

Ghost Rider Ring of Fire

By

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EXT. DARK ROAD - NIGHT

Painted yellow dashes zoom by on a dark, dilapidated road.

A distant motorcycle engine ROARS as we tilt up to see a bicycle pushing as fast as it can up the long-stretching street, its chain SCRAPING as if used to its fullest extent.

On the modest bike pedals JOHNNY BLAZE (12), dressed to combat cold weather, his eyes locked forward with a bag of ice in the bike's basket.

EXT. BLAZE RESIDENCE - NIGHT

A two-story southern house sits adjacent a small farm and a far-stretching cornfield, barely any streetlamps.

Johnny rushes to the porch, LEAPING off his bike while still in motion with ice in hand. The bike CRASHES into the porch as Johnny races up the stairs and through the front door.

INT. BLAZE RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Johnny rushes up the stairs, past framed family portraits but HALTS at a bedroom door frame underneath a crucifix.

BARTON BLAZE (30) and a DOCTOR (50) stand hunched over a bed where NAOMI BLAZE (30) lies still, a damp rag on her forehead and her eyes open, but still.

BARTON

No...no!

Johnny stares at the scene, mouth agape, and DROPS the ice.

Barton SPINS around.

BARTON

Johnny.

Johnny turns and runs back down the stairs.

EXT. BLAZE RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Johnny runs out the door, off the porch, and past his bike.

BARTON(O.S.)

Johnny!

EXT. CORNFIELD - NIGHT

Johnny pushes through stalks of corn for several meters before tripping in the dirt and falling to his knees.

He buries his face in his hands and weeps.

BARTON(O.S.)
Johnny?!

Johnny looks up and notices a shadowy figure approaching.

Through cornstalks, a glimpse of ZARATHOS, sharp in shape and head aflame, appears before Johnny.

BARTON(O.S.)
JOHNNY?!

INT. THE GARAGE - DAY

ROXXY (O.S.)
Johnny?!

A BANG on a door shakes awake an adult JOHNNY BLAZE (30), a real Norman Reedus looking guy. Uncanny.

JOHNNY
Ugh.

Johnny pushes himself out of his makeshift couch bed and approaches the repair shop's garage. Light spills through rustic holes created by time or unsatisfied customers.

Johnny stumbles to the door and unlocks it.

ROXXY(40), dressed in experienced overalls, pushes past him.

ROXXY
The one time you actually sleep is
when I forget my keys. Go figure.

Roxy goes to the counter as Johnny closes the door and begins opening the shop.

ROXXY
I didn't interrupt anything
important, did I?

JOHNNY
I was actually in the middle of a
dream.

Roxy opens the cash register and flips through a book.

(CONTINUED)

ROXXY

That so? Was I the lion or scarecrow, Dorothy?

JOHNNY

I remember you riding a broom.

ROXXY

Funny. Y'know, I had a dream last night too. One where you actually fixed the lift here like I've been telling you to for months.

JOHNNY

I did what I could. Might just need to invest in a new model.

ROXXY

If we had even a thought of the budget for that, I'd have considered it already. Now I'm just counting the days until it drops Mr. Friedrich's pickup on me.

JOHNNY

I'd be so lucky.

Roxy smirks and throws a stained rag at Johnny.

ROXXY

Looks like another bone-dry day today if our appointment schedule is to be trusted.

JOHNNY

Maybe we're so good at our job that everyone in town is riding around in a pristine vehicle.

ROXXY

What fine, up-standing citizens we are. We should start sabotaging our customers; Income insurance.

JOHNNY

Really want to mess with karma?

ROXXY

Karma doesn't scare me. At least not as much as poverty. Or snakes.

Johnny snickers as he turns on a nearby fan.

(CONTINUED)

Roxy takes a pen to a calender behind her.

ROXXY

Let it be known that it was on this day that we began our criminal ways. Tuesday the--

She freezes where she stands; Johnny looks to her.

ROXXY

Oh shit. The 23rd. Happy Anniversary.

Beat.

JOHNNY

Huh.

ROXXY

A full year here at Roxxy's Garage Auto Repair and you're still alive to tell the tale. You've come a long way, Johnny.

A KNOCK at the door interrupts a beat of silence.

JOHNNY

Is that cake?

ROXXY

You'd be so lucky. Go freshen up.

Johnny returns to his sleeping area as Roxxy approaches and opens the door. Waiting for her is ROY (18), scratched-up helmet in hand.

ROY

Hi. Do you do bikes here?

ROXXY

Bikes, ATVs, those three-wheeled midlife crisis-mobiles. If it runs on tires, we can fix it. What brings you?

Roy pushes his damaged dirt bike into the shop.

ROY

Took a tumble off a jump. Looked pretty sick from what I'm told.

ROXXY

Sick. I'll have my guy look at it.
Bikes are kind of his specialty.

Johnny emerges from his area with a fresh shirt.

ROXXY

Speak of the devil.

Roxy returns to the cash register.

JOHNNY

Take a landing wrong on this one?

ROY

Yeah, up by Ploog Peak. Came down
hard and now it won't spark.

Johnny kneels down next to the vehicle and studies it. He
follows wires with his hands, delicately.

JOHNNY

Kill switch. Wires leading to it
got crushed between the fork leg.
Easy fix.

Johnny stands and looks back at Roy who is staring at him.

ROY

You're...you're Johnny Blaze.

Johnny takes a slight step back and averts his eyes.

ROY

Dude, you're my hero.

ROXXY

Flattery has no effect on prices.

JOHNNY

Yeah.

ROY

I watched you flip through rings of
fire when I couldn't even touch my
scooter without busting my ass.

JOHNNY

By the look of this bike it seems
like not much has changed.

ROXXY

World famous Johnny Blaze: Zero to Asshole in less than ten seconds.

ROY

Can I get your autograph? Do you, like, charge people for that?

ROXXY

Let's prioritize payment for repairs first, huh? We're gonna have to run out and buy some wires. Do you have the cash to shell out for this?

ROY

Oh, I was hoping it'd be a loan kind of thing.

ROXXY

Take it from a fully-grown adult: Being in someone else's debt is the worst relationship you could be in. Although I'm sure some of his exes would disagree.

Johnny scratches his brow with his middle finger.

ROY

I have 20 dollars on me now. I can probably get 40 by dinner.

Roxy turns to Johnny.

ROXXY

Think that'll cover what you need?

JOHNNY

Whatever it doesn't cover just take out of my check.

Roxy shrugs and collects dollar bills from the register.

ROY

Wow, thank you, man.

JOHNNY

Don't really do signatures anymore, so consider that my alternative.

Roy smiles and nods. Roxxy walks over to them.

(CONTINUED)

ROXXY

Here, take this. Should cover wires and then some. You'll have a better idea of what to get than me.

Johnny nods and heads to the door.

ROXXY

Not taking the bike?

JOHNNY

Nah, I'll just walk.

ROXXY

Like hell you will. I'd like to get this done before tomorrow, thank you. Here.

Roxy tosses a ring of keys to Johnny.

ROXXY

Treat yourself. You haven't touched that thing since when?

Johnny exhales as he stares to the keys in his hand.

ROXXY

Hey, whatever's left after the wires, why don't you grab a drink or something? A little anniversary gift from the garage. Give into a vice every once in a while.

Johnny swings the key ring around his finger. He nods and heads to the back of the garage.

He approaches a tarp covering a motorcycle and PULLS it off.

Johnny reaches toward the handle, but hesitates. After a beat, he grabs it.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Painted yellow dashes zoom by on a dusty, dilapidated road.

We tilt up; Johnny soars on his bike, the engine roaring.

EXT. HARDWARE SHOP - DAY

Johnny pushes through a glass door, charms CLANG together. He holds a bag of boxed wires in his hand.

He steps toward his bike and gazes down the road to a solitary saloon at the end of the dusty street.

INT. SALOON - DAY

A country song echoes through the poorly populated bar.

Signs of local sports teams and game animal trophy heads make up the bulk of the decor. Spilled beer covers the rest.

Johnny Blaze enters the front door, surveys the area, and approaches the bar where BARKEEP, dirty clothes, waits.

BARKEEP

What'll you have?

JOHNNY

Uh, Bloody Mary?

Barkeep nods and walks away. Johnny shifts on his stool.

BIKERS enter. DUMBASS, JERKOFF, ASSHOLE, and CRAIG. All of them dressed head to toe in leather and denim.

DUMBASS

Yo barkeep, get the usuals ready.

They all loudly cavort to the bar. Johnny looks to them.

Johnny focuses on Jerkoff's hand as it clenches into a fist. A molten liquid appears to drip from it. CRIES yell out.

A clouded image of a WOMAN cowering in fear appears. A familiar fist enters the image, connecting with her face.

ASSHOLE

Get something good on that jukebox.

Johnny SHAKES his head and forces his eyes downward, his attention goes to Asshole's boots. Molten footprints are left where he steps. Similar YELLS seem to come from them.

JOHNNY

No...no, no, no.

Barkeep returns with Johnny's drink.

(CONTINUED)

BARKEEP

That'll be ten dollars, son.

Johnny pants and winces, sweat dripping from his forehead.

JOHNNY

No, no.

BARKEEP

Son?

Asshole beats on the jukebox. Craig approaches the bar.

CRAIG

Ears filled with shit, junkie? You owe this man ten dollars.

Johnny meets Craig's eyes. A teardrop tattoo under his left drips down his cheek in a bright molten sheen.

Johnny shakes and sweats as he reaches into his pocket.

CRAIG

That's it.

Jerkoff smacks the jukebox; "Ring of Fire" begins to play. Johnny takes out a handful of dollar bills and drops them.

CRAIG

Oops.

Johnny clenches his eyes shut; Craig grabs his shoulder.

CRAIG

Pay the man and get lost.

Craig SLAMS a knife down into the bar. Johnny jumps in his place and looks down to see it leaking the molten fluid from the blade. SCREAMS and PLEADS echo from the implement.

CRAIG

Before you piss me off.

Ring of Fire grows louder along with SCREAMS and CRIES. Johnny's skin begins to steam. He clenches his eyes shut.

Johnny opens his eyes. Only Ring of Fire echoes in the bar.

The place is wrecked; the Bikers strewn across the floor among shattered tables and singed walls.

The glass before Johnny is empty, save for rising steam. Johnny raises his hands off of the bar to find burned hand prints where they rested. He slinks off the stool.

(CONTINUED)

Johnny stumbles to the door, slowly taking in the scene.

Asshole lays against a wall, Dumbass under the remains of a table, Jerkoff on the floor with a hole in his chest, and Craig with his own knife in his face, its handle melted by a tight grip, his eyes open, black and smoking; all of them simmer where they remain.

The molten footprints are gone; their screams silent.

Barkeep cowers under the bar, burnt dollar bills in hand. Johnny rushes out the front door.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

A squad of county sheriff cars ZOOM down the road. Johnny rushes past them on his bike.

Cloudy images come in and out of Johnny's vision; molten dripping knives, scenes of violence and murder, SCREAMS.

Johnny shakes his head and swerves wildly in his lane.

A shrouded image of Zarathos appears in the street and Johnny swerves off of the road, crashing into the dirt.

Johnny, laying face down in the dirt, looks up to the empty road and drops his head back down.

BARTON(O.S.)

Johnny?

INT. CURCUS HUT - DAY

Johnny (12) wearing dirt bike gear with "Blaze" embroidered on it, lies on the ground next to a bike; Barton approaches.

BARTON

Johnny? You alright, son?

Johnny pushes himself upright, a scratch on his head.

BARTON

I'm the one with the nickname
"Crash," bud, how about you leave
that to me?

Johnny giggles and Barton runs his thumb over the scratch.

(CONTINUED)

BARTON

Gotta be more careful on that bike,
kiddo. The "Blaze Boys" stunt show
can't become a one man gig. C'mon
now, get up.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Johnny, face down in the dirt, opens his eyes.

INT. THE GARAGE - DAY

Roxy is polishing a wrench with a rag. Johnny stumbles in.

ROXXY

Me and the kid where talking about
you for an hour before he left.
Your ears must've been burn--

She looks up; Johnny's clothes are tattered and blood drips
from scrapes and scratches on his arms and head.

ROXXY

What the hell happened to you?

Johnny limps to his area.

JOHNNY

Squirrel ran in the road, swerved.

Roxy follows him to his space. A single blanket is strewn
on the folded-out couch. Shirts droop out of cabinets.

ROXXY

You're bleeding.

JOHNNY

I know.

Johnny shuffles through some cabinets before reaching for
rag on a table and knocking a book to the ground.

Roxy picks it up; Johnny quickly grabs it in her hand.

The cover reads "The Devil in Disguise: Accounts of
Possession and Demonic Presence."

Johnny pulls it away from her.

(CONTINUED)

ROXXY

Think I haven't seen that before?
That, the other books, your prayer
"smoke breaks."

Johnny's head sinks downward. He leans on the table.

ROXXY

You've been acting weird as shit
for...as long as I've known you.

Roxy moves toward another cabinet, Johnny jolts in place.

ROXXY

What? Am I gonna find another noose
in there?

She reaches toward the cabinet; Johnny leaps in front of it,
slamming it shut.

Roxy steps back and looks to the floor.

ROXXY

I have some errands to run, I'll be
back before your fan is.

Johnny sulks back to his table.

ROXXY

If you're not gonna get those
checked out, at least get some
fresh air. Pretty nice out today.

Through the window, two county sheriff cars speed by.

ROXXY

That isn't your doing, is it?

JOHNNY

No. Not mine.

INT. SALOON - DAY

Numbered crime scene placards are scattered among the
wreckage and corpses. Four OFFICERS dash around the scene,
taking pictures, rolling police tape, and surveying.

Barkeep sits near the bar, eyes still as stone. Beside him
sits a DETECTIVE (40), wearing a dark suit.

(CONTINUED)

DETECTIVE
And you said his skull...did what?

Beat.

DETECTIVE
Sir.

Barkeep jumps in his seat and turns to Detective.

BARKEEP
Uh...his...yeah.

Beat.

DETECTIVE
Hm. Can you describe this man?
Before his...skull burst into
flame, that is.

Through the door, cutting through the police tape, emerges AZAZIAH, (60), adorned in a deep red trench coat with long, silver hair in a ponytail and a beard down to his chest. He walks with a cane but stops to survey the area.

DETECTIVE
Excuse me. Sir, you can't here.

Detective rises and walks over to the old man. Azaziah, without looking at him, holds up a dangling pocket watch. Detective HALTS.

AZAZIAH
Call your men outside. Tell them
your favorite story.

Detective straightens up.

DETECTIVE
Boys! Outside.

Detective and the Officers leave as Barkeep watches them. Azaziah exhales and sits next to Barkeep.

AZAZIAH
Tell me what happened.

Barkeep stares at Azaziah.

AZAZIAH
There are four deep-fried human
beings over there and you have
nothing to say?

BARKEEP

I...I, oh god.

Azaziah shakes his head and pulls out the watch.

AZAZIAH

Sleep.

Barkeep flops forward onto Azaziah's shoulder.

AZAZIAH

There there. Been a long day.

Azaziah pushes Barkeep back upright in his chair.

AZAZIAH

Tell me what happened today.

BARKEEP

I came in at six. Had to get an early start on account of not doing the dishes last night like I sh--

AZAZIAH

Skip to the part I give a shit about.

Azaziah gets up and walks toward Asshole's body.

BARKEEP

A man came in. Ordered a Bloody Mary.

AZAZIAH

Louder, dammit.

BARKEEP

FOUR BIKERS CAME IN NOT LONG AFTER. LOUD AND STOMPIN' AROUND LIKE THEY OWNED THE PLACE.

AZAZIAH

They frequent customers? Inside voice, please.

BARKEEP

Once or twice in the past. Devil Dogs have their own place not far from here. Must've been looking for someone.

AZAZIAH

Well, they found someone, alright.

BARKEEP

The man, he--he burst into flames.
Burned his skin off all the way to
the bone but...he moved. He spoke.

AZAZIAH

...What did he say?

BARKEEP

He tore them apart. Threw them
around like they were nothing.
Just...just stared at the one.
Froze him in his place.

AZAZIAH

What did he say?!

Beat.

BARKEEP

He called them guilty.

Azaziah turns to Craig's body; eyes still smoking past the
knife jutting out of his skull. He kneels down beside it.

BARKEEP

What did this? Where did it go?

AZAZIAH

A beast. It went back to its cave.

Azaziah YANKS the knife out of Craig's head.

INT. CAVE - NIGHT

Moonlight peers through a deep sinkhole in the middle of
nowhere. Carved into one of the walls leads a deep tunnel.

An altar looms over a viscus pit; various ritualistic
objects adorn the area. Hundreds of candles illuminate the
satanic symbols and horned animal skulls.

A DISCIPLE (30) dressed in a dark cloak conducts a dozen
similarly dressed CULTISTS circled around the area chanting.

Around the pit kneel a PRIEST (60), a LAWYER (30), and a
SUPREMACIST (40). Behind them stand Cultists with knives.

A Cultists rings a large bell.

(CONTINUED)

RING. The Priest's throat is slit.

RING. The Lawyer's throat is slit.

RING. The Supremacist's throat is slit.

Their blood flows into the pit where a fog grows.

From behind the altar approaches the CHOSEN (20), a cultist dressed all in white, joined by two other CULTISTS.

The three approach the pit; the two by Chosen's sides roll up his sleeves. They each slit both of his wrists and he calmly walks into the pit where he vanishes in the liquid.

Disciple walks to the edge of the pit and reveals a single strand of hair. He holds it over the pit and drops it in.

Silence.

The pit BOILS, bubbles of heat POP with grotesque noise.

The pit settles, Disciple signals Cultists to drain it.

In the empty pit lies MEPHISTO, taking the form of a woman (50), identical to Jessica Lange. She'd be great.

Disciple descends into the pit with a towel and covers her.

DISCIPLE

Welcome back, Lord Mephisto.

INT. THRONE ROOM - NIGHT

Disciple escorts Mephisto into a sprawling lair.

Dozens of bookshelves span the length of the room, depictions of biblical and demonic scenes hang on the walls and a decorative carpet leads to an aged armchair, deep black with the left armrest missing its end, made up for by a black heart shape on the edge of the right.

Mephisto approaches a nearby mirror.

MEPHISTO

So this be the face all who gaze upon will tremble.

DISCIPLE

Yes, my lord. I hope this vessel will accommodate your needs. We found it more difficult than

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DISCIPLE (cont'd)
anticipated to fill the needs of
the ritual--

MEPHISTO
Enough, you've done well. She will
do. No body's limitations can
hinder me once I regain my full
strength. Or at least what fraction
of it I can access in this forsaken
realm. All that time clawing
blindly to this world and I already
yearn for the feeling of such
strength again. How long have I
been locked away?

The two walk toward the throne.

DISCIPLE
Just shy over twelve months.

MEPHISTO
Twelve months blind to all I've set
in motion. All that time for my
contracts to roam free of their owe
to me. Unacceptable. You get so
bored torturing the same trillions
of souls every day.

The two walk past a depiction of a serpent in a garden.

MEPHISTO
You know, I've always hated this
painting.

DISCIPLE
I'll have it destroyed, my lord.

MEPHISTO
No. It serves as an important
reminder. The myopic nature of
these constituents of mine. All so
desperate to find a single
culmination of their fears; a
solitary target for their crusades.
Do you believe that they believe
it, themselves? All so quick to beg
me for axes and clubs yet claim it
my fault when they use them on each
other. This voluntary blindness is
what makes them easy prey, my
disciple. Never forget that.

Disciple nods.

(CONTINUED)

MEPHISTO

Now. Where are my current business associates?

The two continue on toward the throne.

DISCIPLE

We have tracked as many of your contractors as we could. The highest concentration remains in the United States.

MEPHISTO

Naturally. Where are we now?

DISCIPLE

An ancient sinkhole on an island off the coast of Peru.

MEPHISTO

I must compliment you. This is a much more impressive location than where I was last made flesh.

DISCIPLE

Dark cave in the middle of nowhere?

MEPHISTO

Cleveland.

DISCIPLE

Horrid.

Mephisto takes her place on the throne, sinking into it.

DISCIPLE

I've seen to it myself that your legion be armed to appropriately deal with your former... business associates.

MEPHISTO

Armed? As in weapons? Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but for what is buried underneath such crude matter. No, you don't hunt that with guns and knives. You send a predator designed for such prey.

Mephisto clenches the black-hearted armrest tightly.

(CONTINUED)

MEPHISTO
Where is my Rider?

INT. THE GARAGE BATHROOM - DAY

Johnny is hunched over a chipped, dirty sink filling up with water, face dripping as he locks eyes with his reflection.

His eyes trail down to a deep laceration in his forearm.

BARTON(O.S.)
It's not as bad as it looks.

INT. BLAZE RESIDENCE - DAY

Johnny Blaze (18) escorts Barton Blaze, limping with a gash in his right thigh, into the same room his mother died in.

BARTON
Really, I'm fine.

JOHNNY
Coulda had me fooled.

Johnny eases Barton into a chair and goes to an adjoined bathroom to collect a rag and alcohol from the cabinet.

BARTON
I'm fine, son, there's plenty of dirt already rubbed in there.

JOHNNY
That's what I'm worried about, dad.

BARTON
Always worrying about something.
Yesterday it's my cough, today it's my bike skills--

JOHNNY
Neither of which are improving, by the way.

Johnny soaks the rag in alcohol and wipes the wound.

BARTON
Ow!

Johnny continues to clean the wound.

(CONTINUED)

BARTON

This was just an accident, that jump always gave me trouble. Coulda happened to me 20 years ago.

JOHNNY

Well, it's not 20 years ago, dad, it's today; it's now. You have to be more careful.

BARTON

We didn't get here on "careful," Johnny; risks and leaps of faith.

JOHNNY

We got here on two legs each. Let's try to keep that as the minimum.

Johnny goes to a land line phone next to the bed.

BARTON

What are you doing?

JOHNNY

Calling someone who knows how to stitch better than I do.

Barton leaps out of his chair and to the phone. He grabs hold of it in Johnny's hand.

BARTON

No! Son, I'm fine!

They grapple over the phone.

JOHNNY

You're not fine!

BARTON

I don't need a doctor.

JOHNNY

Stop!

BARTON

Leave it be, son!

JOHNNY

You'll have plenty of time to tell me off once your leg is fixed--

(CONTINUED)

BARTON
With what time?!

Barton begins wheezing and violently coughing, sways into the wall and then onto the bed as Johnny stumbles back.

The impact knocks the crucifix off of the wall and onto the floor. Johnny looks to the floor as Barton's coughing eases.

BARTON
With that time? How much time do I
have left.

Beat.

JOHNNY
Don't talk like that.

BARTON
I just want some things to be on MY
terms, son.

JOHNNY
We'll make it work.

BARTON
We don't have the money to make it
work. We can't afford the treatment
just like when your mother...

Johnny turns away, looking toward the door.

BARTON
I'm sorry.

Johnny droops his head and notices the crucifix.

JOHNNY
Maybe there's another way.

INT. THE GARAGE BATHROOM - DAY

Johnny's grip is tight on the sink, the water in it boils.

A KNOCK at the door, Johnny jumps back, away from the sink.

INT. THE GARAGE - DAY

Johnny opens the door to find Azaziah waiting. He wears the same trench coat as he did in the saloon.

AZAZIAH

Afternoon. My name is Azaziah.

Johnny looks at him through the small opening.

AZAZIAH

I was wondering if you caught any wind about what happened up at the saloon not too far from here.

JOHNNY

You a cop?

AZAZIAH

A concerned citizen. A Big Bad Wolf is on the prowl. I'm hoping to track it down before any little piggies get their houses blown down.

JOHNNY

Pretty sure most of the buildings here are made of brick.

AZAZIAH

This wolf's lungs are a little stronger. May I come in?

JOHNNY

Customers only.

AZAZIAH

I see. This is a nice neighborhood. You from around here?

JOHNNY

You sure you aren't a cop?

AZAZIAH

I wouldn't dare be as unproductive. For example, tire tracks left at the scene; motorcycle.

Azaziah pulls out a cigarette.

AZAZIAH

Got a light?

Beat.

(CONTINUED)

Azaziah pulls out his own lighter and ignites his cigarette.

AZAZIAH

Plenty of them, as well there should be, there was a whole string quartet of throttle-jerkers toasting in there. What none of those badges picked up on, though, was one particular tire track didn't match up with our well-done friends' bikes. Nope. One thinner tread sticking out like a worm in a snake pit.

Azaziah taps embers off of his cigarette.

AZAZIAH

The track faded off not too long down the road, but it picked back up not too far from here after what appeared to be a tumble into the dirt. Faded quick too, but it was heading in this direction. Auto Repair shop. Call me curious.

Azaziah looks at the wounds on Johnny's arm.

AZAZIAH

Take a tumble yourself, young man?

Johnny checks his arm.

JOHNNY

I guess the roads are getting dangerous for everyone these days.

Azaziah takes a long puff.

JOHNNY

This wolf you're looking for. What'd it do?

Azaziah exhales.

AZAZIAH

You believe in the Bible, young man?

JOHNNY

Well, there's some chapters I think need revising.

AZAZIAH

Most depictions of a devil see him acting as a trickster; an ultimate tempter, carrying out his own twisted pleasure through the weak resolve of the downtrodden. He gets all the credit for the evil in the world, but it's people that do all the work for him.

Over Azaziah's shoulder, Johnny again sees Zarathos standing off in the distance.

AZAZIAH

No, the devil's true power is corruption; like a demonic Tom Sawyer. Convincing his underlings to paint his fence...

Azaziah steps into Johnny's gaze.

AZAZIAH

And rip apart anyone in its way.

JOHNNY

But here you are, stepping right in its path.

AZAZIAH

Nothing I haven't dealt with before. It just had a different face, then. And a different form of transportation.

Azaziah drops his cigarette and peers into the shop.

AZAZIAH

Nice wheels. You take it out for a spin at all today?

JOHNNY

I was going to but...now there's someone in my way.

The two lock eyes. Azaziah steps on his cigarette and slowly reaches into his pocket before--

ROXXY (O.S.)

You're a brave man to wear a ponytail like that in this town.

They loosen up. Roxxy approaches, bags in hand.

(CONTINUED)

ROXXY

Maybe even braver to wear that coat
in this weather.

AZAZIAH

At my age, miss, the slightest
breeze can chill my bones.

ROXXY

I don't see a car. Looking for a
referral?

AZAZIAH

No, no, just a passer-by. Seeing
what I could learn about the area
from your friend, here.

ROXXY

Oh, Mr. Strong Silent Type? How'd
those three words treat you?

Azaziah turns back to Johnny.

AZAZIAH

Well, some things say more than
words.

Beat.

AZAZIAH

I should be off now, there's plenty
more stories this town has to tell,
I'm sure.

Azaziah turns and walks down the street.

ROXXY

Find Gabriella at the Baskin Robins
on 4th. Ask her about what happened
behind Mario's Pizza back in 77.

Azaziah salutes as he walks. Roxxy enters the garage.

ROXXY

Another fan?

JOHNNY

Something like that.

ROXXY

Hey, d'you get a start on that
kid's bike yet?

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY

No, I had to clean this up then the Gate Keeper knocked on the door.

ROXXY

Alright. Let's see what we can get done before lunch, shall we.

JOHNNY

Yes ma'am.

Johnny goes to the bike.

ROXXY

Let's take a look at this mess.

INT. HELICOPTER - DAY

A helicopter flies over a southern landscape. Mephisto and Disciple sit, gazing out to the far stretching land.

Mephisto holds a dossier in her right hand; her left trembles on her knee.

DISCIPLE

Sir...or, Ma'am?

Mephisto looks to Disciple.

DISCIPLE

Your hand.

Mephisto clenches her shaking hand tightly.

MEPHISTO

The body is acclimating. These forms can't contain my power, even what little I still have at the moment.

Mephisto returns her gaze to the earth beneath her.

DISCIPLE

It must look so different. I mean, since you first came here.

MEPHISTO

It's all superficial, the evolution of this world. Its structures stretch higher and higher, trade brick and mortar for glass and iron, metal spreads across its face

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MEPHISTO (cont'd)
like a bad spill. All the while,
its custodians, its people, stay
exactly how I leave them every
single time.

DISCIPLE
How is that?

MEPHISTO
Hungry. Thirsty. Full of want and
desire. Too weak to go after their
cravings themselves. And they've
only become more consistent of
customers as time has gone on. It
used to be that only an old legend
or folk tale would get me any
business but now I'm just a Google
search away. I might even have an
app, now.

DISCIPLE
There has been a consistent rise in
traffic since the turn of the
century. Plus, the average
clientele median has grown
continually younger.

MEPHISTO
The more things that are known, the
more people have to want. There is
a direct correlation between
selfishness and time, my disciple.
Greed ages like a fine wine.

DISCIPLE
A poet would denote the irony of
you looking on the world from
above.

MEPHISTO
The true irony here is having to
walk among these parasites nearly
as weak as they. How more
productive I would be without the
need of...private contractors.

DISCIPLE
He's likely weaker than last you
faced him, my lord.

MEPHISTO

I can guarantee as much. Blaze has held that confounded spirit in his husk for years now. He's well on his way to burning out.

DISCIPLE

Are you certain about your plan for him? I worry he may complicate matters.

MEPHISTO

The Rider is a wild fire, but one completely under my control. Blaze will fall in line, or I'll crush his fiery bones and find a new pet.

EXT. HILLTOP - DAY

A grassy hill overlooks the town. Roxxy's garage and a tall church stand out among other stout, square buildings.

Johnny walks up it, sandwich bag in hand, toward a tree.

As he comes up to the tree, Johnny looks at a series of markings on its bark. Dozens of single notches after an X.

Johnny pulls a pocket knife out of his...pocket and carves another X at the end of the line of notches.

He gazes at the X for a moment then turns his attention to the knife. He looks up; Above him sways a thick rope tied to a high branch, the end of it singed black.

Johnny clenches his eyes and hits his head against the tree.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Johnny's (18) head hits a table. He props himself up.

The room is dark, save for candle and moonlight spilling over the numerous open books, a chalice, and a bottle of whiskey. Johnny grabs the chalice, takes a deep breath, and takes a swig of the whiskey.

JOHNNY

Well shit.

Johnny brandishes a familiar pocket knife and cuts his wrist over the chalice.

(CONTINUED)

Johnny wraps the wound tightly and begins creating a pentagram out of his blood.

He places a candle at each of the star's edges and waits.

Some time passes and Johnny wakes to see a SUITED MAN (40) standing before him. He balances on a cane with a medallion around his neck. MEPHISTO in another form.

MEPHISTO

I don't mean to startle you.

JOHNNY

I'm--I'm sorry, can I help you?

MEPHISTO

Well, I do believe I was the one called here to help, wasn't I?

Beat.

JOHNNY

You're...you're--

MEPHISTO

Here to help. What is it you need, my son?

JOHNNY

My, my father. He's sick.

MEPHISTO

Oh, you poor thing. To grow without a father figure at your age. It'd be a sin.

JOHNNY

Can you cure him?

MEPHISTO

As surely as I stand before you. Clean bill of health.

JOHNNY

But, what do you want from me?

MEPHISTO

From you? I want what makes you happy. What gives you joy, what sustains you in moments of great despair. For you, Johnny Blaze, you come to me without greed. Without the seed of ruination that can bring down the best of men.

(CONTINUED)

Mephisto makes his way toward the chalice on the table.

MEPHISTO

And yet, payment must be made.

JOHNNY

Anything. Whatever will make him healthy again.

MEPHISTO

Such a loyal boy. Let us say that on the day your father dies, as healthy as a horse, I will come to you for a favor.

JOHNNY

Of course. Now how do we...seal this?

Mephisto reveals a scroll of paper and places a white feather in the chalice.

MEPHISTO

A contract, boy. A budding showbiz star such as yourself should look into them.

The feather falls and Mephisto unravels the parchment.

MEPHISTO

I'll need you sign this.

JOHNNY

And he'll be healthy?

MEPHISTO

Read the print, if you like.

Johnny reads the paper and leaves a red signature. Mephisto rolls the paper and takes the feather.

MEPHISTO

And that'll do it.

JOHNNY

When will he get better?

MEPHISTO

He already is.

Johnny exhales and falls back into the chair by the table, a smile comes across his face.

(CONTINUED)

MEPHISTO

Till we meet again.

Johnny looks up and is alone in the room. He grabs the nearby bottle of whiskey.

INT. DEVIL DOGS BAR - DAY

A half-empty, or half-full, whiskey is SLAMMED down onto a bar's counter. LEROY (30), in leather, wipes his mouth as BROWN (30) wearing a more decorated jacket, approaches.

Brown pulls the bottle away and guzzles it, himself. Among Leroy and Brown linger a half dozen DEVIL DOGS.

GOOD DOG

Wh--what the hell even was that?
What were they even doing there?

BAD DOG

Had to be those sons'a bitches up
by eighth.

OLD DOG

No way, gotta be Simpson and his
boys.

BROWN

Don't matter who it was! We're
gonna find them, and we're gonna
burn them same as they burned our
men.

Brown paces the bar.

BROWN

We'll start with Simpson and his
goons. Rough them up, find out what
they know. If it wasn't them, we
move on to the next one-piece that
gets in our way.

Brown holds up his bottle and the rest of the dogs hold up their drinks.

AZAZIAH

I think I can save you some time.

Azaziah turns around on his bar stool, drink in hand.

(CONTINUED)

AZAZIAH

That is, of course, unless you have a quota coming up on being over dramatic.

BROWN

Got something to say, old-timer?

AZAZIAH

Respect your elders, son. They've forgotten more than you've even known. For example: I think I just forgot the massive lead I was about to gift you with.

BROWN

Somebody get this geezer out of here.

Two Dogs move toward Azaziah.

AZAZIAH

It's only one man.

The Dogs halt. Azaziah sips his drink.

BROWN

Bullshit.

AZAZIAH

Been tracking him for years. Now, thanks to your crispy friends, I finally found his den.

BROWN

So you come here to drink instead of going for the kill.

AZAZIAH

You have to bait the line before you can catch the fish.

BROWN

But here you are, asking for someone else's rod.

AZAZIAH

My fishing days are over, son. Don't have the upper body strength for it anymore. Way I see it, you boys have the drive to find him, means to take him down, and I...

Azaziah STABS the dagger from the Saloon into the counter.

(CONTINUED)

AZAZIAH

--know where to find him.

INT. MORGUE - DAY

The cold metallic interior gleams the white and red lights set up around the dark room. Disciple and Mephisto stand next to a gurney.

Disciple pulls a sheet off the corpse of Craig. He splits apart his eyelids, still smoking.

MEPHISTO

That's undoubtedly his handiwork.

DISCIPLE

It's...impressive.

MEPHISTO

Of all the Riders I've had under my contract, there's always been something about Blaze that's remarkably...creative.

DISCIPLE

This must have been an accident. He's laid so low for so long, he wouldn't dare risk showing himself.

MEPHISTO

He's gotten too comfortable away from my gaze; fattened up after blinding my eye to this realm, forcing us to result in this breadcrumb-following.

Mephisto approaches Dumbass' body and examines it.

MEPHISTO

These are the marks of a beast lashing out, clawing for release. My Zarathos must sense Blaze's weakness. He's trying to overtake him.

DISCIPLE

How long do you figure Blaze has?

MEPHISTO

Enough for us to find him and get a handle on it. Zarathos is work enough restrained to a host. The

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MEPHISTO (cont'd)
last thing we need is that animal
getting out of its cage.

From behind the two of them, GENE (40) dressed in a white apron and surgical hat, emerges.

GENE
Excuse me. You--you shouldn't be
back here.

Disciple reaches into his coat pocket. Mephisto stops him with one hand and stalks toward Gene.

MEPHISTO
I know you. You have one of those
familiar faces. Don't tell me:
Gregg? Geoff with a "G?"

Gene stumbles backward as Mephisto approaches.

MEPHISTO
No, no. It's "Gene," right? Oh yes,
I remember you.

GENE
Who are you?

MEPHISTO
An admirer. Or, more of a fan,
honestly. Been with you ever since
your little experiment in here all
those years back. What was her
name? The poor dearly departed?

GENE
I don't...I don't know what you're
talking about.

MEPHISTO
That's right, you didn't know her
name. So you called her Crystal.
How creative.

Gene leaps for the door. Mephisto snaps and it shuts.

GENE
Who the hell are you?!

MEPHISTO
Why, I'm Santa Claus and I've heard
your every wish. I apologize for
not accepting your requests all
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MEPHISTO (cont'd)
those years ago, I was much more
conservative about my clientele; I
only dealt with people who had
something I wanted. But you know
what tastes better than candy?

Mephisto steps nose-to-nose with Gene; Gene slyly takes a scalpel off a nearby desk.

MEPHISTO
More candy.

Gene STABS Mephisto in the heart; she takes a step back.
Disciple DRAWS his gun, but Mephisto only holds up her hand.

Mephisto removes the scalpel from her chest and examines it.

GENE
What do you want?

MEPHISTO
That is no concern of yours. If I
want something, I take it on my
own. I've spent much time on this
world, roaming the earth, going
back and forth on it. I've found
that people like you, the selfish,
the sinful, are the more common
I've come across. Do you know what
I've learned about you?

Mephisto drops the scalpel in front of Gene.

MEPHISTO
You all taste like candy.

Mephisto PUNCHES into Gene's chest. The veins in his face bulge, as do Mephisto's on her arm. The exposed wound in her chest completely heals and her eyes turn black.

She RIPS her arm out of Gene's chest and studies its crimson gleam as he sinks to the ground.

MEPHISTO
Well...

Disciple holsters his gun as Mephisto's eyes lighten.

MEPHISTO
Let's keep following breadcrumbs.

INT. THE GARAGE - DAY

Johnny enters the main door and throws his bag of a mostly-finished sandwich into the trash. Roxxy and Roy huddle around Roy's bike.

ROXXY

Welcome back, we're nearly finished here.

Johnny nods and heads toward his area.

ROXXY

(to Roy) Why don't you see how it feels, I'll be right back.

Roy takes a seat on his bike and toys with the throttle. Roxxy goes over to Johnny, stopping him.

ROXXY

Hey, about earlier--

JOHNNY

It's fine, really.

ROXXY

No, I didn't mean to snoop, but, are you sure you're okay? I know it's been a while since--

JOHNNY

I am.

ROXXY

Okay. You can talk to me when you aren't, you know. You've been here a year now, I'm more than just your boss.

Johnny nods. Outside, two motorcycle engines pull up.

ROXXY

Looks like we have more business.

Roxxy goes back behind the counter, Johnny goes to Roy.

Brown and Leroy enter, Brown surveys the area.

ROXXY

Afternoon, boys. Were those Harleys I heard out front?

(CONTINUED)

BROWN
Newest models. Good ear.

Johnny looks at them. Brown cracks his knuckles and a molten liquid seems to seep from them. Leroy bites his thumb's cuticle which bleeds the same fluid. Distant YELLS echo from the liquid, Johnny's hand begins to shake and he looks away.

ROXXY
Part of the job. Need a tune-up?

BROWN
No, we're just scouting ahead for a new shop. Been burned before.

Brown looks at Johnny.

BROWN
Hey. Do I know you?

He approaches Johnny, who keeps his eyes averted.

BROWN
I definitely know you.

Johnny looks Brown in the eye. Flashes of his POV while BEATING and STRANGLING people go by, Johnny winces.

BROWN
You're Johnny Blaze. Wow. I must've went to five Blaze Boys shows way back when.

JOHNNY
Yeah.

Johnny brushes past Brown and Leroy, toward the door. Flashes of violence continue to flood his head as sweat drips down his face.

BROWN
Hey, what, no autograph?

ROY
Yeah, good luck.

ROXXY
Johnny.

Johnny looks back toward the group and sees Zarathos standing behind them in the shadows.

He turns and stumbles out the door.

ROXXY

Johnny!

EXT. THE GARAGE - DAY

Johnny stumbles past motorcycles and hunches over, hyperventilates. He looks around wildly with VOICES and SCREAMS in his mind. Storm clouds loom in the distance.

A church bell RINGS from down the block and Johnny looks up to see it a few hundred yards away.

He pushes himself upright and heads toward it.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Fading light pierces through stain glass windows, painting the otherwise plain and empty pews with sharp colors.

Johnny pushes through the doors and braces himself against a stand of holy water. He splashes his face with a handful.

Johnny travels to the front and sits in the first row of pews. He buries his face in his hands.

MEPHISTO (O.S.)

Much better when it's quiet, isn't it?

Johnny turns around to find Mephisto, still adorned in her crimson cloak, sitting in the pew directly behind him.

MEPHISTO

None of that damned singing or those robotic hymns. Man and woman, young and old, reciting someone else's praises, thanking a thing they've never met because they were taught to.

Johnny gets up to leave.

MEPHISTO

Oh, don't mind me young man. Just thinking out loud. I didn't mean to infringe on your silent brooding. Please, sit back down.

Johnny notices Disciple standing guard by the entrance.

(CONTINUED)

MEPHISTO

I don't suppose you came here to find God, Johnny. Funny where people often go to look for him, whether it's a village in Uganda or the bottom of a bottle. What's funnier is how quickly people tend to give up. Did you even try ringing the old man up before me?

Johnny's fist tightens as he stares at Mephisto.

MEPHISTO

You're probably wondering a lot of things, right now. Could this really be him? How'd he get out? How'd he find me? A woman, this time? Really?

Numerous motorcycle engines ROAR in the distance.

MEPHISTO

And what is that sound? There is a storm coming, Johnny, but it isn't made of thunder.

Johnny runs toward the door, Mephisto gestures for Disciple to let Johnny pass and he does.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Clouds darken the town with a gray tone. Dark dust ascends over the horizon as a pack of motorcycles charge forward.

Johnny sees them and turns to run back to the garage.

INT. THE GARAGE - DAY

Johnny BURSTS through the door where Roxxy and Roy are transacting money.

ROXXY

Johnny, what the hell--

JOHNNY

We need to leave.

Johnny rushes back into his area and begins throwing clothes and medical supplies into a bag. Roxxy comes in after him.

(CONTINUED)

ROXXY

Ok, you're going to explain to me what the hell is going on right now. What was with you, earlier--

JOHNNY

Go! Get in your car and go home.

Johnny throws on a black leather jacket. He reaches into his cabinet and pulls out a metal chain. He coils it around his arm but notices something else.

ROXXY

Like hell. Blaze, you better tell me--

BOOM. Innumerable shots fire into the Garage. Hundreds of bullets fill the walls with holes, furniture and decoration shake around and crumble. Johnny and Roxxy are hit by numerous shots and fall to the ground. The firing stops.

Johnny, face down, pushes himself up to see Roxxy on the floor, eyes wide open and motionless. Blood drips from both of their bodies. Johnny's vision fades and he falls.

INT. CURCUS HUT - NIGHT

A full crowd watches in horror as Barton Blaze crashes onto the ground, his flaming body SLAMS and skips on the dirt.

Johnny (18) rushes to his side but is pushed away by WORKERS and a DOCTOR (50). In a tent exit stands Mephisto, leaning on a cane, the medallion around his neck.

Johnny hurries to his bike and rides after him.

EXT. ROADS - NIGHT

Johnny speeds through the darkness on an asphalt road, parallel to a train track, after a seemingly stationary figure that only grows further away.

A flash of Zarathos appears before Johnny. He flinches and swerves slightly off the asphalt and onto the dirt. Mephisto appears before him and raises his hand.

Johnny flips off of his bike and skips across the dirt. Mephisto appears across the train track.

(CONTINUED)

MEPHISTO

You take falls better than your old man, I'll give you that.

Johnny pushes himself up.

JOHNNY

We had a deal!

MEPHISTO

You are absolutely right, young man, and did I not uphold my part of the bargain?

JOHNNY

You killed him! You gave me your word, you said you'd save him!

MEPHISTO

And I did just that. Your father has been cancer-free for thirteen hours now. Could have made it to fourteen if he could have just stuck that landing.

Johnny clenches his fists and stomps toward Mephisto.

MEPHISTO

Now, now, a deal is a deal, young man. I acquiesced your request now I expect you to be true to mine. You owe me a favor. I imagine your father had enough time to teach you respect.

Johnny looks down the track to see a far-off train approaching. He steps over the track to Mephisto.

JOHNNY

Over my dead body.

MEPHISTO

All the same.

Mephisto flicks his cane at Johnny turning into a metal chain; it coils around Johnny, forcing him onto the track.

MEPHISTO

This world is a harsh place. I don't need to tell you, you just lost your last parent in a horrible accident. The place reeks from the stench of its people; filth, sin,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MEPHISTO (cont'd)
dishonesty, disloyalty. I need you
to help me clean it up.

Johnny struggles against the tightening chain; the train
speeds closer.

MEPHISTO
I can't help but feel I haven't
been entirely clear with you, so
let me make this blunt.

Mephisto takes the medallion off from his neck.

MEPHISTO
I have a vacant position I need
filling and you just won the
lottery. I've looked into your job
history and you'll be pleased to
know this is a transportation-heavy
job. The rest I'm sure you'll pick
up from your partner here. So what
do you say?

JOHNNY
Go to hell!

MEPHISTO
No one ever knows the irony of
telling me that. Shame, really.

Mephisto holds the medallion over Johnny. A thin line of
flame shoots out of it and into Johnny's mouth.

Johnny writhes violently on the track and begins to burn. As
the train speeds mere yards away, Johnny's face begins to
burn, revealing his skull underneath as he SCREAMS.

INT. SHACK - NIGHT

Little light illuminates the dark interior.

Johnny SHAKES back to consciousness, hanging by the neck
from a chain as he drips blood from multiple wounds.

Mephisto, in female form, lurks behind him in the dark.

MEPHISTO
Welcome back. Did you enjoy your
vacation?

Johnny GASPS and CHOKES as he hangs.

(CONTINUED)

MEPHISTO

I'll admit, I've been scrambling while you've been away after, you know, trapping me in my realm. But I've returned and, more importantly, we're back together. I'm happy to see you are still up to your old antics. I would have figured you tired of getting innocent people slain in your wake, but old habits, I presume.

Johnny takes a swing at Mephisto, to no avail.

MEPHISTO

Still some fight in you. I've always admired that; proven quite useful before and hopefully can again. We've left a lot of unfinished work here in our wake. We can't have that, so I'd like to make you one last deal. What do you say?

Johnny GURGLES, choking on muffled words.

MEPHISTO

I'm sorry, what was that?

Johnny GURGLES again.

MEPHISTO

Come again?

JOHNNY

Fuuuglck. Euuuuuuue.

Johnny drops to the floor, still wrapped in the chain. Mephisto grabs him by the neck.

MEPHISTO

Don't forget who you speak to.

Mephisto pushes his face aside and paces around him.

MEPHISTO

You are mine, Johnny Blaze. You are mine until my flames have no more bones to engulf. You signed yourself away all those years ago, but here you sit looking at me as if I stole you myself. Now I am offering to alter our terms and you'd be best to listen.

(CONTINUED)

Johnny straightens himself up and looks at Mephisto.

MEPHISTO

I have a few open contracts left roaming the world in our absence and I simply can't have that. I need you to round them up for me. You do that, you walk free. I take my beast back out of your custody and you get to ride off into the sunset with a cute little blonde you might pick up along the way. Let's start with the basics.

The chain loosens and droops around Johnny.

MEPHISTO

I happen to have a target among your new roadhog fans. You know, the ones that just lit up your new friends? Goes by the name of Leroy; star-crossed lover boy, asked me to cross off his brother so he could take the spoils of his marriage. A whole wedding and honeymoon later and he still hasn't gotten me that pesky soul of his. The gall of some people, I tell you.

Johnny pushes himself up to his feet and stands, uneasily.

MEPHISTO

You of all people know I don't take kindly to people going back on my deals, so could you be a dear and go pick him up and drop him off at my place? You know the deal; isn't your first rodeo.

Mephisto holds Johnny's keys up to him.

MEPHISTO

Last ride, Johnny. Make me proud.

Mephisto exits through a door veiled by the darkness. Johnny follows.

EXT. SHACK - NIGHT

The shack sits alone on the side of a dark, desolate road.

Parked next to the shack is Johnny's motorcylce. He starts to approach it but stops. He extends his hand out.

The bike charges toward him, the throttle meeting his hand.

Johnny sits and GRIPS the handles tightly; his eyes GLOW.

EXT. DEVIL DOGS BAR - NIGHT

Two BIKERS (30) drunkenly cavort outside a lone wood-built bar. Neon signs hang in the windows and an American flag sits draped over the entrance.

Approaching far-off on the horizon speeds a flaming figure seated on a fire-spitting motorcylce. GHOST RIDER.

Biker 1 drops his bottle of beer.

BIKER 1

Uuhhh, boss!

The ghostly figure speeds closer as Brown, Leroy and a handful of BIKERS walk onto the porch. Brown peers into the distance. Leroy cowers behind him.

BROWN

Get every gun we have.

Ghost Rider reaches 100 yards away from the bar and every biker aims an assortment of weapons his way. They FIRE.

The onslaught of bullets have no effect; Rider speeds on.

LEROY

No, no.

Leroy DARTS back into the bar as the rest keep firing.

INT. DEVIL DOGS BAR - CONTINUOUS

Leroy leaps behind the bar and takes a pineapple grenade.

EXT. DEVIL DOGS BAR - CONTINUOUS

Leeroy returns to the firing squad; Ghost Rider closes in.

Leeroy pulls the pin and throws the grenade onto the road. It bounces into Ghost Rider's path. BOOM.

A cloud of smoke and dust engulfs the road. Two bikers approach it with their weapons drawn.

A chain STRIKES and coils one of the bikers, dragging him into the cloud. It returns and does the same to the other.

The bikers FIRE into the cloud; a flaming skull shines through the dust, slowly stalking forward.

Each biker empties their clip into the cloud. Silence.

A sinister BREATH echoes out of the dust. Molten bullets FIRE back out of the cloud into the bar, taking out most of the bikers. Leeroy limps into the bar.

Ghost Rider emerges from the dark. His flaming skull illuminates his black leather-clad body. Metal spikes adorn his jacket and gloves and a chain sits coiled around him.

He approaches a Wounded Biker, crawling through the dirt toward a shotgun. BOOM. Ghost Rider is shot from behind. The Shotgun Biker unloads on the Rider, shoved by each shot, until he falls to a knee. He grabs the nearby shotgun.

Shotgun Biker pumps his weapon; it is empty. Ghost Rider, on one knee, turns his body and aims the shotgun at the Biker. The gun BURSTS aflame. Ghost Rider FIRES a massive blast of hellfire into Biker, sending him back several yards.

Ghost Rider stands and drops the melting gun.
BOOM. Brown leans back on the porch stairs aiming a pistol.

BROWN
You like that, huh?

BOOM. Ghost Rider marches toward him, unaffected. He looks at the pistol; flashes of it aimed and fired at people.

BROWN
I don't fear you.

GHOST RIDER
Nnnnnnooo.

Beat. Brown's eyes widen.

(CONTINUED)

GHOST RIDER

You will fear what you have done.

Ghost Rider grabs Brown's collar and stares into his eyes. Brown's eyes burn and he SCREAMS. Ghost Rider shoves him aside and looks up to the bar's entrance.

INT. DEVIL DOGS BAR - CONTINUOUS

Ghost Rider pushes through the door into the empty bar. Brown's SCREAMS echo from outside.

Behind the bar top, Leroy cowers with a shotgun, watching. He sinks behind the bar, takes a breath, and POPS up, aiming his weapon. Ghost Rider has vanished.

Leroy looks to his left and Ghost Rider POUNCES, grabbing him and throwing him onto the floor.

LEROY

WAIT! WAIT! I can give you someone else! Please!

Ghost Rider uncoils and holds his chain. He THROWS the end into the floor next to Leroy's head. He spins it around them, creating a ring of fire. The flames SHOOT up--

INT. THE COURT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The ring of fire EXTINGUISHES. Johnny Blaze stumbles and falls to his knees next to Leroy.

They reside in a circular, stone room. Columns divide sections of the circled-wall. Directly in front of them sits CHARON, a withered humanoid figure wearing a light cloak and a blindfold wrapped over his eyes. He sits on a throne with a column-like bar suspended over his seat.

CHARON

What have you brought me today, Rider?

Johnny stands and drags Leroy before Charon.

LEROY

P-please, whatever you want, I--

CHARON

Shhhhh. You find yourself at the cusp of your actions. Words hold no barring here. Now, show me your sins.

(CONTINUED)

Charon extends his hand toward Leroy and tilts his head.

CHARON

Hm. You have coveted much which has not been your own. Perhaps the Fourth for you.

Behind Charon, a stone serpent begins to coil around the suspended bar.

LEROY

Please, this is just a misunderst--

CHARON

Ahhhh. Betrayed those you have held you dear. Maybe the Ninth will suit you. A long life of violence. The Seventh calls to you as well.

LEROY

I didn't mean for any of this--

CHARON

Ah. The root of it all. She is beautiful. You would do all of this, harm all of these people you have held dear; your own brother. Nearly his wife too had this good Samaritan not intervened in your men's trip.

Johnny averts his eyes from Charon.

CHARON

Damn yourself to this place. All for Lust.

LEROY

I can be better! I can change!

CHARON

Perhaps in some other life. The Second claims you in this one.

The second portion of the wall to Charon's right OPENS and chains ERUPT out of it, wrapping Leroy in their links. They drag him into the opening and the wall SHUTS.

CHARON

I believe we're done here.

Johnny nods. He winds up to spin his chain.

(CONTINUED)

CHARON

Rider.

Johnny stops and looks back.

CHARON

Welcome back.

Johnny spins the chain around and it ignites.

INT. DEVIL DOGS BAR - CONTINUOUS

Johnny stumbles from the transition back into the bar. Mephisto sits at the bar, pouring a glass of whiskey. Disciple sits at a table in the back.

MEPHISTO

Welcome back. You want one?

Johnny glares at her.

MEPHISTO

Remember your first trip to Charon? Coulda used a drink back then--

JOHNNY

Who's next?

MEPHISTO

Persistent. I like it.

Mephisto downs her drink and walks to Johnny.

MEPHISTO

My clientele spans a whole litany of sinful but I have one at the moment that outdoes them all; Drug runner down south, goes by "Diablo." I never took a liking to being called the devil but that doesn't mean I want someone else running around out there riding the coattails of my reputation. Let alone when said person owes me their soul.

Johnny turns and marches to the door.

MEPHISTO

Come, now, you don't want to help yourself to any of these free samples?

(CONTINUED)

Johnny halts.

MEPHISTO

We have so much catching up to do. You know how annoying it was not being able to watch your every move from my realm? I only had hearsay and my imagination.

JOHNNY

I do this, I track this scumbag and his goons down and take care of 'em and we're square.

Beat.

MEPHISTO

That's right.

JOHNNY

I'll hold up my end. Just stay out of my way.

Johnny turns and continues.

MEPHISTO

I imagine you've heard the adage of biting the hand that feeds.

Johnny halts again. Mephisto paces around him.

MEPHISTO

And yet you continue to bite at every bit. Let's keep one thing straight in that hot head of yours: I'm the only one with the shock collar to that beast you have clawing inside of you, so you will watch your tone. I could just watch him tear you apart, bit by bit. But neither of us win from that, do we? You cross me, there is nowhere you can run.

Mephisto's reflection in a nearby shattered window appears ghoulish, red and cloaked in a sharp and collared cloak.

MEPHISTO

Nowhere you can hide from me. I will assure that you roam this world for eternity, bringing ruin and damnation to every poor soul unlucky enough for you to approach.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MEPHISTO (cont'd)
Or, more so than usual, at least.
Are we clear?

Johnny stares forward.

MEPHISTO
I want to hear you say it.

Beat.

JOHNNY
We're clear.

MEPHISTO
Good. Now go do your job.

Johnny walks to the door.

MEPHISTO
Oh, and Johnny?

Johnny STOMPS to a stop in the door frame and looks back.

MEPHISTO
It's comfort to the wretched to
have companions in misery. I'm in
your corner. You've no idea how
lucky you are that I am. I'll be in
touch.

Johnny turns and exits.

INT. THE GARAGE - NIGHT

Johnny walks through the empty front door frame. The door
lays on the floor, riddled with bullet holes.

Across from Johnny, Roy lay slain on top of his damaged
bike. Johnny trudges to his area where Roxxy remains.

Johnny steps beside her and kneels before his
cabinet. He reaches in and reveals an aged polaroid of
his younger self with Barton posing in front of a circus
tent.

He reaches in again and pulls out Mephisto's medalion from
their first meeting; a deep crack sprawls across the middle.
He pockets it and stands. He looks back at Roxxy.

A distant police siren RINGS. He walks to the door and
stands in the frame before looking back.

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY

I'm...

Johnny turns and leaves.

EXT. THE GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Johnny sluggishly exits the shop, his bike a few yards away, and looks to see faint red and blue lights blinking.

He groggily holds out his hand and his bike meets it. Johnny sits, looks forward, and STOMPS the engine on.

Johnny SPEEDS toward the horizon, his engine ROARS.

Azaziah steps forward onto the road near the garage and watches Johnny grow smaller in the distance.

He reaches into his cloak and pulls out a handful of photographs. On them are Johnny and Mephisto.

Azaziah puts them back in his cloak and starts walking down the road where Johnny had sped off.

CUT TO BLACK.