



Dirt Bike Ike: Pursuing the Dream

Roy Jenkins

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Humorist Amy Krouse Rosenthal once mused, “I always want to see what happens after the movie’s technically over. I want an update on the couple that fell in love...to see how they’re doing post-euphoria.” For author Roy Jenkins, the “post-euphoria” moment became the stepping stone for the second book in his *Dirt Bike Ike* series.

After uncovering a crime ring in the first book of the series, teenagers Ike and Sam are hometown heroes. Jenkins’s second installment sees the two returning to regular life: school and training for motocross, the sport they both love. But it’s not as easy as it sounds for Ike, particularly after he witnesses a brutal crime. Now, with the help of Crip, a crippled former Marine and motorcycle mechanic, Ike must rely on his faith, face his fears, and solve a mystery.

A high school teacher, Jenkins creates a very realistic snapshot of his teenage protagonist. Throughout the book, we see Ike struggle with everyday problems: He considers dropping out of school; he’s baffled when his friend Sam, a female motocross rider, gives him mixed signals about their relationship; he’s frustrated when a bike accident has his mother pestering him to leave the sport he loves.

Just when Ike feels he can no longer go on, he finds solace in faith. Jenkins tackles Ike’s spirituality in a subtle way. In one scene, Ike returns home after a particularly hard day and dozes off while in the bath. He dreams of being a boxer knocked down for the count. “God, please. Help me,” Ike cries. When he awakes, Jenkins writes, “Ike felt the fire inside of him. It was the fire of desire. The desire to work, to train, to win. Ike got up...and back into the race of life.”

Overall, Jenkins creates a very flavorful world in his story. Through his words, we’re introduced to the tool-lined garages, the tiled motorbike showrooms that smell like new rubber, and the winding dirt jumps of different motocross race tracks. Jenkins neither skimps on details nor overloads the story. While he may sometimes rely a bit too much on dialogue, Jenkins’s pacing and delivery keep Ike and the action rolling.

In an age when the shelves of bookstores are filled with tales about vampires, young wizards, and other supernatural themes, the *Dirt Bike Ike* series is a refreshing alternative for young readers looking for something real. Along with the thrill of adventure and victory, the second book shows readers how to persevere through difficulties and conquer struggles when life moves on.

KATERIE PRIOR (April 27, 2011)

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