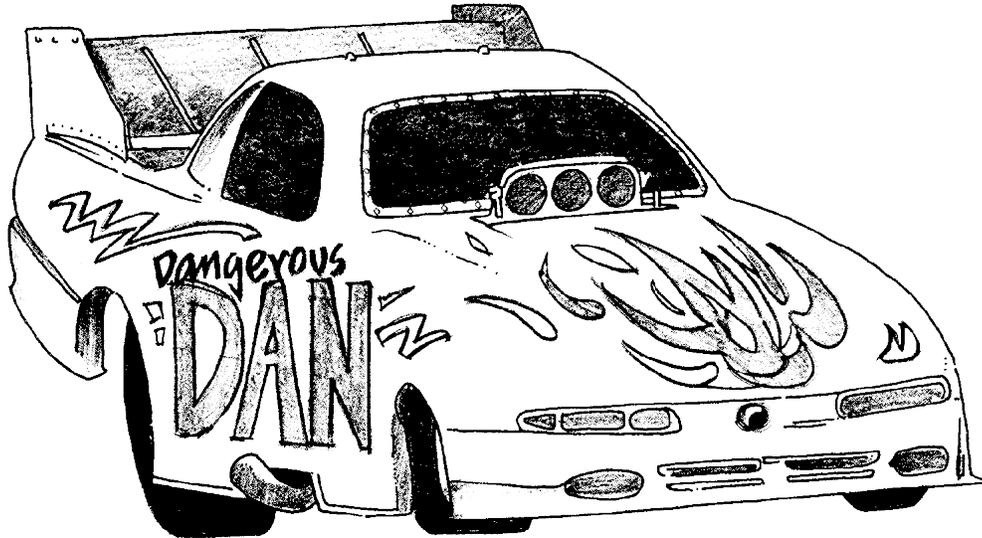


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### Chapter 2



## FIREBALLS AND FLAMETHROWERS

### Phoenix, Arizona

After spending all Wednesday on the road, Nitro pulls the truck and trailer into the parking lot of Channel 7 TV in Phoenix. They have a TV gig first thing the next morning and are going to have to get everything ready early to get SuperBike in the TV studio.

They've made arrangements to park at the station overnight so they wouldn't have to fight Phoenix rush hour traffic in the morning. There will be local show featuring Terry and SuperBike, and also a taping of several public service spots for national television for the "D.A.R.E. To Keep Kids Off Drugs" program. These will feature the D.E.A. videotape of the China Lake drug bust and interviews with Terry and Celeste.

Now that Celeste is running the public relations department, she's decided the Bikesters can be famous and use the fame to do a lot of good. The rest of the gang is certainly agreeable to that concept.

### Smile, You're on TV

The TV appearance and taping go quite smoothly. They also have to do a lot of hand shaking as it seems like every politician in town just happens to stop by and, strangely enough, most of them just happen to have their kids with them. After being celebrities most of the day, it's nice to get the bike loaded up and be in the truck heading to the Indian Hills Motorcycle Shop just outside of town.

The local bike racers hang out there, and there's enough room to park the truck and trailer behind the shop, down by the river. However, they won't have much time to enjoy the river, because Celeste has arranged appearances at two hospitals in Phoenix on the next day.

"Man," says Terry, "this having a PR person sure doesn't leave you with much free time."

"True," Nitro adds, "but after this weekend we'll be heading for home."

"Yeah," says Terry, "Home."

Celeste and TK look at each other. "Home" is a mystery to them.

## **Indian Hills Motorcycle Shop**

Pulling into the camping area by the river, they see that several of the traveling bike racers are also here, stopping over on the way to the race at Albuquerque. Nitro spots Nail's truck and trailer and parks nearby. As they are setting up camp, Nail and a few of the other racers come by to give them a hard time about all the heroics at China Lake, and how cool it was to see Terry on SuperBike smoking that Lear Jet on the news.

The bike drag racers appreciate the good image the Bikesters put forward for their sport. It's kind of hard to get much good press when you're a rag-tag looking group who call themselves 'Grungers'.

Nitro and Terry, for their part, have noticed that since they started trying to race at any Grunger race they could fit into their schedule, the Grungers have become much more professional and are working at upgrading all the time. As Nitro says, "You don't have to be Republicans, but you can clean up your act."

The Grungers show their appreciation the way they best can. They go out and find the best steaks they can buy, and throw a big barbecue in honor of the Bikesters. They've all been on the road several weeks since the last time they crossed paths, so there's lots to catch up on. They're all up until late in the evening.

## **Visiting the Kids**

The next morning, as the Bikesters get things ready to leave for the hospitals they are going to visit, Nail shows up pushing his bike. Celeste has talked him into coming along, and right behind him is Bob 'Big Daddy' Corliss who Nail has talked into bringing his drag bike and coming along too. They are going to put on quite a show for the kids today.

Both Nail and Bob Corliss are very nervous about the whole hospital thing. But after the bikes are set up in the lobby of the first hospital and the kids start coming to see them, both of them loosen right up. Soon Nail and Bob are visiting with the kids and going to the rooms of the patients who can't get around. Within an hour Nail and Corliss are old pros at this, signing autographs and giving out free posters and tee-shirts with the best of them.

Terry, Celeste, Nitro and TK are still the favorites, but the kids do like the visiting Grungers. It's starting to get dark by the time the Bikesters truck pulls back into the river campground -- after putting on a show at the second hospital!

Celeste offers to help the Grungers put together a program of visits to hospitals and schools in towns where they put on races. Nail and Bob Corliss graciously accept.

"We're going to make socially acceptable people out of you animals yet!" laughs Nitro.

## **Breaking up Camp**

Everybody is packing up and hitting the road. The Grungers are heading for their race in Albuquerque. The Bikesters are on the way to Phoenix Raceway for their night race against Dangerous Dan Jones in his Funny car. After the match race they will drive the 300 miles to Albuquerque for the bike drags. Another busy weekend!

Nail drives by and yells out the window, "See ya in Albuquerque!" with a wave.

## **Phoenix Raceway**

The Bikesters arrive early, like they always do, so they have a little extra time to get organized

and visit with the fans. Lately, there always seems to be fans no matter where they go.

Besides the match race this is also a major regional points race and the crowd is already big and growing even larger by the minute. Nitro and TK work on getting SuperBike ready to run while Terry and Celeste deal with the crowd. The first D.A.R.E. spots have appeared on TV, and both Terry and Celeste are kept busy signing autographs. Tee shirts and posters are selling like hotcakes.

Soon it's dark and time for the first round of the match race, which will be a best two out of three deal. Nitro fills the bike's fuel tank. He now has the distilled water in a fuel can so no one will ask any questions. The H<sup>2</sup>O-S system is a secret shared only by the four Bikesters and Jim Truesdale.

### **SuperBike vs. Dangerous Dan's Funny Car**

The crowd around the starting line grows huge, filling the grandstands on both sides of the racetrack as the two vehicles are brought to the head of the staging area. The Dangerous Dan funny car fires up first, the cackle of its fuel burning supercharged hemi Chrysler engine causing the crowd to jump back.

Then SuperBike is started and the unbelievable roar of power produced by the H<sup>2</sup>O-S turbo-charged engine drowns out the Funny car. The crowd doesn't know what to think; most of them have never heard anything this loud before. Nitro is a bit worried, thinking, "It sounds like it's making even more power than it was at Sonoma."

With only one rear tire, even if it's a racing (traction) slick 20 inches wide, they can only put so much power on the ground and then it starts to get squirrely. The engine is producing around 4,000 horsepower with the H<sup>2</sup>O-S system installed, and you don't want the bike to be out of control with that kind of power. Terry's got enough work riding this "bronco" as it is.

### **Smoke City**

Nitro's fears are verified when during the burnout, the bike is spinning its huge racing slick so hard it starts skating around on the track. The tire smoke is beyond belief. It totally obliterates the tire smoke made by the funny car during its burn out.

Dangerous Dan is already staged as SuperBike pulls up to the starting line. Nitro gives Terry the hand signal to go light on the throttle. Terry knows he is going to have to feather it if he wants to get any kind of a run at all with this much power.

As the light turns green, Dangerous Dan gets a jump on Terry, as Terry is being very careful with the throttle. By the time they reach the half way mark, Terry is still a car length behind as he controls the power as best he can.

Then the bike starts to get a bit more traction and finally catches the Funny car. As he crosses the finish line first, Terry, always the showman, can't resist leaning on the throttle in the lights, lighting up the slick in a huge cloud of tire smoke just to let everybody know who's got the power.

Back on the starting line Nitro watches as Terry smokes it in the lights and mutters, "Gotta figure a way to fit another tire or two on that thing."

Once they have SuperBike back in the pits, Nitro and TK quickly take the H<sup>2</sup>O-S injector apart and make the adjustments necessary to cut down the amount of power the engine is putting out. They also put on a fresh rear slick, as the tire that was on it is now cooked.

As they head back to the starting line for the second round of the match race, Nitro hopes they've taken enough out of the engine. They're running out of spare slicks.

**BOOM!**

This time as the two vehicles fire up SuperBike sounds a little more civilized, and Terry thinks maybe they'll have a bit more of a controlled trip down the race track. After both the Funny car and SuperBike do very smoky, but normal, burnouts, they slowly and carefully pull up to the starting line. The yellow lights come on in both lanes showing they are ready and the lights start their sequence.

As the lights turn green both Bike and Funny car accelerate with a deafening roar in a cloud of clutch dust and very little tire smoke. At the half way point SuperBike is just barely starting to pull ahead and as they hit the finish line Terry is almost a wheel length ahead when suddenly there is a huge bang from the Funny car and a flash of fire! Its supercharger has exploded!

The entire front end of the funny car is in flames. It's a funny car driver's worst fear. Terry knows; he used to drive one. Dan releases the parachutes, which immediately catch fire and burn off! Terry has already popped his chute and is slowing down, so he is behind the ball of fire that is coasting to a stop.

The funny car is rapidly becoming an inferno as Terry rolls up behind it and jumps off the bike. The flames are spreading to the cockpit and the tires are beginning to burn. Terry is in his fire-proof driving suit with his helmet and gloves still on; he knows that Dan is wearing the same safety equipment but can survive in the inferno for only a few precious seconds. The escape hatch in the roof must be jammed, because he should be out by now!

Terry runs to the flaming race car and begins ripping burning fiberglass away to get to the dazed driver who is still struggling with his shoulder harness. Terry is feeling the heat of the fire as he pulls his friend free.

He is dragging the driver away from the fire that is now billowing clouds of black smoke as the emergency equipment arrives. The safety crew takes care of Dangerous Dan, who is O.K. except for a few very minor burns.

Terry walks back to the bike as Nitro rides up on the Suzuki four-wheeler they use to tow SuperBike back to the pits. Looking at the burning funny car and the emergency vehicles with red lights flashing Nitro asks, "Anything unusual happen?"

Terry answers, "Nah, same old stuff. But I think I remember why we quit racing funny cars: I hate Fire!"

## **Through the Desert**

After all the excitement in Phoenix, it takes a couple of hours to get everything packed up. It's already 2 a.m. and the Bikesters have to be in Albuquerque first thing in the morning. They drive east through the dark desert landscape and are in New Mexico by dawn, arriving at Albuquerque Dragway at the moment it opens.

## **Albuquerque Dragway**

This is the biggest race the Grungers have ever put on. There are hundreds of race bikes in attendance; every major bike racer is here. As the Bikesters get set up in the pits, they are immediately deluged with fans. "This fame thing might be starting to get out of hand," thinks Nitro, "It's getting harder and harder to get anything done on the bike."

Terry is already out there, smiling, signing autographs and having a great old time; he loves it. This race is going to be a little different as far as the Bikesters are concerned. Aside from the final race for King of the Hill against the dragbike top eliminator, Terry and SuperBike will also run a two out of three match race against the dreaded "Flamethrower" Jet Dragster. As Terry says, "It's

good to run against a jet now and then. It teaches you to be quick off the starting line. Let one of those blow torches get out in front of you, and you're barbecued!" By noon the racetrack is jammed with spectators. Terry and Nitro are glad to see this because they know the Grungers run on a real tight budget. A good crowd like this pays for their smaller races.

### **SuperBike vs. the Flamethrower**

Up by the starting line before the race Terry visits with Doug Flowers, the driver of the jet dragster. Terry looks at the jet; he loves these things. They produce mega-power and are always spectacular, especially when they run at night, with all the flames, smoke, and noise. Doug, in return, is quite intrigued by SuperBike, which he has never seen before. "I thought I was crazy sitting in front of a jet," he remarks.

With a handshake Doug climbs in the jet car and his crewman helps him buckle up his safety harness as Terry walks over to SuperBike. Terry puts on his helmet as Nitro gets ready to start the bike. The jet starts with a roar, but SuperBike is louder. Terry does a long smoky burn out. The jet comes up to the starting line belching smoke and fire as the driver injects short bursts of raw fuel into the tail pipe and 'blips' the afterburner to make it pop: "Very impressive."

As the starting lights turn green Terry immediately jumps out a length in front. Like he says: "You have to get out in front of these blasters or get cooked." He stays about one length in front all the way to the finish line. The crowd loves it. Terry could have won by a lot more, but the idea here was to put on a good show. If Terry really wanted to put on an ultra good show, he would lose the second round of the match race so they could have a tie breaker, but, he won't go that far. He likes to win too much! So Terry easily wins the second round and lights up the tire in the finish lights to blow the crowd's mind, and also to give Doug Flowers in the jet something to think about.

Terry and SuperBike make one last run to defend the "King of the Hill" crown. For the second race in a row, it's Nail who has won "Bike Top Eliminator", and the chance to challenge Terry. Terry wins again doing a wheelstand and smoking the tire all the way down the quarter mile, just to give the crowd something to remember on the way home. However, Nail once again gets a good jump at the start. "I must be getting old," thinks Terry.

### **Bench Racing**

After the races, everybody stops at a local all-night diner for an early breakfast, where they relive the race and talk until dawn. Most of them won't see each other until the next Grungers race, which is over two months away.

Terry invites Nail to stop by and visit them at home if he's ever in the neighborhood. Nitro looks over in surprise. Terry never invites anybody to visit them at home. He must think Nail is all right.

Celeste gives Nail and Bob Corliss computer discs with not only information for putting together a strong PR program for the Grungers, but also a complete business plan for organizing their races and whole operation. The sun is just coming up over Albuquerque as the Bikester truck and trailer pulls out heading north, for home.

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