



# The Road Rash Queen

By April Phillips

**B**rittany Morrow was 22 years old when she hopped on the back of her friend Shaun's Suzuki GSX-R750 back in September 2005. She was planning to join the Marine Corps and had her heart set on becoming a combat correspondent. She also loved riding and considered herself an experienced passenger. She was excited to be on a sport bike—even if it was as a passenger.

To prepare herself, she put on a pair of sunglasses and shed her cowboy hat for an oversized helmet. She donned a pair of Capri pants and a sweatshirt over her bikini.

"I thought nothing of the fact that I had practically no protection against the asphalt if anything were to happen. I figured that we couldn't get into a wreck. It simply wouldn't happen to me," Morrow said.

Forty-five minutes into the ride, Morrow wished she'd been a little more thorough when choosing her personal protective equipment.

"I started to slide back on the seat and felt the cool air fill the small space between my chest and Shaun's back. I felt a rush of wind hit my face like a brick and our bodies separated," she said.

The force of the wind ripped her off the seat in an instant. Soon, she was grinding across the surface of the highway, and Morrow said she felt every single inch of the 522-foot tumble.

"I didn't lose consciousness, but I remember wishing that I had," she said. "I knew this was far worse than anything I had ever gone through, and I was convinced I would not live to see the next day," she said.

Morrow spent the next two months in a hospital. She had third-degree road rash-burns covering 55 percent of

her body. She lost half of her left breast. She severed the tendons in her left pinky finger and dislocated her right big toe. The accident also caused indirect health problems. She lost a lot of blood and ended up contracting pneumonia. She suffered a blood infection, a blood clot on one of her legs, and an adverse reaction to one of her three blood transfusions.

"My road rash was so severe that my skin was not going to grow back on its own. I had lost too much surface area for the doctors to simply suture me together and send me home. My thighs were the only two places that had not received any abrasions," Morrow described.

In order for her open wounds to heal, the doctors had to cut off a thick layer of healthy skin from her thighs, place it over her burns and surgically staple the new skin in place. There wasn't enough skin on her thighs to graft all the wounds at once, so the doctors had to choose which areas to repair first and which had to wait. As a reaction to medication, her long, blond hair fell out.

It's been nearly two and a half years since Morrow fell off that motorcycle. She knew the physical healing process would be a long, tough journey, but she also realized that she had some emotional scars.

"My heart felt heavy, knowing something I loved so much had almost cost me my life," she said.

That's when Morrow decided that she had to get her own motorcycle and ride again. She's now a trained and licensed rider. She owns two motorcycles—a Yamaha R6 and a Honda CBR600F4i. She takes part in track days and is learning to stunt ride. What's even sexier is that Morrow works on her own bikes. This time, she's doing it right.

"Riding prepared for the worst possibilities will always help protect you from injury in even the smallest wreck. I believe that wearing gear is an attitude that can save your life. Accepting the risk before you even swing your leg over your bike and protecting yourself in case it happens will make you ride smarter and safer and might even prevent an accident altogether," she said.

Morrow is a protective apparel spokesperson and has also purchased the rights to TheRoadRashQueen.com, an online forum where she can share her experience and urge others to always wear the proper gear. She travels the country telling others how to protect themselves. She enjoys taking her message to the military, because she feels grateful to give something back to those who protect America.

"Protect others by protecting yourself," she said. "Ride with the attitude that you are needed so desperately by those around you, including your country. You can't afford to risk riding without your gear." ■