

# GHOST RIDER 2: RIDERS ON THE STORM

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June 13, 2009 WGAw

**THE RULES:** "Forget what you know... this is the truth..."



Call it a preamble. Likely via Voice Over, we hear Johnny Blaze encapsulate becoming the Ghost Rider... what his purpose is, and the rules of his supernatural alter-ego: Changing in the presence of supernatural evil, or when innocent blood is spilled nearby. Blaze wasn't the first of his kind but he was the first to spit in the face of the devil. He declined the role of the Devil's bounty hunter. Rather than terrorize the innocent, Blaze chose instead to use his supernatural evil to slay those already in Satan's service. Sound easy? Sound like hero's work? Did to Blaze too... but walking with evil takes its toll... and sooner or later it gets hard to tell the difference from the evil out there and the evil inside your own soul...

## **OPENING:**

MEET **JOHNNY BLAZE**... drunk and staggering... a shadow of what he once was... tormented by his years of being Ghost Rider. He stares at himself in the bathroom mirror of a shitty bar. He holds up his hand... flames lick out from the fingers as he presses it on the reflective glass. It heats, distorts, cracks - Blaze's reflection fragments -- pieces of Johnny, pieces of Ghost Rider. Finally he SMASHES his face into the mirror. Staggeres back, drops to the filthy floor.

Door swings open - Meet **DEACON GRAY** (think Sean Bean), once entered the priesthood but slugged a Bishop for eying an altar boy. He's rugged, righteous and vicious with scars from brow to jawbone. He slaps Blaze across the face.

Coffee. Lots of it. Deacon forces Blaze to drink it. Sobering him some. "You good enough to ride?" asks Deacon.

Blaze's Harley (the Easy Rider bike from the first film) kicks to life. It too is a mess. No longer clean or pristine, it's amazing it runs at all. It's as tarnished as Blaze is himself. Deacon glides up next to him on his own bike. The two take off. American highway through the Rockies. Mountainous terrain, tunnels and open road. Blaze finally slows... Deacon next to him. We intercut their conversation.

Deacon: "Blaze, you turned your back on everything you had goin for you. Shit, you had achieved the dream. And now you can barely keep your head on straight."

Blaze: "That ain't the half of it."

Deacon: "This thing inside you... if it ain't gonna leave on its own then you gotta make peace with it. Cause you're letting it kill you."

Blaze: "I'd be okay with it killin' me. Hell, I'd welcome it. But it doesn't want me dead. It just wants out. So I gotta keep the road movin' beneath me..."

Deacon: "Yeah? That never seems to stop you from turnin.' You look on it like it's hell itself... but think of the evil that you smite... Blaze, that's a good thing."

Blaze: "In the beginning. Thought if I was pure of heart, true to myself, that I could control it. But now... seems like the worst kind of nightmare keeps finding me. Like I'm not a hunter of evil...I'm a goddamn magnet for it. I swear to you brother, if we come to a crossroads and you want a peaceful day, just don't follow me. Because my path's gonna be full of pain and suffering. Makes me think there's a reason. Like my jumping ship has thrown the balance out of whack. Like I'm just supposed to give in."

Deacon: "To what? The Dark side? Blaze. You do that. And I will personally send you back to hell myself. That is a promise."

Johnny and Deacon lock eyes. Then Johnny extends his hand. "I'll take you at your word. And hold you to it." Deacon shakes, the deal sealed.

Blaze and Deacon race through the mountainous road. Head through one tunnel, then emerge from another. Both screech their bikes to a halt.

### **THE WRECK:**

Almost blocking the road. Flames everywhere. A bus has been t-boned by a truck. Blaze and Deacon dismount, examine the wreck. No bodies. No passengers. But stuff everywhere, like the bus was full.

Deacon: (scans the surrounding night.) "They must have gotten out, must have..."

Blaze closes his eyes...tastes the air. "No. They were taken...by force. You better go brother. This is that nightmare I was talking about...and this one (sniffs) I can tell...is gonna be bad." Flames lick out of Blaze's face - the Ghost Rider taking over when:

RPG - howls out of the darkness, nails Blaze's gas-tank before his bike can go full "Hell-Cycle." The Bike EXPLODES - sending Blaze, his body already flaming - into the wreckage.

Deacon draws a sawed off Shotgun from his bike, takes cover. Two figures withdraw, running back down the other side of the wreck. Deacon takes off after, them... fires. Hits one. Throws a look back to Blaze. He's lost in the wreckage, then takes off after the other assailant. Stops at the first one he shot. There's a wicked brand on the guy's arm: a cross with a circle behind it - symbol of the zodiac.

Then Deacon enters:

### **THE TUNNEL:**

That's been transformed into a grim level of Hell. The survivors of the wreck have all been strung up along the curve of the tunnel. And they're screaming. Begging Deacon to help. The walls behind them have all been painted in archaic runes and symbols. Painted in blood. **AMANDA**, a girl in her early 20's is partially free. Deacon cuts her loose.

Deacon: "What the hell happened here?"

Amanda: "They took us..." She's crying. Deacon helps her down as --

ENGINES roar... two stakebed trucks, and a humvee drive down the tunnel from the opposite end. Men, clad in dark clothes, amble out. These guys are like some kind of rogue militia inbred with a cult of Satan fuckers. Bad-asses... each baring the zodiac brand.

In an instant Deacon is surrounded. A wiry fucker emerges from the Humvee -- the zodiac brand on his chest: **ZODIAK**, leader of these militia fuckers.

Deacon tries to shield the girl. The pleas of all the survivors of the wreck suddenly fade to whimpers. They're terrified.

Deacon spots this for what it is: "Look... if this is some kind of trap..."

Zodiak moves towards Deacon: "... a trap that's been sprung. Where's Blaze?"

BUS/WRECK - the wreckage is ablaze... and so is Johnny. He shoves himself out of the twisted metal. Fire licking all over his body. His bike is destroyed. But Deacon's bike still stands.

### **TUNNEL:**

Deacon: "You set a trap for, Blaze? Not too bright are ya?"

Zodiak: "No... this trap's not for Blaze."

THE GHOST RIDER suddenly VAULTS over the flaming marriage of Bus and Truck - roaring towards the tunnel.

Deacon: "Well if it's the Rider you want... your wish is about to come true...."

Zodiak flicks his wrist at Deacon - the air ripples with psychic energy, pummeling him off his feet, flying him against the tunnel wall when:

GHOST RIDER screeches into the tunnel, flames licking out of Deacon's bike. The Rider's weapon, a flaming chain whip, flies back....

And the symbols on the walls of the tunnel... BEGIN TO GLOW -- The innocents hanging there wail in agony. Amanda shrinks back from the Rider, runs to Deacon. And the very asphalt beneath the Rider flares brightly in the symbol of the zodiac... like it's been branded into the pavement itself. GR wheels the bike, launches it at Zodiak but... it rears on its hind wheel - the bike launches forward out of the circle, leaving Ghost Rider behind. GR tries to cross out of the arcane circle. But can't.

Zodiak: "NOW!!!!!"

His forces launch at the rider, imprisoned in the zodiac circle. They let loose with every weapon they have. And Ghost Rider goes INSANE. He lashes out with the chain whip... snagging any that get too close... But he's getting hammered.

Deacon shoots one of the attackers... moves through the absolute chaos for his bike. Amanda's with him. Deacon punctures the gas tank, revs the engine, and launches it towards the circle.... He aims the shotgun -- and blasts the bike just as it crosses the circle's perimeter. THE ASPHALT erupts... the CIRCLE BREAKS --

AND GHOST RIDER IS LOOSE --

CHAOS -- The Rider slashes and whips his way through the cultists. He's fueled by raging hellfire unlike any we've ever seen.

Ghost Rider attacks. He swings the chain, cuts the binds that hold the innocents from the wreck. But as they are freed... several militia SHOOT them... The Rider cannot save them.

And goes berserk. The Militia, fueled by their own fanaticism, keep giving the Rider everything they have.

Deacon reloads. Tells Amanda to run. When Zodiac grabs him. Seizing him in a psychic grip. Deacon fights it....

ELSEWHERE -

GR rips through Zodiac's militia... but none are turning tail. They fight with savage ferocity. Ghost Rider tears through them, beating his way towards Zodiac himself.

Zodiac (to Deacon): "You put your faith in Blaze because his devil is just? But he can't control it anymore, Deacon. He's chaos incarnate. Not even the devil himself can control him... So he must be put down..." Deacon strains against the grip that binds him... Trying to aim the gun at Zodiac. But Zodiac slams his arm down... and Deacon skids to the tunnel floor.

In an instant - Zodiac releases Deacon and yanks the fleeing Amanda to him, using his psychic pull. Deacon rises, aims the gun... PULLS the trigger... just as Amanda flies into Zodiac's grasp. THE SHOT rips into Amanda NOT Zodiac...

GHOST RIDER... wheels around, "Innocent Blood..." And LASHES OUT without hesitation....The chain whip sailing past Zodiac.... INTO CHAOS....

A BARRAGE of attacks... the last wave of militia fall onto Ghost Rider... But the Rider's fury is relentless. Thug and after thug is cut into burning pieces.... leaving the Rider... standing there with just the moans. And no sign of Zodiac.

Thankfully, there are survivors among the innocents.

Flames recede from the Rider, but not all the way. Blaze's face is now visible beneath them... his eyes glowing with hellfire... still ready to fight any of the militia that may not have done the smart thing and died.

Moans... Blaze/Rider moves through the chaos to find:

DEACON, burned, bleeding... dying. He shudders at the sight of his friend.

Blaze: "Deacon... God, what happened to you?"

Deacon: "You did, Johnny. You did...."

Blaze: (disbelieving, he crouches next to Deacon) "No... I, Deacon... you're good. I can't... the Rider wouldn't, couldn't hurt you..."

BUT IN THAT INSTANT... we see flashes of Ghost Rider's flaming chain whip coursing past Zodiac and biting into Deacon. Blaze can't shake the truth.

Deacon: "... this is on... on you, Johnny. My death. Is. On. You." And Deacon's eyes fade, his head lolls back.

Blaze recoils. This can't be happening.

Not far... Amanda, blood running from her chest, trickling from her mouth. The flames snuff out from Johnny's face. He bends to help her... And Amanda starts crabbing away, weak, terrified... and SCREAMING. Blaze can see her terror at the very sight of him.

Amanda won't stop screaming. The sound shrills through the tunnel, ripping through Blaze's ears like it will go on forever...

### **ONE YEAR LATER:**

#### **ENGLAND - The Moors**

We fly across miles and miles of rainy, wet countryside. Lonely and isolated. Ancient stone walls, narrow roads or no roads at all. Finally we circle a vast lowland marsh.

A white horse is stuck in the bog. A thirteen year old girl, **MARY** and her 18 year old sister, **JOANNA**, are trying pull the horse out. But the horse keeps sinking further. The two girls are desperate.

Suddenly, the whine of a small motorcycle engine catches them on the wind. The girls are relieved -- they know that's the sound of the old motorbike the new Marsh Warden drives. Mary asks her sister, "Isn't he American?" Joanna nods. Joanna stays with the horse as Mary runs to the hilltop. She waves her arms frantically at:

A lone rider on the gray horizon. The rider stops. Sees her. Waves back. A spec. But then revs the bike towards them.

**THE MARSH WARDEN** - wrapped in a wool sweater and beaten leather jacket, is Johnny Blaze - completely different then when we last saw him. The ancient motorbike, a 125cc Royal Enfield Flying Flea circa 1952, sputters beneath him. But Blaze pushes the bike to its limits like the pro he is, getting more out of it then anyone ever had a right to, even when it was new.

He leaps a stone fence, like Steve McQueen in "The Great Escape", then skids to a stop near the bog where the two girls are with the horse. Instantly Blaze dives in, helping the girls coax the horse from the bog. Finally they get the horse out. It's white hair now covered with green/brown mud. And so's Blaze. Mary & Joanna grab the horse and Johnny pushes the bike along beside them.



Mary: "That's not your real bike is it? "

Children...their honesty...and their ability to cut through the bullshit.

Blaze: "This is my work bike. I used to have a different bike. But it's gone now."

Joanna: "Why are you here? I mean, you're American. You're... well... you don't seem to fit this place. You must be so bored. Nothing ever happens here."

Blaze: "That's exactly why I love it here."

Blaze climbs onto the dirty old bike. Waves to the girls, then peels out across the moors.

#### **THE VILLAGE:**

"The Devil You Know" PUB: Blaze, now cleaned up, is talking to **SQUIRE BROOKS**, a kindly, barrel-chested older man who clearly takes a shine to Blaze. We can tell that these two are friendly but Blaze keeps the friendship at a distance. After all, anyone close to Blaze has a tendency to end up dead. Or worse.

Back story: Blaze has been in the village for 4 months. Squire gave him a job as the Marsh Warden. Blaze rides alone, patrols the marsh. Worst thing he's had to do is catch a 15

year old poacher and report him to the constable in the neighbouring village. Simple stuff. And strangely, Blaze seems to be sort of at peace. But he's careful not to get too close. And we hear the others in the pub make that observation when Blaze leaves early, before getting totally shit-faced.

## MUNICH/MOORS INTERCUT SEQUENCE



**MUNICH - The Heist:** (Night) We pick up a team of professionals... and Zodiac pulling in on a sleek *Concept-Ducati*... more shark than bike... entering a unique museum. The team of thieves is highly skilled and very hi-tech. The museum is ultra modern - A stark contrast to Blaze's life in England. We also meet **THE CURATOR**. An old ex-hippy historian who studies ancient lore etc who works at the museum.

### MOORS:

Squire hears motorbikes in the night. Three Poachers kill livestock on his land. Squire calls Blaze. Blaze tells

Squire to wait for him. But Squire goes out on his own. A poacher shoots Squire. Blaze senses innocent Blood spilled as he gets on the old crappy bike. Flames lick from his hand. "No." Blaze takes off on the crappy bike... arrives at Squire's farm. There, Squire is dying... Blaze leans next to him... Squire's blood on his hands. Innocent Blood. And Blaze knows he won't be able to contain Ghost Rider any longer.

The Poachers load into an old truck that one drives, the other two are on Dirt Bikes. They pull out from Squire's house. And see Blaze rising before them. Flames lick from his face. The Poachers panic... shoot and take off.

Johnny goes full Ghost Rider... and hops on the crappy old bike... and it shudders, its distinctive whining engine becoming throaty, more of a roar... like its testicles just dropped -- it's not the hell-cycle Blaze is used to... but it's all he's got. He takes off... GHOST RIDER, driving across the moors - flames licking out from him.

### MUNICH:

Zodiac and the others meet resistance. But Zodiac uses his psychic abilities and yanks the guards from cover, where his sidekick, **MADDY SIMONESCU**, a kick-ass turbo-bitch Romanian, shoots the guards in flight. Zodiac and Maddy are a deadly team. Defeating the last guard, Zodiac hunts down the Curator. He's caught, bound, and dragged along with them as their prisoner. With the rest of the team, the thieves move quickly to a bizarrely high-tech case. We don't see what it contains as they begin to break their way in. The Curator watches them horrified: "Why... why do you want that?" But Zodiac only smiles his response.

### MOORS:

Mary and Joanna watch from their farmhouse as the Poachers truck and dirt bikes rip down a side road. Followed by -- Ghost Rider... getting more out of the flaming vintage Flying Flea than heaven or hell would've ever imagined.

GHOST RIDER bares down on the poachers... whips his chain across the rear poacher, yanks him off his bike...

#### **MUNICH:**

The case opens. Camera wraps around Zodiac to reveal its contents. A Human Skull sitting on a pile of dark earth. Below it a plaque. "The Skull of the Last Protector of Germania" Legend says this skull belonged to a a great and nameless warrior who fought the Romans and filled them with fear. He was the last man standing in the battle of Teutoborg in 58, AD. Where, even engulfed in flame, he fought the Roman horde for days alone before they finally put him down.

Zodiac reveals a special canister.... opens the vacuum seal. Takes the skull from where it rests in the dirt, brushes it off and places it into the container: SEALING the container shut. A 'zodiac' symbol, etched into the brushed metal suddenly glows with the vacuum rush of air...

#### **MOORS:**

AND GHOST RIDER stutters... the flames on his skull visage snuff out, Blaze returning... the bike reverts, almost collapsing apart beneath him! Blaze fights to keep control of the whining Enfield Flying Flea. What the hell's happening?

The remaining poachers are almost out of sight. When Blaze summons the Ghost Rider again. The flames lick back on him, on the old bike, its engine whine reclaiming the throaty purr it had in Hell-Cycle-mode... almost. There's something off about Rider and ride. Blaze's face is still partially visible within his flaming skull alter-ego. Ghost Rider takes off, cuts parallel to the fleeing poachers across a field. He gets airborne... lands on the roof of the truck, then shoots off of it, the chain biting into the cab.

The Rider uses the truck as a pivot, rocketing around it... clothes-lining the other Poacher off his dirt bike. Then Ghost Rider, yanks the truck off the road, FLIPPING THE ENTIRE TRUCK OVER his head... to splash into the bog where the horse was stuck only days before.

The remaining Poacher scrambles out of the sinking truck. And is seized by Ghost Rider. GR gives him the Penance Stare.... "You killed my friend...." But on Ghost Rider's skull we can see Blaze... not fully receded... like something's happened to the Rider's power.

#### **MUNICH - PRE-DAWN:**

Arriving at the breached museum, representatives of **THE CABAL**, a multi-sect secret religious order that has united to thwart any grand Satanic design. A PRIEST, a RABBI and a sleek ASIAN MONK -- it'd be the great set up for a joke if they didn't all look so impossibly grave standing at the empty case where the skull was kept. The Rabbi paces on his phone. "Find him. If we don't. They will."

**MOORS - DAWN**, which means the sky turns from black to subtle dark foreboding grey.

Two small duffel bags are lashed to the crappy bike. Shed doors open and Blaze pushes the bike out. Blaze quietly walks his bike to the top of the road overlooking the village. He stops, throws one last look back at his home for the past few months. Then starts the bike....

SCREECH - Blaze pivots to see...

A RENTAL CAR tops the hill, skids! Blaze kicks off the bike, lands on the hood and rolls up it

-- AS THE CAR SLAMS the crappy Flying Flea launching it down the hill where it shatters on impact. Blaze rolls off the hood, helped to his feet by the apologetic driver: **KATE RONSON**. Blaze stares down at the ruined bike. Grabs his bags. Now what?

Kate recognizes him: "Blaze? Johnny Blaze? The American."

Blaze: "There are better ways to ask for an autograph, lady."

Kate: "Autograph? Oh. Yeah. That's cute. No, I need you to come with me."

Blaze: (disbelief) "Come with...who the hell are you?"

Kate: "Are you totally unaware? Witnesses say they saw a man riding a flaming motorcycle... a man who was on fire... across the moors last night. Say he killed three men. That he may have killed a man named Squire Brooks...."

Blaze: "Squire was my friend."

Kate: "Yeah... and like most of your friends he ended up dead. Look, Mr. Blaze, I don't give a shit if you're traveling around the countryside torturing yourself for your sins; real, imagined or otherwise, but I do care that the hitchhiker inside you...the one that ignites and lashes out with fiery vengeance, is going to become a very endangered species in a matter of days if you don't get your bony ass in my car and listen to what I have to say." Kate turns, heads back to her car. "Either that or you can speak to the authorities...I'm sure they'll love to hear your tales of flaming skulls and deals with Satan."

Blaze: "How do you know so much about me?"

Kate: "It's my job."

Blaze takes one last look at the town, then follows this crazy woman to her car intrigued that she knows so much about him.

## **DRIVING**

Kate: "You're not the first Rider, Mr. Blaze."

Blaze: "I'm aware of that. There was another."

Kate: "Several others. Throughout history. And upon their deaths the Riders have been laid to rest throughout Europe."

Blaze: "Deaths? Deaths how?"

Kate: "Someone is always hunting the Rider. Or haven't you noticed?"

Blaze: "Noticed yeah, but I was starting to think I couldn't be killed. I'd like to know how."

Kate: "By being tricked of course, but we can feed your suicidal tendencies later. Only the remains of a few are left. Last night one was stolen from Munich. I'd be surprised if you didn't notice."

Blaze: "Last night?" Blaze tells her of the power interruption when Ghost Rider seemed to 'blink off' for a few seconds.



Kate: "Someone is stealing the skulls, Mr. Blaze. With each skull they get, the weaker you will become. We must find the other skulls before they do."

Blaze: "How do you KNOW this?"

Kate: "Because I work for religion, Mr. Blaze."

Blaze: "Which religion?"

Kate: "All of them."

Kate gives him her backstory. She's an archivist...does obscure research for the CABAL OF RELIGIOUS Representatives. Has been working with several historians around the world, creating links to legends of mysterious anonymous riders... flaming riders, throughout history. The Ghost Rider lore. She thought it was merely a recurring story, like vampires... "But last night, one of the skulls was taken and I'm sent here. To find you. The current rider. I kept thinking you'd laugh in my face. Call me crazy. Guess I sort of hoped you would. But you haven't. Which means either you're crazy or you are what they say you are."

Blaze: "Or both." He can't believe it. She stops the car as they near a train station. Blaze gets out. Kate takes off after him. He wheels on her... "You have no idea what you're messing with. People close to me die. I thought out here in the middle of nowhere it'd be different. Well, I was wrong. No one is safe. If whatever is happening makes me an endangered species... then great. Bring on the extinction."

Kate SLAPS him across the face.

Blaze recoils. Shocked.

Kate: "Look you selfish, self-pitying adolescent... there is much more at stake... than you."

Blaze touches the blood on his lip: "You're lucky I'm not innocent or you'd finally see one of your riders face to face."

Kate: "The skulls are... are like a battery. In their resting places... they fuel the Rider. Taken from their resting places, placed into confinement, the Rider's power fades. But the power of the skulls does not. If the skulls are all brought together, their power will be immeasurable. Imagine the power you possess times seven -- and in the hands of whoever has figured this out. You think it's mother-fucking-Teresa who wants to wield it for a little 'let's cure the sick' fun? No. It's someone who wants to fuck up the shit of the world and they know you're the only one who can stop them. And they've figured out how to make sure you don't."

### **EUROPE - DECAYING THEATRE:**

We don't know where... but this run down, centuries old theatre is still losing its battle with gravity and surrendering to decay. Inside, a container with the Munich Skull is visible. Next to it, another container with a skull - marked "Carter Slade: The Ranger". They both sit equal-distant apart in the center of a zodiac-symbol which sits in the center of a heavily runed circle. Dark containment magic. Zodiak looms over them, SCRAPING fragments from each skull, and grinding the fragments with mortar and pestle.

Without facing Maddy, Zodiak says, "He'll be here soon. Has The Curator revealed the next location?" Not yet. Zodiak shakes his head. Always gotta do it yourself. He passes their

elite team, throws open the ancient dressing room where the Curator is being held -- to find it empty. "FIND HIM!"

THE STREET -- The Curator runs, staggers, falls, limps, slams into a telephone booth. He dials.

The high-pitched electric hum of a Motocysz E1pc, super-bike needles through the narrow street. Maddy, clad in black, speeds with stealth towards -- the phone booth.

The Curator - urgently speaks in German when - the WINDOWS of the booth smash and he's snatched out of it.

### **PARIS - Denfert-Rochereau - NIGHT - THE CATACOMBS:**



Kate & Blaze arrive at the center of the huge Paris roundabout where the entrance to the catacombs is located. Kate tells Blaze that the Cabal has informed her that one of the Riders skulls is hidden below. The thieves are likely going here next. The catacombs are locked, but Blaze breaks in. They walk down a dark stone spiral staircase into the Paris underground arriving in the dimly lit tunnels. And they're FILLED with skulls, MILLIONS of them. This Ossuary

dates back to the 1700's and was the repository of so many remains. Blaze and Kate reel at how far the catacombs stretch and how many skulls are down here.

### **THE DUELIST'S SKULL -- (EMMERSIVE POTTER-ESQUE VISION)**

Moving through the maze of old bones, Blaze suddenly succumbs to visions: OF THE DUELIST... a Rider from the French Revolution. Blaze sees his final demise... praised by a blood-thirsty mob who turn on him... suddenly ramming the Duelist into a guillotine... the BLADE, gleaming an angelic blue, crashes down... and then the Duelist's skull, held in reverence is placed in its final resting place.

Blaze looks at a winding wall of skulls and bones. AND SEES THROUGH them... to the Duelist's skull hidden behind. He and Kate pull at the bones until they make a small hole. Kate looks at Blaze... he's too big so she dives into the hole... emerging into a dark stone chamber.





Blaze calls to her from the tiny hole. Inside, a daisy-chain of bones spiral around a mound of skulls.

SHADOWS move behind Blaze. They aren't alone.

Blaze peers through the tunnel. He can SEE the Duelist's skull glowing like it's on fire. To Kate all the skulls are just normal skulls. He directs her to the Duelist's skull. It hides on a tiny mound of earth. Kate takes the skull AND the earth with it into a messenger bag.

Blaze feels the presence of supernatural evil. Flames lick out across his hands. "KATE... get outta there!"

She moves for the hole when the stone ceiling above her CRUMBLES away... and MADDY drops down on top of her.

BLAZE starts going full RIDER when A BLAST of psychic energy throws him into the bone wall.

ZODIAK and the others have arrived. Blaze compels Ghost Rider to the surface... the flaming skull almost going full... but Blaze's face still flickers beneath it... pained by the partial transformation.

He lets loose with the flaming whip... only he's not as powerful as he used to be. That... and the catacombs are a crappy place to fight with a whip. No room. It's hand to hand for Ghost Rider. But he IS Ghost Rider... so he kicks ass.

THE CHAMBER - Kate tries to fight Maddy. Maddy's a total kung-fu bitch... but Kate's scrappy as fuck. She ends up DIVING back into the tiny hole with the skull, tumbles back into the cavern to see:

THE FLICKERING of Ghost Rider, flames licking out as he chases after Zodiak and his men.

Kate runs with the skull, heads for the spiral steps. Maddy is right on her heels.

Zodiak climbs out of the Catacombs from their alternate entrance with the Rider right behind him. Zodiak is cut off from his wheels, and darts through traffic. The Rider takes Zodiak's Ducati. Ghost Rider bears down on Zodiak. The DUCATI BECOMES the AMAZING hell-cycle -- GR catches Zodiak... Zodiak is no match, terrified. Ghost Rider fixes him with the "Penance Stare" - the melding vision - shows all Zodiak's evil deeds... ending with Deacon's death... Then another figure approaches Deacon's body: GR's about to see the truth of what happened back in the tunnel when -

INTERCUT -- A NEW BIKER roars through the shadows - rides at Kate. She barely escapes as this Shadow-Biker -- TAKES The skull from her and in one move... SEALS it in vacuum case.

AND GR'S POWER SUDDENLY SHEDS away, like it's been cut out of Blaze. He stumbles back. Zodiak also staggers, weakened heavily by the Penance Stare. Blaze tries to summon the Rider's flames back. But they're suppressed. He can only go part-way and that part-way hurts like a motherfucker. Zodiak crawls from Blaze's screaming agony when:

MADDY speeds up, her arm lowered, scoops Zodiak onto the back of her cycle. Beyond her... the Shadow-Biker, a familiar shotgun in his hand. Blaze, flames finally licking from his skin, his eyes on fire, climbs on the Ducati to give chase when -- THE SHADOW BIKER FIRES... but Blaze revs the Ducati, avoids the shot.

Ghost-Blaze pivots... to see the Shadow-Biker chamber another round, single-handed, the skull case by his side, then peel off. Blaze... half-Ghost Rider... and in pure agony, races the Ducati after them. Chase ends as GR can't take the pain... the Shadow-Biker fires back... blowing Johnny off the Ducati... Ghost-Blaze rises... the burning chain disintegrating in his fingers. His eyes are molten, BUT STILL SEEING the face of the shadow-biker looking back: IT'S DEACON.

And Johnny collapses.

### **THE CABAL**

Blaze finds himself, the Ducati, etc. in a sleek ultra-modern European building. He wakes to see a cluster of religious figures, priests, rabbis, monks, etc all engaged in furious debate. And at the center of them... Kate.

Johnny enters: "Hey. Who. The Hell. Are you guys?"

They introduce themselves as The Cabal - a religious entity that has worked in secret to monitor and if possible, thwart the machinations of Lucifer and his minions here on earth. Blaze laughs at them. "You guys? You gotta be kidding me? And why is my friend... my dead friend behind whatever's going on? I killed him. I saw him die. How?"

Kate's the only one brave enough to respond: "We don't know. Until you saw him we didn't even know he was alive. Actually didn't really know he existed."

Blaze: "Great. Just great... your secret society is really awesome. Let me guess... it's called a 'secret' society because you chuckleheads DON'T KNOW ANY!"

Priest: "Mr. Blaze, we know that your friend... what's his name?"

Blaze: "Deacon. Deacon Gray. And he wouldn't do this. Deacon... was a good man."

Asian Monk: "Perhaps. Or maybe you never knew what kind of man he was."

Priest: "What he was isn't the issue. We know that Deacon... and Zodiak... have three of the seven skulls."

Blaze: "Well fine... let's go get the other four."

Asian Monk: "We already have one."

Blaze: "We do? Can I see it? Where is it?"

Kate smacks him on the side of his head. "Where do you think?"

Blaze: "Okay, the other three then. Where are they?"

The others gather around Kate who has high-tech maps drawn on glass - analyzing where the skulls might be.

Blaze: "You mean you guys don't even know where these all powerful skulls were laid to rest?"

Asian Monk: "One of us knew but he is not available at the..."

Blaze: "Deacon has him."

Kate: "The Curator was taken from the museum in Munich. His research destroyed."

Blaze: "And now the information only exists in his head."

Kate: "And yours."

Blaze: (getting it) "Because I can actually SEE the skulls. But so what? I can't go door to door across Europe. You gotta get me in the right door at least."

Rabbi: "Perhaps we can."

They all stare at Blaze. Blaze looks to Kate.

Kate: "You are the Rider. You might have this secret in you."

Blaze: "Right. Okay. What's that supposed to mean? Just pop my skull open, have a look inside?"

Rabbi: "I would like to hypnotize you."

Blaze: "Hypnotism's bullshit. Don't believe in it."

Priest: "But you believe in deals with the devil that result in your head catching fire?"

Blaze: "That's not a question of belief. Just a fact. A fact I'm gettin more and more tired of. Fine... you wanna try to hypnotize me. Let's go for it."

### **DEACON:**

Sharpens an archaic Cavalry Sabre. Its blade gleams blue and blinding with each stroke of the stone, reminding us of the guillotine blade that took The Duelist's skull. Deacon looms over The Curator. Paper maps strewn everywhere. All drawn on, research displayed. Behind them, sit the three cases, each with skulls. "You're sure?" Curator nods. "Because goose-chasin' us won't help you. What we're doing... we're doing for the good of all..." Curator doesn't believe that, but he nods his agreement anyway. Deacon, Zodiac and Maddy ride out. CHARACTER BEAT: Deacon believes his mission is righteous.

### **SKULLS OF THE RIDERS: (TERRIFYING HYPNOTISM SUMMONING SEQUENCE)**

Blaze sits in a darkened room that's more like an operating theatre. His chair is bolted in

the center of a zodiac symbol etched into a pentagon at the center of a pentagram. All sorts of religious graffiti mark the walls. The Rabbi and Kate secure Blaze to the chair with heavy psychiatric hospital restraints while the rest of the Cabal watch from behind the glass observation window.

Blaze: "You guys know... I can't go all the way. I've tried... but the Rider... he can't come all the way out."

Rabbi: "Let's hope he doesn't come out at all. The Ghost Rider has been part of you long enough that we should be able to get what we need from you, Johnny Blaze."

Blaze: "And the restraints?"

Rabbi: "A precaution."

Blaze tells them he doubts he can be hypnotized... but before the sentence is out.... he's under.

AND WE'RE TRAVELING -- RIDING with Blaze as he rides with -- THE RIDERS.... from the past. Abstract, ghostly and terrifying. Blaze is wrenched inside the vision.

**THE RANGER: CARTER SLADE** -- (Sam Elliot) from GR1... his skull taken from his Western American resting place...

**THE BRUTE** -- the Germanic protector from the Munich museum -- a flaming berserker wielding a fiery hammer -- skull found, protected... and preserved in the Munich museum until Zodiak and Maddy claim it.

**THE DUELIST** -- Riding through the streets of Paris, flames licking out from his Hell-Steed as he vaults over a massive barricade during the revolution... The Guillotine before him is lit up in a flash of lightning.

IN THE CIRCLE --

BLAZE is torn from Rider to Rider... becoming the Rider, then Watching the Rider's wreak furious vengeance for their Satanic Masters,... then seeing their final resting places....

The Rabbi and Kate move back as Blaze's eyes begin to GLOW -- molten light coursing inside... cracks in his flesh begin to appear. The Rider within him is coming forward.... Kate steps towards Johnny but the Rabbi jerks her back. "Do not enter the circle."

Blaze is pulled into --

**THE SAINT** -- a holy man that pre-dates Christ. He battles a bronze-age army from a flaming chariot... His flames fade into a withered old man... his skull seeming to float... next to...

**THE NOMAD** -- an Arabian Rider, who shoots flaming arrows from a curved bow of fire. His skull snuffs through time and is secreted away to join the Saint's in a

MASSIVE CHANDELIER OF SKULLS in a church filled with bones....

BLAZE -- screams out in the circle... "Two of them... there's two that rest together... a church... of bones...." He ROARS -- FLAMES jetting from his eyes as he's propelled into:

**THE CHAMPION** -- a heavily armored black knight... plumes of fire ripping from skull and armor -- the armor itself glows red like iron in a forge. A lance of fire... cleaving through a pilgrimage caravan. He rears on his massive hell-steed... HIS SKULL now snuffs in his

helmet... his mission over...

BLAZE turns his head... like he's trying to see...

PAST A ROW of strange medical specimens, hideous and preserved for ages, jar after jar -- some kind of storeroom in an old Medical University... maybe Romanian... And there -- in an ancient lead-glass jar, sitting on an earthen mound... is the skull of the Champion. AND A SHADOW CROSSES --

A FACE IS REFLECTED IN THE WARPED GLASS -- DEACON, distorted.. and AHEAD OF BLAZE -- DEACON TAKES THE SKULL from its resting place...

BLAZE BURSTS FROM THE CHAIR... THE RIDER SCORCHING OUT OF HIS FLESH -- It's whip is out... Blaze isn't in control of it... GHOST RIDER IS PURE RAGE -- lashes around the circle... trying to escape... The Rabbi tries to calm the Rider... speaking to Blaze inside... BUT THE RIDER WHIPS at the Rabbi - sending him back through the glass observation window...

DEACON - places the Champion's Skull into one of his vacuum cases. IT SEALS SHUT with a HISS --

AND THE RIDER IN BLAZE WAILS LIKE A TORMENTED BANSHEE -- levitating in pure agony... BLAZE is being dragged back through the fire of the dissipating Rider... his whole body shaking like he's birthing from hell itself.

HE SLAMS to the floor... KATE rushes to him... Blaze twitches... His eyes still burning. His mouth still on fire. He can't control any part of the Rider. It ripples in and out of him like a furious animal smashing at the walls of its cage -- only that cage is BLAZE. KATE takes Blaze's face in her hands. Her fingers burning but she holds him... speaks to him, compels him to take over, to take charge, to come back.

And finally he does. Johnny Blaze returns and slumps into Kate's arms. She holds him, a Pieta pose, stroking his tormented face. We can feel the connection between them.

Catching his breath, Johnny says: "Deacon has another skull... but I... I know where the last two are..." Kate looks from Johnny to the Cabal. The Rabbi still lives. Their faces grim.

### **DECAYING THEATRE:**



Deacon returns with the Champion's skull. Laid out on the floor are the skulls of Carter Slade, The Brute, and The Duelist. Zodiac takes the Champion's skull and adds it to the ritual. He scrapes fragments from the latest skull, grinding it to powder.

Deacon looks to Maddy... "Get the Curator... see if he's found the last two locations." The Curator's room is locked. Fire is flickering under the door. They kick their way in to see the Curator hanging from the rafters... his papers in flames... the flames licking up his dead body. There won't be any more information from him.

Deacon wheels on Maddy: "Find Blaze. Track him."

### **TRAIN - to the Czech Republic:**

The Ducati is loaded in baggage. Blaze and Kate ride together in a small compartment. The Rabbi has given her a high-caliber hand-cannon. Small but packs a massive wallop. She looks at it with reservation but Blaze tells her to hang onto it. Odds are good she's gonna need it. They finally have a heart to heart... where Kate is less aggressive and more, sympathetic and somewhat in awe. She touches Johnny's face: "How do you go on... with the Rider inside you? How do you do it?" And we see Johnny's veneer of steel crumble. It's been far too long since he let anyone into his twisted reality.

Blaze: "No one... has been close to me, has touched me... for forever. Everyone who I have loved, who has been my friend, leaves or dies."

Kate: "I'm not going anywhere, Johnny. I don't understand what you go through, no one can. Except maybe those that have ridden before you. But even they never fought their dark destinies the way you have."

Their partnership is transforming from uneasy alliance to romance. Blaze is timid, even terrified. But Kate is confident. She takes control. Gently kisses him. And that kiss heats into passion. Shutters are drawn. And trans-European Train-Sex begins.

### **OUTSIDE PRAGUE - SEDLEC OSSUARY**

Blaze steers the Ducati into the graveyard, Kate holds tight behind him. They get out... expecting to be attacked. Wary.

As they enter the chapel... Maddy's near-silent electric bike hums into view.





**THE OSSUARY:** Skulls, bones and death are everywhere. BLAZE SEES, in his eyes only, the luminous skulls of both THE SAINT and THE NOMAD. They are high above them in the Chandelier. Blaze sees fragments of both Riders -- of their deaths -- The Saint, now old, prays as a beautiful woman raises a curved blade behind him... The Nomad, led to sinking sand... Arrows dipped in black pitch fly into his body... until he disappears below the surface...

Blaze senses something new... senses something about the deaths of each Rider.

Kate looks to him. "What is it?"  
Blaze: "They... they were betrayed. By someone who loved them... Someone they loved. That's how they died."

He holds his look with Kate. Then she turns her attention to the chandelier of bones and skulls. "Help me climb up." Blaze shakes his head, spots instead...

A way to lower the chandelier. They pluck the two Rider Skulls... place them in the heavy messenger bag. Blaze puts it over his shoulder. The mere touch of the skulls seems to renew his power. As if being this close to the source of power is fueling the Rider inside him.

They board the Ducati... and RIDE OUT.

### **THE TRAIN RIDE BACK -- (END OF ACT 2 SET-PIECE)**

In the bar car. "Now we need to get the other skulls from Deacon," says Kate, "But finding him will be the challenge." Blaze reacts... sensing the approach of supernatural evil. "We won't have to. He's already found us."

OUTSIDE the train... Deacon on his own supercharged bike roars next to the tracks. Maddy w/Zodiak ride next to the engine. Zodiak boards the engine, hijacks the train. Takes control and keeps it moving at gunpoint.

Deacon REVS his bike... along an overpass above the train... and DROPS onto the TOP OF THE BAR CAR -- THE BIKE COLLAPSING the top of the train, folding it down like a ramp - ALLOWING DEACON to RIDE RIGHT INTO the car. He steps off the bike, the Civil War Cavalry Sabre in one hand, his shotgun, only now demonized in the other.

BLAZE vs DEACON - On the train, skulls by his side, Blaze goes RIDER, still not all the way, but stronger than he was in Paris. However, Deacon's turbocharged. He's way more than he was before. Fueled by some ancient evil coursing through his veins.

They fight whip against sabre and shotgun. Finally Deacon seizes Kate. "THE SKULLS!" Kate struggles, pulls out her own handgun... and PUSHES IT UNDER Deacon's chin -

FIRING. Deacon rockets back... but he's NOT dead. Not even close. She takes off... but there's only one way to go... UP THE RAMP made in the roof of the train car. SHE FINDS herself... on top of the speeding train... with no where to go but back its length... AWAY from --

DEACON who vaults up onto the roof, back on his bike. He guns it at her. She's got nowhere to go... WHEN THE FLAME WHIP snakes around Deacon... JERKING him back. Deacon clings to his bike, swings it around with him as...

GHOST RIDER snaps the chain back, spins DEACON and his bike OFF of the train.

ONLY TO LAND miraculously on the tracks BEHIND it.

Kate loses her balance, is about to fall off the train when -- THE FLAMING WHIP snakes around her... pulls her back from near death into GHOST RIDER'S ARMS. Kate is face to face with a near-flaming skull. Blaze is still visible beneath, but The Rider's in more control... He spins, let's her go...

Kate SLIDES down the make-shift ramp into the train car. THE RIDER runs down the length of the train towards the BAGGAGE car near the front. HE WHIPS down at the roof. SLASHES three times. Then jumps -- AND SMACKS DOWN on the top... CREATING ANOTHER RAMP...

GHOST RIDER SURFS down the ramp... arrives right in front of the Ducati.

DEACON'S BIKE SLAMS on top of the rear of the train. He screams along the top of the speeding train.

GHOST RIDER - BLASTS OUT of the baggage car... flames lunging out of the Ducati-Hell-Cycle.

DEACON, his Sabre held HIGH... REVS AT THE RIDER.

THE RIDER -- LAUNCHES AT DEACON --

THEY SCREAM HELL BENT AT EACH OTHER ACROSS THE TOP OF THE SPEEDING TRAIN ---

DEACON rears back with the sabre, ready to strike...

GHOST RIDER bears down on Deacon...

ZODIAK - HITS THE BRAKES IN THE ENGINE...

THE TRAIN LURCHES VIOLENTLY -

DEACON VAULTS SKYWARD -- SWINGING THE SABRE AT THE RIDER'S SKULL...

GHOST RIDER - Ditches the Ducati on its SIDE... SLIDES UNDER DEACON... THE FLAMING WHIP SLASHES AROUND DEACON'S THROAT...

BUT DEACON'S BLADE... HOOKS AROUND THE MESSENGER BAG STRAP...

CUTTING THE SKULLS FREE --

And in that instant... The Rider's power RETREATS... not all the way... but enough for Ghost-Blaze to lose his grip on Deacon...

But not enough for Deacon to lose his grip on the BAG. Deacon yanks in the messenger bag... clings to the skulls...

DEACON REVS off the SIDE of the train... and AWAY.... AHEAD of the stopping train... AND ACROSS THE TRESTLE down the tracks.

Ghost-Blaze rights the semi-hell-cycle... and speeds after Deacon. He flies from the train, lands hard... almost spilling.

MADDY rides at a dead intercept course with Deacon. TWO Vacuum cylinders in her saddle bags. She and Deacon skid together.

BLAZE pours on speed RIDING ALONG THE RAIL -- he's gotta get there before the canisters are sealed.

SKULLS disappear within the rune-marked cylinders. THEY HISS THEIR CONTAINMENT - LOCKING OUT BLAZE'S POWER...

THE GHOST RIDER -- SPASMS WILDLY in Blaze, TUMBLING him from his BIKE... The bike careens to a stop but BLAZE GOES OVER THE SIDE OF THE TRESTLE... He barely hangs on by his finger tips.

DEACON steps up to the edge and looks down at his friend, clinging for his life. But before Deacon can speak... BLAZE LETS GO... AND FALLS INTO THE RIVER over a hundred feet below.

KATE - Staggeres from the halted train...into ZODIAK.

THE RIVER -- Blaze rises from the icy waters. Staggeres to the river bank.

### **THE CABAL:**

Blaze arrives with the battered Ducati. Deacon has Kate and the skulls. He wants Blaze to come to him. The Cabal are against it. Now that Deacon has the six Rider skulls -- Blaze can summon so little of the Ghost Rider. He'll be facing Deacon and his minions as Blaze. And that's how Deacon will take Blaze's skull. Blaze turns to them... 'then he's welcome to try.'

### **THE BINDING KNOT:**

Close on the skulls, the last fragments shaved off, ground to powder. Zodiac pours the powder into red hot liquid glass... he folds the glass into a BINDING KNOT, made from the skulls of the six riders past. "We're ready."

### **THE SHOWDOWN:**

AKALARRE - SPAIN - an isolated bowl of red rock and earth. Caves litter a long canyon... these are the CAVERNS OF THE INQUISITION -- where so many were found guilty of witchcraft and tortured. This place overflows with evil. And at the mouth of the Caverns... Zodiac has set up the skulls. Each in its own circle, pulled from the vacuum canisters, only now each skull is marked with a the zodiac symbol on its brow. Other runic markings are all over the skulls. Zodiac's dark controlling magic covers them. And attached to a chain, the glass binding knot. Zodiac puts it around his neck. The skull fragments melted within knot begin to glow.

Zodiak turns on Deacon: "You must get Blaze's skull fast. Without it, I won't be able to control them for long."

Deacon sharpens the old Cavalry sabre: "You just run them long enough to get me close to him. I'll do the rest."

Kate eyes them both. "You're all so cliched. Kidnapping me. You really think Johnny's that stupid... to hand his head to you for my life?"

Deacon: "That I know I can count on. He's unpredictable in a lot of ways. But I can guarantee he's gonna ride in here to save you. After that... well... it's anybody's guess."

The GLASS KNOT around Zodiak's neck glows brighter. The corresponding symbol marked on each of the Rider skulls glows as well. Zodiak nods to Deacon. And Deacon takes a torch, setting EACH skull alite.

ON THE ROAD

BLAZE is met by Maddy. "Come on, tough guy. I'll take you to Deacon."

She leads him into the canyon mouth. Beyond, he sees Kate, strung up to a pair of crossed saplings. She's illuminated by six small fires around the mouth of the Caverns.

Blaze (shouts): "DEACON! Let her go. You want me. I'm here. No fight. Just let Kate walk out and I'll walk in!"

Deacon shouts back: "BLAZE. I made you a promise. To end your life if you lost control of the Ghost Rider. And you have. You are the very thing you fought against. And now I'm gonna make good on my promise." With that Deacon turns and slashes the sabre across Kate's mid-drift. SHE SCREAMS as her blood... innocent blood spills.

BLAZE summons the Rider... or what he can... his face singeing with dim flames... barely a hint of the Rider's skull visible. He revs the Ducati, the substance of the chain growing in his hand.

Maddy cackles with delight as he tears toward Zodiak...cackles until GR's glowing chain snaps back, wraps around her and engulfs her in hellfire.

BACK ON GHOST RIDER as he thunders toward --

ZODIAK - the GLASS KNOT is now fire-red around his neck. HE RAISES HIS ARMS --

AND THE BURNING SKULLS RISE UP -- FLAMES LICKING DOWN FROM THEM as they FORM the fiery phantoms of GHOST RIDERS past.

Ghost-Blaze reacts with a 'fuck-me-shit' look.

ZODIAK WAVES his arms forward -- AND THE RIDERS CHARGE.

Blaze rears back on his rear wheel and charges into them.

The six Riders, The Ranger (Carter Slade), The Brute, The Duelist, The Saint, The Nomad and The Champion - surround Blaze. He's in a shitstorm of pain. He and his whip and the Ducati are damn near no match. He revs the bike through them, spinning faster, lashing

out... seeking to hammer the skulls.

But the Riders overpower Blaze, swarm him into the center of the firestorm they've become....

BLAZE -- can feel he's being beaten. They fall upon him like anvils. They pound him into the ground. He cannot move. Then...he sees Kate. Kate helpless. No. Kate...who loves him. He. Is. Loved.

AND BLAZE surges through the Riders... WHIPPING OUT... seemingly at Deacon-- WHO DODGES... but the flaming whip BITES INTO Kate's BINDINGS... and frees her...

THEN BLAZE is pulled back into the maelstrom of the Riders.

Zodiak's eyes roll back in his head. He summons every ounce of his magical strength to control the Riders.

WHO FINALLY SUBDUE GHOST-BLAZE -- AND RAISE HIM up on a sea of fire... propelling him to Deacon's feet.

Kate... now free, grabs Deacon's shotgun from where it lies.

Deacon looms over Blaze, sabre in hand. Blaze is held fast by the Riders, forced to his knees.

Blaze: "Why Deacon? This isn't you. You don't do this. What deal did you make?"

Deacon: "This sabre is old, Blaze. I'm told that it's been forged with the fire of angels and only it can take the head of evil as powerful as you. Let's see if that's true."

Kate stands and presses the shotgun to the back of Zodiak's head... AND SHOOTS: Zodiak LAUNCHES FORWARD -- dead before he hits the ground.

AND THE RIDERS ARE RELEASED -- each staggers back in its own swirling dust-devil of fire.

Allowing BLAZE to rise -- he spins on Deacon!

The skulls still glow, the Riders now sentinels held within Zodiak's magic - the Glass Knot is bright red around the stump where Zodiak's head should be.

Though still less than what he was, GhostBlaze goes after Deacon with a vengeance! Deacon swings the blade, fights with all he's got, all he's been given, but he's no match for a Johnny Blaze who wants to live. Blaze disarms, Deacon, holds his face close and delivers --

THE PENANCE STARE: "What deal did you make?"

AND We see the opening - the tunnel ambush - it wasn't for Ghost Rider or Blaze - it was always for Deacon - for Deacon to betray The Rider, to betray Blaze.

FLASHING BACK TO: A figure looms over Deacon as he lies dying in the tunnel:  
**MEPHISTOPHELES** - finding Deacon's broken body -- 'your friend killed you... your friend... is the most powerful evil force in existence... and must be destroyed... I can give

you the power to do it... the resources... and you'll live... you'll do right. Justice will be served..." Deacon accepts the offer he can't refuse.

BLAZE recoils -- HIS FIRE extinguished by -- a wash of ICE clouding out of the CAVERN MOUTH --

Mephistopheles stands there: "You have squandered your gift SO recklessly, Johnny. You have turned your back on me. Used the Ghost Rider for your own ends. You have grown more powerful than any rider before you. And you MUST BE STOPPED. My Riders have been drawn together. Your power stripped."

He glares down at Deacon, "I thought we had a deal? I'll do it myself."

Mephisto flicks his wrist. Deacon slams into the wall...bones shatter.

Blaze takes a step toward Deacon...his face filled with concern.

Mephisto laughs. "He betrayed you and still you show compassion. You may well be the greatest failure the Riders have ever known." And with that Mephisto rips into Ghost Blaze. Literally beats the hell out of him.

Deacon watches...broken...dying.

Blaze is pummeled. Throttled. Pounded. Beaten into the circle of the Riders.

KATE - goes to Zodiac's body.

The Riders surround Blaze, malignant in the presence of their true master, the master only Blaze was strong enough to spurn. From each Rider, a burning iron chain lashes, snares Blaze, pulling his arms taught. An offering.

Blaze gazes at Deacon.

KATE pulls Zodiac's glass knot from his dead body. Stares at the glowing twisting glass...traces of each Riders' skull burn within it.

A busted Deacon stares over at a beaten Blaze as Mephisto stalks triumphantly toward him.

Blaze (to Deacon): "Now do you get it? Now do you see what I've been fighting against all these years? A deal *with* the devil is just a deal *for* the devil."

Mephisto tips Blaze's chin up to him. Caresses his cheek, feeling the skull inside. Then holds his hand back, fingers open. Waiting.

Mephisto: "Deacon. You made the deal. All's forgiven if you just hand me that sabre."

And Deacon rises, the sabre in his hand, its blade gleaming blue. Head down, shame on his face, he walks to Mephisto.

Blaze: "Deacon...you were a righteous man. Now you work for the very evil you despised. I'm dead. And the next rider will be his weapon and his alone. And YOU'VE done that for him."

Mephisto: "Johnny, give it a rest. Deacon's on the winning team..." And Mephisto finally

looks back at Deacon.

Deacon slowly raises his eyes, meets his master. Then finds Blaze.

Deacon uses the last of his strength to SWING the Heavenly BLADE INTO MEPHISTOPHELES -- THE DEMON ROARS!

And Kate raises a rock over her head and smashes it down onto the glowing GLASS KNOT!

Mephisto's head jerks toward the Riders -- their flames extinguish... they drop to the ground. "NO!" As their glowing symbol's fade...and vanish. Suddenly...FIRE snakes into the air from each skull and one by one that fire SLAMS into Johnny Blaze!

And from this broken man...rises... **THE GHOST RIDER**



tears off after Mephiso.

The Demon Mephisto retreats into the cavern.

Ghost Rider kneels beside his old friend. "Your soul is clean Deacon Gray." And with a hint of a smile, Deacon inhales two quick breaths...and falls still...never to rise again.

GR rises, nods to Kate who knows better than to stick around. She turns and flees the cave as --

Blaze mounts his Hell-Cycle... and

Mephistopheles, unable to pull the heavenly sword from his body is no match for --

GHOST RIDER -- THE WHIP LASHES OUT -- SNARING THE STUCK SABRE -- The Rider snaps the chain back -- and the SABRE tears UP THROUGH MEPHISTOPHELES' BODY -- in a SPRAY OF LIGHT

THAT LIGHT EXPLODES OUT OF THE CAVERN -- blowing Kate off her feet.

Through a cloud of smoke and dust and fire...

The Hell-Cycle emerges... the Ghost Rider steps off... his face changing back to Johnny Blaze. Not the lost Blaze, but one that's found, redeemed. He pulls Kate to her feet. And she throws her arms around him.

**THE END.**

Special thanks to Deviantart wizards:

~saltares

\*rushredkryptonite

~TheDEviLDweLLeR

and random screen grabs from the net.

