



Knocking on Heaven's Door: Six Minor Leaguers in Search of the Baseball Dream

Marty Dobrow

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The rich slice of Americana found in minor league baseball presents a contradictory culture. On the one hand, the minors are filled with wholesome, family-friendly entertainment-fluffy mascots, kitschy promotions, and earnest young men signing autographs for wide-eyed Little Leaguers. On the other, they comprise a world of cutthroat competition in which a teammate's failure or injury can be the cause of quiet celebration and 90 percent of all players never play a single inning in the major leagues.

In *Knocking on Heaven's Door*, award-winning sportswriter Marty Dobrow examines this double-edged culture by chronicling the lives of six minor leaguers-Brad Baker, Doug Clark, Manny Delcarmen, Randy Ruiz, Matt Torra, and Charlie Zink-all struggling to make their way to "The Show." What links them together, aside from their common goal, is that they are all represented by the same team of agents-Jim and Lisa Masteralexis and their partner Steve McKelvey-whose own aspirations parallel those of the players they represent.

The story begins during spring training in 2005 and ends in the fall of 2008, followed by a brief epilogue that updates each player's fortunes through the 2009 season. Along the way Dobrow offers a revealing, intimate look at life in minor league baseball: the relentless tedium of its itinerant routines and daily rituals; the lure of performance-enhancing drugs as a means of gaining a competitive edge; the role of agents in negotiating each player's failures as well as his successes; and the influence of wives, girlfriends, and family members who have invested in the dream.

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