

RAIN... ENGULFING THE CITY IN A DAMP BLANKET OF GLOOM...

RAIN... POUNDING DOWN ON THE SKULL THAT ONCE WAS THE HEAD OF A NORMAL MAN...

RAIN... COMBINING WITH THE BLACK LONELINESS OF NIGHT TO BEAT A MOURNFUL CAPTIVE WHICH CRIES: YOU ARE NOW - THE

GHOST RIDER



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YOU SEE WHAT IS HAPPENING AS YOU SPEED DOWN A NEARLY DESERTED SIDE STREET...

KRAK



...AND YET YOUR TORTURED BRAIN CHOOSES NOT TO SEE IT... SO YOU RIDE ON...



...NEVER CONSIDERING THE FACT THAT YOU ARE DOOMED TO COME INTO CONTACT WITH NORMAL MEN...

...AND THAT THEY ARE DOOMED TO HOUND YOU... CHASE YOU... FOLLOW YOU INTO HELL IF NECESSARY...



...SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY CANNOT UNDERSTAND THE MONSTROSITY YOU HAVE BECOME...

THAT GUY SAW US... MIGHT BE ABLE TO IDENTIFY US IN COURT!

UGS

GET IN THE CAR, CLYDE! WE GOTTA GET HIM! HE'S THE ONLY WITNESS!



SUDDENLY, THEY'RE AFTER YOU... TRYING TO RUN YOU DOWN...

WHY... WHY NOW? I CAN'T LET ANYONE SEE ME... NOT LIKE THIS!

HAVE TO SHAKE THEM SOMEHOW... KEEP THEM FROM SEEING WHAT'S HAPPENED TO ME!



WE'RE CATCHING UP WITH 'IM! ANOTHER BLOCK OR SO... AND HE'LL BE DEAD MEAT!

I HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT... BUT THAT GLOW FROM HIS HEAD'S GIVIN' ME THE CREEPS!

PROBABLY JUST A LUMINOUS HELMET! NOTHING A BULLET WON'T STOP!



STREET'S TOO SLICK TO
OUTRUN THEM! HAVE
TO FIND ANOTHER
WAY!

WE'RE CLOSIN'
THE GAP! ANOTHER
BLOCK OR SO AND...
WATCH IT!! HE'S
CLITTIN' A CORNER--



NO DICE!
THEY'RE STILL
ON MY TAIL!



ONLY HOPE
IS TO DUCK INTO
AN ALLEY... *oo*

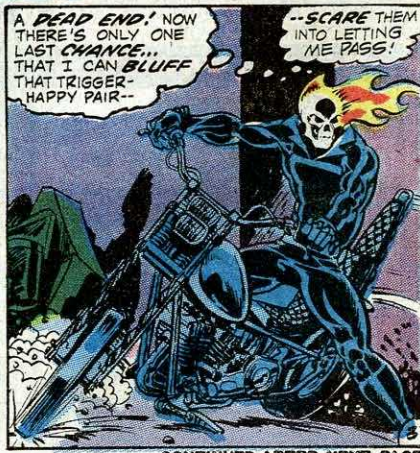
...LIKE THAT
ONE COMING UP
AHEAD!



HE'S TRYIN'
TO SNEAK INTO
THAT ALLEY!
CUT 'IM OFF!

DEAD
END
BEWARE

THEY'RE TOO
CLOSE... SAW
ME! THERE'D
BETTER BE A
WAY OUT OF
HERE... OR IT'S
ALL OVER!



A DEAD END! NOW
THERE'S ONLY ONE
LAST CHANCE...
THAT I CAN BLUFF
THAT TRIGGER-
HAPPY PAIR--

--SCARE THEM
INTO LETTING
ME PASS!

CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE



HE'S IN THERE, ALRIGHT! WE GOT 'IM **CORNERED!** AND SINCE DEAD MEN TELL NO **TALES...**

KNOCK IT OFF! LET'S JUST GET IN THERE AND **FINISH 'IM!**

HOW MUCH TROUBLE CAN ONE **CYCLE JOCK** BE?!

KEEP OUT



MORE TROUBLE THAN YOU CAN **IMAGINE...** ESPECIALLY WHEN HE IS...

...**THE SERVANT OF SATAN!**



WHAT IS THIS?! IT AIN'T ANYWHERE **CLOSE** TO HALLOWEEN!

LOOKIT 'IM! HE AIN'T GOT NO **FACE--** JUST A **BLAZIN' SKULL!**



IT'S GOTTA BE SOME KIND OF **TRICK...** AND ANY TRICK CAN BE STOPPED BY **BULLETS!**



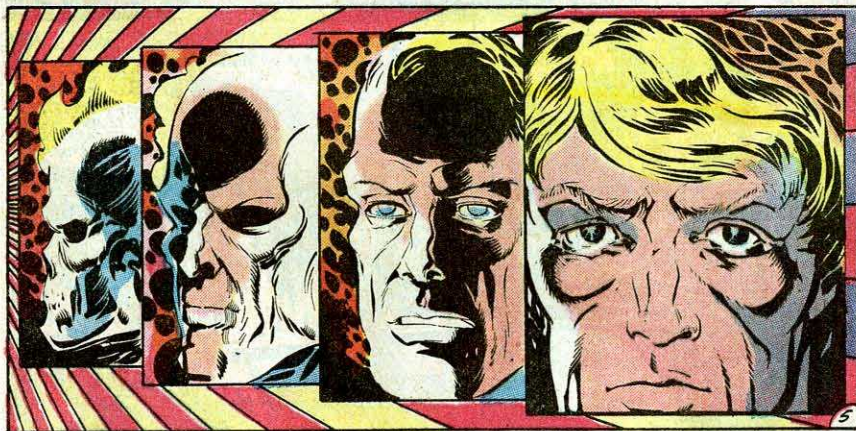
A **TRICK** MAY-- BUT THIS IS NO TRICK... RATHER THE WORK OF THE **MASTER OF DARKNESS!** **OBSERVE!**



FIRST... A **BARRIER OF FIRE...** AND THEN...

HE'S PLAYIN' **GAMES** WITH US! **DRILL 'IM!**

I'LL **TRY...** BUT ANY DUDE WHO CAN SET THE **GROUND ON FIRE** JUST BY **POINTIN'** AT IT MUST HAVE **SOMETHIN'** GOING FOR 'IM!



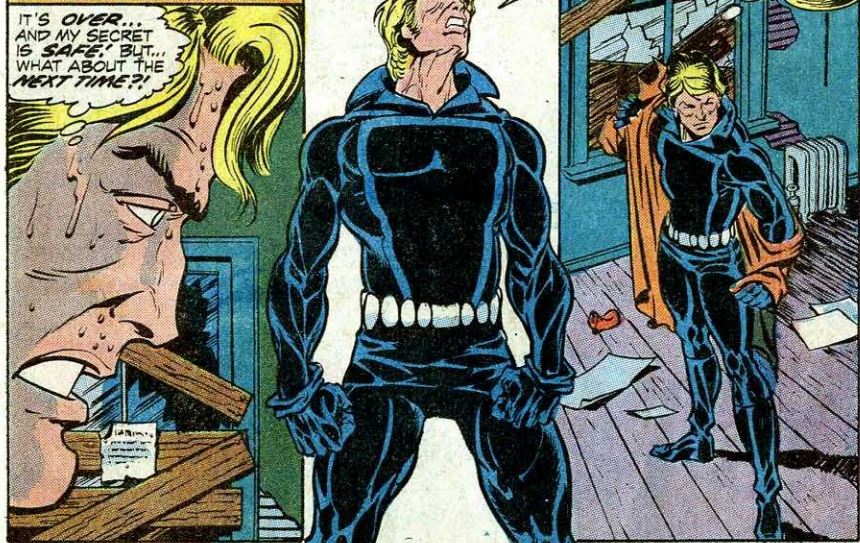
NOW... THE TRANSFORMATION IS FINISHED! YOU ARE HUMAN ONCE MORE! BUT... WHEN WILL IT HAPPEN AGAIN... *WHEN?*? THE QUESTION EATS AT YOUR SOUL LIKE A CANCER...

IT'S OVER... AND MY SECRET IS *SAFE*! BUT... WHAT ABOUT THE NEXT TIME?!

WILL I EVER BE... *FREE*?!

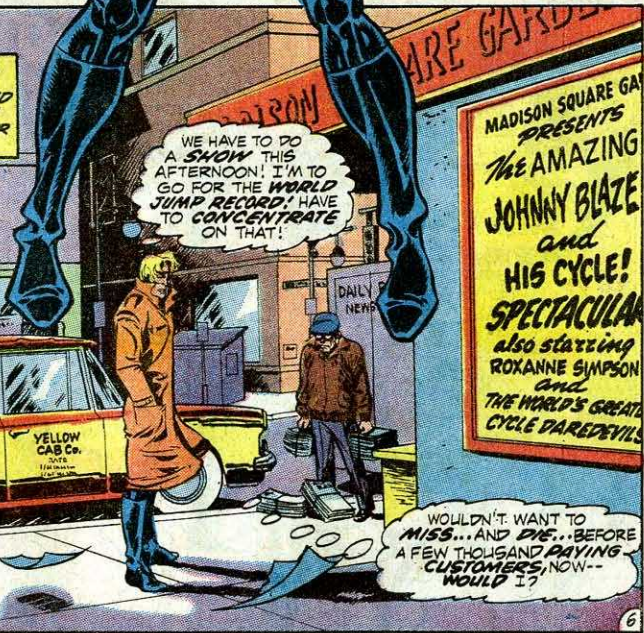
OR AM I DOOMED TO A *DUAL LIFE*... MAN BY DAY... AND *MONSTER* BY NIGHT?!

HAVE TO STOP *THINKING* ABOUT IT... PERHAPS *WORK*...



BUY YOUR TRADE, JOHNNY BLAZE! BURY YOUR TORTURED MIND IN THE DEADLY DANGER THAT IS YOUR LIVELIHOOD...

TDON



WE HAVE TO DO A *SHOW* THIS AFTERNOON! I'M TO GO FOR THE *WORLD JUMP RECORD*! HAVE TO *CONCENTRATE* ON THAT!

WOULDN'T WANT TO *MISS*... AND *DIE*... BEFORE A FEW THOUSAND *PAYING CUSTOMERS*, NOW-- *WOULD I?*

BUT YOU CAN'T CONCENTRATE ON YOUR RIDING... NOT AFTER WHAT YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH...

HAVE TO THINK BACK... TRY TO REMEMBER NOW IT HAPPENED...

... AND PRAY I CAN FIND AN ANSWER... SOMEWHERE IN THE PAST!

JOHNNY BLAZE
RIPPER
SPEED KING

THE CYCLE SHOW: THAT'S WHEN IT ALL STARTED...

--THE DAY BARTON BLAZE DEFIED DEATH ONCE TOO OFTEN--

CRASH SIMPSON
AND HIS FLYING MOTOR
DAREDEVIL

--AND PAID THE ONLY PRICE POSSIBLE-- HIS LIFE!

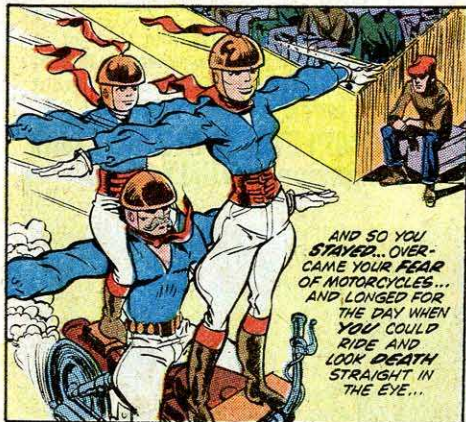
YOUR FATHER WAS A BRAVE MAN, JOHNNY... AND WE'RE SORRY HE WAS KILLED!

AND SINCE YOU DON'T HAVE A MOTHER... SOMETHING'S GOING TO HAVE TO BE DONE WITH YOU!

IF YOU LIKE... YOU CAN STAY WITH US... AND WE'LL RAISE YOU LIKE A SON... OR... YOU CAN GO TO AN ORPHAN-AGE!

OH, PLEASE STAY WITH US, JOHNNY... PLEASE!

WHATEVER YOU SAY... ROXANNE...



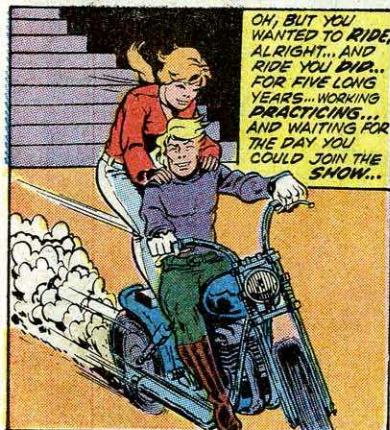
AND SO YOU STAYED... OVER-CAME YOUR FEAR OF MOTORCYCLES... AND LONGED FOR THE DAY WHEN YOU COULD RIDE AND LOOK DEATH STRAIGHT IN THE EYE...



UNTIL, FINALLY, THAT FATEFUL DAY CAME... ALTHOUGH MRS. SIMPSON DIDN'T APPROVE...

DON'T PUSH HIM, CRASH! MAYBE HE DOESN'T WANT TO RIDE!

CRASH SIMPSON DAY MOTORCYCLE SHOW



OH, BUT YOU WANTED TO RIDE, ALRIGHT... AND RIDE YOU DID... FOR FIVE LONG YEARS... WORKING PRACTICING... AND WAITING FOR THE DAY YOU COULD JOIN THE SHOW...



THEN, WHEN YOU WERE FIFTEEN...

JOHNNY... THE BIKE'S ON FIRE!

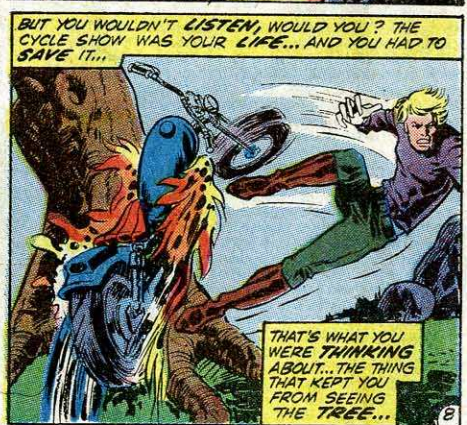
JUMP, ROCKY... JUMP!



GET OFF, JOHNNY! IT'S GOING TO EXPLODE!

I CAN'T! HAVE TO GET IT OUT OF THE TENT FIRST!

DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT! JUST SAVE YOURSELF!



BUT YOU WOULDN'T LISTEN, WOULD YOU? THE CYCLE SHOW WAS YOUR LIFE... AND YOU HAD TO SAVE IT...

THAT'S WHAT YOU WERE THINKING ABOUT... THE THING THAT KEPT YOU FROM SEEING THE TREE...



SHE WASN'T EVEN RELATED TO YOU... STILL, SHE'D RAISED YOU... AND GIVEN HER LIFE FOR YOU...



SO THERE WAS NO WAY YOU COULD DENY HER LAST REQUEST...



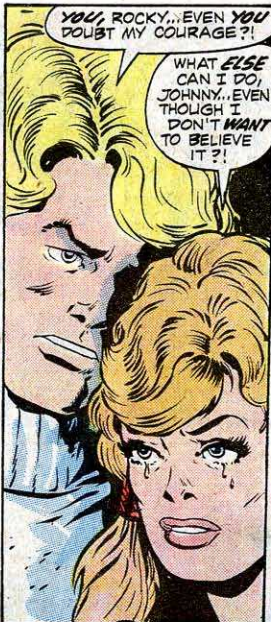
BUT SHE NEVER HEARD YOU SPEAK THAT CHERISHED NAME! DEATH CAME QUICKLY... ONCE YOU HAD MADE THAT FINAL VOW... THE VOW YOU COULDN'T GET OUT OF YOUR MIND... EVEN AS YOU KNELT BESIDE THE FRESH BLANKET OF EARTH WHICH COVERED HER...

EVEN AS YOU TRIED TO COMFORT POOR ROXANNE, YOU COULDN'T DRIVE AWAY THE BURNING THOUGHT THAT YOU COULD NEVER RIDE AGAIN... NEVER KNOW THE THRILL OF DEATH HURTLING TOWARD YOU AT A HUNDRED MILES AN HOUR! NO... NOT EVEN GRIEVING AND THE COLD DRIVING RAIN COULD MAKE YOU FORGET...

BUT YOU KEPT YOUR PROMISE...



FIVE YEARS SINCE MY WIFE DIED... AND YOU HAVEN'T RIDDEN SINCE! I'M STARTIN' TO THINK... YOU'RE YELLA!



YOU, ROCKY... EVEN YOU DOUBT MY COURAGE?!

WHAT ELSE CAN I DO, JOHNNY... EVEN THOUGH I DON'T WANT TO BELIEVE IT?!



YOU WON'T RIDE... AND THERE'S ONLY ONE REASON FOR IT I CAN THINK OF... COWARDICE!

YEAH... I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT! I'M CHICKEN... SO LET'S LEAVE IT AT THAT!

YOU COULDN'T LEAVE IT AT THAT, THOUGH! AS THE SHOW GOT BIGGER... THE APPLAUSE GREW LOUDER... THE STUNTS BECAME MORE DANGEROUS... YOU STOOD IN THE SHADOWS AND WATCHED, CHEATED OF FAME AND FORTUNE BY A PROMISE TO A DYING WOMAN...



THEN IT HIT YOU! YOU'D PROMISED NOT TO RIDE IN THE SHOW! NOTHING WAS SAID ABOUT RIDING FOR YOUR OWN SATISFACTION! SO YOU STARTED TO PRACTICE... LATE AT NIGHT... WHEN NO ONE WAS WATCHING... AT LEAST NO ONE YOU KNEW OF...

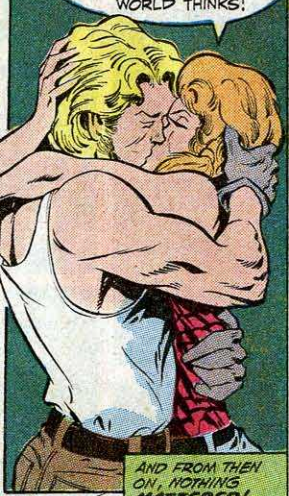
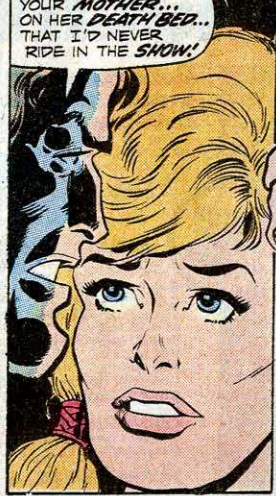
I KNOW, JOHNNY! I'VE BEEN WATCHING YOU FOR MONTHS NOW... AND YOU'RE GOOD... MAYBE THE BEST!

SO THE SECRET'S OUT... CHICKEN JOHNNY BLAZE CAN RIDE

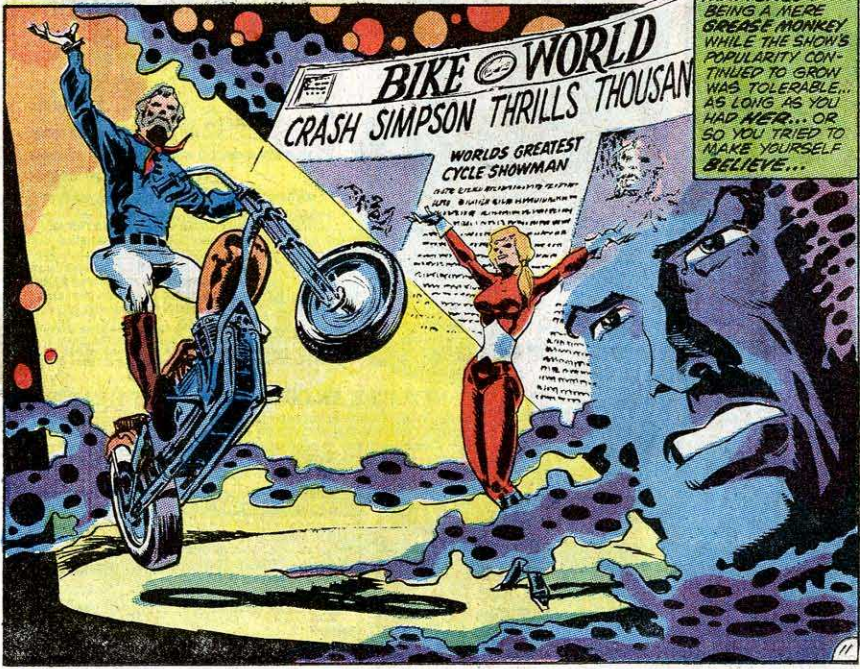
YES HE CAN... BUT WHY HAS HE KEPT IT A SECRET? I DON'T UNDERSTAND!

BECAUSE I PROMISED YOUR MOTHER... ON HER DEATH BED... THAT I'D NEVER RIDE IN THE SHOW!

OH, JOHNNY... I SUSPECTED IT FOR A LONG TIME... AND NOW I KNOW FOR SURE! I LOVE YOU, JOHNNY BLAZE... AND I'LL KEEP LOVING YOU, NO MATTER WHAT THE WORLD THINKS!



AND FROM THEN ON, NOTHING MATTERED! BEING A MERE GREASE MONKEY WHILE THE SHOW'S POPULARITY CONTINUED TO GROW WAS TOLERABLE... AS LONG AS YOU HAD HER... OR SO YOU TRIED TO MAKE YOURSELF BELIEVE...



MORNING... ANOTHER CITY... ANOTHER HOTEL ROOM... AND A SIMPLE PHONE CALL... A CALL WHICH WILL CHANGE YOUR LIFE MORE DRASTICALLY THAN YOU CAN EVER KNOW...



OH... HI, ALFIE! ANY NEWS ON THE BIG ONE... OR IS THIS ANOTHER SOCIAL CALL?!

WHAT... YOU REALLY GOT IT?! YOU WOULDN'T PUT US ON?! I... I'LL CALL YOU RIGHT BACK!



WE'VE DONE IT... MADISON SQUARE GARDEN!

THEN... THIS IS IT... THE BIGGEST SHOWCASE IN THE WORLD!

NO PRACTICE TODAY! TODAY WE CELEBRATE!



HOW ABOUT IT, CRASH? AFTER ALL THESE YEARS OF STRUGGLING...

...THE CRASH SIMPSON CYCLE SPECTACULAR HAS HIT THE TOP!



YEAH... YOU'RE RIGHT! BIG DEAL!

I RISK MY LIFE EVERY DAY FOR THIRTY YEARS... AND THEN WHEN I FINALLY REACH MY GOAL...

... THE DOC TELLS ME I MAY NOT LIVE TO SEE IT!



DADDY... WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?! DO YOU MEAN THAT...?!

THAT'S IT, BABY! DOC WARREN GIVES ME A MONTH... AT THE MOST!



GOOD LORD! THE SHOW... WITHOUT YOU?! IT CAN'T BE! THERE MUST BE SOME MISTAKE!

CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE



BUT YOU COULDN'T GO... NOT WHEN THEY NEEDED YOU! STILL, THERE WAS NO ONE YOU COULD TURN TO... NO ONE EXCEPT...





THROUGH TIME
ETERNAL,
THROUGH ENDLESS
SPACE!
I BEG THEE...
JOURNEY TO THIS
PLACE.



THE ICY HAND OF
FEAR GRIPS
YOUR GUT LIKE A
VICE, AS THE
HOT WIND OF
EVIL FILLS THE
ROOM...

THEN, AS THE
LIFE IN YOUR
SACRED
CANDLE
SUDDENLY IS
SNUFFED
OUT, YOU
KNOW THAT...

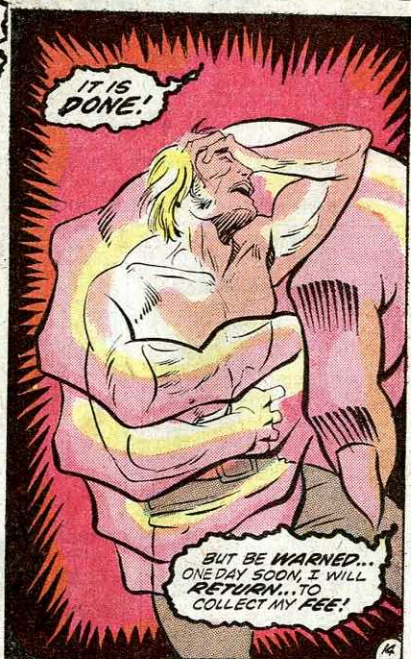


...HE HAS
ARRIVED!!

YOU HAVE CALLED...
AND SATAN HAS
ANSWERED! FROM
THE DEPTHS OF
HELL... I COME TO
AID HIM WHO WILL
SERVE ME!

YES... YES!
GRANT MY WISH...
AND I WILL SERVE
YOU FAITHFULLY
THROUGH ALL
ETERNITY!

I ASK ONLY...
THAT CRASH
SIMPSON...
BE SPARED FROM
THE DEADLY DISEASE
WHICH IS KILLING
HIM!



IT IS
DONE!

BUT BE WARNED...
ONE DAY SOON, I WILL
RETURN... TO
COLLECT MY FEE!

CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

THEN, AS QUICKLY AS IT
BEGAN... IT IS
ENDED...



THE ROOM COOLS...
AND THE SICKENING
STENCH OF DEATH
FADES FROM YOUR
NOSTRILS! THE
SACRED CANDLE
BURNS ONCE MORE...
AND YOU KNOW THAT
HE IS GONE! THE
BARGAIN HAS BEEN
SEALED...

YOU KNOW ONLY ONE END...
YOU FEEL STRANGELY
RELIEVED... AS IF A
GREAT WEIGHT HAS BEEN LIFTED FROM
YOUR SHOULDERS! CRASH WILL LIVE... AND
PERHAPS ROXANNE WILL LOVE YOU AGAIN...



...IF THE MASTER
GIVES YOU TIME... IF...

THREE WEEKS PASS... AND YOU FIND YOURSELF
IN NEW YORK... MADISON SQUARE
GARDEN...



JOHNNY... IT'S DAD!
COME QUICK! YOU
HAVE TO STOP HIM!

ME?! HOW COULD
A COWARD LIKE
ME KEEP HIM
FROM DOING
ANYTHING?!

PLEASE, JOHNNY!
HE THINKS THIS
MAY BE HIS LAST
PERFORMANCE...

... AND HE'S ANNOUNCED
THAT HE'LL TRY FOR
THE WORLD'S CYCLE
JUMP RECORD!

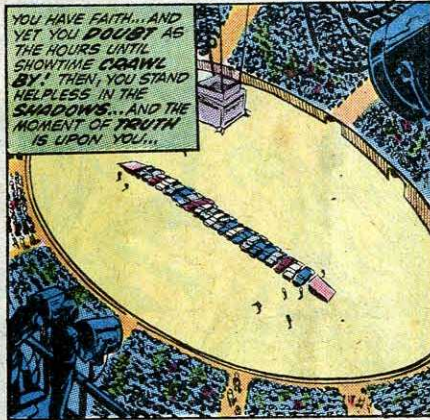
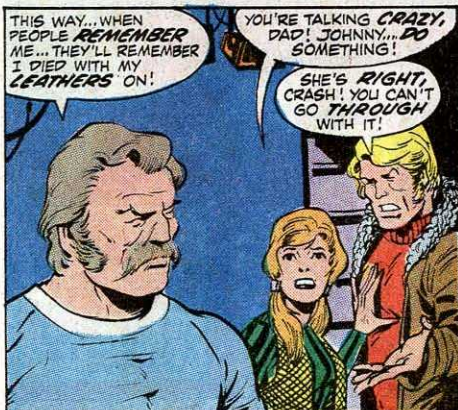


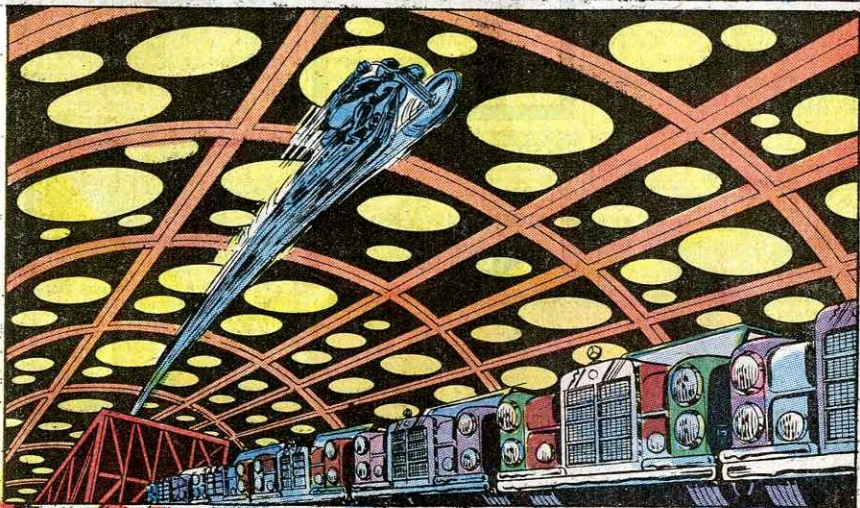
BUT--HE CAN'T!
HE'S GOOD--BUT
NOT GOOD ENOUGH!
OKAY... LET'S
FIND HIM!

ARE YOU OFF
YOUR ROCKER,
CRASH? YOU'RE
GOING TO KILL
YOURSELF!

SO WHAT?! IF I'M
GONNA GO... IT'S GONNA
BE HERE... ON MY
BIKE! NOT IN SOME
HOSPITAL BED!







CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

YOU WATCH IN STUNNED SILENCE AS THE MANGLED, BROKEN BODY IS PLACED ON A STRETCHER... AND YOU LISTEN TO ROXANNE'S AGONIZED SOBS...



SO THIS IS HOW THE MASTER KEEPS HIS PROMISES...!

THEN, BLINDED BY RAGE AND GRIEF... YOU KNOW WHAT YOU MUST DO...



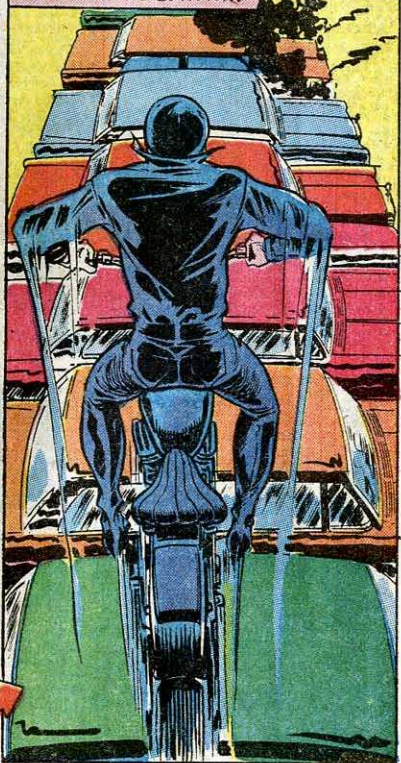
ALL SENSE OF TIME IS LOST TO YOU... AND SUDDENLY, THE GLARE OF THE SPOTLIGHT UPON YOU...



BLOOD RACES THROUGH YOUR TEMPLES... FEAR GRIPS YOUR HEART! YOU FEEL THE BIKE LOSE CONTACT WITH THE GROUND... AND A THRILL SURGES THROUGHOUT YOUR BODY... A THRILL LIKE YOU'VE NEVER EXPERIENCED BEFORE... AS YOU SOAR THROUGH SPACE... KNOWING AT THE END, THERE WILL BE TRIUMPH... OR DEATH...!

YOU'RE OBLIVIOUS TO THE GASPS OF THE CROWD... EVEN TO THE SCREAMS OF ROXANNE... AS ONE THOUGHT BURNS IN YOUR MIND... YOU MUST MAKE THE JUMP... FOR HIM!

JOHNNY... NOOOO! PLEASE... DON'T DO IT! DON'T!







FROM THIS DAY FORTH... YOU WILL WALK THE EARTH AS MY EMISSARY IN THE DARK HOURS... AND IN THE LIGHT... YOU WILL JOIN ME IN HADES!

NO...
NO!



BUT, AS YOU FEEL THE FLESH BURNING FROM YOUR FACE... AS YOU SCREAM IN AGONY... A DOOR OPENS... AND THE ONE BEING WHO CAN SAVE YOU... ENTERS...

JOHNNY... I WANTED TO...
NO! NO!!

I SUSPECTED IT... BUT I DIDN'T WANT TO BELIEVE IT!



AND WHILE THE FIRE IN YOUR BRAIN RAGES OUT OF CONTROL... SHE FLINGS HERSELF ACROSS YOU...

BACK, O FOUL DENIZEN OF THE DEPTHS! AS THE CROSS IS TO A VAMPIRE... SO IS THE PRESENCE OF ONE PURE IN HEART TO YOU!

DISAPPEAR... I COMMAND YOU! OR THE FORCES OF GOOD WITHIN ME ... WILL DESTROY YOU!

I DEPART, CURSED WOMAN! BUT I SHALL RETURN... TO CLAIM WHAT IS OWED ME!



ONCE MORE THE WIND FADES... THE ODOR DISAPPEARS... AND THE FIERY PAIN DIES!

IT'S ALL RIGHT, DARLING! HE'S GONE... NEVER TO RETURN... AS LONG AS I STAY WITH YOU!

BUT... I DON'T UNDERSTAND! HOW DID YOU KNOW...?!



THOUGH YOU NEVER REALIZED IT... I READ YOUR BOOKS ON SATAN... WHEN YOU WEREN'T AROUND...

... AND WHEN I ENTERED THE ROOM... WELL, I KNEW EXACTLY WHAT TO DO!

THANK GOD! OH, ROCKY... I LOVE YOU!

DON'T TALK, DARLING! JUST HOLD ME!



YES, NESTLED IN HER ARMS, YOU FEEL SO SAFE... SO FREE... BUT THE FOLLOWING NIGHT... AS DARKNESS STEALS OVER THE CITY...

HEAD... THROBBING! FEEL LIKE... I'M BURNING WITH FEVER!

COULD IT BE? WHAT IN-? NO! LORD, DON'T LET IT HAPPEN!

CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

FOR WHAT SEEMS AN ETERNITY... THE SEARING PAIN BRINGS YOU TO THE BRINK OF INSANITY! THEN, SUDDENLY, IT SUBSIDED... BUT YOU KNOW SOMETHING HAS CHANGED...



AND YOU RUSHED TO A MIRROR... TO FIND...



WHEN THE SHOCK BEGINS TO EBB, YOU KNOW WHAT YOU MUST DO! YOU HAVE TO RUN... GET AWAY... NOT LET ANYONE SEE YOU... NOT LIKE THAT...



SO YOU FLEE... INTO THE NIGHT... NOT REALIZING YOU HAVE BEEN SEEN...

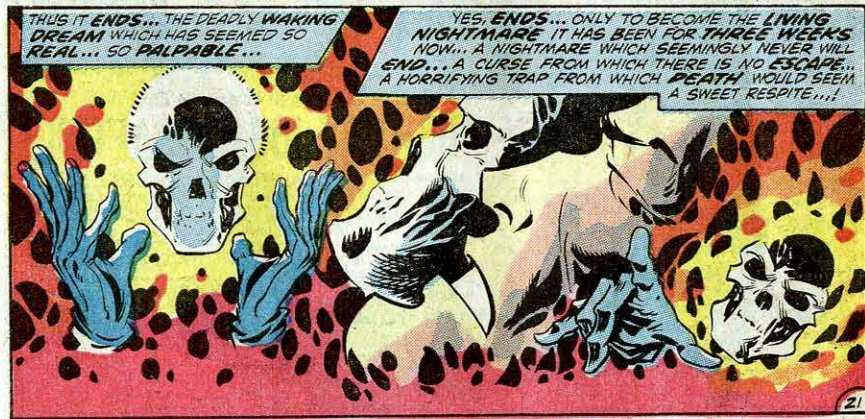
HEY... WHAT THE DEVIL'S THAT?!

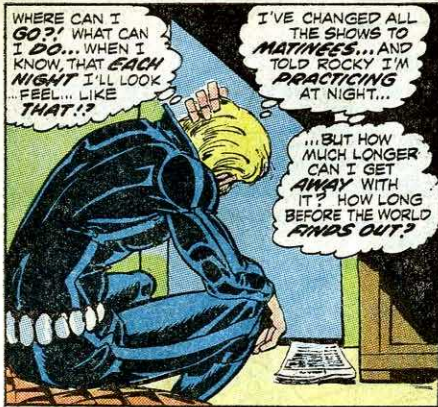
I DUNNO ABOUT YOU... BUT I'M GONNA PRETEND I DIDN'T SEE A THING!



THUS IT ENDS... THE DEADLY WAKING DREAM WHICH HAS SEEMED SO REAL... SO PALPABLE...

YES, ENDS... ONLY TO BECOME THE LIVING NIGHTMARE IT HAS BEEN FOR THREE WEEKS NOW... A NIGHTMARE WHICH SEEMINGLY NEVER WILL END... A CURSE FROM WHICH THERE IS NO ESCAPE... A HORRIFYING TRAP FROM WHICH DEATH WOULD SEEM A SWEET RESPITE...!

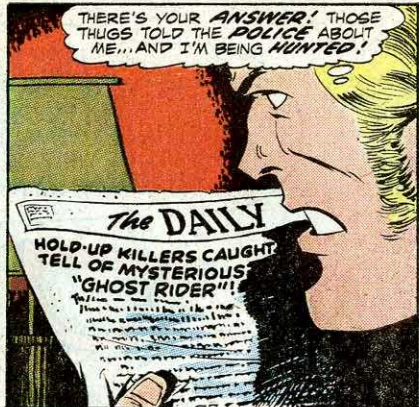




WHERE CAN I GO? WHAT CAN I DO... WHEN I KNOW, THAT EACH NIGHT I'LL LOOK... FEEL... LIKE THAT?!

I'VE CHANGED ALL THE SHOWS TO MATINEES... AND TOLD ROCKY I'M PRACTICING AT NIGHT...

... BUT HOW MUCH LONGER CAN I GET AWAY WITH IT? HOW LONG BEFORE THE WORLD FINDS OUT?



THERE'S YOUR ANSWER! THOSE THUGS TOLD THE POLICE ABOUT ME... AND I'M BEING HUNTED!

The DAILY
HOLD-UP KILLERS CAUGHT
TELL OF MYSTERIOUS "GHOST RIDER"!



HAVE TO LEAVE... GET OUT OF NEW YORK!

THERE MUST BE SOMEPLACE I CAN HIDE... AND THINK!



BUT BEFORE YOU CAN FLEE...

...IT IS TIME!

I...MUST HAVE SLEPT... ALL DAY! IT'S NIGHT AGAIN... AND I'M CHANGING... CHANGING TO--



...THE GHOST RIDER!

THE BEGINNING!