all? Oddly, it was the "white" Ted Williams, the Splendid Splinter himself, who once said --

(beat)

"We tell lies when we are afraid... afraid of what we don't know, afraid of what others will think, afraid of what will be found out about us. But every time we tell a lie, the thing that we fear grows stronger."

(beat)

Still... an honest man's brushes with witnesses leave something quite apart from lies or stats to fill the back of his gum-stained cards.

(beat)

Believing is another story. The reasons rarely last. Every day we all head up to bat.

The sound of an AIRPLANE taking off builds.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. SHEA STADIUM -- DAY

AIRPLANE sound continues, as one soars above SHEA STADIUM.

DARRYL, the lanky slugger, stands in a deafening roar in right field. He hangs his head with a hangover. The crowd

might be chanting "Dar-ryl, Dar-ryl" -- but it's not really audible, the roar is so loud. The roar just gets more deafening until --

The CRACK of the bat.

FADE TO WHITE.

INT./EXT. 1986 SEASON MONTAGE

"VICTORY" by Kool & the Gang.

Various METS in the field. Breathing heavily. Talking to

themselves. Looking around.

DOC, the slim young fireballer, on the mound. He delivers a wicked CURVEBALL to WILLIE McGEE, a lean and ugly St. Louis Cardinal. Strike One.

LOCKERROOM. A bunch of REPORTERS huddle around KEITH, who's got a bucket of iced BEER at his feet and a CIGARETTE dangling from his lips. He passes a beer to DARLING. LENNY and WALLY goof around -- Lenny showing off something weird about the CHEW in his lip. GARY's all smiles. More beers poured. "GO-BEERS" wrapped in sanitary socks scarce. HOJO and McDOWELL pull a hotfoot on Darling. DAVEY smokes a CIGARETTE and talks with press, turns as they leave and whips out some VODKA.

Mets making plays. Balls whiz. The game is intense.

NEW YORK CITY BAR. GROUPIES going wild. Crazy nightclub chaos. Doc and Darryl do SHOTS, clink GIN AND TONICS. KEVIN MITCHELL nurses a GLASS of Colt 45. Darling chats up some girls. Lenny passes shots, places one in a GROUPIE's exposed bra. JESSE slaps asses, swilling a beer. Darryl gets his neck licked by a smoking-hot girl.

Doc back on the mound. High heat. McGee swings and misses a FASTBALL. Bangs his helmet.

Doc picks up rosin bag. Darryl pounds his glove.

GROUPIE pushes out the door of the men's room. Doc and Darryl follow another DUDE in. Darryl does a line of COKE quietly, rubs his nose, and is suddenly elsewhere making out. Doc, forlorn, sucks down a BEER at the end of the bar.

LOCKERROOM. Darryl, looking awful, popping some BEANS. Doc getting wrapped, hobbles out and grabs some BEANS and a cup of COFFEE from Lenny.

Players throw tantrums, break bats. Yell at UMPs. Talk shit to OTHER PLAYERS. A fight ensues. Mitchell starts choking someone.

HEADLINES amazed at the Amazin's.

Darryl, in right, looking limp.

FAN

Come on, Straw, look alive now!

DARRYL

(shrugs)

I'm just doing my thing, man. You want to come out here?

FAN
You wanna get paid what they pay
me, shithead?

Doc gets a FASTBALL inside, but Willie inside-outs it to right with a crack. Darryl charges in.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. ORIGINS -- SPLIT SCREEN

Two halves of the screen. Microscopic SPERM breaching EGG walls. Twice.

DARRYL'S SIDE:

His mother RUBY carrying him. Washing him. Someone puts a baseball cap on his head.

FATHER STRAWBERRY pitches a mean game in the EMPLOYER LEAGUE. Beer in his other hand by the dugout.

Ruby straightens Darryl's shirt. Takes him out walking. Points to bad people doing DRUG DEALS on the corner.

Ruby drops him at a sandlot. Waving BALLPLAYERS. Darryl plays with BROTHER MICHAEL and BROTHER RONNIE.

Father Strawberry at a kitchen table littered with beer cans, shouting at a basketball game on television.

SISTER I and SISTER II babysit for neighbors.

Brother Ronnie meets up with GANGBANGERS. Darryl watches.

Darryl and BROTHER II get into a fistfight with their father. Darryl tosses his high school shirt down and walks away. Sneaks out the window with his brother.

Darryl tries to hang around Gangbangers. Brother Ronnie beats him up.

Crenshaw High at-bats. Darryl's natural swing. Other CRENSHAW players. The crowd is filled with SCOUTS and PRESS. Darryl's natural swing against JOHN ELWAY on the mound.

Ruby marvels at Darryl's basketball skills during a game, asks him about a newspaper proclaiming him the nation's top high school player.

Darryl is drafted #1.

AGENT, AGENT'S SON, and GARY TEMPLETON hang out in some plush office. Darryl signs.

Darryl hovers three feet over PEOPLE in a rural town. Darryl on the phone with Ruby and his sisters. Darryl walks around town with STARVIN' MARVIN. Darryl eats dinner with the COACH'S FAMILY at a Formica table.

Darryl down in Caracas -- he hits a HOMERUN -- he gets pelted with stones and bricks -- a kid runs up with a helmet, but Darryl waves him off and comes trotting in.

JIM FREY counsels Darryl. Darryl strikes out looking, three at-bats in a row. Bat slammed in the dugout.

Darryl meets with LISA at a LAKERS GAME -- her hand on his arm under the lights.

Darryl's loopy swing sends home runs out of a variety of MAJOR LEAGUE PARKS.

DOC'S SIDE:

FATHER GOODEN shows three-year-old Dwight the Braves on TV. Pride in his face. Quiet pride.

Little League World Series. Dwight pitching.

Father Gooden grabs the lawnmower from his son. Slaps the boy's baseball mitt into his stomach with a grin. The expectation set forever.

Gooden, a freshman, pitching against LITTLE LEAGUERS. Then HIGH SCHOOLERS. Mowing them down.

Gooden meets DEALER HAWK by his big black car in the high school parking lot. Hawk motions Gooden into the car. Drives to the projects. Sends Gooden up the stairs. Gooden gets beat up. Dealer Hawk hangs up a payphone.

Dwight, wearing a Univ. of Miami hat, huddles with TAMPA TRIBUNE reporters watching the draft come in on a ticker.

SPLIT ENDS.

EXT. CRENSHAW HOUSE -- NIGHT

Eleven, twelve years old. YOUNG DARRYL comes home. The TV flickers basketball. FATHER STRAWBERRY in a chair, drinking, not turning his head.

Ruby in the kitchen. Plate of food. Young Darryl sits.

YOUNG DARRYL
Daddy, coach said --

FATHER STRAWBERRY
Boy, I asked you something?

YOUNG DARRYL
No.

FATHER STRAWBERRY
Then shut your mouth.

Ruby sets Father Strawberry's plate down. He looks at it.
Looks at her. Sweeps it off the table. The plate cracks.

RUBY
Henry --

He stands. She doesn't move. Young Darryl hasn't moved
either. He is watching his father, learning his father.

FATHER STRAWBERRY
Pick it up.

RUBY
Henry, the boy --

FATHER STRAWBERRY
(to Darryl)
Pick it up.

Young Darryl gets down on the floor and picks up the broken
plate while his parents stand over him. He doesn't cry. The
inheritance of violence -- visible on his face.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. GOODEN HOUSE -- DAY

Sixteen-year-old DOC at the kitchen table, sweat-stained
high school uniform. Stat sheet in front of him -- a no-
hitter line.

FATHER GOODEN walks in. Glances at it. Doesn't say anything.
Picks the lawnmower keys off the counter. Walks past Doc.
Slaps the baseball mitt into Doc's stomach with a grin.

FATHER GOODEN
Mow the lawn before your mother
gets home.

Doc nods. Father Gooden's quiet pride hangs in the air. Doc
will spend his entire life trying to satisfy that grin.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. RURAL TOWN PAYPHONE -- NIGHT

Some Appalachian minor-league town. A streetlight. DARRYL, eighteen, hovering three feet over the locals. He is on a payphone.

DARRYL
Mama. No, Mama. I -- I know.

A figure -- STARVIN' MARVIN -- sits on a curb a few yards back, eating from a bag.

DARRYL (CONT'D)
Lisa called you? Mama, I --

He listens. Eyes wet.

DARRYL (CONT'D)
I can't, Mama. I can't come home
for the offseason. Coach got me
here on something. I'm playing
ball.

He listens.

DARRYL (CONT'D)
I know. I love you, too.

He hangs up. Walks back into the dark with Marvin trailing behind.

EXT. MINOR LEAGUE BALLPARK -- DAY

A-ball. DOC, seventeen, on the mound, against grown men. He tries DIP someone offered him -- spits it out, washes his mouth from a gallon water jug.

DAVEY in the stands.

A MINOR LEAGUE COACH walks out to the mound, body language asking why Doc is struggling against such inferior foes.

The coach walks back. Doc sets. Then -- the leg kick. The fastball. Painted black. Strike. Strike. Strike.

Davey rises slowly, eyes narrowed. Walks straight off the bleachers, straight to a PAYPHONE on the wall behind the concourse. Drops a coin.

DAVEY
(into receiver)
Get me his birth certificate.

INT. CASHEN'S OFFICE -- DAY

1983. FRANK CASHEN behind a desk, talkin' baseball. Cigar smoke. Reporters on the other side of his desk.

CASHEN

64, 66, 63, 67, 41, 65, and 68...
68? I mean, honestly, that team
last year, it was awful, no? But
the kids look good, right? How
good do I think this Gooden will
be? You can't ask me that.
Honestly, I don't think there's a
state the kid can drink a beer
in. You want me to put him in
there with major league hitting?
We may or may not compete this
year, but we can give him time.

(beat)

Tom? What do you want me to say
about Tom? Tom, he's Tom
Terrific. He's done a lot for
this club. You know, it's tough.
Did I think the Sox would pick
him up? Obviously not; it was not
a stupid move on my part, though,
the guy's 40, but that's what
happens. He'll win them ten
games, I'm sure, but not much
more, but I guess that's all they
wanted from him.

(beat)

Strawberry? Kid's been great. And
I'm really excited to have Keith
on board. I don't know about that
whole black Ted Williams thing. I
wouldn't know about such a thing.
But what I definitely do know is
that we drafted him first for a
reason. I mean, Darryl's Darryl.
Who went next in the draft? Garry
Harris, Ken Dayley, Darnell

CASHEN (CONT'D)

Coles? Those guys might end up
being good, but with Darryl, you
can see the raw power in him
already. The kid's a machine.

(beat)

I don't know about Gooden. We
really haven't seen him enough. I
don't know why people seem to be
talking about him. Then again,
I'm going to be indubitably

(MORE)

CASHEN (CONT'D)

correct in saying he's got to someday be better than Bad Pitcher. Once he straightened it out last year, he pitched really well, but Single-A's and a couple of AAA playoff games are just that, and we're not going to rush him. I don't want another Tim Leary here. I'm not going through that again with anybody. He never even pitched AA. He needs at least a full year on the Tides.

(beat)

We got Darling and Terrell who I think can really get the hang of things quickly around here. Dave West, a talented guy, too -- we're really looking forward to seeing him mature. You know how I feel about the lefties. After a certain point in the draft, I tell our people: "Take all the left-handed pitchers you can get." We'd corner the market if we could. A southpaw is a commodity.

(beat)

Next year? What about this year? I'd hate to say this team is going to finish worse than last year. I mean, Kingman's gone, right? We still got Foster. Carter's not going to just be a good hitting catcher -- we're counting on him to babysit the

CASHEN (CONT'D)

staff out there. I don't know. I got a good feeling about this year.

EXT. SHEA STADIUM -- DAY

April 7, 1984.

DOC stands in a mostly silent dugout. Scared.

DARRYL strolls up.

DOC

First game in the bigs: Just like spring training, right?

DARRYL

Not exactly, but you'll be fine.
You'll have bad innings at some
point, and they're going to boo.
But you get used to it. And screw
'em anyway, right?

(beat)

You're like me, Dwight. You got a
lot of talent and want to use it.
You're here for a reason. They
don't bring brothers like us up to
shine shoes.

Across the dugout, DAVEY leans toward an ASSISTANT COACH,
nodding at the two young men.

DAVEY

See that over there? That's the
future. Darryl on offense. Doc on
defense. That's the new Mets.

DARRYL

Anyway, what I'm trying to say is:
just go out there and show 'em
what a brother like you is built
out of, Doc.

Davey strolls over as Darryl peels away.

DAVEY

You ready, kid?

DOC

I'm ready for whatever you want me
to do, Davey.

CHYRON: April 7, 1984. Dwight Gooden, age 19, allows one
run in five innings in his ML debut. The Mets win 3-2.

BLACK SCREEN BACKGROUND. 1984 TOPPS cards of Dwight and
Darryl. Each comes alive with a great game, then floats
stage right, followed by a rectangle (each off-kilter in the
opposite direction) with HIGHLIGHTS of great games for both
between April 7 and the All-Star break.

DAVEY (in the dugout, mid-inning, to a coach):

DAVEY

I better go get him. Strict orders
not to use him up. Sorry, guys.

CUT TO: JIM FREY, in a Cubs uniform.

FREY

You're asking me what I think of
Gooden's poise? The guy has a
93-mile-per-hour fastball and one
of the best curves in baseball
and you ask me about his poise?
What the hell does he need poise
for?

INT. KINER'S KORNER -- DAY

The set. Lights. RALPH KINER on his stool. DARRYL and DOC
sit awkwardly across from him.

KINER

So tell me, Darryl, what --

DOC

Excuse me, Mr. Kiner. It's Dwight.
(beat)
Or Doc.

INT. CLUBHOUSE -- NIGHT

TRAINER'S ROOM. DOC ices his shoulder.

FLASHBACK: Doc as a kid, playing catch with FATHER GOODEN.

FLASHBACK: Doc playing third base in high school.

DAVEY walks in, bleary-eyed.

DOC

Can you believe it, Davey?

DAVEY

I'll believe anything with you
around, Doc. You got the touch.

DOC

Right.

DAVEY

You'll be a great All-Star.

(beat)

You're already a great Met.

(pause)

Hey listen. Don't stay too late.
Go home and get some sleep.

FADE TO WHITE.

EXT. RANDOM STADIUM -- NIGHT

1984 ALL-STAR GAME. ANNOUNCER introducing both Mets. The crowd. Doc and Darryl on the line.

DOC
(to himself)
Holy shit.

INT. BAR -- NIGHT

Surrounded by All-Stars, groupies, and hangers-on. Darryl and Doc with drinks.

DARRYL
You know what I was thinking
about? The first time we met.

DOC
In the outfield at Miller Huggins?

DARRYL
Yeah, you looked scared shitless.
Whole spring training you couldn't
even look anyone in the eye.

DOC
You know what you said to me? When
you first met me? You said: "You
know what your problem is, Doc?
You don't look like a big-league
ballplayer. You don't talk like
one. Man, you don't even walk like
one. Look at you, you got your

DOC (CONT'D)
head all down like you're
embarrassed to be here."

DARRYL
You know what I also said?

DOC
What?

DARRYL
I said you're all right, Doc.

DOC
No, I think you said "Go get me
some water, rookie."

They laugh.

DOC (CONT'D)

We're good this year, Straw. Not just you and me, I mean the team. It's like an express train, and we're on it.

DARRYL

Yeah, I got to admit, it's pretty cool. Can you believe this? We're playing good ball, screwing up some other teams? It's a lot better than last year.

DOC

It's messed up, man. I wake some mornings and think about pinching myself because it's like a dream. One day you're striking out high school sophomores, the next day you're on your way to rookie league, the next day you're in the majors. That's how it feels.

Two FINE CHICKS walk up.

DARRYL

(to Fine Chicks)

Ladies, anyone want to meet an All-Star? A man who's only a boy. And his very grown-up friend.

One whispers in the other's ear.

DARRYL (CONT'D)

Don't worry, I won't bite. And I'm buying. Only right thing to do for such a fine pair of beauties.

INT. DARRYL'S BEDROOM -- DAY

Darryl and LISA in bed.

DARRYL

Listen, Lisa. There's something I think you should know. I love you and want you to be with me. Like, forever.

LISA

Come on, darling. Who am I to you?

DARRYL

You're the only one woman for me, Lisa, you know that.

(MORE)

DARRYL (CONT'D)
(smiles, reaching down)
Everything's been feeling great
since I met you.

LISA
Oh, Darryl. I hope you mean it.

DARRYL
No, I definitely mean it.

LISA
I don't know why they say you
don't hustle, Darryl. You're going
to be great no matter what. I'm
going to be your woman, and take
care of all of that other stuff.

INT. THREE RIVERS STADIUM -- DAY

Visiting clubhouse. Empty except for KEITH and a CATERER.
Quiet exchange. Cash for a small BAG.

KEITH
Good stuff? Yeah?

KEITH (CONT'D)
(beat)
Thank you, sir. Good doing
business with you.

Keith pockets it. Holds one beat on his face. He knows what
he's just done.

INT. THREE RIVERS LOCKERROOM -- NIGHT

The game lost. Sun setting outside the high windows. Keith
stretching on a bench, smoking a CIGARETTE, talking to
REPORTERS.

KEITH
The thing is, some people on this
team -- and I'm not naming names
here, but you can imagine who I'm
talking about -- these people are
not playing up to their potential.

REPORTER
You talking about Strawberry, Mex?

KEITH
Straw, yeah. And some other
people. A couple of guys who have
the talent, but just don't seem to
(MORE)

KEITH (CONT'D)
 want to get their butt in gear.
 It's still anybody's race, but
 it's not your race if you're going
 to be loafing out there.

EXT. SHEA STADIUM -- DAY

1985. The Ks GO UP on the wall. Doc in dominant form.
 Darryl's bat. The HOMERS travel.

CROWD
 Dar-ryl! Dar-ryl!

Pure highlight reel. We let it be beautiful.

INT. AWARD CEREMONY -- NIGHT

November 1985. A small ballroom. DOC at a podium, twenty-one years old, in a suit that fits him about right.

A trophy in his hands.

DOC
 (reading from a card)
 I'd like to thank my mother, my
 father, my sister --

He looks up from the card. Looks for someone in the crowd.

CUT TO: FATHER GOODEN at a round table. Coat and tie.
 Watching his son. The grin he never used to give. He's
 giving it now.

CUT TO: DOC, seeing it. The pause that this look bought.

DOC (CONT'D)
 (back to the card)
 -- and my teammates.

CHYRON: National League Cy Young Award. Youngest pitcher
 ever to win it.

He sits down. Father Gooden across the table reaches over
 and slaps his baseball mitt -- which he's brought to the
 ceremony, the same mitt -- against Doc's stomach with a
 grin.

INT. GOODEN'S PARENTS' HOUSE -- DAY

Dinner being prepared. MOTHER GOODEN at the stove. FATHER
 GOODEN strolls around the kitchen. College football on TV.

FATHER GOODEN
Leave the child alone in there,
Ella. He's been working all
summer.

MOTHER GOODEN
I tell you what, though, he will
be coming to dinner. His sister's
coming and bringing Gary.

FATHER GOODEN
I'm sure the boy'll be up by then.

Doc wakes up. Goes into the bathroom and stares at himself
in the mirror.

The mirror TURNS into magazine covers he's been on. Sports
Illustrated. Sporting News. Then back to his own face.

He showers. Rubs his shoulder. Walks out to a full family.

EXT. TAMPA BURGER KING -- NIGHT

Skating rink first -- DOC hanging out with ANOTHER GIRL,
laughing as FRIENDS, including a young SHEFFIELD, goof off.

Doc and Another Girl get in his car. They wing around the
parking lot to the BURGER KING DRIVE-UP.

MONICA at the window, taking orders.

DOC
Hey. How's your family? Everything
good with your brothers?

MONICA
Yeah... fine... you know.

DOC
Yeah... ?

MONICA
Yeah.

DOC
Good. What about you?

MONICA
The same... you know... You know
how it is, Dwight.
(beat)
Listen, you going to let me take
your order or something? You come
here to eat or what?

DOC

(pause)

Monica, I've known you a long time. When are we going to hook up?

MONICA

(nodding at Another Girl)

I don't think we're going out anytime soon.

DOC

Just a friend.

MONICA

Yeah... ?

DOC

(grinning)

Yeah, you know.

INT. SHEA STADIUM -- DAY

A trainer's room. STEVE GARLAND, weathered, talking to an unseen REPORTER over the wrap of an ankle.

GARLAND

When a guy gets to the ballpark at five-thirty, six o'clock at night and he's sending somebody out for a burger or chicken and it's his first meal of the day, that's a sign of trouble. And that happened a lot.

INT. GOODEN'S LONG ISLAND HOME -- DAY

LENNY and DOC on the couch, drinking BEERS. TV flickering.

LENNY

Hey, man. Thanks again for having me.

DOC

Don't even say it, cuz. You'd do the same for me.

LENNY

You fucking think?

DOC

Yeah, I fucking think.

They watch.

LENNY
 I wish there was some goddamn
 real television on at this hour.
 What do they want -- you getting
 up to trouble?

The PHONE RINGS.

INT. CLUB BATHROOM -- NIGHT

End of '85. A loud club outside. Stalls. Mirrors. Two
 TEAMMATES at the sink. A folded paper between them.

Doc. TEAMMATE 1

Nah. DOC

C'mon. TEAMMATE 1

Nah, man. DOC

The two laugh. Doc washes his hands. Stands a beat. Looks
 down at the paper.

Doc. TEAMMATE 1

DOC
 (very quiet)
 Yeah. Okay.

He bends. The line goes. He comes up. Wipes his nose. Looks
 at himself in the mirror. The lie is in the silence after.

INT. AIRPLANE -- NIGHT

After a loss. LENNY in the back of the plane with the SCUM
 BUNCH, passing a bottle around.

LENNY
 Straw. You in?

DARRYL looks at him. Looks down the aisle. CARTER, a few
 rows up, glances back, then turns away. Doesn't say
 anything.

Darryl takes the bottle. Drinks. Passes it to JESSE. Lenny
 grins.

The Scum Bunch absorbs Darryl as one of their own.

INT. DOC'S CAR / DARRYL'S HOUSE -- DAY

Doc driving through the suburbs.

DARRYL (V.O.)
What the fuck, Lisa?

LISA (V.O.)
You asking me what the fuck?
That's exactly what I should be
asking you, lying piece of shit.

DARRYL (V.O.)
Honestly, Lisa, you had better
calm down because you are not
right on this one.

Doc pulls up to Darryl's house. Honks. Darryl comes out and gets in. Doc pulls off.

DOC
Yo, Straw.

DARRYL
Yo.

They drive in silence. Darryl fuming. The car tracks an underpass that leads to Shea.

DARRYL (CONT'D)
Doc, turn around. I'm going back home.

DOC
Straw, we're here. We've got a game in a few hours.

DARRYL
I don't care. Take me back. I ain't finished with her.

DOC
Listen, man. I'm going into the clubhouse. You want to go home, I'll give you the car -- drive yourself back.

DARRYL
Thanks, man.

DOC
She's making you fucking crazy, Straw, you realize that?

INT. DODGER STADIUM -- NIGHT

Pre-game. A FOOD FIGHT erupts in the visitors' clubhouse. A chunk of bread sails. A whoop. A glob of mustard. Backman ducks. Mookie laughing.

ON FIELD. The Mets lose to the Dodgers anyway.

INT. AIRPLANE -- NIGHT

Lenny jokes around. Scum Bunch tossing trash at him. Players drinking.

DARRYL

You know I love L.A., but I can't wait to get back to some real New York action, you know what I'm saying?

(sarcastically)

Where do you think Carter's going out first? Hey, Kid! You going out to any parties on the off day?

DARRYL (CONT'D)

Think maybe I can come along? Or are you too young and innocent to get in anywhere, Kid?

KEITH

All right, settle down back there, Straw Man.

DARRYL

(to whoever)

What does he think, he owns this team? Fuck. Pass me a beer?

Doc walks toward the front of the plane. Keith sits alone in the aisle with a BEER.

JESSE

Eh... what's up, Doc?

Doc leans into Keith, nervous.

DOC

Why don't you lay off a bit on Darryl, Mex?

GEORGE FOSTER looks back.

KEITH

Somebody's got to keep his butt in gear.

DOC

Don't you think the press is doing a good enough job of that? I mean, even without your help.

KEITH

Listen, Doc, sit down.

Doc sits.

KEITH (CONT'D)

What are you, kid -- twenty yet? Darryl's not much older than you, but he's old enough to know better than to rock the boat all the time.

DOC

Come on, Keith, that's just Straw, you know that. It's like you getting on the Scummies for drinking.

KEITH

Dwight, there's one thing I know: I don't care what you're doing so long as it doesn't affect things on the field. Maybe -- it's a fact of life, actually -- that no one does. You got to keep focused.

DOC

So...

KEITH

You know what I'm saying. Darryl being a jackass and loafing around may be just what it is for him, but it can definitely cross the line.

DOC

I'm not telling you to not tell him to lay off the guy, but... try not to belittle him.

KEITH

Trust me, I'm not trying to stop the kid, any more than I wouldn't want you to succeed to the fullest, Doc. Long after I'm gone they'll be saying "as goes Darryl, so goes the Mets."

In the back, Darryl is acting like a jackass. Foster watches without expression.

FADE TO BLACK.

ACT II

THE WIN THAT BREAKS THEM

INT. DRUGSTORE -- DAY

1986. A KID buys three packs of baseball cards. He tears one open. A DARRYL card. Then a DOC. The kid stares at the backs.

The myth manufactured in real time.

INT. LOCKERROOM -- DAY

1986 OPENING DAY.

KEITH

How you guys feeling? I feel like feeling good. It's pretty rad, the kind of team we've got.

DOC

You know, Mex, I feel pretty good, too.

KEITH

Nice... nice...

KEITH crosses to DARRYL.

KEITH (CONT'D)

Listen, Darryl. We're really counting on you. But -- let me know.

DARRYL

You going to keep badmouthing me to the press?

KEITH

Knuckleface. Just keep your head in the game.

A NEW FIELD. Darryl hits a home run. Mookie, Keith, Gary, Doc, the rest of the team meet him at home plate. Darryl is filled with pure joy. A big, unangry grin.

EXT. SHEA STADIUM -- DAY

A "the Mets are the best team in baseball" sequence.
Spring rolling into summer. The team finding itself.

DOC on the mound. The leg kick. The fastball. STRIKE
THREE. The crowd up.

Doc striking out fourteen Cardinals on a Tuesday in May.
A scoreboard that goes K-K-K-K-K-K-K-K-K-K-K-K-K-K-K.

DARRYL in right field, gliding on a long fly. Glove up.
Catch.

DARRYL at the plate, the natural swing. CRACK. Upper deck.

DARRYL again. CRACK. Off the scoreboard.

A BENCH-CLEARING BRAWL with the Reds. The Mets running in
from the dugout, from the bullpen. KNIGHT throwing
punches. Lenny under someone twice his size, biting.

MITCHELL at the bottom of the pile, smiling. MITCHELL on
top of someone, smiling. MITCHELL eventually pulled off
by an UMPIRE who looks afraid of him.

The Mets win the brawl. They walk back to the dugout
laughing.

HERNANDEZ at first base. Diving stop. Glove flip to the
pitcher covering. Out. He stands and brushes the dirt off
his pants like he's annoyed they made him do that.

CARTER behind the plate. The catcher's mask the face of a
man in charge of nineteen pitchers and not one of them
fooling him.

MOOKIE in center, running -- the way he runs, the smile he
has while doing it.

LENNY leading off, fouling off a million pitches before he
takes a walk. He sprints to first like he was running out a
double.

WALLY hitting behind him. Slap-dash to right. Hit and run.

KNIGHT bunting to move runners over without being asked.

A BACK PAGE: AMAZIN' AGAIN.

A BACK PAGE: METS GO TO 50-21.

A BACK PAGE: STRAW & DOC: THE ARMS, THE BAT.

A KID in the upper deck holding a sign: I LOVE THIS TEAM.

The audience falls in love.

The audience does not yet know what these men do at night.

INT. CLUBHOUSE -- DAY

After a win. Champagne. Beer. The usual chaos.

GARY CARTER at his locker, eye black off, BIBLE open in his hands. Reading.

DARRYL walks past. Punches Carter lightly in the shoulder.

DARRYL

Kid. You praying for the win, or
what?

CARTER

Just reading, Straw.

DARRYL

Yeah, all right.

Darryl moves on. Carter smiles to himself. The conscience
the team ignores.

INT. BUS -- NIGHT

A road bus. Players slumped, drinking, joking.

DARRYL

(calling forward)

Hey, Richard. Whatcha doing,
Richard? Mr. Richard Head, you
enjoying yourself tonight? Sure is
a big Richard Head we got on our
team.

LENNY

Tuff, how's that hammy doing?

Lenny opens and closes his fist, makes loud kissing noises.

LENNY (CONT'D)

Yeah, baby, milk that leg. Milk it
good.

TEUFEL

(laughing)

Why don't you go fuck yourself,
Len?

DOC
Don't you think he would if he
could, Richard?

KEITH
Yeah, Richard. If you figure that
one out, tell me.

The mood turns.

DARRYL
(to Howard Johnson, in
front)
Hey HoJo. HoJo. You know what
today was, HoJo? A day Mookie
should've started.
(no answer)
A day Mookie should have started,
HoJo. Now, why don't you sit your
ass down and explain why you keep
taking at-bats from a real
ballplayer? Huh?

HOWARD JOHNSON keeps his head forward. Doesn't turn. The
back of his neck flushed.

DARRYL (CONT'D)
HoJo. I'm talking to you, HoJo.

A figure rises in the middle of the bus. MACKEY SASSER. He
stalks down the aisle to the back. Eyes locked on Darryl.

SASSER
Straw --

DARRYL
What?

Sasser SWINGS. A short hook. Catches Darryl. Catches him
again. Blood gushes from Darryl's nose.

Players grab Sasser. Pull him back. He's still shouting,
won't get the words out.

JOHN MAGADAN watches, two seats away, doesn't move.

Silence.

DARRYL
(V.O., later, almost as
narration)
Darryl always thought ragging on
people was funny. But a lot of
times it was vicious. And he

wasn't always drunk. A lot of times it was on the bus right after a game.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Strawberry could be mean and antagonistic, especially from his usual spot in the back of the team bus. He would shout loud enough so that Johnson, sitting in the first row, could hear him. He once ridiculed Johnson so viciously for not giving enough playing time to outfielder Mookie Wilson that Johnson had to fight back an urge to run to the rear of the bus and pummel Strawberry.

INT. DAVEY'S OFFICE -- DAY

A COACH and a TRAINER across from DAVEY. The office cluttered.

A BOTTLE on the desk.

COACH

Davey. We need to do something about the bus.

TRAINER

About the bars.

COACH

About the stuff.

Davey pours himself a drink. Holds it up.

DAVEY

They're winning, aren't they?

He drinks. The drink is the answer.

INT. COOTER'S NIGHTCLUB -- HOUSTON -- NIGHT

July 19, 1986. Loud music. DARLING, TEUFEL, OJEDA, AGUILERA at a table. Half-drunk. Off-duty COPS working as bouncers move through the crowd.

A stupid ESCALATION over nothing -- a shoulder bump, a spilled drink. Words. A push.

OFF-DUTY COP grabs Teufel.

TEUFEL
Get your hands off --

A swing. Connects. The cop goes down. Other cops in. Darling swinging too. Ojeda pulling.

It is over in seconds, and they are face-down on the floor.

INT. HOUSTON PRECINCT -- NIGHT

Four pitchers in a holding cell. Teufel sits on the bench. Darling next to him.

DARLING
This is going to be in the papers.

TEUFEL
Yeah.

They laugh. They sober.

EXT. PRECINCT -- NIGHT

MIKE ANDERSON, ASSISTANT DA, smokes a cigarette outside under a sodium lamp. Watches the cars roll by.

INT. DARRYL'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

The clock strikes 4 A.M.

LISA
Great. So Mr. Baseball finally gets a homestand and this is what his family gets. Do you know what time it is?

DARRYL
Aw, come on, baby. You know I love seeing you.

LISA
You're not here eighty percent of the time.

DARRYL
I can't help that, I'm a ballplayer, baby.
(beat)
You said you'd be asleep.

LISA
You think I know how to set this alarm clock?

DARRYL JR. sleeps peacefully on the couch. Darryl crosses and looks at him. Comforts Lisa.

DARRYL
You're right, I didn't. I'm sorry.
And, you know what? Straw is going
to spend more time at home from
now on. I swear.

LISA
I could just use some help, you
know.

DARRYL
Let me take him.

LISA
I'm going to get some ice cream.
You want any? It's that new Rocky
Road stuff.

Darryl sits with Jr. A bowl of ICE CREAM on the coffee table.

LISA (CONT'D)
Gooden's looking pretty good so
far this year. Everyone, really.

DARRYL
Yeah. I just wish the press would
stop bitching every time I don't
get a hit. Why they got to be
dissing me every time?

INT. KEVIN MITCHELL'S HOUSE -- DAY

HIGHWAY. DOC drives with CARD GUY, memorabilia promoter, speeding faster and faster over concrete. "BROKEN WINGS" by

Mr. Mister on the radio.

CARD GUY
So you'll give these checks to the
other guys for last week's
signings, right?

DOC
Sure, man. It's cool. No problem.
I'm not fucking retarded. Trust me
-- I know retarded. I just saw
some of those kids last week. Or
at least that's what I would say
if I was Darryl.

CARD GUY

Hey man, Doc, you guys are un-fuck-yeah-believable this year. You know that? I don't even know what the fuck to say about it, you're that fucking good.

DOC

We're doing pretty all right so far, that's all I'm thinking. Guys like Darryl and Carter really got the offense going, you know. I do what I do. Ronnie, Ojeda'll do what they do. We'll see.

CARD GUY

Personally, I'm thinking I should be getting some more of your rookie cards. That's what I'm thinking. Maybe you'll sign some for me?

INSIDE MITCHELL'S HOUSE: a vase IS THROWN.

PULL INTO DRIVEWAY. Doc pulls a small flask of GIN out of his jacket pocket. "THAT'S WHAT FRIENDS ARE FOR" kicks in on the radio.

CARD GUY

Seriously, though, man. You should get Darryl in touch with me. I'll hook him up.

DOC

You mind, man? Give me a sec.

CARD GUY

Kool and the gang, homeboy.

Doc takes a swig. Gets out. Card Guy, hunched over, lights a ROACH with his Zippo. Passes it to Doc, who takes it to his lips.

DOC

You're starting to talk like a black person already, you know that?

CARD GUY

Fuhggeddaboudit. Hey, you don't think Kevin'll mind us stopping by without calling first, right?

DOC

What the fuck else would he be up to? It's like 2:30 and we got the night off.

CARD GUY

Good point. I got to drop this shit off at some point anyway.

INSIDE MITCHELL'S HOUSE

"IT'S TRICKY" by Run-DMC blasting. MITCHELL in a T-shirt and jeans, arguing with his GIRLFRIEND. He has a bottle of MILLER LITE in one hand and a KNIFE in the other. COKE on the table.

MITCHELL

(shouting)

What the fuck, bitch? Bitch? What the fuck? I told you not to fuck with me, but you don't want to fuckin' listen to me, do you?

MITCHELL'S GIRLFRIEND

Why you gotta be an asshole, Kevin? Why you gotta be an asshole and tell me you weren't sleeping

MITCHELL'S GIRLFRIEND (CONT'D)

with her? Why? I let your hoodlum friends come by here all the time.

MITCHELL

(holding up finger to guys)

What the fuck did you think you were doing flirting with a fucking teammate of mine like that, baby?

DOC

(to Card Guy)

Maybe now is a bad time.

MITCHELL'S GIRLFRIEND

(seeing the others)

How the fuck did they walk in here?!?!?

(shrieking)

How many times do I fucking have to tell you, Kevin: lock the fucking door! You want me to be raped by some stranger who just strolls in here? That's what you want? Maybe I should just hike up

(MORE)

MITCHELL'S GIRLFRIEND (CONT'D)
my skirt, go fucking jogging in
Central fucking Park!

MITCHELL
Sit the fuck down. The two of you.
We're not going anywhere.
(checking windows)
You guys see those undercovers
following you, or what?

CARD GUY
Don't know what you're talking
about, bro.

MITCHELL
C'mon, they're outside the house
right now, over there. In that
Buick that just passed. That's a
sizable shit sandwich we've got
here. Come on, we're going to
barricade the doors.

DOC
(sweating)
You kidding, cuz?

MITCHELL
Do I look like I'm fucking
kidding? Do what I tell you.

They put a couch in front of the door, then stack two chairs
on top. Pull the blinds down on all the windows. Mitchell
rips the phone out of the wall.

MITCHELL'S GIRLFRIEND
You're out of your mind.

DOC
Mitch, listen to me. It's okay,
there's nobody out there. Even if
there is, they ain't getting in
now.

MITCHELL
You calling me a liar,
motherfucker?

MITCHELL'S GIRLFRIEND
Kevin, stop acting so crazy.
These people are your friends.

Holding the knife in his right hand and tossing beer from
the left, Mitchell bends down and grabs the GIRLFRIEND'S

KITTEN at his feet.

In one awful sweep of his hand, Mitchell pulls the cat's head back, exposing its throat.

MITCHELL
Enough! All right?!? Enough
already! You think I'm kidding
when I say don't ever fuck with
me?!

He takes the knife to the cat's throat, and cuts its head off. Clean.

He drops the body to the floor. Blood pouring out from where the head once was. Limbs still twitching.

MITCHELL'S GIRLFRIEND
NO!!! JESUS! JESUS! JESUS!

MITCHELL
Why -- when I say don't ever fuck
with me -- would you ever fuck
with me, huh??

MITCHELL'S GIRLFRIEND
Roxy...

Card Guy walks fast-stride toward the door.

MITCHELL
Sit the fuck down. You, too. Doc,
sit down on that couch and don't
move.

Card Guy, Doc, and then Mitchell's Girlfriend sit on the couch backed up to the door.

Mitchell sits opposite them in a chair. BEERS lined up near him. He starts to fade off into sleep. Eyes snap open. Drift shut.

SUNLIGHT FADES. SUN RISES through the blinds.

MITCHELL
You guys can go.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. ASTRODOME -- DAY

1986 ALL-STAR GAME. Clubhouse before. CHRIS BROWN walks in.

DARRYL
Chris?

CHRIS BROWN
Darryl?

DARRYL
Brother, come here.

They embrace.

DARRYL (CONT'D)
Crenshaw homeboys together again.

CHRIS BROWN
Took a little longer, but I got here.

DARRYL
Man, what you been up to?

CHRIS BROWN
You know. Got married to that chick from Crenshaw I was always dating.

DARRYL
Nah.

CHRIS BROWN
Had a son, a junior. Got a divorce. Playing some third baseman.

DARRYL
Play it good, too. Not much has changed there. Anyway, you know, I know all that. Hey, you talk to all the guys much? Cordie, the twins, Carl?

CHRIS BROWN
You know how it is. Every once in a while.

DARRYL
Listen, what are you doing tonight? You want to go out with Lisa and me, catch up?

CHRIS BROWN
Sorry, Darryl. I got a girl here. I'm supposed to take her out.

DARRYL

What are you talking about? Bring her along. I flew some buddies in, and we're going out later, you know, after dinner or whatever. It'll be fun. Come on, we'll make fun of Coach Hurst.

CHILI DAVIS strolls in.

CHILI

There you are.

CHRIS BROWN

Darryl, you know Chili, much?

DARRYL

A little. How's it going, Chili? You cool?

CHILI

Actually, I just remembered some important advice I had to tell your old teammate. You want to help me convince him?

CHRIS BROWN

What is it?

CHILI

Okay, it's this: whatever you do, don't swing at the first pitch if you get a chance to pinch hit. Make it last.

CHRIS BROWN

Seriously, that's what you had to tell me?

CHILI

I'm telling you. Couple years back, I made the team, traveled to the game instead of doing a little vacation or something, practiced, then waited innings for my licks. Then I swung on the goddam first pitch, and grounded like a pussy to short.

DARRYL

Seems like good advice, man.

DOC strolls in.

DOC
Yo, Straw. Come on, we got to do
some picture shit. You know how
pissed off Jay'll be.

DARRYL
Shit, thanks, man.
(to Chili and Chris)

DARRYL (CONT'D)
I'll see you guys. Chris -- think
about going out. Call your girl.

ON THE FIELD: All-Star Game starts. Doc and Darryl on the
bench, goofing.

CHRIS BROWN sent up against CHARLIE HOUGH. He smashes the
ball against the wall. Coasts into second. Looks into the
dugout.

DARRYL on the top step, shouting inaudibly. CHILI doubled
over with laughter.

EXT. HOTEL -- NIGHT

A LIMO out front. Engine running. CHRIS and his DATE inside.
Chris checks his watch.

DARRYL and LISA get in. The argument already happening.

LISA
You said we'd just stop by --

DARRYL
Lisa, drop it.

LISA
Don't tell me to drop it.

DARRYL
Drop it.

CHRIS BROWN
(carefully)
Hey, you guys want me to --

DARRYL
Chris. You're fine. We're fine.

He isn't. The DATE looks down. Chris reaches for the door.

CHRIS BROWN
You know what, I'm just going to
get out and meet you over there.
(MORE)

CHRIS BROWN (CONT'D)
We'll catch up, all right?

He opens the door. Out into the night with his date. The limo door slams. Darryl and Lisa alone.

INT. HOTEL BAR -- NIGHT

DARRYL alone at the bar. A drink. Another. Another.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY / ROOM -- NIGHT

He keys the door. The chain is on. Will not open.

DARRYL
(banging)
Lisa.
(banging)
Open the door.

From inside, MUFFLED YELLING. He bangs again. Bangs again.

The chain finally slides. Lisa opens.

He throws a punch. It catches her squarely. Her nose. She goes down.

Blood. A scream that becomes a gasp.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. AIRPLANE -- NIGHT

DOC pulls out a bottle of STOLI VODKA. Passes it to MITCHELL in the next seat.

DOC
Mitch... do you remember that
night in your apartment, with the
cat, and everything?

MITCHELL'S GIRLFRIEND (V.O.)
JESUS!

MITCHELL
I told Dwight. We don't remember
any of that. Nothing happened.

DOC
Yeah?

MITCHELL
Thanks.

DOC

Sure thing.

EXT. ASTRODOME -- DAY

NLCS GAME 6, 16 INNINGS. End of the marathon. Bullpen exhausted. DOC, in street clothes, on the dugout steps, watching. He is unavailable for a Game Seven that won't come.

DAVEY at the rail, eyes hollow. The team dragging itself toward the celebration tunnel.

They are running on fumes.

INT. ASTRODOME CLUBHOUSE -- DAY

Pandemonium. BACKMAN, "Whoo!" MITCHELL grabs OJEDA, douses him with CHAMPAGNE. Ojeda douses SISK. Sisk douses AGUILERA, who douses GOODEN, who gets Backman.

ARTHUR RICHMAN, the traveling secretary, tries to get people dressed. Floor strewn with crushed cans and empty bottles.

CASHEN

The World Series bus is leaving!
Anyone not on it gets left behind!

The bus rolls. Beers flowing. Champagne polished off. Even DAVEY indulging.

INT. SHEA STADIUM -- DAY

GAME ONE, 1986 WORLD SERIES.

Ball rolls through TEUFEL'S legs. Costs the Mets the game.

GAME TWO, 1986 WORLD SERIES.

KEITH misplays a CLEMENS bunt.

The Mets are down 0-2 going to Boston.

INT. AIRPLANE -- NIGHT

Doc in headphones. Signals to a WAITRESS he wants a drink.

Time passes. She passes through without it.

DOC

(impatiently)
Hey, do you think I can get that
drink or what?

DARRYL
Doc, you think she's your servant
or something?

DOC
Hey, man, all I want is a beer.

DARRYL
Then wait your turn, man. She's
busy, can't you see that?

DOC
Why don't you mind your own
business, cuz? I ain't talking to
you.

DARRYL
(rising)
It is my business.

They scuffle. Look serious. TEAMMATES pull them apart.

DAVEY watches from the front. Doesn't move.

No one talks for the rest of the flight.

EXT. FENWAY PARK -- DAY

LENNY pacing the dugout. Crazy.

He walks to the plate. Crack. LEADOFF HOMER. Game Three.

The team's pulse returns.

EXT. SHEA STADIUM / DARRYL'S HOUSE -- DAY

LISA at home, packing a small bag. Pausing. Putting things
back. Picking the bag up. Putting it down.

RUBY (V.O.)
It's like I told you. Like I been
tellin' you. Like I'm gonna keep
on tellin' you every time you
from New York. You ain't gonna

RUBY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
get nothin' fixed over the phone
while you in New York playin'
ball and she out here watchin'
you on the TV. You kids just
gonna start fighting again and
somebody's gonna hurt somebody
and you got a little boy to watch
out for. You wanna talk to Lisa?
(MORE)

RUBY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 You get done with your game and
 get yo' butt home. Darryl. You
 got to grow up.

INT. SHEA STADIUM -- NIGHT

GAME 6, 1986 WORLD SERIES.

A LIGHT MIST. The flags above the upper deck not moving.
 55,000 in the seats.

OJEDA on the mound. The first inning. The Sox go up 1-0
 on a sacrifice. Second inning, another run scores. 2-0
 Boston before the Mets have come to bat for the third time.

DUGOUT. Knight chewing. HoJo with his hand on Carter's
 shoulder. KEITH staring straight ahead.

KEITH
 (to no one)
 Long night.

FIFTH INNING. The Mets answer. Two runs. The dugout
 collectively breathes for the first time.

SEVENTH INNING. The Sox put another up. 3-2 Boston. Davey
 goes to the mound, takes the ball from Ojeda. The crowd
 groans. Ojeda walks off slowly. Looks at his hand.

EIGHTH INNING. McNAMARA on the visiting dugout steps,
 hesitating. A long beat. Then he raises his hand. The
 bullpen door opens.

DAVEY moves down the bench.

DAVEY
 Darryl.

DARRYL
 I know, I know. Don't worry.

DAVEY
 I'm sorry. You're out.

Darryl walks away. Looks out at the field. The fans behind
 him don't see his face.

DARRYL (CONT'D)
 (under his breath)
 Aw, come on. Fuck, man.

He sits at the END of the dugout. Glove on the floor.
 Doesn't watch.

NINTH INNING. The Mets get a runner to second with one out.

BENCH COACH

Bunt him?

DAVEY

He hits.

The hitter flies to right. The runner stays. Davey closes his eyes briefly.

DAVEY (CONT'D)

(very quiet)

Fuck.

LEE MAZZILLI in the on-deck circle. Steps in. Flies out to right -- the kind of fly ball that would have been a sac fly if there'd been a runner on third.

The runner is stranded. Half-inning ends. Tied 3-3.

TENTH INNING.

AGUILERA on the hill. The crowd already on its feet.

DAVE HENDERSON steps in. SWING. The ball rises, rises. Out of here. 4-3 Boston.

Aguilera bends at the waist. Hands on knees.

DUGOUT. Carter slumps. Knight stares forward. Darryl in the corner doesn't react.

Two outs later, MARTY BARRETT singles. WADE BOGGS scores. Sox up 5-3.

WALLY BACKMAN flies out. KEITH HERNANDEZ flies out. Aguilera holds his head. Towel over it.

ABOVE THE FIELD: The center-field scoreboard MOMENTARILY reads:

CONGRATULATIONS RED SOX

The booth flips it to black almost immediately. People saw it.

In the visitors' dugout, the Sox bench leans forward, hands on the rail.

In the corridor behind home plate, TWO NBC ANNOUNCERS rehearse with Sox owner JOHN HARRINGTON, lights warming. The TROPHY on a folding table.

NBC ANNOUNCER
And so the wait is over for
Boston, sixty-eight years --

Dead silence over the 55,000 at Shea.

GARY CARTER steps in. Two strikes on him. Sox bench leaning forward.

He singles to left.

The crowd, which had gone quiet, breathes.

CARTER on first.

KEVIN MITCHELL was undressing in the locker room when called upon. He's now standing at the plate half-dressed under his jersey. He looks at the third-base coach. He looks at his bat.

He BLOOPS one to center.

Carter to second. Mitchell to first.

Mets dugout starts to come up off the bench.

RAY KNIGHT in. SCHIRALDI gets ahead 0-2. Knight fouls one off. Schiraldi sets. Pitches. LINE DRIVE to center. Carter scores. Mitchell to third.

5-4 Boston.

McNAMARA out of the visiting dugout. Walks slowly to the mound. Takes the ball from Schiraldi. Calls in BOB STANLEY, the "Steamer" -- the closer.

MOOKIE WILSON walks to the plate.

He works the count. Two balls. Then back to 2-2. Foul. Foul.

The crowd louder with each pitch.

Stanley delivers. INSIDE. The ball gets past GEDMAN.

MITCHELL scores from third. KNIGHT to second.

5-5.

The wild pitch is officially a wild pitch. Most people in the building think Gedman should've caught it.

CLOSE ON: GEDMAN. Mask off. Looking at his glove.

Count 3-2. Wilson fouls a pop into the stands. Lines one just foul down third.

The crowd is past the point of words.

Next pitch.

SLOW ROLLER down the first-base line.

BILL BUCKNER -- in the game tonight when he wouldn't have been in any of the first five, defensive replacement DAVE STAPLETON on the bench -- moves to it.

CLOSE ON: BUCKNER'S FACE. The mustache. The moment.

The ball dribbles through his legs.

KNIGHT rounds third. Jumping the whole way.

DUGOUT. The Mets bench is over the rail.

Knight hits home.

The Mets MOB him.

In the visitors' dugout, no one moves.

In the corridor, the announcers stop talking. The trophy on the folding table is being quietly carried away.

CLOSE ON: DARRYL on the dugout step, having watched the whole thing standing up. Tears in his eyes, but not the kind of tears the camera looks for.

He didn't get to play this inning. They won it without him.

He doesn't run out to the pile.

INT. SHEA CLUBHOUSE -- NIGHT

Pure joy. Cashen interviewed by REPORTER.

CASHEN

I mean, what can you say? This is what it's all about, right?

RANDY NIEMAN douses him in champagne.

CASHEN (CONT'D)

(deadpan, to camera)

You know, it's always the guys who contribute the least who spray the most champagne.

He smiles a small, knowing smile. Hold one beat on his face. He knows what he has.

INT. DOC'S CAR / RESTAURANT PARKING LOT -- NIGHT

Doc and MONICA leaving Doc's parents' house. DWIGHT'S MOM and DWIGHT'S DAD see them off.

DOC

Let's take separate cars to dinner. I don't want you to have to come all the way back here, and I'm supposed to swing by Pete's later anyway.

MONICA

(kissing him)

Sure, whatever.

They pull off. Doc lets himself miss a red light Monica makes. He turns the car. Drives into a seedy area. Stops at a friend's. Picks up some coke. Does a quick line. Leaves.

He pulls into the restaurant parking lot next to Monica's.

MONICA

What the hell happened to you? I've been here for like an hour and a half. I was getting pretty worried. I was about to leave.

DOC

You won't believe this, baby. I got a fucking flat out of nowhere. You'd think I've spent enough on that car to never get flats, right? So anyway, this older brother pulls over when he sees I'm on the side of the road, and he's all like, "Doc, Doc. You know who you are, you're Dwight Gooden. So, what's happening here? What, a flat tire? You gotta let me help you. I got a jack, hold on." And we started to put the spare on, only he didn't know what he was doing, and stuff, and then we finally got it on, you know, and I

DOC (CONT'D)

gave him an autograph and everything on his copy of the Times, which was all he had, and came here.

MONICA

You're acting weird. You weren't really with another girl having dinner, were you? You always disappear like this.

DOC

Other woman? What other woman? Listen, I'm sorry I got a flat. I'm here now. Let's order dinner. Okay? You order yet? What looks good?

Food comes. They chat. Doc waves at fans staring at him. He only picks at his lobster.

INT. FRIEND'S CAR -- DAY

Doc gets in. Notices a .38-CALIBER PISTOL by the feet of the driver, RANDOM DOC FRIEND 1.

DOC

What's that for?

RANDOM DOC FRIEND 1

We're going to fuck up the first cop who fucks with us.

RANDOM DOC FRIEND 2

Yeah. A little surprise. Motherfuckers.

The car rolls down the street.

DOC

Stop the car. You heard me. Stop. I'm getting out.

The car waits. Doc paces a moment outside. Sticks his head back in.

DOC (CONT'D)

I can't do it.

INT. GOODEN'S LONG ISLAND HOME -- DAY

Black lingers.

VIN SCULLY (V.O.)

...and now the winning run is on second with two outs, three and two to Mookie Wilson... little roller up along first; behind the bag! It gets through Bill Buckner!
(MORE)

VIN SCULLY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Here comes Knight, and the Mets
 win it!

EXT. SUBURBAN STREETS -- DAY

DARRYL drives the suburbs. Looking lost.

INT. GOODEN'S HOME -- DAY

CHAMPAGNE bottles strewn in a beautifully decorated bedroom.

Darryl knocks on the front door.

DARRYL
 Ding dong. House call for a Mr.
 Doctor K, of your World Champion
 New York Mets. Doc, you in there?
 We got to get going if we're going
 to make the parade, man. It looks
 like there's no doubt there's
 going to be traffic.

DOC holds the pillow over his ears. Winces. Thinks back to getting home and into bed a few minutes earlier, around 8 A.M. on the clock.

DARRYL (CONT'D)
 Doc, what's up, you coming? Come
 on, we got to get to the parade.
 Ahhh man... Don't make me come up
 there and beat your ass.

Doc peeks out from under the pillow. Doesn't move. Darryl looks up at the second-story window. Then, cursing under his breath, turns and walks back to his car.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. LOWER MANHATTAN -- DAY

The Parade.

Darryl in ticker-tape. Looks skyward.

CROWD
 Dar-ryl! Dar-ryl!

His face -- joy, vindication, loneliness, all at once.

INT. GOODEN'S HOME -- DAY

DOC watches on television. Sips REMY MARTIN.

The TV cuts to NEWS:

NARRATOR (V.O.)

In the sunny chill, no roses
bloomed in the Rose Garden, only a
few marigolds and too few Mets,
who were there to accept President
Reagan's congratulations. Fourteen
players, two coaches and four
members of the World Series
champions' front office had formed
a backdrop on a small outdoor...

A PRESS RELEASE flashes onscreen. A KNICKS-MSG photo. Doc.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

In a statement released by the
Mets at the Knick game last night
in Madison Square Garden, Dwight
Gooden, responding to newspaper
reports, acknowledged that he has
a son and that the wedding planned
Saturday with his friend from high
school, Charlene Pearson, was off
for the time being.

Doc puts down the glass. Doesn't pick it up again.

EXT. LOWER MANHATTAN -- DAY

The parade has ended. The streets emptying. The pavement
deep in paper.

A single PIECE of ticker tape lifts on a draft of wind.

It travels along the gutter.

Catches in a storm grate.

Slides through.

INT. STORM DRAIN -- DAY

The piece of paper carried by water into darkness.

INT. INTRO -- DARKNESS

The dirty BASEBALL again. The cigar voice.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

They told us they were heroes. We
believed them. That's the lie we
tell ourselves first.

FADE TO BLACK.

ACT III

THE FALL

EXT. TAMPA / I-275 -- NIGHT

December 1986.

DOC, SHEFFIELD, RANDOM FRIEND, VINCE LOVELACE, more FRIENDS.
Driving back from a USF basketball game in three cars.
"KISS"

by Prince. "WALK THIS WAY" by Run-DMC.

They pull out of Chili's in a MERCEDES 500SL, a CORVETTE, a
NISSAN 280Z. Sheffield drives unaware that POLICE SIRENS are
blaring behind. His speakers block view.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Gooden said yesterday that he had
been "harassed and abused" by the
police in Tampa, Fla., who
arrested, handcuffed and manacled
him after a fight that grew out
of a routine traffic violation
Saturday night.

Pulled over. A ton of cop cars pull up. Doc shouts. Grabs at
a WHITE POLICE OFFICER'S hand. They beat the living crap
out of him. More squad cars show up. Hold back Doc's
friends. Beat him some more. Throw him in a squad car. Take
him out, by railroad tracks. BLACK POLICE OFFICERS clean him
up before driving him to the station.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

To the Sports Editor: The recent
arrest of Dwight Gooden means
that 80 percent of the Mets'
starting pitchers have been
arrested on assault charges this
year. Is this really baseball the
way it oughta be? -- Thomas
Mariam, Brooklyn.

INT. METS FRONT OFFICE -- DAY

Spring 1987. CASHEN behind the desk. DOC across, AGENT next
to him.

CASHEN

We need a clause.

AGENT
Frank, you're talking about a
drug-testing clause for a guy who
hasn't tested positive --

CASHEN
For a guy.

He drops a SHEET OF PAPER on the desk between them. The
result.

Doc looks at his hands.

AGENT
Let me talk with my client.

CASHEN
Talk with him quickly. Smithers is
waiting.

INT. SMITHERS -- DAY

Doc arrives at LaGuardia. A gray van picks him up off the
tarmac. Drops him off at SMITHERS. He walks through the
front doors, head down, REPORTERS shouting.

CRACKHEAD walks by, scratching himself only a little less
than furiously.

NURSE
Right this way.

The NURSE checks Doc in. Small bed. Nightstand and lamp.
Room with three other people.

He gets up at 7 A.M. Cleans out the garbages. Sits in on a
lecture. Eats a bad lunch. Group therapy. Reads. Writes.

INT. SMITHERS GROUP THERAPY -- DAY

CRACKHEAD 1
Fuck, man. There ain't one needle-
free spot on my body, except my
neck. And I shoot heroin into
that, too.

CRACKHEAD 2
I been using for six days once.
Didn't sleep a wink. Coke, rock,
rock, whatever, it didn't matter.

CRACKHEAD 1
And so then I would have to ask
myself: has it really been two
(MORE)

CRACKHEAD 1 (CONT'D)
days since I ate? And when's the
last time I took a shower? Three
and a half days ago? Shit,
something weren't right with me,
you know?

DOC
I, you know -- didn't really do it
at all until this year, and then
it got bad.

NURSE
How much were you using?

DOC
I don't know... really... mostly
at parties, with the booze and
the girls and the music. At least
once a week, but not much more
than that.

CRACKHEAD 1
C'mon, man. Doc. You're lying.

CRACKHEAD 2
You wouldn't be lying to us?
There's a reason you're here, son.

INT. SMITHERS -- HALLWAY -- DAY

Doc carrying his bag. Walking down a corridor lined with
identical doors.

The number on his door behind him: 312.

A counselor at the end of the hall. A nod. A handshake.

Doc walks out of the building. The reporters waiting on
the curb. Cameras flash.

He doesn't see them. He looks past them.

EXT. SHEA STADIUM PARKING LOT -- DAY

A different door. A different number painted on the
asphalt: 16.

His parking spot. His car pulling into it.

He sets his hand on the dashboard. Looks at his hand.

INT. SHEA STADIUM -- DAY

1988. DARRYL pulls into the parking lot. Walks the gauntlet of REPORTERS.

REPORTERS

(overlapping)

Darryl! Darryl?! What do you think, Straw? Should we fear for you? Should we fear for you, too?

DARRYL

(charming)

Come on, man. I was not raised like that. You all have got to lay off. How'd you like it if I was doing this to y'all?

He takes some baseballs. Signs them. Walks over to the stands. Signs more. Then enters the clubhouse.

KEITH at his locker. McCARVER talks to RON DARLING.

McCARVER

Thanks for the time, Ron. You have a good game today, all right.

(turning to Darryl)

Straw. How's it going?

DARRYL

S'okay.

McCARVER

Great. Great. You thinking about maybe playing in a little more?

DARRYL

C'mon, man. Leave that shit alone.

Keith looks on, chuckling.

McCARVER

You know, Darryl. No reason you got to be camped up near the warning track. I'm going to mention it to Ralph again.

DARRYL

Mex, you believe this?

Keith waves him off.

DARRYL (CONT'D)
Don't you worry about me, Mr. Bob
Uecker, or whoever you think you
are.

INT. DARRYL'S HOUSE -- DAY

LISA enters. The bedroom upstairs.

LISA
Great. Look who it is.

DARRYL
Why is there some strange car in
the driveway filled with bags? Is
there a guy here?

LISA
You weren't home. So I had the
nanny watch Darryl Jr. and went
shopping. I went car-shopping,
too. I'm going to need you to take
the bags in. Some of them were too
heavy.

DARRYL
In somebody else's car?

LISA
The driver --

DARRYL
Jesus, Lisa. Can't you stop
shopping for a minute?

LISA
Can't you stop drinking for a
minute?

Darryl SMACKS Lisa.

LISA (CONT'D)
(quietly)
You're a rotten man, Straw. You
know that. Been rotting since the
day I met you.

DARRYL
Keep it down. You'll wake him up.

INT. AIRPLANE -- NIGHT

A team flight. Players around. DARRYL in the back.

MAGADAN (V.O.)
 (treated as overheard
 quote)

Darryl always thought ragging on

MAGADAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 people was funny. But a lot of
 times it was vicious. And he
 wasn't always drunk. A lot of
 times it was on the bus right
 after a game.

TEUFEL comes to the back of the plane. Stands over Darryl.

TEUFEL
 I'm warning you, Straw. I don't
 like this crap. And I'm not going
 to put up with it anymore.

INT. STUDIO -- DAY

"CHOCOLATE STRAWBERRY" by Darryl Strawberry plays. In the
 STUDIO, Darryl behind the mic. Highlight film cued up. He
 raps over it.

DARRYL
 My name is Darryl, I'm a baseball
 player /
 One thing I forgot to say-a /
 When I'm on the field I'm on top
 of the world /
 I get screams from all the girls /
 (Dar-ryl!)
 Everybody in the stadium, screams
 for me /
 Strike one, strike two, but no
 strike three /
 When I'm runnin', all the players
 make space /
 I run, I slide, and then I'm safe /
 'Cause you're DEF! Yo, I ain't
 soft /
 I even get paid on my days off /
 Grandslammer, "Are you as good as
 they say?" /
 I guess you never came to see me
 play /
 Any pitch you throw I control it /
 I took it while you wasn't lookin'
 /
 So give me your beef, homeboy I'm
 cookin' /
 I can get loose so don't you try /
 I graduated from Crenshaw High /
 (MORE)

DARRYL (CONT'D)

You can even ask Eric "Boogie" E.

RUN-DMC

My name is Darryl, but you can call me D, hit it!

DOC (V.O.)

The cat's in the bag, and the bag's in the river.

DARRYL (V.O.)

Lisa? She's moved back to California.

CRACKHEAD (V.O.)

Hey, Straw. Ain't you supposed to be at the ballpark?

DARRYL

Used to be I was just playing for myself. Now I'm playing for you, and all the rest of them. I've stopped playing for me, like I have all my life. It's a hard thing. I don't matter anymore.

The branded version of himself the world is selling.

EXT. TEAM PHOTO -- DAY

PLANE HOME first. Players sprawled across the cabin.

PLAYER (laughing in the row in front of Darryl)
I don't know, maybe I'll go golfing for a couple weeks. What do you think? Or, more importantly, what do you think my wife'll think?

DARRYL

(low, to no one)
Bunch of pussies up there. Better shut their fucking mouths. Anyone got a problem with that?

No one answers. The cabin lights flicker as the plane banks.

TRAINING CAMP. 1988 team photo day. PHOTOGRAPHER setting up. Darryl arriving with a sour face.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Now if you two could just squeeze in a little.

DARRYL

I ain't sitting this close to this motherfucking backstabber.

KEITH

Honestly, Darryl, just shut your damn mouth and let's get this over with.

DARRYL

I mean, honestly, what the fuck, man? Now you got to mess with my contract situation?

KEITH

Why don't you mind your own business, boy? Get a new team if you can't be part of this one.

DARRYL

I know who won't be there. And I'm including Big Mac over there because I ain't taking anyone who sucked you off, Mex. I want at least a fair chance of winning the MVP on it without your gaylord-side getting in the way.

PUNCHES FLY.

DARRYL (CONT'D)

I've been tired of you for years!

EXT. HARBOR PARK -- DAY

The off-season program. DARRYL, CHRIS BROWN, ERIC DAVIS, BARRY LARKIN, DAVID JUSTICE, SHAWON DUNSTON. They coast up in Benzes and BMWs. Work out lightly. Goof around.

Other BASEBALL PLAYERS take swings, field grounders, shag flies.

CARL JONES, an old face, arrives.

CARL JONES

Hey, guys, it's me, Carl Jones.
How you guys doing?

DARRYL

Good? You good, Carl?

CHRIS BROWN

Yeah, you got to tell us what's up with everyone.

CARL JONES

Derwin's over there; you guys should say hi to him.

DARRYL

Hold up. I think I got to do a little hitting.

Darryl hits three massive shots. Eric hits a couple of slightly less massive shots and a liner. Then progressively younger and less skilled BATTERS, with DERWIN McNEAL and some high schoolers.

LATER. Darryl, Eric, and Chris take off in Darryl's car. Carl jumps in. They head to Chris's mother's house. All but Carl shower and change.

They head to a Lakers game. Darryl stops the car at Western and Exposition, near the Forum. Opens his wallet. Fishes out a twenty. Turns and gives it to Carl.

DARRYL

Listen, man. Take a taxi or something home. You got to get out. I mean, look at you. You're in no shape to go out in public, even, homes.

In the parking lot of the Forum.

CHRIS BROWN

You kidding me, Darryl? What did you do that for? There's big-footing and then too much.

DARRYL

Whatever. There was no way he could have come in. It was impossible.

CHRIS BROWN

Bro?

DARRYL

Come on.

INT. SHEA STADIUM -- DAY

DARRYL and BUDDY HARRELSON in Buddy's office.

DARRYL

Buddy, can we talk? Don't worry, not about my contract. I'm pretty pissed off about that, but I'm here right now, and I want to win. It's just that I don't know what kind of role I should have here. I'm Darryl, not Keith.

BUDDY

What kind of role do you want?

DARRYL

I'm a member of the Mets family, I have been for years. I'm a leader in the Mets family, but I don't think the Mets want me. And so I don't want them.

BUDDY

It's simple. Show them how to win on the field. You're the natural leader of this team. They will follow you if you perform well.

LATER. A different day. Same office.

BUDDY (CONT'D)

Darryl, can I talk to you for a minute? Darryl, I know that contract stuff has got you down, but what's holding you back on the field? What's keeping you from showing instead of telling the other guys how to win?

DARRYL

I bring it with me, Bud. The pressure. I bring it everywhere.

DARRYL (CONT'D)

They teach you in Smithers how to have an inner security. Rehab helps with that. But I just can't stand that they treat me with the same kind of respect. How come I'm not paid like Donnie Baseball? What am I supposed to think about that?

BUDDY

What did they tell you to do with
your feelings in rehab?

DARRYL

They help you understand them.

BUDDY

And what are you feeling toward
the pitchers who are making you
hit grounders and strike out?

DARRYL

You know I'm angry as hell at
that pitcher, but I'm holding it
in and I don't know why.

BUDDY

Don't hold it in anymore. Get
intense. Get mad. But get mad at
the other guy, instead of at
yourself for holding it in.

DARRYL DOMINATES. Eighteen-game hitting streak. Mets reach
first.

INT. DARRYL'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

PHONE rings. Darryl picks up.

ERIC DAVIS (V.O.)

Hello? Straw?

DARRYL

Yeah, Eric? Whuzz up? You know
what time it is?

ERIC DAVIS (V.O.)

You'll read about it this morning
in the papers.

DARRYL

Read about what?

ERIC DAVIS (V.O.)

The Mets broke off negotiations.

DARRYL

I'm hitting .415. The whole club's
come alive. What are they, crazy?

ERIC DAVIS (V.O.)

They say they won't go above nine
and a half and won't agree to
(MORE)

ERIC DAVIS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 anything beyond a three-year
 contract. At least not for now.

DARRYL
 They've dicked me around the whole
 year. Christ. Now what am I
 supposed to do?

ERIC DAVIS (V.O.)
 Just do what you've been doin'.
 They're playing chicken. They're
 betting you won't file for free
 agency because you're afraid of
 what's going to happen when you
 don't get offers from other teams.

DARRYL
 Fuck.

ERIC DAVIS (V.O.)
 I said the same thing. Just don't
 get too pissed off when you read
 today's papers.

INT. LISA'S MOTHER'S HOUSE -- DAY

Lisa with her MOTHER. DARRYL JR., five, plays on the rug.

Lisa is folding clothes. The folding the only thing keeping
 her from breaking.

LISA'S MOTHER
 Lisa.

LISA
 Don't, Mama.

LISA'S MOTHER
 You can't keep going back.

LISA
 I know.

LISA'S MOTHER
 If you go back, eventually you're
 going to come back here and you're
 going to be hurt worse than now.
 You hear me?

LISA
 I said I know, Mama.

She doesn't put the bag down. She folds another shirt. Looks

at Darryl Jr. He looks up at her. Smiles. Goes back to his toy.

She is lonely too.

INT. DARRYL'S HOUSE -- DAY

January 26, 1990.

Lisa comes in. Clock shows 3 o'clock. CAN OF BEER on the table.

DARRYL
Where were you?

LISA
Oh, come on, Darryl. Don't give me that crap.

DARRYL
Why not?

LISA
Because if you want to give somebody that crap, give it to that slut we're going to owe all this money, too. You realize that, Darryl, your dick's coming to cost us, cost you real soon, so don't give me some crap for going out with my friends. Lord knows we got enough stares because of you.

DARRYL
Shut up already, Lisa. You want to keep fighting about this for the next two days?

LISA
Sure. Sure. You know why? Because you've fucking ruined us, Darryl. You don't even need to wait until the news comes on to prove it. Darryl, you're a fucking joke, you know that?

DARRYL
If you're so worried about money, or whatever, maybe you shouldn't spend so much on your fucking outfits, you fucking bitch.

They keep fighting up and down the stairs.

LISA

I wish you'd just get the fuck out of here already! We don't need a father like that. You're nothing but a loser, Darryl. A fucking nigger Crenshaw loser. YOU KNOW THAT, DARRYL! YOU'RE A LOSER! I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU DO ON THE FIELD, YOU'RE A FUCKING LOSER AS A FATHER, YOU'RE A LOSER AS A HUSBAND, YOU'RE EVEN A LOSER AS THIS BASTARD'S FATHER. You fucking deadbeat.

Darryl cracks Lisa across the side of her head with a punch. She falls back, then slowly gets back up. They stand face to face. Her lip is puffy from where the heel of Darryl's hand came down.

Lisa grabs a metal rod from somewhere, swings it like a bat. The metal cracks across Darryl's wrists as he tries to block, then into his side. He doubles up. Lisa starts swinging again.

Darryl runs to a closet. Pulls a .25-CALIBER SEMIAUTOMATIC. She runs after him, still swinging, tries to force him to stay in the closet by poking his chest. He pulls the gun out, as LISA'S MOTHER comes in.

DARRYL

I'm going to kill you, bitch. I'm going to blow your brains out. Fucking cunt.

LISA'S MOTHER calls 911.

EXT. DARRYL'S DRIVEWAY -- DAY

A squadron of LAPD black-and-whites wheel around Ventura Boulevard. Pull into the driveway. Fan out.

POLICE OFFICER

Open up. Police.
(politely, but with
hands on guns and
nightsticks)
What's going on here? We got a
call.

DARRYL

Nothing, officer. Nothing. It's late, you know?

POLICE OFFICER
You okay, ma'am?

LISA
(touching her face)
Yeah. Yeah, officer. Everything's fine.

POLICE OFFICER
Does that handgun belong to you, Mr. Strawberry? May I see the permit and registration, please?

DARRYL
(shrugs)
Don't have one.

POLICE OFFICER
Mr. Strawberry, you're under arrest for the possession of a handgun. You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law. You have the right to a lawyer and to have him

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)
present with you while you are questioned. If you cannot afford to hire a lawyer, one will be appointed to represent you before any questioning, if you wish. Do you understand these rights?

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)
We'll write this all up as a domestic. We all have our problems, Straw. But no can do. Someone called in a weapon, and it's already on the tape. We gotta make a report, homes, you know.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)
You'll come quietly?

DARRYL
Yeah.

Darryl is taken downtown. They escort him to the back of the car. Getting in, he winces, rubs ribs. No lights come on.

INT. PRECINCT -- DAY

Darryl at a desk. Making phone calls to ERIC GOLDSCHMIDT and ALAN LANS.

LISA in the lobby. She looks forgiving.

FLASHBACK: YOUNG DARRYL and his family fighting Father Strawberry. The choreography of the fight identical to the morning's: the metal, the doorway, the hand to the face. The inheritance is visual.

POLICE OFFICER

This is going to be okay, Darryl.
Just a "domestic" incident. We
didn't find any drugs or anything,
which is great. But you know, your
wife says you may have a "drinking
problem," and really we're not
going to face any more charges
from that.

INT. DARRYL'S HOUSE -- DAY

Later. DR. LANS visits.

DR. LANS

Listen, Darryl, I want to help. We
can intervene medically in your
life. But whatever we do, it has
to be your decision.

(beat)

I can't force you to do anything.
But you should stop drinking right
here and now. It has to be your
decision or nothing will take.

(beat)

We're talking about a medical
problem here, Darryl. You've got
an addiction. But it's something
we can fix. Whatever the public
thinks, you've got to understand,
your problems will respond to
medical treatment. You're sick. We
can make you better. You're not
going to get worse. Things will be
better if you let them. I'm here
to make sure they do.

DARRYL

I can't do this alone.

DR. LANS

Don't worry about help. You'll get help. But you need to talk to the people you've hurt. Things won't start getting better unless you go right to where you feel the most guilty right now.

Darryl walks up to Lisa. Explains things with a pleading look in his eyes. He breaks into tears, and puts his head on her shoulder.

INT. CHURCH -- DAY

January 1991. Darryl on his knees. A PRIEST reads from scripture. The light is grey through the stained glass.

INT. SMITHERS -- DAY

Darryl walks in.

INT. GOODEN'S APARTMENT / FUNERAL -- DAY

October 1991. DOC on a phone in a hotel room on the road. He listens. Sets the phone down. Doesn't move.

CUT TO:

A FUNERAL PROGRAM in his hand. The name. FATHER GOODEN.

A small Tampa church. Doc in a black suit. MOTHER GOODEN beside him. SHEFFIELD a row back.

The expectation Doc has spent his whole life trying to satisfy is in the casket.

He stares forward, present and absent.

INT. GOODEN'S RENTED HOME -- DAY

March 30, 1991. Spring training. DOC stretches on the field. CONE doing some long toss. VINCE COLEMAN stretches out a leg.

AFTER PRACTICE. Cone talks to CONE'S GIRL in the stands.

CONE'S GIRL

You coming out tonight, big boy?

CONE

Can't, doll face.

CONE'S GIRL

Yeah? We can go to Winn-Dixie again, get some BBQ, drink some beers, a bottle of wine... and, you know... again...

CONE

Tomorrow. Okay?

CONE'S GIRL

Okay. I'll miss you.

(as Cone walks away)

Remember -- soon enough we're going to be packing you up for up north.

INT. BANANA MAX -- A JUPITER BAR -- NIGHT

DOC, VINCE COLEMAN, DARRYL BOSTON, other Mets whoop it up. Doc looks forlorn. BOSTON dances with Cone's Girl.

DOC

(to a Random Girl)

Yeah, you know. Apparently it's not as easy as it looks, huh?

Boston swings by.

DOC

Hey, you know Daryl Boston, right? Great.

BOSTON

Heya, Doc.

DOC

Bro, wasn't that Coney's girl you were dancing with?

BOSTON

I guess. Why don't you ask her. Here she comes.

Cone's Girl walks up. The Random Girl, shrugging, walks away.

CONE'S GIRL

Yo, Doc. How you doing?

DOC

Chillin'.

LATER.

BOSTON

Okay, I'll catch up with you
tomorrow, homes.

IN CAR. Doc and Cone's Girl.

DOC

Thanks for the ride.

CONE'S GIRL

No problem. Any time, Doc.

DOC

Want to come in?

CONE'S GIRL

Nah. I really got to be getting
home.

(thinking)

Actually, let me come in and use
your potty.

DOC

Sure.

INT. CONE'S GIRLFRIEND'S APARTMENT -- MORNING

March 30, 1991. Doc's rented home. Boston and Coleman play
NINTENDO in the living room. CONE'S GIRLFRIEND uses the
bathroom. She turns down a beer from Doc, but he gets her a
water.

DOC

(walking Cone's
Girlfriend into the
bedroom)

Yo, I want to talk to you about
something.

The DOOR CLOSES.

We do not see what happens.

LATER. The door opens. Doc heads to the shower. Cone's
Girlfriend, shaking, makes the bed. She goes home in last
night's dress.

INT. CONE'S GIRLFRIEND'S MOTHER'S HOUSE -- LATER

She hangs up the dress and gets in bed with her MOTHER.

CONE'S GIRLFRIEND

Yeah, I had a good time, Ma.
Yeah, I did. But I drove Doc
(MORE)

CONE'S GIRLFRIEND (CONT'D)
 Gooden home, and then I kind of
 got lost.

The mother nods. Doesn't ask. Cone's Girlfriend lies with her eyes open at the ceiling.

INT. CONE'S GIRLFRIEND'S APARTMENT -- DAY

The next morning. Cone's Girlfriend on the phone. Crying.

CONE'S GIRLFRIEND
 Ron... Darling... that you?
 I... I...

INT. METS CLUBHOUSE -- DAY

A copy of "The Worst Team Money Could Buy" by Bob Klapisch sits on a bench. Doc picks it up. Flips through. Sets it down.

A CLUSTER of teammates in the corner, glaring at the spot where Klapisch usually stands.

The room cools toward the writer.

Doc files the cooling away.

INT. SHEA / METS OFFICES -- DAY

A montage. Doc skipping a TEST. Filing a report -- "FLAT TIRE." A DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- the testing administrator arriving in BINGHAMTON. A sample. Results.

The Mets, paranoid as ever, coaxing Doc into pitching a PITTSBURGH GAME anyway. The worst start of his career.

DOC (V.O.)
 If I had to do it again, there's
 no way I'd go out there.

INT. BEVERLY CENTER -- NIGHT

May 1991. Beverly Hills party for Eric Davis's 29th birthday.

DARRYL strolls in wearing a pale yellow suit with a colorful shirt. Greets Eric Davis.

CHARISSE -- a fresh-faced girl wearing a black jacket, jeans, and a hat -- chats with GIRLFRIENDS. She dances with a RANDOM GUY.

DARRYL cuts in. Takes the hat from her head. She cocks her

head. He smiles. They dance.

DARRYL
What's your name?

CHARISSE
Charisse.

DARRYL
Where you from, Charisse?

CHARISSE
You know, round here.

DARRYL
Do you like baseball?

CHARISSE
Not really. Why?

DARRYL
Because that's what I do. I'm a
ballplayer.

CHARISSE
Oh really?

DARRYL
Yeah.

CHARISSE
So who do you play for?

DARRYL
The Dodgers.

CHARISSE
Uh-huh?

DARRYL
You don't believe me?

CHARISSE
What's your name?

DARRYL
Darryl. Darryl Strawberry.

CHARISSE
Oh, yeah? Okay. I know who you
are. My brother loves you.

DARRYL
Oh yeah, okay?

The song ends.

CHARISSE
Thanks for the dance.

She walks away.

EXT. PARKING LOT -- NIGHT

Charisse leaves with girlfriends. Darryl appears.

DARRYL
Hey.

CHARISSE
Hey.

DARRYL
May I get your number?

The GIRLFRIENDS swarm up, encouraging her.

DARRYL (CONT'D)
Well, are you going to or not?

CHARISSE
I've got a better idea. Why don't
you give me yours?

DARRYL
Just give me the digits. Please.

CHARISSE
Actually, why don't you just
autograph my invitation card, for
my brother.

GIRLS GETTING INTO CAR.

CHARISSE (CONT'D)
(to her friends)
Actually, I gave him yours.

EXT. CHARISSE'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

A few days later. Darryl picks Charisse up at her apartment complex in a red two-seater MERCEDES.

They arrive at a Bar & Grill. It is closing time. Mostly empty. The two eat and giggle.

Darryl drops her at the apartment.

DARRYL
Can I call you while I'm on this
road trip?

CHARISSE
That'd be fine.

DARRYL
You going to try to call me while
I'm gone?

CHARISSE
(smiling)
We'll see.

He kisses her on the cheek.

INSIDE THE APARTMENT: Charisse runs across the living room.
Fights with the blinds. Watches Darryl turn around and wave.

She waves back excitedly.

INT. DARRYL'S HOUSE -- DAY

Brief. Darryl with DARRYL JR., five or six. The boy at his
feet. Darryl puts a glove on his hand. The boy runs in
circles wearing it.

CHARISSE walks in carrying a bag. Doesn't know the boy yet.
The boy runs to Darryl. Looks back at Charisse.

The kid Darryl is choosing not to be the father of, by
choosing this.

INT. SIMPSON'S STUDIO -- DAY

A photo shoot. JOSE CANSECO. WADE BOGGS. DON MATTINGLY. MIKE
SCIOSCIA. DARRYL.

The endorsement-deal friends.

INT. DODGER STADIUM -- DAY

March 2, 1992. The clubhouse. A copy of "DARRYL," by Darryl
Strawberry with Art Rust Jr., on a stool. Doc reads.

NEWSPAPER (V.O.)
Strawberry charges Mets with
racism, claims Gooden used
cocaine during '86 World Series.

DOC
(to himself)
What the fuck, homes? I never
did that shit during the
series. I wasn't even doing
that shit then.

INT. CHURCH -- DAY

December 3, 1993.

CHARISSE in white. Darryl in a tux. The wedding.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Three months after Strawberry
was arrested for striking her.
The fifth child by three women.

INT. BAR -- NIGHT

June 1994. The lights. The music. Mostly the alcohol.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
It begins with one beer, the
way an inferno starts with a
spark or the way a massive
freeway pileup begins with one
car. Dwight Gooden's pattern
of self-destruction continues
when he orders another beer
and then another. On this
night, in June 1994, the
lights and the music and
mostly the alcohol at the
Manhattan nightclub are
soothing him.

DOC at the rail. A vodka soda. Then another. Then another.

DOC (V.O.)
He has been a hard drinker
since 1986, when he was 21 and
in his third year in the
majors -- abstaining from
alcohol only on the two nights
before a starting assignment
and, flushed with youth, money
and stardom, indulging on all
the others. At 22 he landed in
a drug rehab center after
testing positive for cocaine.
Now, nearing his 30th
birthday and into his third
straight losing season, he is
(MORE)

DOC (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 drinking out of self-pity. The
 alcohol hits him like Novocain;
 it numbs the pain of his
 depression but cannot remove
 it.

DOC (V.O., CONT'D)
 Man, I'm hammered, he thinks.
 He presses on deep into the
 night, so deep that he still
 is drinking when he notices
 the place is closed, the
 doors are locked and
 everybody else except the
 people who work in the club
 have gone home.

The bar empties. The music fades.

An EMPLOYEE pulls a small bag out from behind the rail.

EMPLOYEE
 You want some?

DOC (V.O.)
 I know I shouldn't.

DOC
 (out loud)
 I'm on minor league rehab.
 They won't test me.

His face when he says yes.

DOC (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 straight losing season, he is
 drinking out of self-pity. The
 alcohol hits him like Novocain;
 it numbs the pain of his
 depression but cannot remove it.

The bar empties. The music fades.

An EMPLOYEE pulls a small bag out from behind the rail.

EMPLOYEE
 You want some?

DOC
 (V.O.)
 I know I shouldn't.

DOC
 (out loud)
 I'm on minor league rehab. They
 won't test me.

His face when he says yes.

INT. METS OFFICES / BINGHAMTON -- DAY

A REPRESENTATIVE of the testing agency arrives in
 Binghamton. A SAMPLE collected.

A LATER OFFICE. The result on a desk.

DOC (V.O.) on the phone:

DOC (V.O.)
 I just overslept. That's what
 happened. It's no big deal.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 But the dirty test last June
 was not ignored. The Mets told
 Gooden he was facing probable
 suspension for violating his
 aftercare program. Gooden, in
 deep denial, told friends
 that it was no big deal, that
 he simply had missed a test
 because of oversleeping. He
 learned of his 60-day ban on
 June 24, a day he was
 scheduled to start against
 the Pittsburgh Pirates. The
 Mets, paranoid as ever,
 coaxed him into going ahead
 with his start anyway.

DOC (V.O.)
 I always knew one or two guys
 who had the coke. It wasn't
 like I had to go driving
 through some bad neighborhood
 and roll the window down.

DOC
 (on phone with Lans)
 I was using last night.
 Should I still go ahead with
 the test?

LANS (V.O.)
 Yes, Dwight. Go ahead with
 the test.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 March 3, 1994. Investigated by
 the IRS and U.S. Attorney's
 Office for allegedly failing
 to file tax returns for income
 from autograph and memorabilia
 shows in excess of \$300,000.

INT. BASEBALL CARD SHOW -- DAY

Rows of DARRYLS and DWIGHTS in plastic sheaths. KIDS,
 COLLECTORS. The myth as inventory.

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD -- DAY

Opening Day 1994. DOC on the mound. Gives up THREE HOME
 RUNS to TUFFY RHODES.

INT. GOODEN'S LONG ISLAND HOME -- DAY

Doc on his couch, watching the news of Darryl's
 disappearance on TV.

DOC
 Darryl's missing? It's that
 fucking phoniness Lasorda
 spews out. He was talking like
 he was close to losing it.

LASORDA (ON CAMERA, V.O.)
 That's how powerful that ----
 is. Darryl told me he used
 again because he felt a lot of
 pressure was on him, like
 going to jail and his ex-wife
 bothering him. Darryl has
 never been one to be honest
 with himself.

INT. WRIGLEY FIELD -- DAY

Opening Day, 1994. Clubhouse, Dodgers visiting. TOMMY
 LASORDA's office. Darryl on a couch.

LASORDA
 Get yourself going, Darryl. We
 need you to carry us.

DARRYL
 (V.O.)
 How many times have I heard

DARRYL (V.O.) (CONT'D)
that? Strawberry thought.
Only my whole career. Why is it
always on me? I'm tired of it.
I don't want to hear it
anymore.

ON FIELD. Darryl steps in. Crack. Home run. He rounds the bases. Touches home. His face is somewhere else.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
He hit a home run in his last
at bat that night and then
disappeared into his own black
hole of despair, drinking and
drugs. He got so high he never
went home.

INT. DARRYL'S HOUSE -- LATE NIGHT

He doesn't come home. We see a phone in the dark. Hear a RING that goes unanswered.

INT. CHARISSE / RUBY'S HOUSE -- DAY

Sunday morning. CHARISSE on the phone. RUBY on the other side.

CHARISSE
Have you heard from him?

RUBY
What's going on?

CHARISSE
I -- never mind.

RUBY
Charisse. Where is he.

CHARISSE
I don't know.

Ruby hangs up. Throws her purse over her shoulder. Heads to church. She lets her daughter REGINA take the phone, leaves without being clear what the call was about.

INT. CHURCH -- DAY

The Blood Covenant Christian Faith Center in Pomona, California, where Ruby also works as a secretary.

PARISHIONERS embracing Ruby.

PARISHIONER
It's going to be okay.

PARISHIONER 2
We're praying.

PARISHIONER 3
Sister Ruby. Sister Ruby.

She doesn't know what they mean.

A USHER hands her a NEWSPAPER. She looks at the front.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
They had heard news reports
that Darryl was missing. Ruby
had no idea what they were
talking about.

DARRYL (V.O.)
I'm tired. Too tired. I am not
going through another season
like this. The partying, the
drinking. I'm just so tired.

She doesn't know what they mean.

A USHER hands her a NEWSPAPER. She looks at the front.

INT. BETTY FORD CENTER -- DAY

April 8, 1994. DARRYL walks through the doors.

INT. PITTSBURGH BULLPEN -- DAY

DOC. The 60-day suspension on the table. He pitches anyway.
The worst game of his career.

INT. BETTY FORD CENTER -- DAY

July 22, 1994. Doc walks through the doors.

EARLIER, AT HOME:

MONICA
(puzzled)
Why?

INT. DARRYL'S HOUSE -- DAY

August 20, 1994. L.A.

MONICA and CHARISSE in the kitchen, chit-chatting.

DARRYL and DOC walk around outside, by a tennis court. They sit by the court.

DARRYL

Doc, I'm telling you. You've got to get out of Florida. Those people around you are killing you.

(beat)

You've got to change your environment to keep from using. The most important thing they told me at Betty Ford was to change the whole atmosphere and get away from the people who use. Can't trust no one but Jesus, Doc. No one but Jesus.

DOC

Yeah... yeah... I know. Darryl...

Time passes. Night falls. The two on the porch.

DARRYL

Can you believe this strike shit?

DOC

Doesn't make much difference to me, of course.

They relive the past. Talk about wasting great seasons. Hurting family and friends.

They go to an NA MEETING.

INT. BAR -- NIGHT

Same night. Doc and Monica home.

DOC

Yo, Monica. If it's cool with you, I'm going to go out and see some friends. You know, nothing crazy. Just to say hello.

MONICA

Of course. You should.

DOC

Yeah?

MONICA

Yeah.

(pause)

I love you.

AT BAR. Doc holds up three fingers. Three beers come.
He downs them.

DOC
What do you have?

DEALER
Come see me in the bathroom.

He exchanges money for drugs.

He walks back. Sits with FRIENDS.

DOC (CONT'D)
(to friends)
Listen, guys, I'm done. You know,
there's been so much going on.

RANDOM DOC FRIEND
Aww, man. Gotta do what you gotta
do. You cool to drive?

DOC
Yeah... yeah... totally cool
there, cuz.

RANDOM DOC FRIEND 2
(pregnantly)
Doc, you okay?

EXT. HIGHWAY -- NIGHT

The BMW 850. 105. 110. 120. 130 mph.

FLASHBACK: Younger Doc and friends blocking off I-275 in St.
Petersburg for drag racing.

Tears run down Doc's cheeks.

He pulls past his own driveway when he sees a car.

He sits in his car parked two blocks away.

He looks at the time.

He pulls into the driveway.

The odometer is in the red.

Played as a driving scene. Written as a suicide scene.

INT. GOODEN HOME -- DAY

November 1995. The day after he learns he's been suspended from baseball for one year for failing a drug test.

The dresser. The 9MM. The full magazine. The safety.

DOC puts the gun to his temple. To his ear. To his forehead. To the roof of his mouth.

He cannot find clarity in suicide. What is he doing?

The bedroom door OPENS. MONICA. Eyes wide.

She runs. Wrestles the gun from his hand. They are on the floor.

She is holding him. He is holding her. Both crying.

INT. GOODEN HOME -- BEDROOM -- DAWN

The dresser. The 9MM where he left it. The empty magazine beside it.

MONICA's hand reaches into frame. Takes both.

INT. GOODEN HOME -- HALLWAY -- DAWN

She carries them past the closed bedroom door. Doc on the other side, somewhere we can't see.

INT. GOODEN HOME -- LINEN CLOSET -- DAWN

A locked metal box on a top shelf. The gun goes in. The magazine goes in. The box closes. Her hands trembling on the lock.

INT. GOODEN HOME -- BEDROOM -- DAWN (LATER)

Light from the window has crossed the room and reached the foot of the bed.

Doc lies on his back. Eyes open. Hasn't moved.

The day has come.

INT. INTRO -- DARKNESS

The dirty BASEBALL again. The cigar voice.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Believing is another story. The
reasons rarely last.

OUT ON BLACK.

FADE OUT.

ACT IV

THE RETURN

EXT. TAMPA CUL-DE-SAC -- NIGHT

1994/95. Three LARGE MEN with weapons on a porch. SHEFFIELD and DOC.

DOC

I don't know who the fuck would be calling up and fucking with Betty -- your mom -- but I tell you what, Sheff, I don't fucking like it.

SHEFFIELD

I tell you what, Uncle Dwight. Having your cousin and these goons around makes me feel a lot better.

DOC

We'll show 'em who's got the bullet waiting for them.

The large men talk among themselves. LARGE MAN 1 walks the perimeter. Doc and Sheffield watch the sun set.

SHEFFIELD

You listen to that mix I made you yet? Some pounding jams.

DOC

Haven't really had time. I mean -- I'm retired, right? I got all the time in the world. I just haven't gotten around to listening to it more than a couple of times. Seems good.

SHEFFIELD

(pauses)

So why you gonna retire anyways? Think about it. You get yourself signed by the Marlins, and we'll win the series together, right here, man. We always talked about playing together. Christ, we got rookies older than you.

DOC

C'mon, Gary. You know how it is with me. I don't got no more juice.

SHEFFIELD

You really tired of baseball, Doc? You don't like pitching anymore?

DOC

It ain't that. I'm tired of everything. All the bullshit I've been putting up with. You know what I'm saying?

SHEFFIELD

Oh, I get it.

(pauses)

You mean you're afraid of the tests.

DOC

What?

SHEFFIELD

They're too tough for you, aren't

SHEFFIELD (CONT'D)

they? You can't beat those tests, so you're just walking away. You gonna let that shit end your career.

Sheffield walks off. Doc sits a minute. Gets up to go inside -- notices a CAR pull across the street. Cuts headlights. Stays.

The large men fan out. Doc, dizzy, thinks of the gun in his glove compartment. The men handle weapons.

DOC

Who's that? Get the fuck out of here.

KLAPISCH and NEGRON get out of the car.

KLAPISCH

Doc, it's me. Bob. The sportswriter from New York.

DOC

Fuck, man. Why didn't you say it was you?

(MORE)

DOC (CONT'D)

(to others)

It's okay. I know him.

(to Klapisch)

You ought to be more careful
around here. You almost got your
ass kicked, cuz.

KLAPISCH

Sorry, Doc. I was trying to
track you down so I could talk
to you about something I'm
writing. This here is Ray
Negron. He's a Yankees guy I've
known a long time. He lives down
here. Gave me a ride.

NEGRON

(shaking hands)

Nice to meet you.

DOC

Yankees, huh? Right.

KLAPISCH

Listen, Dwight. I don't know if
it's a bad time, or whatever.

DOC

It is.

NEGRON

Used to have no time to do
interviews, but you did 'em,
though, right? Funny like that.

DOC

Seven magazine covers in one
week, once. So I must have found
the time. Who exactly are you
again?

NEGRON

Negron. Ray. Been around
baseball almost twenty years.
Started with some minor-league
ball. I been with the Yanks in
every capacity you can think of,
one way or another. I was
Reggie's right-hand man. Scout.
Batboy. Video guy. Lots of
stuff. Right now, though, I'm an
agent. I live two miles from
here. Two beautiful kids.

(MORE)

NEGRON (CONT'D)
 (handing him card)
 Listen, Doc. Anytime you want to
 talk, you know where to find me.

DOC
 Yeah, man. I will. I will. But
 uh -- now -- you guys got to get
 going. Some things going down,
 and...

KLAPISCH
 Not even five minutes for an
 interview, Doc?

DOC
 Not tonight, homes. Not tonight.

The car pulls off. Doc stands in the middle of the cul-de-sac, the business card in his hand.

INT. NEGRON'S HOUSE -- DAY

Negron's KIDS play in the backyard. He watches.

The DOORBELL rings.

DOC at the door, holding daughter ARIEL in his arms.

DOC
 You got a minute to talk?

CHILDREN play in the backyard. Negron's house, and especially his office, is filled with pictures of REGGIE JACKSON and BILLY MARTIN, framed clips of articles about the Yanks, framed back pages of the Post and Daily News in the '70s.

They sit.

NEGRON
 So.

DOC
 Ray. I'm sorry. It was just -- I
 was in the neighborhood, and
 all, and...

NEGRON
 You're thinking some days that
 it's hopeless, right?

Doc reacts.

NEGRON (CONT'D)

I've been there, Doc. You don't know me, and I don't know you, but when I tell you I've been there, you better believe me. I lost a brother to drugs. My best friend fucked up a successful career on Wall Street because he loves crack that much. And me? I lost every penny I ever made to a goddamn gambling addiction. Dude, one day I was ripping the satellite dish off my fuckin' roof because I knew I could sell it for \$500. I just knew that \$500 was going to make me rich at Belmont -- which of course it didn't. So don't ever let anyone look down at you because you've got a problem with coke. Hate the situation, hate the actions, but don't hate yourself. We all have problems. They just show up in different places.

Doc eyes the SIGNED REGGIE JACKSON picture.

NEGRON (CONT'D)

Someday you can be on that wall, too, Doc. But first you have to get your life together. It's that simple.

DOC

I ain't coming back, Ray. I ain't got no chance of making it back. It's over for me.

NEGRON

What about just getting help for your own sake, Doc? Fuck Selig, fuck Cashen, fuck 'em all. How about it, Doc, how about doing that? It can be done. We're talking as men, here, not ballplayers.

DOC

You know I want to. It's why... That's why I'm here today. You... you seem like you got it all figured out.

NEGRON

I ain't got nothing figured out except that when people need help they need help. I'll put you in touch with some people. It isn't going to be pretty stuff, like Betty Ford. But it'll open your eyes. You think you've got problems, I'll introduce you to my friend, Vincent Kenyon. Harvard-educated man, on the fast track to success on Wall Street, and he's in the gutter now. He went to a party one Friday, tried a little coke, and didn't come home for four days, costing himself several hundred thousand and his job. That was three years ago, and it's just been cycles after cycles with the same ending for him. The fucking rock got a hold of him deep.

DOC

Jeez.

NEGRON

Then there was my little brother. It all started when I saw him stealing money out of our mother's purse. We grew up in Queens. My mother was a school teacher, my father an orderly. Obviously we didn't come from a lot of money, and what he took was a big deal when it was gone. Eventually my mother started noticing. About the same time, I heard rumors about my brother, and one day I finally asked him to his face, "Are you using?"

(frowning)

He started crying right in front of me and asked me to help him. He said he was trying to get off the stuff and that he needed money to get counseling -- without my parents knowing. I gave him a couple of bucks, then and later, and that's what kept the

(MORE)

NEGRON (CONT'D)

cycle going. I realize now I'd become an enabler.

(pauses)

One night, I get a call. It's like 2 a.m. and my brother calls me from somewhere in East Brooklyn. He told me some dealers were going to kill him if he didn't come up with two hundred dollars, and so could I come right away? I drove like crazy to get there and showed up, like an idiot. I thought I was helping him. I got to the place he told me he was, walked into a hallway of some dark building, scared shitless, and suddenly I feel a cold gun poking into my head. Some guy just says, "Give me the fucking money," and I gave him two hundred dollars, turned around and went home, thanking the Lord I didn't get shot. Basically -- even though he denies it to this day -- I think my brother set me up just for the cash.

DOC

Fuck, man. I'm sorry.

NEGRON

You think that's bad. You're sitting here with me while your daughter, your fucking daughter, plays outside, and you're telling me you're done. Done with baseball, what? Done with yourself? You throwing that away? I never been bitten quite as bad as some people -- the gambling ruined another friend of mine even quicker, he couldn't stop trying to catch up -- but I been bitten, and I tell you, Doc: you're either getting better or you're getting worse. There's places you can go. It never ends unless you admit you're sick.

Doc looks at his hands. They both look at Ariel out the

window.

DOC
(very quiet)
I had a gun to my head in
November.

Negron lets that sit. Doesn't fill it.

DOC (CONT'D)
And -- my dad, he died.

NEGRON
You're either getting better or
you're getting worse, Doc.
That's it. That's all of it.
Today.

INT. NA CENTER -- NIGHT

Street people. Hard-core addicts.

VINCENT
Doc, if you ever think of
cocaine as a mellow high, like
slowly climbing stairs, then
using crack is like taking an
express elevator all the way to
the top. It's a very powerful
high, and in many people it
creates paranoia. You think
everyone is out to get you. You
think everyone is an undercover
cop. You cannot defeat crack
unless you get help. If you're
in denial, it will kill you.

DOC sits in the corner, listening.

RON DOCK rises.

RON DOCK
A lot of you have heard this
story already. But it's my
story. It's what I been
through. I went to Evander
Childs High School in the
Bronx, and I was going nowhere
in my life. I was, what, boxing
in the PAL, running a little
track, but I had no real goals.
I didn't know anything about
the Marines or Vietnam, until
one of my buddies, an older
(MORE)

RON DOCK (CONT'D)

guy, came home one day in his dress blues. And, man, he wiped me off the map. He looked so tough, so sharp. I was bored with my life at the time, and why not, you know? I decided I had to join up.

(pauses)

Funny thing was, I didn't know the first thing about racism until I got into the corps. The sergeants started telling me, "Hey boy, we're gonna kill you when we get you in 'Nam. You gonna die, you know that?" Shit, I thought these guys were supposed to be on my side. Was I scared? You better believe it. I was only seventeen when I went over, and I got into my first firefight within two weeks.

(pauses)

It was three in the afternoon, and I was part of a seven-man patrol getting ready to set up an ambush when we got caught in an L-shaped ambush ourselves. The VC started with mortars, then with AK-47 fire, and right away we were pinned down in the rice paddies. We lost one Marine, and another was about two minutes away from dying when we called in for an air strike. Luckily, the VC broke off contact with us.

DOC

(to himself)

Fuck.

RON DOCK

Well, and it all happened so fast that I never realized that, during that first firefight, I had urinated and defecated all over myself. I was screaming, completely crazy. I'd gone into shock. I was there but I wasn't there. I knew Vietnam wasn't for me, but there I was, stuck in the worst

(MORE)

RON DOCK (CONT'D)
place in the world. My buddy in
the dress blues didn't tell me
what being a Marine was really
about... constant fear. And,
man, I was about over the edge.
My sergeant gave me a little
weed, some Jim Beam, and I
passed out. That's how it
started for me.

Doc thinks of a home run flying over his head.

RON DOCK (CONT'D)
Basically right after that, I
decided somewhere inside me, I
don't know who was in charge
then, that I would get high
every single night. Particularly
when I was on night patrol. It
was even a reason to volunteer
for it. To get zooted. But it
wasn't, you know, frowned upon
or anything. I mean, put it
this way: whenever we killed a
VC, first thing we did was
check his pockets for opium.

(looking at addicts)
You were in the shit every
second over there, basically,
and it fucks with your head.
One night I fucking look down
and realize I have a huge
erection that popped up while I
was trying to blow away some
gooks out in the forest with my
M-16. I mean, some guys, they
stuck to the Beam and the weed
and compartmentalized it all,
and, you know, they came back
okay, more or less. But I was
hooked on the fear, addicted
to all of it. When I got back
here, I was out of control.
They tried to get me into
teaching young lieutenants
about jungle warfare, but, you
know, I was still so crazy, I
didn't bother with that. I took
over a VA hospital, held the
doctors and patients up as
hostages until they talked me
out of doing worse shit.

(looking at Doc)

(MORE)

RON DOCK (CONT'D)

I was discharged, dishonorably, sent back to the Bronx, and everything else spiraled downward. I was in jail, psychiatric wards, divorced almost as soon as I was married, and mostly in the street. Then one day, man, I was eating out of a garbage bin here in St. Pete, weighing, what, 140 pounds if that, and I thought to myself, "This is the day I'm going to die."

(beat)

So I found a cop and I went up to him and I said, "Please take me to a treatment center." That's how I ended up here, and I've been sober for three years now. And every day, I pray to God that I can just be sober for another day.

The meeting ends. Doc goes up to Ron Dock.

DOC

Hey, Ron. Dwight. Dwight Gooden. I... I was... wondering if you could... you know, help me... through this... as...

RON DOCK

(cool)

Let me ask you something, Dwight. How bad do you want to stay clean?

DOC

Real bad.

RON DOCK

Well, if you do, then just come back tomorrow. Don't say another word. You're talking too much as it is. The only way you can prove you're serious is if you show up again tomorrow.

He turns and walks away.

NEW DAY. Doc is back.

DOC

You don't understand. I'm here to beat this. I want to now. I need to now -- the way... just the way I left the game. I don't want people twenty years from now to say, "Dwight Gooden had a great career, but he threw it away." I want them to say, "Dwight Gooden had a great career because he beat that shit." I sure don't want my kids to think of their father as some junkie who couldn't handle success.

RON DOCK

If you really want to impress me, then don't think about anything except tomorrow. Your goal from now on is to stay clean for the next twenty-four hours.

INT. EL CERRITO COMMUNITY CENTER -- DAY

January 1995. MLK Day rally.

Darryl at the microphone.

DARRYL

The young youth today --

He looks out. CHILDREN look up at him.

DARRYL (CONT'D)

I've been through drugs and alcohol myself. I overcame that through the grace of God.

The cocaine he scored Saturday night is in his system.

FLASHBACK: YOUNG DARRYL'S FATHER yelling at him at the kitchen table.

FLASHBACK: The previous night. Darryl on a hotel bed, mirror, white powder, line.

The audience watches him lie to children.

INT. ROBERT SHAPIRO'S OFFICE -- DAY

Two months before SHAPIRO will be on TV defending O.J. RUBY, CHARISSE, MICHAEL wait outside.

DARRYL across the desk from SHAPIRO.

SHAPIRO

It's time you admitted you're
an alcoholic and a drug user.

Darryl nods.

The DOOR opens. Family on the other side.

SHAPIRO (CONT'D)

Is it okay to share with them?

Darryl nods again.

INT. RUBY'S HOUSE -- DAY

RUBY in a chair. DARRYL across from her.

RUBY

Tears welled up in my eyes, and
I had a big lump in my throat.
It made me realize some of the
things that were going on. I
couldn't understand some of
the things that were happening
with him. He didn't care what
was going on with the family.
He was not in touch with us.

(beat)

Now that I look back, I can
understand a lot of his
behavior. I used to wonder why
he never made eye contact with
me when he talked. I kind of
brushed it off. You know, he
was always on the go. Never
had much time. He was always
kind of looking over my head,
looking for someplace else to
go or something.

CLOSE on Ruby. REVERSE on Darryl, trying to.

RUBY (CONT'D)

I remember one of the first
things he did after he left
the Betty Ford Center. We were
sitting in my home, on
opposite sides of a room. I
told him, "You know, that's
something you never used to
do." And he said, "What's
that? What are you talking

(MORE)

RUBY (CONT'D)
about?" And I said, "You can
look me in the eyes when
you're talking to me. You
never used to do that."

(beat)
From what I understand now, a
lot of things were going on
before he came back to L.A.
That was something we weren't
aware of.

He looks at her. Holds it.

INT. FEDERAL COURTROOM -- DAY

April 1995. DARRYL standing at a defendant's table.
LAWYER beside him. JUDGE behind a bench.

JUDGE
Six months home confinement.
Three years probation. One
hundred hours of community
service. Restitution to the
IRS in the amount of three
hundred and fifty thousand
dollars.

A GAVEL.

INT. DARRYL'S HOUSE -- DAY

A FEDERAL OFFICER kneels beside Darryl, who sits on a
kitchen chair. Pant leg rolled up.

The officer wraps a black plastic ELECTRONIC MONITOR
around Darryl's ankle. Tightens it. Snaps it shut.
Tests the seal.

OFFICER
You don't leave the property
line. You don't leave it for
anything but court appearances
and approved appointments.

DARRYL
What about the yard.

OFFICER
Up to the property line. Not a
step over.

The officer stands. Hands him a printed sheet of his
restrictions.

OFFICER (CONT'D)
Mr. Strawberry.

DARRYL
Yeah.

OFFICER
For what it's worth, my kid had
your poster.

He leaves.

EXT. DARRYL'S BACKYARD -- DAY

Darryl in shorts and a T-shirt, walking the perimeter of
his property line.

He stops. Looks at the grass at his feet.

He picks up a baseball.

He throws it -- hard -- to a fence about ninety feet away.
The ball SMACKS against wood. Bounces back to him.

He picks it up. Throws it again.

INT. DARRYL'S HOUSE -- LATER

Six months of this. The monitor beeping when he gets too
close to the line. Charisse with the kids.

A CALENDAR on the kitchen wall. Days crossed off.

The TV showing baseball. The Mets without him. The
Dodgers without him.

He watches.

He has nowhere else to be.

EXT. DARRYL'S BACKYARD -- DAY (LATER)

The federal officer back. He kneels. UNCLIPS the monitor.

Darryl rubs his ankle.

He looks past the officer to the open street beyond his
property line.

He doesn't move.

INT. YANKEE CLUBHOUSE -- DAY

1996. Doc's first day. He walks in.

JOE TORRE in the corner of the room, in his first season too.

DON ZIMMER at his locker.

DAVID CONE, two stalls away. Cone glances up. Sees Doc.

A pause. Cone NODS.

Doc nods back.

The room they have to share. After everything.

NEWSPAPER (V.O.)
The Yankees that beat their
predecessors in '78 are gone.
This is a new room. A new
season. The man with the
shoulder full of innings is
the one who has to start.

INT. CITY DINER -- NIGHT

Doc with RON DOCK. Coffees.

RON DOCK
You know how this goes. The
aftercare keeps going. The
tests get more frequent. You
stay willing.

DOC
I'm willing.

RON DOCK
I know you are. Today.

INT. YANKEE STADIUM -- DAY

May 14, 1996. SEATTLE MARINERS at the Yankees.

EARLY INNINGS. Light rain. The kind of attendance that
isn't quite full.

DOC on the mound. The leg kick. The motion that has fewer
miles than the body around it. The fastball -- not what it
was. The curve -- still a thing.

A WALK. A WALK. A GROUNDOUT. The first inning ends with no
hits.

DUGOUT. Doc towels his head. Looks at his hand. JOE TORRE walks past, doesn't say anything.

SECOND INNING. Strike. Strike. Foul. A POP-UP. A SWINGING THIRD STRIKE. Another walk. The base runner left.

The scoreboard: 0 hits.

THIRD. FOURTH. FIFTH. Doc settles. The fastball gets a little. The curve breaks late.

DUGOUT. The dance every baseball team does when there's no hits through five: nobody sits next to him. Nobody talks to him. He sits at the end of the bench. His own stretch of empty seats.

PAUL O'NEILL across the dugout meets Doc's eyes for a beat. Looks away.

MEL STOTTLEMYRE comes out between innings. Looks at Doc. Reads his face. Says nothing. Walks back.

The bullpen warms behind him. They have to.

SIXTH. Nothing.

CUT TO: MOTHER GOODEN watching at home in Tampa. Sitting on the edge of the recliner. Father Gooden's chair empty next to her. Hand to her mouth.

She hasn't moved in twenty minutes.

The phone next to her hasn't rung yet. It will.

CUT TO: MONICA in the stands at Yankee Stadium. ARIEL -- seven, eight years old -- sitting on her lap. Monica's hand over Ariel's, holding it tight. Ariel doesn't know what's happening but she knows from her mother's grip that something is.

A FAN behind them: "He's six outs away. Don't say it."

Another fan immediately: "You said it."

CUT TO: A HOSPITAL ROOM. DAVID CONE in a bed -- aneurysm recovery, the long road. The TV mounted in the corner is on. He is staring at it. He has not blinked.

A NURSE walks in with a clipboard. Sees what he's watching. Sets the clipboard down. Stands next to him. Watches with him.

CUT TO: ST. PAUL SAINTS CLUBHOUSE. A small clubhouse. Worn carpet. A tube TV on a stand. DARRYL in his Northern League

uniform, sitting on a folding chair, hat in his lap.

A YOUNG SAINT looks at him. Looks at the TV.

YOUNG SAINT

That your guy?

DARRYL

Yeah. That's my guy.

The young Saint sits down next to him. They watch.

SEVENTH INNING. Doc walks his fifth batter. The crowd gasps. Then exhales when the next batter pops up.

DUGOUT BENCH. Empty seats around Doc. He stares forward. Gum.

The PHONE in the dugout rings. Stottlemeyer answers it. Listens. Hangs up. Doesn't tell Doc what it was.

EIGHTH. A line drive to second. A throw to first. A leaping catch in left.

Three more outs.

The crowd is on its feet now. Not quite cheering. Holding something between cheering and prayer.

CUT TO: NEGRON on his porch in Tampa, watching on a TV through the window of his living room. Standing. Hands on his hips.

He is crying.

DUGOUT, EIGHTH. Doc sits. Nobody around him. He stares at the floor. Looks up. Catches PAUL O'NEILL'S eye again. O'Neill nods.

Doc nods back.

NINTH INNING.

Three outs from the no-hitter. Three outs from a thing his father didn't live to see. Three outs from a thing that has been the only quiet thing in twelve years.

A GROUND BALL. Out one.

The crowd a wall of sound now.

A POP-UP to short. JETER under it. Catches it.

Out two.

CUT TO: MOTHER GOODEN, sliding off the chair onto her knees. Hands together. Eyes closed.

CUT TO: MONICA, gripping Ariel's hand so hard the girl has to peel one finger up to breathe.

CUT TO: CONE, sitting up straighter in the bed.

CUT TO: DARRYL in the Saints clubhouse, standing now.

Final batter. The count goes 3-2.

Stadium quiet.

Doc sets.

The pitch.

Ground ball to second. ROBERTO ALOMAR -- no, this is '96 -- PAT KELLY scoops it. Tosses to TINO at first.

Out.

The Yankees come out of the dugout in a wave. They mob Doc on the mound. He goes under the pile.

Bernie. Jeter. Mariano. O'Neill. Stottlemire last, finding him in the scrum and putting both hands on his face.

The crowd. The stadium.

Doc carried off.

His face, on the shoulders of teammates, looking up at the sky.

CUT TO: MOTHER GOODEN on her knees, weeping.

CUT TO: MONICA and ARIEL holding each other.

CUT TO: CONE in the hospital bed. The nurse next to him holds his shoulder. He doesn't see her. He sees only the TV, which has cut to a closeup of Doc's face.

CUT TO: DARRYL alone in the Saints clubhouse now, the young Saint having walked away to give him a moment. He stands. Watches his guy.

His face is wet.

He picks up a phone. Dials.

INT. YANKEE STADIUM CORRIDOR -- DAY

A clubhouse phone rings. Doc -- still in uniform, still catching his breath, still shaking from it -- picks up.

DOC
Hello.

DARRYL (V.O.)
You motherfucker.

Doc laughs. The first laugh from him in this film that has no edge in it.

DOC
Yeah.

DARRYL (V.O.)
I love you.

DOC
Yeah.

DARRYL (V.O.)
Yeah.

He hangs up. Stands a moment. Closes his eyes.

For the first time in this film, his face is at rest.

INT. ST. PAUL SAINTS CLUBHOUSE -- DAY

May 1996. Brief.

DARRYL in an INDEPENDENT-LEAGUE uniform. NORTHERN LEAGUE.

He signs a CONTRACT in front of him.

INT. YANKEE CLUBHOUSE -- DAY

July 4, 1996. Darryl walks in.

Doc looks up from his locker.

They haven't been teammates since 1990.

A long beat. Doc nods. Darryl nods.

DOC
Straw.

DARRYL
Doc.

DOC

Welcome.

That's all. They survived. The champions of '86 reunited as forty-something role players for George Steinbrenner.

INT. YANKEE STADIUM -- DAY

July 28, 1996. KANSAS CITY. Bottom of the ninth.

Darryl steps in.

A TWO-RUN BLAST. Walk-off. The dugout MOBS him.

CHYRON: Strawberry's 300th career home run.

INT. KINGDOME -- NIGHT

August 28. BENCH-CLEARING BRAWL vs. Mariners.

DARRYL in the middle. EJECTED.

INT. STEINBRENNER'S OFFICE -- DAY

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Ever since the May 14 no-hitter, Gooden had become a spokesman for second chances. He said yes to virtually every interview request, TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, everyone wanted to chronicle this storybook resurrection. By the time the summer was over, Gooden was on the cover of The Sporting News and New York magazine, and he would soon be featured on ABC's Turning Point. The producers wanted to spend a full hour on the dual sagas of Gooden and Strawberry. Less than a week after the no-hitter, Doc had been contacted by movie producer Norman Twain, who had the idea of turning his life story into a feature film.

GEORGE STEINBRENNER stands. NEGRON across from him.

STEINBRENNER

That was a fucking disgrace
out there! And let me tell
(MORE)

STEINBRENNER (CONT'D)
 you something -- if I have
 to hear one more thing about
 that goddamn movie, you're
 both gone!

Negron walks back to Doc's locker, where Doc is sorting out
 the pounding he just absorbed from Seattle's hitters.

DOC
 What was that about?

NEGRON
 (casually)
 Ah, nothing. George just
 wanted to know how your arm
 felt.

Negron weighs whether to tell Doc the truth. Asks himself
 what the point would be. How would it benefit the
 emotionally fragile Gooden to know that Steinbrenner had
 turned his infamous temper on him? Would that make him
 pitch any better? Would that make the tendinitis in his
 shoulder disappear?

Truth was, Doc's real enemy was the number of innings in
 his shoulder, not any TV interview or movie project.

NEGRON
 (V.O.)
 He'd been throwing for nearly
 an entire year without rest
 and was desperate for time
 off. But it was impossible for
 Gooden to make that request,
 not now, not with David Cone
 still on the disabled list and
 the Yankee lead shrinking by
 the day.

INT. ABC NEWS -- DAY

Quick cuts. TURNING POINT.

SAWYER
 (V.O.)
 On the eve of the World
 Series, chief correspondent
 Meredith Vieira with a story
 bigger than baseball.

VIEIRA
 And a good day for Dwight
 Gooden these days?

DOC (ON CAMERA)
 Being clean and sober comes
 first because if I'm not that,
 then I don't get the chance to
 win a game.

SAWYER (V.O.)
 And the man who gave them
 both a second chance.

STEINBRENNER (ON CAMERA)
 I don't want to tell a guy
 when he's 31 or 33, "Hey, your
 life's over."

KLAPISCH (ON CAMERA)
 It really is a story you
 couldn't possibly have
 scripted.

The film consuming itself in real time.

INT. ATLANTA / YANKEE DUGOUT -- NIGHT

1996 World Series. Game 6.

Doc and Darryl on the bench. The Yankees coming back from
 0-2. Doc isn't on the WS roster. Darryl is mostly a pinch
 hitter.

They watch their team win.

They are champions for the second time. They didn't earn it
 the way they earned '86. It still counts.

DARRYL leans toward DOC.

DARRYL
 It still counts, right?

DOC
 It still counts.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY -- DAY

Two championship parades stitched together.

The 1986 ticker tape in newsreel grain.

The 1996 ticker tape in clean color.

The same streets. The same faces leaning out of office
 windows. The same paper falling.

The wind shifts.

INT. DOC'S APARTMENT -- DAY

1997. Doc on a couch alone. A bowl of cereal in his lap. Watching baseball on a different team.

His champion's ring on the coffee table next to the bowl. He doesn't look at it.

INT. DARRYL'S HOUSE -- DAY

1997. Darryl on a couch alone. A book open in his lap. The spine: BIBLE.

He turns a page.

Two parallel rooms. Two parallel quiets.

A PHONE in each begins to ring.

Neither one picks up.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- DAY

October 1998. DARRYL and CHARISSE across the desk from a DOCTOR.

Colon. DOCTOR

CHARISSE
(very quiet)
What?

Cancer. DOCTOR

A beat. Darryl stares at the wall.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
We'll schedule the surgery.

INT. YANKEE STADIUM -- DAY

GAME 1, 1998 WORLD SERIES.

CHARISSE on the mound. Throwing out the first pitch.

The number 39 embroidered on every Yankee cap.

PADRES lined up across the way.

INT. HOSPITAL / CLEVELAND CLUBHOUSE -- DAY

Split. DARRYL in a hospital bed at COLUMBIA-PRESBYTERIAN.
DOC in the Cleveland clubhouse.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Gooden called Strawberry from Boston, two days before the surgery, and said he would pray for him. Strawberry responded by needling Gooden about his ejection from Game 2 of the division series against the Boston Red Sox.

DOC

(on phone)

How you feeling?

DARRYL

Like a Yankee got ejected from Game 2 of the division series.

DOC

I'm not playing that.

DARRYL

You sat down on a bench, Doc.

DOC

I hung my head.

DARRYL

Yeah. Looked good on TV.

DOC

Shut up, Straw.

DARRYL

They cutting me open tomorrow, Doc.

DOC

I'm praying.

DARRYL

I know.

DOC

Five minutes ago, I was on the phone with Charisse. Now I'm on the phone with you. Two months ago, I was watching you throw a baseball.

DARRYL
One year ago, I was watching
you throw a baseball.

DOC
Different baseball.

DARRYL
Different us.

DOC
Yeah.

Five minutes of comedy between two men who almost killed
themselves.

INT. RECOVERY MONTAGE

Brief.

DARRYL rehabbing. KIDS around him. CHARISSE.

DOC winning his ring with the Yankees. The hat held high.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Flowers, cards, telegrams,
candy and phone calls
overwhelm Columbia-Presbyterian
Medical Center.

Things were genuinely better for a moment.

FADE OUT.

ACT V

THE LONG ECHO

INT. TAMPA TREATMENT CENTER -- DAY

October 21, 2000. DARRYL on a couch. The TV showing GAME 1
of the SUBWAY SERIES.

The Mets and the Yankees. The same field.

The cameras pan the YANKEE DUGOUT.

He is supposed to be there.

He gets up. He doesn't tell anyone. He leaves.

EXT. OUTSIDE FLA. REHAB CENTER -- DAY

Darryl waits for a ride. A car pulls up. BEVERLY at the wheel.

BEVERLY
Hey.

DARRYL
Hey.

BEVERLY
Sorry. I'm late.

DARRYL
Nah. It's cool. They'll wait.

He gets in the car.

EXT. TAMPA / DRUG HOUSE -- NIGHT

A four-day binge. Tampa, then Daytona Beach. Crack and prescription drugs.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
He said she took him to a nearby motel where there were a total of five men who had guns and took his jewelry. Strawberry said the men later took him with them in a search for more drugs, and eventually drove him to Orlando, where he was abandoned in a motel. Police are also trying to determine the legitimacy of a kidnapping allegation.

We render it ambiguously. A flicker of FIVE MEN. A flicker of just Darryl ALONE in a motel.

What happened? What did he say happened? Both?

INT. SHEA / YANKEE STADIUM -- DAY

NARRATOR (V.O.)
He haunts this New York-New York World Series from the grave. And he isn't even dead. But there are people who think Darryl Strawberry is working on it.

The men who loved him mourning him while he is alive.

HERNANDEZ

(to a reporter, before
Game 4)

I heard about it ten minutes
ago.

(beat)

I wanted to cry. This might be
over the edge. This could be
suicidal.

DOC, in the dugout, dodging reporters.

DOC

Gotta stretch.

DOC (V.O., later)

I know this is probably tough
for him right now with all
that's going on. To see
everything that's taking place
has to be hard. But my main
concern is his health.

DON ZIMMER

(to a reporter, in
passing)

I don't even want to go into
this. How many times can we be
asked? It's easy to say you're
sad. And I am. But I don't
want any connection to it.

JOE TORRE

(to camera)

He's doing this to himself.

NELSON DOUBLEDAY

(to camera)

I cry for Darryl. I really cry
for him.

HERNANDEZ

(to camera)

It was amazing here in '86.
Honestly, it's so corporate
now -- the crowds seem a
little quieter. Back then,
there was a buzz. It was
electric.

Each man saying a name as if it has already moved into
memory.

INT. CAR -- DAY

The Tampa search.

DOC at the wheel. RON DOCK in the passenger seat. NEGRON in the back, on a phone.

Tampa Bay light. Heat. The kind of afternoon where the air shimmers off asphalt.

NEGRON
(into phone)
Anything? Yeah. Okay.
(hangs up)
Nobody's seen him at the
Phoenix House. He's not at
home. He's not with Charisse.

DOC
He's somewhere here.

RON DOCK
He's somewhere here.

EXT. TAMPA NEIGHBORHOOD -- DAY

Doc pulls the car over in front of a SHOTGUN HOUSE with a sagging porch. Walks up alone. The other two stay in the car, watching.

He knocks. A WOMAN in a robe answers. Sees him. Steps back.

DOC
Sister.

WOMAN
Doc.

DOC
You seen Straw?

She looks down. Looks up.

WOMAN
Not this week.

DOC
He been here.

WOMAN
Two weeks back. He been here.
Not since.

DOC
You hear from anybody.

WOMAN
Doc. Honey.

She puts her hand on his arm.

WOMAN (CONT'D)
You got to find him.

DOC
Yeah.

He walks back to the car.

EXT. ANOTHER STREET -- DAY

A DRUG HOUSE. Doc walks up. A YOUNG MAN with a hat low over his eyes is on the steps. Sees Doc. Stands.

YOUNG MAN
Yo. You Dwight Gooden.

DOC
Yeah.

YOUNG MAN
What you want here, Dwight Gooden.

DOC
Looking for somebody.

YOUNG MAN
You looking for the wrong house.

DOC
Maybe. Maybe not. Tall brother. Skinny.

YOUNG MAN
Lot of skinny brothers.

DOC
Strawberry skinny.

The young man's face changes. Just a flicker.

YOUNG MAN
Move on, Dwight Gooden.

Doc waits. The young man waits. Doc moves on.

INT. CAR -- DAY

NEGRON

He recognized the name.

DOC

He recognized the name.

RON DOCK

They all recognize the name.

DOC

Yeah.

EXT. ANOTHER STREET -- DAY

Doc on a corner with a HOMELESS MAN, who's nodding, gesturing east, gesturing west, his hands telling competing stories.

HOMELESS MAN

Saw him Wednesday. Or Tuesday.
One of those. He had a chain
on. Then later he didn't.

DOC

Where, brother. Where.

HOMELESS MAN

Up by the freeway. The motel.

DOC

Which motel.

HOMELESS MAN

The one off the Bay-side
exit. The one with the sign
that don't light up no more.

Doc gives him a twenty. The man bows his head.

INT. CAR -- DAY

DOC

The motel by the freeway.

NEGRON

There's three of those.

RON DOCK

We'll do all three.

EXT. MOTEL ONE -- DAY

A CLERK behind plexiglass. No, no Strawberry. No anyone matching the description.

EXT. MOTEL TWO -- DAY

Empty parking lot. A FOR SALE sign in the window. A bird in one of the rooms with the door hanging open.

EXT. MOTEL THREE -- DAY

A clerk. A long look at his book.

CLERK

Maybe.

DOC

Maybe.

CLERK

Two days ago. Maybe.

DOC

Which room.

CLERK

Already cleaned out.

DOC

What kind of state was it in.

The clerk doesn't answer. Doc holds his eye.

CLERK

Bad.

INT. CAR -- DAY

Quiet. The three men driving in a straight line through Tampa with no destination.

NEGRON

(very quiet)

He could be dead, Doc.

RON DOCK

He's not dead.

NEGRON

He could be.

DOC

He's not dead. I would know.

He doesn't say how he would know. Nobody asks.

DOC'S PHONE RINGS.

DOC

Yeah.

(listening)

Yeah.

(beat)

Daytona?

(beat)

Yeah.

CUT TO: Highway. Doc at the wheel. Ron Dock and Negron beside him.

RON DOCK

(later, V.O., over the drive)

We picked him up on the highway. That was the saddest sight for me. I thought a couple of times in the car we may lose him. He cried. I cried.

The car pulls over. Both men get out. Doc and Darryl embrace. Both crying.

DARRYL

(broken)

I'm sorry. I messed up. I really messed up this time. I'm sorry.

ST. JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL in TAMPA.

Suicide watch.

INT. CBS / 60 MINUTES -- DAY

SAFER (V.O.)

No echo of cheering crowds, only the arm of a friend for support. Washed up, addicted to drugs and alcohol, and eaten alive by cancer.

DARRYL (ON CAMERA)

I'm just very sorry. Right now I'm just very sick.

SAFER (V.O.)

That body that once had so
much power and grace seemed
hollow and broken, defeated.

DARRYL (ON CAMERA)

I have a wife and I have five
children. And, you know, I
look forward to being a dad,
and being a husband, and
being something to them
instead of being something to
the world of baseball.

LASORDA (ON CAMERA)

He's got a lot of fame, he's
got a family, and yet he put
something inside of him
knowingly that this thing
could ruin his career, ruin
his entire life.

CHARISSE (ON CAMERA)

Why can't he stop? Why can't
he quit?

RON DOCK (ON CAMERA)

There's a Darryl Strawberry
in every household.

DOC (ON CAMERA)

That could easily have been
me.

INT. HILLSBOROUGH COURT / DATELINE -- DAY

JANE PAULEY across from DARRYL. Jail blues. Wrist on knee.

DARRYL

My career is over -- done. I'm
physically not able to go
anymore. I just don't have
the desire to go anymore.

JUDGE FLORENCE FOSTER.

JUDGE FOSTER

Resume chemo, Mr. Strawberry,
or you are history.

An ELECTRONIC MONITOR is fitted on Darryl's ankle.

EXT. HIGHWAY -- DAY

February 2002.

DOC's CADILLAC ESCALADE weaves through traffic. A COP CAR pulls it over.

Red-eyed, Doc leans out the window.

DOC
Officer.

POLICE OFFICER
License and registration.
(taking them)
Where you going, sir?

DOC
I'm going to pick my son up.
For a game.

POLICE OFFICER
You been drinking? It sure
smells like it, Doc.

DOC
Only maybe three beers.
Really. I'm cool.

The officer notices an OPEN BOTTLE OF MICHELOB LIGHT in the cupholder.

Doc sweats it out as the cop runs his license. The radio reports back: "...and that's been suspended for failure to pay."

POLICE OFFICER
Why don't you get out, Doc?

Doc staggers out. Points to his knee.

AT JAIL.

DOC
(exhausted)
No fucking tests. No more
fucking tests. I'm not
fucking doing it.

He made it back. He won a ring. He pitched a no-hitter.

He's still sick.

INT. THE 2000S -- MONTAGE

PHOENIX HOUSE. Darryl signing in. Signing out.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

It's a persuasive argument because, after all, since when is consensual sex or smoking cigarettes cause for imprisonment? Still, the hardhearted -- including more than one Yankee official -- will say: enough. To them, Strawberry is a multiple-offense loser who deserves all the humiliation and embarrassment he's enduring today, including jail. Nevertheless, there are disturbing elements to his case. Phoenix House officials admit "someone goofed" in reporting that Darryl had \$140,000 in his possession during treatment; the actual sum was \$140.

JUDGES. PROBATION OFFICERS.

A COURTROOM. Darryl in front of a judge. Hand on a Bible. Promising. Meaning it.

Six months later. SAME COURTROOM. Different judge. Same Darryl. Same Bible. Same promise.

CHARISSE leaving with the kids -- a packed Mercedes, the kids buckled in, looking out the back window.

CHARISSE coming back -- a different car, the kids running to him.

CHARISSE leaving again.

DARRYL JR., a freshman in high school. A baseball glove on his bed, untouched.

DARRYL JR., a sophomore. The glove still there.

DARRYL JR., in a college dorm. The glove now on a shelf above his desk. He looks at it. Then doesn't.

A SPONSORSHIP-CHECK SIGNING somewhere -- Darryl smiling for a photo with EXECUTIVES, a NEW CAR behind him.

A WORK-RELEASE WAREHOUSE. Doc in a vest. Pushing a cart.

A NA MEETING in a basement somewhere. Doc sharing. Doc shutting up. Doc sharing again.

A CHURCH BASEMENT. Darryl in a folding chair leading something -- a Bible study, the start of his ministry. He's better at it than he expects to be.

A WOMAN in the front row taking notes. Mid-thirties. A recovering addict herself. TRACY.

She raises her hand. Asks a question. Darryl answers.

After. The folding chairs being put away. Tracy helping. Darryl helping. Their hands meet on the same chair.

LATER. A small wedding. 2006. Darryl in a suit. Tracy in white. Ruby in the front row.

The fifth woman. The one who lasts.

A BOOK COVER: STRAW: FINDING MY WAY.

A BOOK COVER: HEAT: MY LIFE ON AND OFF THE DIAMOND.

DOC on a couch in a daytime-TV studio, talking about it.

DARRYL on a couch in a daytime-TV studio, TRACY beside him, talking about it.

NEITHER OF THEM watching the other's segment.

DOC, alone in his apartment, a microwave dinner in front of him. The microwave beeps. He doesn't get up.

DARRYL with TRACY at a kitchen table. Cooking together. Saying grace.

The years pass.

There is no dramatic arc. Just life.

INT. PRISON / PROCESSING -- DAY

2006. Brief. DOC in a line. ID photo. Number. The intake officer doesn't look at his face.

DOC
(V.O., quiet)
You're either getting better
or you're getting worse.

The line moves.

EXT. SHEA STADIUM -- DAY

August 19, 2006. Light drizzle.

20th Anniversary of the 1986 win.

THE ARRIVALS. A side gate. Cars pulling up.

LENNY first, in a flashy suit, hugging EVERYONE who steps out of a cab. He is huge. Heavy. Loud.

KEITH, in a blazer over a polo. Ron Darling next to him in something tailored. They are mic'd up for SNY before they even get inside.

DAVEY in a ball cap. Older than the camera expects. He stops to greet a SECURITY GUARD who remembers him.

CARTER -- alive, smiling, a SHARPIE in his hand for an autograph someone hasn't asked for yet. Bible peeking out of his back pocket.

MOOKIE with his SON, who's grown. WALLY. OJEDA.

KEVIN MITCHELL pulls up alone, in a black town car. Gets out. Stands with his hands in his pockets a moment. Then walks in.

A TELEVISION CAMERA tracks him. He looks at it. Doesn't smile. Doesn't not smile.

A REPORTER catches HOWARD JOHNSON.

REPORTER
HoJo. Who else is coming?

HOJO
Most everybody.

REPORTER
Doc?

A pause.

HOJO
Not today.

The reporter writes that down.

INT. SHEA CLUBHOUSE -- DAY

The old men in their old lockers, which have other men's nameplates on them now. Each one walks to where his stall used to be. Stands a moment.

KEITH at his old corner. Touches the wood.

CARTER at his.

WALLY at his.

DAVEY in the manager's office, on the couch, with his old ASSISTANT COACH. Both holding cups of coffee.

DAVEY
He should be here.

ASSISTANT COACH
I know.

DAVEY
He should be here.

ASSISTANT COACH
I know, Davey.

EXT. SHEA STADIUM -- DAY

The drizzle thickens, then thins. The grounds crew waves it through. The ceremony will go.

The old players walking out one by one, announced.

PA ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Number eleven, second baseman
WALLY BACKMAN!

Wally tipping his cap. The crowd warm.

PA ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Number four, RON DARLING!

Darling out, smiling.

PA ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Number eight, GARY CARTER!

KID waves with both arms. The crowd's loudest yet.

PA ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Number seventeen, KEITH
HERNANDEZ!

Mex with a hand up, the cool-guy lean still in his walk.

LENNY out to a roar. MOOKIE with a grin. DAVEY almost shy, not quite.

A pause in the announcements. The crowd waits.

The announcer doesn't say a name.

In the dugout, the names that were going to be said NEXT are not said.

PA ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
And from Crenshaw, California,
number eighteen --

INT. SHEA TUNNEL -- DAY

DARRYL waits at the lip of the tunnel.

He is older. Sober today. Alive.

He hears the announcer's voice through the concrete. Hears his own name coming.

He looks at his hands.

He looks up.

He walks.

EXT. SHEA STADIUM -- DAY

PA ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
DARRYL STRAWBERRY!

Darryl walks out to cheers. Slow motion if we must.

The crowd.

CROWD
Dar-ryl! Dar-ryl!

The crowd we heard in the cold open. The same crowd. Older.

Some of them have been waiting twenty years to see him again. Some weren't born then.

His face. The kid in right field who said "I'm just doing my thing, man" is somewhere inside this man.

He waves. He stops walking before he gets to the line of '86 Mets. Lets the cheer wash over him.

Then he walks the rest of the way.

KEITH meets him first. They embrace.

CARTER next. Then LENNY, who lifts him an inch off the ground. WALLY. MOOKIE. DAVEY.

The line of survivors, plus one alive who shouldn't be.

Doc not in the line.

Doc in prison.

That fact is the loudest absence in the stadium.

He survived.

INT. SNY BOOTH -- DAY

Darryl with KEITH and RON. Banter. Warmth.

KEITH

You got a new home, Straw.

DARRYL

Yeah, Mex. Long time coming.

RON DARLING

We missed you.

DARRYL

I missed you guys.

Keith's coke deal in Pittsburgh. Darryl's punch in Houston. The team picture fight. The cat night. None of that is mentioned.

They survived together too.

EXT. SHEA STADIUM -- DAY

2008. WRECKING BALLS swing.

The infield grass torn up. The outfield grass torn up. Box seats lifted out by crane.

A '86 BANNER above the third deck being lowered for the last time. Folded by GROUNDSKEEPERS.

EXT. CITI FIELD -- DAY

2009. Steel rising where Shea used to be.

A WORKER in a hard hat eating his lunch on the bones of the unfinished upper deck. Looking out at the same skyline Darryl used to look out at.

INT. DOC'S CAR -- DAY

March 23, 2010. Long Island Expressway. Late morning.

DOC at the wheel. Forty-five years old. Eyes hollow.
Sweating in cold weather.

In the back, his SON DYLAN -- five years old -- in a car
seat, looking out the window. A juice box in his hand.

A SUV in the next lane drifts. Doc doesn't see it.

The SUV's mirror clips Doc's mirror. A small impact. The
SUV lays on the horn.

Doc looks at the rearview. Sees the SUV behind him now,
flashing its lights.

He makes a decision. Accelerates. Pulls past two cars.
Changes lanes.

DYLAN
(from the back)
Daddy?

DOC
It's okay, buddy.

DYLAN
You're going fast.

DOC
Just a little fast. It's okay.

He glances at the rearview again. The SUV still on him.

INT. POLICE CAR -- DAY (LATER)

Doc in the back seat. His son in the front, with a
SECOND OFFICER who is talking gently to him. The officer
has a juice box in her hand from somewhere. She is
treating him like a five-year-old.

Doc watches through the partition.

His son is fine. His son is laughing at something the
officer said.

His son does not yet know what just happened.

Doc leans his head against the cold window. Closes his
eyes.

INT. POLICE STATION -- DAY

Doc being processed. The desk officer holds up a clipboard.

DESK OFFICER
Driving while intoxicated.
Endangering the welfare of a
child. Leaving the scene.
Driving with a suspended
license. Possession.

DOC
(very quiet)
Yeah.

DESK OFFICER
Mr. Gooden.

DOC
Yeah.

DESK OFFICER
Your son is fine.

DOC
Thank you.

He closes his eyes.

INT. PAWN SHOP -- DAY

A few weeks later. Some city, somewhere. A YOUNG GUY
behind a glass counter, hat backwards.

DOC across the counter. He sets something on the glass.

It is a YANKEES WORLD SERIES RING. 1996.

The young guy picks it up. Turns it. The diamonds. The
inscription. Looks at Doc. Recognizes him -- not from
the ring, from his face.

YOUNG GUY
Doc.

DOC
Yeah.

YOUNG GUY
You sure.

Doc nods.

The young guy puts the ring under a loupe. Takes it
out. Pulls cash from a drawer. Counts. Slides it across.

Doc takes the cash. Doesn't count it.

The young guy puts the ring in a velvet-lined case under the counter.

Doc walks out. The bell above the door rings.

The young guy stands there. Looks down at the ring in the case.

He doesn't put a price tag on it.

EXT. A SMALL CHURCH -- DAY

2012. DARRYL in a suit, on the steps. Bible in his hand. Smiling at people leaving the service.

A grandkid runs up to him. He picks her up.

EXT. A HALFWAY HOUSE -- DAY

2013. DOC walking out. Bag in hand. His hair grayer.

He looks both ways. Walks toward a waiting car.

INT. DOC'S APARTMENT -- DAY

2015. Doc on a couch. The TV is on but he isn't watching. The pipe in his hand.

He sets it down.

Picks it up.

Sets it down.

Time, doing what time does.

INT. WFAN STUDIO -- DAY

March 2016. DARRYL on the other side of a console. Headphones

on. He has the loose, focused look of a man who's been sober a long time. A HOST in front of him.

HOST

So you're saying he's --

DARRYL

He's a junkie. He's a complete junkie-addict.

HOST

Doc is.

DARRYL
Doc is. I'm not gonna sugarcoat
this. I love him. I love him
like a brother. But if I don't
say it, who says it?

The host looks down at the console. Lets it sit.

DARRYL (CONT'D)
He's gonna die. If he doesn't
get help.

INT. DOC'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Same day, later. The radio interview replayed on a sports
show on a flat-screen TV. DOC sits on the edge of a couch.
A coffee cup in his hand, untouched.

He doesn't change the channel. He doesn't get up.

He listens to Darryl say it again.

INT. PHONE CALL -- DAY

Two weeks later. Doc on his couch. Darryl on a couch in
another state. The split as it has always been.

DARRYL
Doc.

DOC
Straw.

DARRYL
You hear what I said.

DOC
I heard.

DARRYL
I shouldn't have said it like
that.

DOC
You meant it, though.

DARRYL
I meant some of it.

DOC
Yeah.

DARRYL
You coming to the thing in May.

DOC
I'm coming.

DARRYL
Okay.

DOC
Okay.

That's the call.

EXT. CITI FIELD -- DAY

May 28, 2016. 30th Anniversary of the 1986 win.

A new stadium where Shea used to be. Brick where there was concrete. The Jackie Robinson Rotunda. The CITI logo on the scoreboard.

Old-timers arriving. Some of them with grandkids.
PHOTOGRAPHERS. SMARTPHONES out where '06 had handhelds.

KEITH. RON DARLING. LENNY -- larger than '06, smaller than someone he used to be. WALLY. MOOKIE. DAVEY, older now, the cancer he beat is in his face. OJEDA. HOJO.

A TRIBUTE BOOK on a folding table near the entrance. The cover: GARY CARTER. The kid who read his Bible at his locker. Brain cancer, 2012.

A YOUNG FAN, twelve or thirteen, holds his father's hand, asks who Carter is. The father starts to explain. Stops.

INT. CITI FIELD CLUBHOUSE -- DAY

A circle of folding chairs. The men arranging themselves in a way that almost reproduces an old team photo. Without saying so.

ONE CHAIR is left empty. Carter's.

DAVEY in the middle. The crooked grin. He sits slowly.

DAVEY
We're missing one.

KEITH
We're missing one.

MOOKIE
Kid would've loved this.

DAVEY
Kid would've taken over.

Quiet laughter. Davey looks around the circle. Counts in his head.

DAVEY (CONT'D)
Where's Doc.

KEITH looks at the door. RON DARLING looks at the door.

INT. CITI FIELD TUNNEL -- DAY

DOC stands at the lip of the tunnel. Hands in his pockets. Looking out at the light on the field.

He is fifty-one. Thinner than the body the no-hitter came out of. Sober today.

DARRYL walks up behind him. They stand a moment.

DARRYL
You look skinny.

DOC
You look fat.

A beat. Then they're holding each other. The hug a long one. Old men.

DARRYL
I'm sorry.

DOC
Me too.

DARRYL
You good today?

DOC
Today, yeah.

DARRYL
That's all we got.

DOC
That's all we got.

EXT. CITI FIELD -- DAY

The introductions begin. Mookie out first to a roar. Lenny loose, waving with both arms. Wally. HoJo. Davey takes his time.

KEITH and RON DARLING in the dugout, micced for SNY, watching their teammates walk out one by one.

PA ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
From his hometown of Crenshaw,
California, number eighteen --
DARRYL STRAWBERRY!

The crowd. Older voices in it. Some new ones.

CROWD
Dar-ryl! Dar-ryl!

He waves. Tips his cap. The grin's still in there somewhere. He stops at the line of '86 Mets and turns back toward the tunnel.

He waits.

PA ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
And from Tampa, Florida, number
sixteen -- DWIGHT "DOCTOR K"
GOODEN!

The K signs come up in the stands. Hand-painted, the way they used to be. Some of them held by KIDS who weren't born when he threw the no-hitter.

DOC walks out.

He tips his cap. Long. Slow.

He reaches the line. Reaches Darryl. They clasp hands. Both of them turn, together, to face the crowd.

The crowd doesn't quite know which decade it's cheering.

Both of them. Both alive. Both there.

INT. SNY BOOTH -- DAY

DARRYL. DOC. KEITH. RON. All of them in their fifties. The formality of broadcast and the looseness of survivors.

KEITH
Welcome home, boys.

DARRYL
Long time, Mex.

DOC
Yeah.

RON DARLING
Was that everything you thought
it'd be today?

DARRYL
Pretty close.

DOC
More than I thought.

KEITH
More than you thought.

DOC
More than I thought.

The cat night. The flat-tire lie. The Pittsburgh deal. The
punch in Houston. The team picture fight. The cellblocks.
Carter's funeral. None of that is mentioned.

They survived. Most of them.

INT. INTRO -- DARKNESS

The dirty BASEBALL again. The cigar voice.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
We tell lies when we are
afraid... afraid of what we
don't know, afraid of what
others will think, afraid of
what will be found out about
us. But every time we tell a
lie, the thing that we fear
grows stronger.
(beat)
Believing is another story.
The reasons rarely last.
Every day we all head up to
bat.

The SOUND of a baseball hit cleanly.

We don't see where it goes.

FADE OUT.

THE END.