ESTABLISHING

To reveal the TWINKLE LIGHTS of the speedway BURSTING as he goes, raining glass and creating a PATH OF DARKNESS in his wake. Something Wicked This Way Comes.

INT. MAINTENANCE TENT - NIGHT

Johnny stops as he sees his BREATH suddenly appearing in ICY BURSTS. The room has gone inexplicably, deathly cold.

START —

HELLO, JOHNNY (O.S.)

Johnny turns to see The Stranger standing in the doorway. His eyes shimmering in the darkness. A cat’s eyes.

JOHNNY

Do I know you?

THE STRANGER

No. But I know you. I’ve had my eye on you for quite some time...

JOHNNY

Why?

THE STRANGER

I want you to ride for me.

JOHNNY

You run a show?

The Stranger smiles.

THE STRANGER

The Greatest Show on Earth.

JOHNNY

You gotta talk to my Dad.

THE STRANGER

I’m not interested in him.

JOHNNY

We’re a team.

THE STRANGER

Yes. But not for much longer.

Johnny stops.
JOHNNY
What do you know about that?

THE STRANGER
I'm in the business of knowing things.
Like knowing how to help your father.

JOHNNY
How?

THE STRANGER
Invite me in. And I'll tell you...

Johnny sizes him up for a LONG BEAT before:

JOHNNY
Come in...

The Stranger bows and steps inside as the LIGHTS DIM in his presence. Watch closely and you might catch a glimpse of his TRUE FORM in the MONSTROUS SHADOWS on the wall...

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
My father... he has cancer...

THE STRANGER
Yes...

The Stranger slowly circles Johnny... like a shark...

JOHNNY
It started in his lungs and now it's spread to his heart...

THE STRANGER
Yes...

JOHNNY
The doctors said that it's too late for chemo. You still think you can help?

THE STRANGER
Yes...

JOHNNY
How?

Lightning CRACKLES to reveal that the crystal skull seems to have changed. Its smile is wider. Its teeth longer.

THE STRANGER
It's what I do. But first you must offer me something in return...
JOHNNY

What do you want?

The Stranger traces a long finger over Barton's old chopper... past the flame job... and up onto the chrome handlebars...

THE STRANGER

What I want...

... before running up Johnny's arm and stopping on his heart.

THE STRANGER (CONT'D)

Is right here.

Johnny steps back from his icy touch.

JOHNNY

I-- I don't understand...

THE STRANGER

Your soul, Johnny Blaze.

Johnny tries to laugh.

JOHNNY

I shoulda known you were crazy...

But The Stranger just smiles. Waiting.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

I don't believe in souls.

As The Stranger looms over him:

THE STRANGER

Then you've got nothing to lose...

The Stranger smiles as he holds out his hand to seal the deal. We SLOWLY CLOSE ON Johnny's reaction as we hear:

BARTON (V.O.)

Johnny? Hey, Johnny Boy!

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. JOHNNY'S BEDROOM - NEXT MORNING

As Johnny opens his eyes to see his father smiling down at him, backlit by the morning sun. And he looks terrific.

BARTON

Wake up, sleeping Beauty!