



Dopefiend

Donald Goines

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For twenty-three years of his life Donald Goines lived in the dark, despair-ridden world of the junkie. It started while he was doing military service in Korea and ended with his murder at the age of thirty nine. He had worked up to a hundred dollars a day habit and out of the agonizing hell came Dopefiend. It is the shocking nightmare story of a black heroin addict. Trapped in the festering sore of a major American ghetto, a young man and his girlfriend- both handsome, talented, and full of promise- are inexorably pulled into death of the hardcore junkie!

Dopefiend Details

Date : Published May 1st 2007 by Holloway House (first published January 1st 1971)

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Author : Donald Goines

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From Reader Review Dopefiend for online ebook

Kurt Reichenbaugh says

Brutal and hellish depiction of the lives of addicts in Detroit, around 1970. For the most part the novel follows a young couple, Terry and Teddy, as they descend into addiction and crime to fill their junk-need.

Chilly SavageMelon says

I thought I had pretty well exhausted all of the junkie novels out there: Burroughs, Jim Carroll, Nelson Algren, Herby Selby Jr., Iceberg Slim, Alister Crowley, Robert Bingham, James Folge et al, when I came across Goines in a NY Times article a few months ago. Apparently, his books are enjoying a resurgence after references made to his bad self in the rap world. He died in the mid-70's after having been a junky most of his life, who took up writing during one of many stints in prison, mostly to support his habit. It should be taken into account when I rate this book, I consider this drug pulp to be a subgenre of it's own, and it rates high within that context. It is nothing close to high minded literature, it's a junky writing about the world he knows, and I give him props over other junkies who never wrote a thing, just stole, whored, and shot shit. That having been said, this novel was completely hardcore! I'm sure the underworld of Detroit in the 70's was rough, but Goines spares nothing in his descriptions. The bloody floors of shooting gallerys; track marks leaking so much puss that addicts attempt to hit veins in their armpits, groins and necks, and even then it might take hours; freakish sex, including bestial acts with pregnant women; and common to all of these kinds of novels, the loss of innocence, decency, humanity that just keeps pulling the characters lower. And like most of those others mentioned, it is very much an anti-drug story. But unlike Requiem for a Dream, there isn't even a moment of bliss here where the characters are allowed to delude themselves with bigtime dreams of making it (holing up in heated rooms with huge stashes to nod undistrubed and re-shoot upon waking, about the best a junky could ever hope for) and peace. Things start going wrong for most everyone in the first chapter and the bottom just keeps on dropping out. It's sort of like an epic after school special, but the subject matter is so horrific, a judge would question sentencing even the most hardened juvenile to read it. I can't exactly judge the level of realism portrayed here; at times it seems over the top and yet when you think again, actually it seems even the most outlandish events described, or worse, could have happened, to some unfortunate soul on this earth. In the end kids, just be thankful your hooked on reading and not something worse.

Amanda B. says

I stumbled upon this book looking for another which I needed for one of my classes. When I found it, it was with about four other ones which were by the same author. I sat down for the next ten minutes to read each blurb then I picked one to read. When I read the back of this book it intrigued me the most so I started to read it. Dopefiend is about two young people, Terry and Teddy, who get warped into the dope fiend life style. Teddy was already addicted when he met Terry. Their relationship did not work out that well because Terry used the heroin once, so that Teddy could get a better price on the drugs, and she became addicted. Something interesting though, was that Donald Goines himself was a junkie for 23 years, and it started when he was in Korea fulfilling military services. Goines continues the story showing the extremes that Terry and Teddy go to, to get money for the drugs. Terry stole from her job, and Teddy (along with some of his

friends) would steal from random stores which had products that they could sell (like electronic stores). In the end, Terry was hospitalized and Teddy was killed because he got wrapped up in the business. The story captures the turbulent love of Terry and Teddy and shows the outcomes of a dope fiend life.

Because of the intensity of this story I felt as though I could not relate at all to this story. But I did find one little thing that I made a connection to; Terry's beginning thoughts after getting involved with the drug. Initially Terry's parents did not know she was doing any drugs, it wasn't until they found out she was stealing from her job that they found out. And after they found out Terry was slightly second guessing why she was doing drugs. She felt guilt for having let her parents down. That feeling of guilt was what I could connect to. Most of the things I do are to make my parents feel as though what they do for me is worth it. I don't like to let them down because then I feel as though they will feel horrible. Knowing that they brought me into this world makes me realize I would not even be living the life I am if it were not for them. And there are times when I tell them little white lies, everyone does. Sometimes I do get those feelings of guilt but I can overcome them, like Terry did. Overall, this book was extremely interesting and Goines did a great job in portraying that way of life.

Deedee Henson says

No words needed

Sarah Hamilton says

The book was absolutely chilling. It left me feeling as if my skin were crawling. It was disturbing. I have never read something so gruesome and brutally honest as this. I felt myself bringing my hand to cover my gaping mouth. I was awestruck.

♥Laddie♥ (Lee Lee) says

A Devastatingly Stunning And Hardcore Dose of Reality

I was ten years old the day that I first picked up this book. *Dopefiend* was the first novel that I read by Donald Goines and it captivated me.

As messed up as it is to say, I recognized the world that Donald Goines writes about with such honesty and skill. It says something about Donald Goines' awesome talent that he created such on-point characters and painted, with his words, such vivid pictures.

The main characters are people that I saw on my street corner or hanging out in front of my building. The junkie fever is the manic look that I would see in the eyes of people who looked at my possessions and calculate how much they could sell them for.

The drug den was the house that I would cross the street to avoid when walking to and from school.

I loved the fact that there is a romantic (I use that term VERY loosely) relationship at the heart of this novel. It illustrates the unhealthy attachment of drug addicts. It also shows the way that someone who is not

addicted to drugs can follow a drug addict into that web.

Also, this is the life of a junkie that I've always seen. There's no glamour, no fame, no money, nothing shiny about the life these characters are living. These are not rock stars who can go to rehab and get clean. These are not suburban pill poppers going to clubs and raves. The characters in this book are living a dirty, desperate, infected, bloody and twisted version of life.

Donald Goines was a wildly talented author whose work I think should be read by everyone, especially other authors no matter what genre they write in. He brought home a gritty reality and he did it brilliantly. His books are a must read.

Adam says

Dopefiend is a phenomenal, devastating book. It's far better than the three novels by Donald Goines that I've read up to this point. *Never Die Alone* was OK, but was too short and sketchy to have much of an impact, and the first two Kenyatta novels--which Goines wrote under his "Al C. Clark" pseudonym--read more like black-oriented versions of the "men's adventure" pulps that littered newsstands throughout the '70s than they did ghetto realism. *Dopefiend* seems more autobiographical, and there's a compassion for his characters that I felt was missing in his other books. That's not to say that Goines spares his characters any suffering--this is one of the most miserable narratives you will ever read--but I got the sense that he knew these people and cared for them, even if there was no hope for any of them.

Kit Fox says

If there's one thing I've learned from Donald Goines and Iceberg Slim, it's this: for the love of god and all that's holy, stay off the goddamn needle! And if you're on it, get the fuck off now!

Selena says

Mr goines took me on an adventure an i explored baby yes Lord powerful book! Whew wow! Masterpiece

Raya Sunshine says

this book was one of the first adult-fiction books that i read. it was extremely graphic (as is the nature of d.goines novels) but the characters and the writing style pulled me into the book...even if you are unaccustomed to the subject-matter, you feel drawn-in and i definately felt like i learned a little about the pull and addiction of drugs. the ending was unforgettable, both image-wise and in a literary sense. Great Book!

Lavell says

Dopefiend by Donald Goines is an excellent urban story. It vividly describes the hard life of a junkie in the streets. The plot of the story revolves around a young fiend named Teddy. His girlfriend, Terry, hates that he is an addict, but she knows that he is controlled by the sickness within him. His dealer, Porky, is the biggest heroin dealer in the city. Porky is well known for having the purest heroin that anybody can get. He is a sadistic, perverted, overweight man who is consumed by power and greed. Porky gets a serious rush from seeing people weak to his will, especially women. His main goal is to get people hooked on dope and make money off them. Later in the book, Terry hooks up with a young fiend named Minnie, who is pregnant and heavily hooked on heroin. She eventually gets Terry hooked on drugs as well. Terry eventually resorts to stealing from her parents and prostitution in order to get a fix. Teddy is already in too deep from the start. He will do literally anything to get a fix. He first starts stealing his sister's welfare checks, then resorts to robbery and theft. The details of Teddy's struggle and decline are disturbing; but, his life and death are a vivid morality tale.

C.E. Long says

There's a scene in this book I'll never get out of my head.

Dr. Detroit says

Donald Goines first saw the devil on the streets of Detroit back in the 1950's and wound up with a monkey on his back the size of Mighty Joe Young, eventually going belly up in the gutter at age 37 over a dope deal gone way south. With a stint at Jackson State Penitentiary wedged in there somewhere as well. Before he laid down for that final dirt nap, however, he was churning out grim stuff like "Dopefiend" in between nods, most of which is so seedy you'll be tempted to start shooting up, scratching yourself, and waking up in a puddle of your own vomit. Despite what the young and elegantly wasted, Velvet Underground, or Keith Richards may lead you to believe, there's nothing glamorous about sticking a spike into your vein.

To be honest, there's not much to like about ANY of the characters here, Detroit ghetto rats chasing the dragon's tail and entirely consumed with that next dimebag of smack. Goines doesn't dance around the details, from Teddy and Terry's rapid freefall into opiate hell to massive perv dealer Porky's penchant for bestiality to the steady, rolling body count due to death by misadventure.

You've been warned.

Michael Mulligan says

Dopefiend by Donald Goines transports the reader into heroin culture on the streets of Detroit around the year 1971 (when Goines published the book). He shows the reader that heroin (also called dope, smack, junk) is there for people who fall between the cracks of society. The book is also written through the lens of the black community--it recreates many of the struggles that members of the black community face; there are several instances of subtle racial discrimination throughout the book. Just for historical context, this book was published 16 years after Rosa Parks refused to go to the back of the bus, and three years after Martin Luther King Jr was assassinated. The white hoods of the KKK still loomed in the living memories of many Americans.

Terry's father is an exceptionally hard worker and he's been at the plant for 15 years but didn't get promoted for the first ten years--he thinks it's because he's black. Terry just got out of highschool and she works at a major clothing retailer. Her white coworkers are very friendly. Her boyfriend Teddy lives at home with his single mom and older sister who has several young children. The family has a hard time making ends meet. Teddy takes Terry over to Porky's place to get some dope. Terry doesn't want to go inside because Porky is a creep. Porky gives Terry a dose of extra pure heroin because it's her first time trying the stuff. Things spiral downwards from there.

Heroin addicts have a medical condition--an addiction that they cannot fight on their own. None of the characters in this book overcome their addiction. They need help, but instead they are kicked out of homes and incarcerated. They receive their drugs from dealers who are experts at making addicts out of teenagers. First, get someone hooked with the purest form of the drug, and then keep them coming back, spending more and more for weaker doses that are cut with something, anything: talcum powder, brick powder...

After the high wears off, users suffer an intense depressive mood--as their dopamine levels drop. This causes an intense craving for more dope. It takes more and more of the drug to reach the same high, and eventually, users need the drug just to feel normal.

Characters start lying and stealing (anything) to get their drug fix, and many girls turn to prostitution. In the crack-house (a glimpse into hell), female users are forced into degrading sex acts if they cannot afford to pay for the dope with money. The acts become progressively obscene, dirty, and degrading.

Blaming users of the drug does nothing to solve the problem. Users bond with the drug mostly because the drug acts as a substitute for not having social needs met. Sure, some users are young people curious for new experiences. But, due to the pervasive stigma surrounding the drug, users have no one to approach except for other users and dealers. In practice, there are no institutions to turn to in the book; no parents to reach out to, no hospital programs, no safe-injection sites. So, users are completely isolated. Non-users in the book do not recognize symptoms and are unable to reach out--we witness no successful interventions. Addicts face the problem on their own, and they can only turn to other people in the heroine culture, which seals their coffins shut with them still alive, inside.

My takeaway from reading this book, and others, like *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander, and *Chasing The Scream* by Johann Hari, and other novels by Donald Goines, is that drug addiction needs to be treated like a medical problem. Not a criminal problem. This book only looks at a sliver of all drug users, but it spotlights many of the underlying issues. Society needs to not heap shame and felony charges on addicts--such actions drive users further into addiction. We need to show compassion and provide medical help for drug addicts. That would include: legalizing drugs to end the extremely lucrative and violent underground drug trade; provide safe-injection clinics for users; and provide controlled safe doses for users, medical advice, and support groups. Most importantly, society needs to remember that addicts are people too. You never know the living hell someone else might be going through.

A note on history: During the Vietnam War, %15 of American soldiers became addicted to heroin. It was cheap and abundantly available. Also, use of the drug was a reprieve from the daily horrors that soldiers witnessed--all the pain went away. Faced with such numbers, Nixon allocated \$14 million to open 13 more clinics for dealing with addiction among war veterans. These programs were a step in the right direction, but they were only directed towards mostly white addicts--our heroes who were conscripted and served in Vietnam. Inner city addicts were provided no such services. Instead, when Nixon launched the War on Drugs, federal dollars were allocated towards State police based on narcotics arrest quotas. In the subsequent decades since this period, more and more federal dollars--under the aegis of both the Democratic and Republican political parties--have been allocated to state police for upping their arrest quotas of narcotics

users. This War on Drugs has been disproportionately targeted towards people of colour, the poor, and the mentally ill. Today, in 2016, the Drug Policy Alliance estimates that the United States spends \$51 billion dollars annually on the War on Drugs. Yes! Heroin, crack-cocaine, and meth are health problems. But this money could be allocated towards health institutions that treat the underlying problems associated with addiction. Instead, the U.S. incarcerates more people per capita than any other country in the world. This is largely due to the War on Drugs. As of 2010, there are more people in jail for drug offences (in America) than there were people in jail for all crimes in 1980. And while black people make up 13% of the American population, they make up more than 37% of prisoners. Also in the States, while 1 in 106 white men are incarcerated, 1 in 36 hispanic men are incarcerated, and 1 in 106 white men are incarcerated. And don't forget, white people do more drugs, recreationally, than any people of color, per capita.

A note on the author: Some say Donald Goines single-handedly invented the genre of ghetto realism. Born in Detroit in 1936, he lied about his age and joined the military at age 15 to fight in Korea. Just like many American soldiers at the time, he became addicted to heroin and was unable to kick the addiction when he returned. He resorted to theft and pimping to support his addiction, and went to jail several times. In jail he wrote his first novel, Whoreson in 1970, and continued to write for a five year period at an accelerating pace up until his death at the age of 37. Writing served to support his addiction, and as a means of discussing the day to day reality of life in the inner-city ghetto.

Linda Strickland says

The Real Deal!!!!!!
