

Readers beware...

Count the teeth

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On a normal high-way cutting through a normal corn-field, people drive. One of these people drives an 18 wheeler

filled with Chocolate and Strawberry flavored Pop-Tarts. They slip open their eyes – weighted by insomnia – and see the road. On one side, a mini-van speeds by, a mother equally as tired, calms her two screaming children. On the other side, a warning sign stands.

“WARNING: DO NOT PICK UP HITCHHIKERS. IF YOU MUST: REMEMBER TO COUNT THE TEETH.”

By the time the trucker reads it again, it’s already past them. It wouldn’t be too important, it’s not the first odd-ball road sign they’ve seen. Signs for upside-down houses, advertising cultic groups – political groups of all sides and shapes. The odds of a hitchhiker being on these roads were slim anyway.

Surely enough, there was one.

A hunched man covered in dirty clothes stuck his thumb towards the road. His eyes and

the trucker’s eyes clicked in contact. The trucker thought. Thought about the obvious. He’s too nice for his own good. He pulls over – the hitchhiker slinks back as the trucker lets his window recede.

“Need a ride?” The trucker asks.

“Of course,” The hiker hitched.

“Where to?” They asked.

“Wherever I need,” The hiker grinned.

That grin was wrong. The trucker knew. But he was already in too deep, the hitchhiker got into his passenger seat, still grinning. The trucker broke a sweat he let off the truck’s brake. The hitchhiker said nothing but a smile, a smile that spoke a thousand conflicting words. The trucker remembered.

“COUNT THE TEETH.”

So he did. 1, 2, 3, 4.

The hitchhiker stared at the trucker.

10, 11, 12, 13.

His smile grew.

23, 24, 25, 26.

The trucker speeds up.

31, 32, 33, 34.

That’s too many.

40, 41, 42, 43.

The trucker slows down. As the number broke 50, the hitchhiker’s infinite grin shattered open.

“I need a couple more, if you don’t mind.”



Worthless

By: Amber Ness



Night was always my favorite time of day. It was quiet. Everyone had gone to bed. Finally, I would have some peace. I’ve noticed I tend to get things done at night. I write stories, draw pictures, things like that.

I hate alerting people when I’m up so late, so I leave my lights off. The only source of light I have is the flashlight built into my cell phone. I keep my phone charged next to my bed while I work on my art, headphones plugged into my laptop to listen to my music. Music always sounds better with headphones.

It was nearing October, so I was getting in a spooky mood. I didn’t really have much of an idea of what I was drawing, just kind of doodling cute little ghosts and skeletons. Nothing actually scary, I wasn’t good at that stuff.

Everything was pretty quiet, aside from the music playing in my ears.

I thought I heard a knock on my door, so I took out an earbud. I didn’t hear anything. I shrugged, I was used to hearing things with my earbuds in. I always get paranoid about people coming into my room so I tend to hear things like that. I went back to what I was doing, and I heard the knock again, louder this time. I paused my music and opened the door. All I saw was the hallway, empty and dark. I walked back to my bed and looked at my paper. I was taken aback when I noticed some writing on it. “Nice art. Think it would look better if you made it realistic.”

I had no idea where this came from. Not really knowing what to do, I simply erased the message and went back to doodling. But then, something else was written. “Why are you ignoring me?”

I read the message and looked back at one of the ghosts I doodled.

Instead of the cute, cartoon face I drew, it had soulless eyes and an open, frowning mouth. I looked back at the message, but it was changed.

“That’s better.”

What was going on?

I grabbed my phone to shine the light directly on the paper. As I turned away to grab my phone, I noticed the skeleton was also changed. The structure of its bones looked extremely realistic, nothing I’d ever be able to draw with my art skill. It was covered with clumps of dirt and grass. It looked as if it was staring right at me.

Frightened, I jumped and dropped my phone. The flashlight side landed on the floor, causing my room to go completely dark. I felt the ground for my phone. As I searched for my phone, I heard a soft whisper in my ear.

“Worthless...”

I grabbed my phone and shined it back at my paper, but everything looked normal again. I looked around my room one more time before putting away my art supplies and laptop, deciding it was time I went to bed.

