

ROCKET BURSTS AND BURNER POPS

RocketBike vs. Jetasaurus Rex

It's late and the sun's going down, but nobody has left early to beat the traffic. Everyone in the huge crowd is on their feet as RocketBike and Jetasaurus Rex are towed to the front of the staging area. During a lengthy starting line interview, both Terry and Jet Car Bill cover a lot of the technical aspects of their vehicles and some of their thoughts on racing, particularly at very high speeds.

This is interesting, because Terry and Bill are about to race each other in what will most likely be the fastest side-by-side race in the history of land vehicles.

Terry is very impressed by Bill, who presents himself very professionally. "This 'Jet Car Bill' guy is alright," thinks Terry, "I'm even starting to get used to the weird clothes."

The interview is over, and they shake hands. Terry goes over to RocketBike, where Nitro, TK, Jim and Ben are going over things one more time, while Jet Car Bill's crew helps him into the cockpit of Jetasaurus Rex.

Before getting on the bike, Terry looks down the racetrack. There are TV cameras and press photographers everywhere, all the way past the finish line. This is probably going to be the most documented drag race of all time. Terry loves it, and wonders, "What can I do to blow their minds?"

As Terry buckles on his helmet, he looks over at the three ton, eleven foot wide, forty foot long, Jetasaurus, with its two huge turbo jet engines and afterburners, each producing over fifteen thousand pounds of thrust. He thinks, "This dude is going to be hard to top."

Nitro is talking to Terry as he helps him with the special quick release bindings they've designed to help him stay on the bike. As they are talking, Jetasaurus fires up, and nobody can hear anything anymore!

As its compressors spin up, all you can hear is a very loud whining sound. Then, as the turbo jets ignite, there is an unearthly roar. Now Nitro and Terry not only can't talk, it's hard to even think. The monster jet begins to move forward, very slowly, like some prehistoric creature, ambling toward the starting line in search of prey.

Groundshaker

Then Jet Car Bill hits the button that injects raw fuel into the tail pipes. He ignites the afterburners for just a fraction of a second, producing an explosive "pop" that sounds like thunder! Both Terry and Nitro feel the ground shake under their feet. Terry thought this thing was awesome when he was all the way at the far end of the racetrack watching it. Up close, it's terrifying! What a show!

Terry holds a hand up in the air and makes a circular motion to let Nitro know that he's going to fire this thing up. He pushes the yellow button on the handlebars, which starts the rocket. He knows the crowd can't even hear it, with all the noise Jetasaurus is making ... "Bummer," thinks Terry.

Rocket Burst

Terry starts to roll forward slowly along side Jetasaurus, just as Jet Car Bill does another "burner pop". This time Terry is ready for him and answers by pushing the new button that Nitro has added, the "white button." This activates the new system that injects oxygenated hydrogen fuel directly into the tail pipe of the rocket engine, producing a huge roar and a spectacular bright white flame behind

RocketBike that is fifty feet long! The crowd goes absolutely berserk. “Ha,” thinks Terry, “No way are you going to top me!”

After several more “burner pops” from Jetasaurus, and answering “rocket bursts” from RocketBike, they are on the starting line and waiting for the lights to start their sequence. As Jet Car Bill brings the twin jets up to full RPM, he looks over at Terry and they give each other a nod, as if to say: “Are we putting a show on for these folks, or what?” Smoke and Fire! Lightning and Thunder! The two nod again as if to say “But now, let’s race!” Jetasaurus has never been beat, and RocketBike has never been in a race. This should be interesting. The yellow lights flash-- And it’s green!

Power

Terry hits both the full-ignition button and the rocket burst button as the green light comes on and feels the unreal power as the Rocket is instantly at full thrust.

At the exact same moment, Jet Car Bill hits both full power and the afterburners. The noise from the two “space age” vehicles under full power is deafening! Terry looks over and is astounded to see that Jetasaurus is right beside him. “That thing’s power must be beyond awesome to get a car that size moving that quickly”.

What a show the huge jet and RocketBike are putting on! They’re side by side, with both of Jetasaurus’ afterburners shooting fire and smoke against RocketBike’s fifty-foot tail of bright white flame—both of them roaring at an unearthly level! If they had interplanetary drag races, this is what they would be like!

As they approach the first speed trap light, Terry thinks he’s pulling away from the giant jet! Now they are at the finish line, and there’s no doubt about it. He’s actually going faster than Jetasaurus, not pulling away really fast, but pulling away.

“Man,” thinks Terry, “this is something else!” To win is the ultimate, but to win while pulling away from a car with all that power, at over 350 miles an hour, that’s beyond ultimate! They don’t even have a word for this feeling!

Going Ballistic

Terry is totally over the top! He’s so cranked up that, after giving it some careful thought, he pushes the blue button! After a race like that, what is there left to do but fly! The air deflectors in the new ducting system change angle, creating instant and massive lift as Terry crosses the final speed trap light. At the speed he’s traveling he’s instantly airborne! He immediately pulls back the controls to gain a little altitude and banks to the left in a graceful rolling turn.

Jet Car Bill is stunned. He’s never lost a race before! As he crosses the finish line he pops his parachutes, and looks over at Terry on RocketBike - only to see that Terry is already two feet off the ground, and going up. His first thought is that Terry has totally lost it and is out of control. When he realizes that Terry is actually flying, he thinks, “Lucky Guy! He not only beats me, but he gets to fly, too! I guess maybe he’s the Pilot.”

The crowd, which has been going absolutely nuts all during the race, is suddenly silent. Even after they realize that Terry’s not crashing, but that he is flying they are still silent: dumbfounded. They’ve never seen anything like this before! Even the television commentators don’t know what to say as the cameras track RocketBike.

Nitro looks up and thinks, “Up there without a parachute again. I’ll fix that! Next time I’ll sew one onto the back of his flight suit!”

Terry continues his rolling turn off the end of the strip, and comes back in low, heading back down the racetrack towards the starting line. In the twilight, RocketBike, with its long white tail of flame, looks like a low flying comet. As Terry crosses the starting line flying over the grandstands he does a victory roll, and the crowd finally goes crazy! TK thinks, “Hmmm, I didn’t know he could fly it upside-down, have to make a note of that.”

Meanwhile, Back at the Farm

Nerissa and the girls are riding their horses on the beach. Nerissa doesn't like to watch Terry race, even on TV. The twins knew she was nervous and suggested the ride on the beach.

Suddenly, the silver eagle makes a low fast pass from behind them, executing a perfect roll, and disappears down the beach. "He's showing off," thinks Nerissa with a smile, and the three of them gallop off down the shoreline.

Roll out the RocketBike

Terry continues his exhibition in style, completing the flawless roll in a single, seamless movement. "That should let them know who's up here," thinks Terry, after completing his 360-degree roll above the crowd. Looking down, he knows that Bo is down by the starting line looking back up.

Terry pulls back on the controls and goes straight up like a skyrocket in front of the crowd, television cameras and Bo. When he gets to around five hundred feet, he loops it over heading back towards the far end of the strip, all the while descending.

After passing the finish line, he puts RocketBike into a wide graceful turn, coming back across the finish line at very low altitude, touching down smoothly about halfway down the strip, popping his drag chute and coming to a stop in front of the starting line grandstands.

The crowd is going ballistic as Terry gets off the bike. They give him a standing ovation, something you don't see very often at the races. After the show he's just put on, the press mobs Terry. It doesn't look like there will be any end to the microphones and cameras being stuck in his face.

Celeste gathers up Jet Car Bill Hollings, Bo Barns and Dan Jones and gets them involved in the post-race interviews. After all, one of the main reasons for this race was to publicize the sport of drag racing and both Celeste and Terry want to be sure that this is carried out to the fullest degree possible. They even drag the usually very shy Nail into the interview loop. After post race festivities that last into the wee hours of the morning everyone is more than happy to hit the motel and get some sleep.

Monday Morning

Over breakfast at the motel restaurant, the gang plots their escape. There are a couple of more PR and press duties, which Celeste and Terry will take care of, while Nitro and TK with Jim and Ben's help will get the trailer all packed up and ready to go. They should be on the road by late afternoon, and will drop Terry off in Atlanta, where he will catch a jet for home. The rest of them will proceed on up to Chicago for the Engineering Society meeting.

Chapter 14

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