

Dear Garth Stein:

I clearly remember the day I picked up your book, *The Art of Racing In the Rain*. I was initially drawn in by the cute dog peeking up from the bottom of the cover; being a dog lover myself. I was further intrigued by the title, wondering what was being implied. I assumed it was about the dog, but didn't understand what "racing in the rain" was talking about, and why is it considered an art? Beginning to read, I soon discovered that "racing" was as in professional automobile racing. Though I have never shown interest in car racing, simply thinking it loud, dangerous and expensive, I was willing to approach this with an open mind. Thinking this would simply be a quick, fun book to read, never would I have guessed that this book would change my life.

One of the most unique aspects of your book is that it is being narrated by a dog, something of which I had never read before. But this isn't just any dog, your story starts out by describing an old, particularly bright and political lab-terrier mix named Enzo. He is literally lying on his deathbed reflecting on his life all it taught him. Enzo was wise and thoughtful and had many life lessons to share. My favorite subject Enzo focuses on is how to race in the rain; hence the title of the book. Though actual racecar driving techniques were described past my comprehension, I discovered how this theme could be applied to not only me personally, but also universally to others.

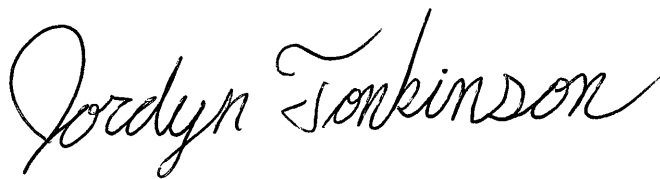
Through Enzo, I learn that life is all about the ability to race in the rain. Meaning that even when times are hard and the road is slick, you need to push on--no matter how bad you may want to stop. Like a driver, you need to be prepared for the race. Like a racer would put rain tires on his car, you would mentally prepare yourself and make sure you are stable. This results in better handling and control on a wet road. Another thing Enzo taught me was the importance of your pit crew, aka your family and friends. These are the people who you go to when you're in trouble and can't fix the problem yourself. They are there for you, waiting for you to reach out and ask for help. The last racing technique I was introduced to was that "your car goes where your eyes go". This was one of the most important techniques Enzo stressed in his stories. For example, if you are in trouble on the road and the only thing you look at is the huge menacing wall just waiting for you to make a mistake, you will end up in that wall. But say that your eyes are fixed on that finish line, no matter how distant; you will eventually make it there. Connecting this to real life, this shows that if you are always thinking negatively and thinking of the worst possible outcomes, they will become true. Your car goes where your eyes go. But, if you have a goal and you continue to strive for that goal, that finish line, with optimism and hope, you will find a way to make it come true. Your car goes where your eyes go.

I was moved by Denny who holds never-ending perseverance and courage. Denny endured so much “rain” in his life that it could be considered a class 4 hurricane. When Denny finally thinks the worst is over and begins to pick up the pieces, his experiences another staggering blow. Against all odds Denny survives the storm, not with out scars, but alive nonetheless. Through these trials Denny stays strong and never gives up or loses sight of what he is fighting for. He has truly mastered the art of racing in the rain.

I realized personally that like some racers, when the rain is coming down hard I tend to be cautious, not wanting to get hurt. this quote from Enzo guided me to think differently, “There is no dishonor in losing the race; there is only dishonor in not racing because you are afraid to lose”. Denny was put through the ultimate test, one that most probably wouldn’t have walked away from. But I realize that not all rain comes in such heavy force. For example, rain that I experience often in my own life is fear. Whether it be trying out for a new sports team or simply making new friends, fear has always held me back. It has been easier for me to just hide and theoretically stay indoors where I know its warm and safe. Thinking about it now, if I had just put on my rain tires and stepped outside, despite the rain, and ran toward my goal—how different my life could be. This quote from Enzo guided me to think differently, “There is no dishonor in losing the race; there is only dishonor in not racing because you are afraid to lose”. I may not always get first place; but realizing that I made it over the finish line and didn’t quit, is success in itself.

After reading this book, I am inspired by you to challenge myself and try new things even if fear tries to hold me back. Like Denny, even if the odds seem to be against me, they wont stop me from achieving my goal. In my next storm I wont fall back, instead I will push harder than ever because racing in the rain is an art, and takes determination, perseverance, and courage to master.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jordyn Tonkinson". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of each name being significantly larger and more decorative than the others.

Jordyn Tonkinson