

G FORCE

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195 Allstate Parkway, Markham, Ontario L3R 4T8.

www.fitzhenry.ca godwit@fitzhenry.ca

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to end Eddie's dream of winning at Indy before it even begins.

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A.H.

first place with almost a three-minute lead, and I had just broken the lap record. For the fifth time. Even though I'd never seen the track or driven an Indy car before this weekend, I'd had no trouble leading the field in practice, in both qualifying sessions, and in every lap of the race. I mentally rehearsed the speech I planned to deliver to the massive crowd from the top of the victory podium in a few minutes. "My DynaSport team gave me a great race car and my crew was awesome." Perfect.

I wound the shrieking Honda V8 up to the redline as I accelerated hard out of the hairpin turn. I was in the zone. Even above the roar of the engines, I could hear the crowd chanting.

Ed-die! Ed-die! Ed-die...

Suddenly, Surfer's Paradise started melting away, but someone was still calling my name.

"Eddie? Eddie?"

I slowly opened my eyes, focused, and realized, to my disappointment, that I was not strapped into an Indy car after all. I was slumped over in a train seat, propped up against the window. A kindly, older lady in the next seat was nudging my arm and smiling at me. I peeled my cheek off the window, straightened up in my seat, and worked the kink out of my neck.

"We'll be pulling into Victoria Station in about

my preparation for the latest racing project for my sponsor, DynaSport Industries. I had no idea what was up next and couldn't wait to meet with my race engineer, Allan Tanner, in the capital of his home country, London, England. Knowing Allan, I suspected that we were gearing up for something big next season.

"My goodness—a race car driver!" exclaimed Lizzie. "How exciting!"

"But why the physical training, Eddie?" asked Harry. "Don't you just have to sit in a car and drive?"

I rubbed my neck and chuckled.

"Oh, no, Harry. Driving a top-level race car is more demanding than most people think," I replied. "The Indy cars I was driving last fall taught me what serious G force means. See, 1G is simply the force of gravity on your body—the weight you normally feel just moving around. But put yourself in motion and this force multiplies. It doesn't matter if you're on a skateboard or in a race car: gravity is always there. And the faster you go, the more you feel its force. Imagine this: If you drive quickly in a normal car, your sunglasses slide across the dashboard, or you might spill your drink. If you're going hard in a really fast road car, you might get up to a force level of 1G, which is the same as your body weight. So, if you weigh 160

"So we noticed."

Just then, a beep from my cell phone alerted me to a new text message.

Edward,

Meet @ Shakespeare Tavern. Tons to talk about.

Allan

PS: How's yr neck?

and salad. Oh no.

"So, Edward you appear to have survived your three weeks in the country. Spectacular place, Kent. How did they treat you?" Allan asked.

"Pretty well," I replied, pushing my dinner slightly off to the side. "Once I got past the first week and got to know the guys better, I actually learned a lot."

"Do tell," Allan pressed as he poured the tea. Earl Grey, of course. His favourite.

I shifted in my chair to relieve my aching back. "Let's see, Allan. My trainers, Kevin, James, and Nigel, had me up before dawn. We ran fifteen miles cross country with heavy packs every day until I fell into bed at seven each night. And I lived on steamed chicken and salad for three weeks."

Allan laughed and sat back in his chair.

"So much for your dinner then. They must have decided to work on the psychological side as well. Putting up with all of that for three weeks would tend to test your endurance and your patience. They're very clever at Apex you know, and those ex-commandos know how to train people to face extreme situations. I hope you didn't complain too loudly or question their methods?"

"Nope, not a word. Well, maybe just once, at the end of the last day when they made dinner. They

jump," I protested. "Are you nuts?" Even though I had already guessed that we were moving up to big-time formula cars, I hadn't expected that J.R. would throw us straight into the deep end. And the Indianapolis 500 was definitely the deep end.

Allan grinned and leaned forward.

"You know, that is almost exactly what I said to J.R. in New York a month ago. He assured me that he was not. Impatient perhaps, but he is quite determined. He's done his homework and he knows what it will take to compete."

"But seriously Allan, we don't have the experience to do Indy," I said.

"Not necessarily," he replied. "The Indy 500 is one of the few sports events left in the world that still welcomes talented newcomers. Of course there are always the star drivers and teams who compete each year, but there are also the rookies who arrive every May from other forms of racing with a dream to race in the 500. And Indianapolis gives them that chance. There's one simple rule for everyone. If you're fast enough, you're in. So, we're having a go and announcing it on the website today. Of course it will cost a boatload of money. Plus, we'll need time to put the right people and equipment in place in order to get up to speed and qualify. But J.R. thinks we can do it. So do I."