

Carleton Chinner

*[This is the opening scene from a new story called Rack Space. I was trying for a particularly hopeless character.]*

Mindy loved her market. The smells of lavender soap and homemade bread; the handmade batik pennants fluttering in the breeze. It was always her market, never Gordon's; a place that spiritually nourished her while ticking just about every box that Gordon hated.

Somehow calling it her market felt right after what he had done to her. No, she wasn't going to wallow in self-pity. Gordon had kicked her out, Fine. After she had left her home and family to be with him halfway around the world. Fine. All she had was in her small backpack. That too was fine.

*Oh, who was she kidding?*

She had maybe two hundred dollars on her cash card and nowhere to sleep. She sat down beneath a shady tree as the tears threatened to surface again. What was she going to do?

'Are you alright?' asked someone who had just slumped onto the bench beside her.

Mindy looked left to find a vision in lilac paisley balloon pants next to her. The woman wore the most extraordinary, crocheted beret to tame a wild mop of hair.

'I'm fine thanks, just going through a rough breakup.'

'That's awful. Why don't I get you a nice cup of tea?'

'Thanks.' Mindy sniffled back her tears.

The woman strode across to a stall and returned with two steaming mugs of dandelion tea. 'I'm Annette,' she said holding out one mug.

Mindy took a sip of the toasted, smoky brew. 'He was such a nice guy when I met him. So charming. I don't know why he got so mad. I mean just because I'm vegan and he still likes his steak when we go to the pub. I could live with that. I mean I would never be able to eat an animal myself, but he could eat what he likes.'