

## Tekst 6

---

*Het volgende fragment is het begin van een kort verhaal, over een moeder en dochter die samen reizen.*

### **“Just Like Us”**

by Vanessa Hua

It wasn't easy to get kicked out of Happy Trails RV Park and Camp. The owner put up with a lot, as long as you followed the rules. Put your fire out before turning in. Dump your trash each night and secure the lid to keep the raccoons away. No fireworks on the beach. Only if people fell to  
5 shouting and shoving after a long day of drinking that slid into night did the owner call the cops. I won't abide fighting, she said.

But she let us go without summoning the authorities.

Mama and I had arrived at Happy Trails the spring I turned fourteen. We drove north on Highway 101, past the green hills and herds of cows in  
10 Sonoma County, the billboards for the Indian casinos, the signs to Shelter Cove and the Lost Coast. Past Ukiah and Willits and Garberville and Phillipsville, each town smaller than the last. It seemed like we'd been driving forever in our truck camper and we were still in California.

We entered a grove of redwoods that kept the roads in a cool perpetual  
15 twilight and not long after came upon a carved wooden cowboy sleeping in a crescent moon, the sign for Happy Trails. At the front counter, the woman studied our hair, our clothes. Our camper's shower had a lukewarm, faint spray, never wet enough.

“We're looking for a place to stay,” Mama said.

20 “How many nights?” The woman wore a green velour tracksuit and a white visor tucked into her bobbed silver hair.

“Is there a discount for more nights?” Mama asked.

The woman peered at us. I didn't look much like either of my parents, with my tawny skin and dark brown hair that people mistook for Mexican or  
25 Italian or Native American or Middle Eastern. Mama had sandy-blond hair and fair skin freckled from too much sun. In photos, my Chinese father had been lean and dark enough to disappear into my mother's shadow.

A fat man in flipflops came in and pulled out a cherry popsicle from the freezer case. “Thanks, Ma.” He tossed the plastic wrapper toward the  
30 trash can by the door. He missed but didn't pick it up. “That's my profit you're eating into,” she grumbled. She must be the owner. “Alan. Alan!” He didn't acknowledge her and the screen door slammed behind him.

Fetching the wrapper, Mama asked the owner if she had any jobs around the campsite in exchange for a discount on the weekly rate. The owner  
35 leaned forward for a closer look, checking my mother's hand – no ring.

Please, I asked silently. Let us stay. Just for a while. A place to start over, maybe settle for more than a few weeks. For the last five months, Mama

and I had bunked down in RV parks, by warehouses and factories, and in superstore parking lots.

40 “I could use a little help around here,” the owner said. “I’m Margie.”

*electricliterature.com*