

A Ghost Story: The Rider in the Dark
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In this world there are many strange and inexplicable events that occur in our lives. Events that have no easy explanation and, indeed, seem impossible. You tell your friends in confidence of these events, hoping they will confide in you similar events and, conversely, that they will not scoff outright at your fantastic tales. The subject of ghosts is a major source of inexplicable phenomena and tale trading. Halloween is a time of year that celebrates and ponders that which exists at the periphery of reality and, as such: I bring you a ghost story to ponder...

It was a dark and moonless night that found two young couples driving on a little used back road called Wildcat Road, located in the northern fringe of Huber Heights, Ohio. The road was old, narrow and in a serious state of decay. Most of the road was flanked by tall and thick trees that seemed to be clawing at the car as it slowly drove past. There was a stretch of the road that had a field to one side and it was in this area something strange happened.

The car, a 1984 (I think) Ford Fairmont, had been traveling slowly over the pitted road when it suddenly stalled and the lights went out. The four people riding in the car, Don, Mike, Sue and Susan, freaked at the notion of the car having broke down in such a remote and foreboding area. You have to realize, this story takes place in the '80s and back in those days, cell phones were not widely used or reliable had they been available. Unlike today, there was no quick call for help to save the day, or night, in this case. The couples were on their own.

Don turned the engine over several times before the Fairmont came to life, headlights springing to life as well. The Fairmont moved forward a little way before stalling again, drifting to the side of the road as it died. Mike, Sue and Susan, feeling panicky and uneasy, yet feeling hoaxed, begin to give Don a hard time and accuse him of stalling the car on purpose. The thing about Don, is that he couldn't keep a poker face for too long, and as such, struggled to conceal his smirk when he new he was putting someone on. It was this smirk that tipped off the others to his ruse. Don laughed as if caught but he wouldn't completely admit guilt. You could catch Don red-handed in a prank and he would still look you in the face and flat-out deny it, smirking all the while.

Despite Don's denial, he started the car easily and claimed he couldn't turn the lights on as the car slowly moved forward. Sometimes the lights would come on briefly then die again. At this point Mike realizes Don's charade and appreciates it because, as a result of the heightened sense of fear, Sue and Susan clung tenaciously to he and Don. Very crafty! Feeling a little easier, Mike settles back to enjoy the ride and even plays along by following Don's lead. This being said, Mike still scans the dark in front of the moving car. It would not do to have Don run into a big log or something and damage the car for real.

The lights had been off for a lengthy period as the Fairmont slowly rolled down a slight grade, entering an area where there were trees on the left side and a tall field to the right. It had grown quiet in the car as all talking had settled into a lull. Mike was startled to see a barely visible man riding a 10 speed bike across the path of the car around 15 feet ahead. Mike begins to open his mouth to yell "Stop!," fearing Don would run into the rider. Mike yells "stop" just as Don slams on the breaks, jerking the car to a stop and flipping the lights on. And for that brief moment between the Fairmont stopping and the lights coming on, the rider was visible, crossing a path that the car would have almost certainly rolled over had the car not stopped.

But when the lights came on there was no rider! The headlights illuminated an area well ahead of the car and there was nobody there. No man and no bike. As sure as Mike would've been looking at his own hand and to suddenly see it disappear: when the lights came on, so too did the rider. Again Mike opened his mouth to speak when the silence was broke by Sue, sitting up front with Don, who, hysteria rising, asks if the others saw the man on the bike. At this everyone in the car explodes with claims to seeing the man on the bike, Don included, who had stopped the car and turned the lights back on for fear of hitting the man.

As the chattering died down it was mutually agreed that it was time to get off of Wildcat Road. Unfortunately, it was necessary to drive down to where Wildcat dead ends in order to turn around as the road was too narrow to attempt such a maneuver. All the way down and back the two couples, who had grown quiet again, no doubt each considering what they had just seen, scanned outside the car for the rider, wanting and not wanting to see the rider again. They did not see the rider again.

How do I know this story? Did someone recount this to me? I know this story because I was in that car on that dark and moonless night and I was a witness to a strange and inexplicable event that I cannot explain. Regardless of what you believe about the afterlife and the notion of ghosts, the fact that four people saw the same thing at the same time, if only briefly, gives one pause to wonder.