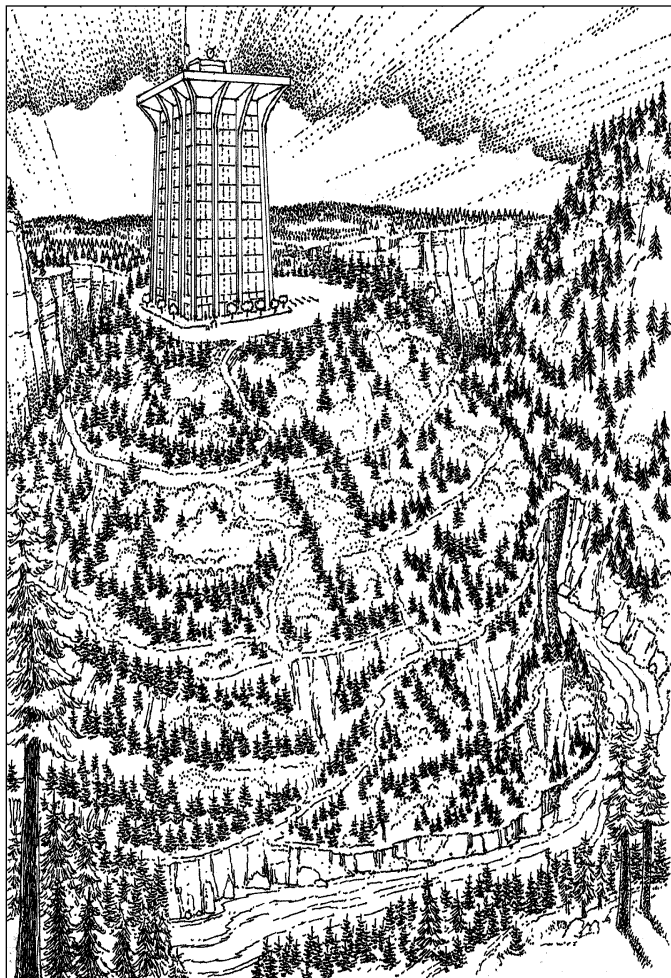


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**The RIVAL Building**

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **Doubletrack**

Hawk Davidson was gaining. A minute ago he had been behind. But now he was just in back of Sam, the leader of the pack. The new extra-light frame was doing its job well. He had passed all the other riders. In a few seconds he could make his move. But Hawk had raced against Sam before and knew it would not be easy.

The course narrowed into a tight double-track. There was one more switchback left. Then it would be a final sprint to the finish line. Hawk

began to pedal his mountain bike faster. Now he was right behind Sam. Mud from Sam's tires was flying in Hawk's face. As the two riders came to the switchback, Hawk swooped around the turn. He was now side-by-side with Sam. The two riders spun like crazy toward the finish line. In the final 50 yards, Hawk began to pull ahead. He won the race by a tire length.

"Thought I had that one all wrapped up," said Sam. "How did you come from behind so fast?"

"I just saved the best for last," Hawk said.

"I think there's a little more to it than that, Hawk. I've never seen a bike like that before. Can I take a closer look at it?" Sam asked.

Hawk had a lot of respect for Samantha Turner. Not only was she pretty, but she was Hawk's main competition. Like Hawk, Sam was skilled at most extreme sports.

"You know I can't do that, Sam. First of all, it's not my bike. It is owned by ACME Extreme Sports. Second, any gear I bring to the course to test for ACME is top secret. It goes right back to them after the race. Besides, you work for RIVAL Extreme Sports now. How do I know you won't tell them about the bike?"

"I thought there were no secrets among fellow thrashers," Sam answered. "But if you insist . . ."

Hawk watched her walk away. Then he

took the bike to an ACME van. The van was parked in the lot next to the track. Mick, the driver, was waiting in the van. Mick was 55 years old. He had been with ACME for 30 years. Besides driving trucks and vans for ACME, he also knew how to fly planes and copters.

"Well done, Hawk. I always like to watch you race," Mick said. "The ACME Bosses will be glad to hear that you and the new bike won. ACME should make a lot of money with this new model."

"Thanks, Mick. I think the frame will be a hit with the hard-core riders. Make sure it gets back to ACME safe, OK?"

"Don't I always?" Mick said. He placed

the bike in the van and drove off.

Hawk took a last look at the track. He could see the other riders talking. Next to them he saw Sam talking on her cell phone. *She looks busy*, thought Hawk. *I'm sure I'll see her again soon.*

Hawk got on his motorcycle and went home.