

The Ex

Ken Sparling

I pull a book off the
basement bookshelf.

It's a book about the Canadian National Exhibition,
what everybody always used to call The Ex

back when I was a kid.

They still call it The Ex,
I think,
although it's changed
a lot since Kitty
and I used to go.

I've been going to The Ex
since I was a little kid.

Dad used to play saxophone
in a band that performed
little musical flourishes
for the Hell Drivers,
who were these guys
who came to the Ex
every year
to do stunt driving.

These guys would go up

sideways in their cars

on two wheels,

driving around the track

REALLY FAST

and very close together.

At the end of the show,

they would jump their cars

through hoops of fire,

WHILE THE commentator

warned of possible fiery explosions.

Meanwhile Dad and the band
played short energetic
proclamatory bursts of music,
interspersed with long
crescendoing drum rolls.

Dad got us tickets every year to
see the Hell Drivers, and Mom
would take us down to the Ex
to watch the show, even though
she'd stopped talking to dad after
they separated, WHICH WAS
AROUND THE TIME I WAS
ENTERING KINDERGARTEN.

**This book about the Ex
that I've pulled off the shelf**
down here in the basement
doesn't even mention the Hell Drivers.

The stories in it were
written by my friend Derek.