

My room was unfurnished, except for the sofa bed on which I lay, and a kitchen table which I was going to strip of paint when I had the time, and polish with a coat of beeswax. Even the floor was bare, boards stretching to the wainscoting. An orange box did duty as a bedside table, and a second one filled in for a chair.

5 I put out a hand and turned on the light and surveyed the desolate scene with the utmost satisfaction. It was mine. My first home. I had moved in only three weeks ago but it belonged entirely to me. With it, I could do as I pleased. Cover the white walls with posters or paint them orange. Sand the bare floor or stripe it in colour. Already I had started to acquire a proprietary interest in junk and antique shops and could not pass one without scanning the window for some
10 treasure that I might be able to afford. This was how the table had come into my possession and I already had my eye on an antique gilt mirror, but had not yet plucked up the courage to go into the shop and find out how much it was going to cost. Perhaps I would hang it in the centre of the chimney breast, or on the wall opposite the window, so that the reflections of the sky and the tree would be caught, like a picture, within its ornate frame.

15 These pleasant imaginings took some time. I looked again at the clock, saw that it was growing late, and climbed out of bed to pad, barefooted, across the floor and into the tiny kitchen, where I lit the gas and put the kettle on to boil. The day had begun.

Rosamunde Pilcher, *The Day of the Storm*, 1975

20 beeswax: the wax secreted by bees to make honeycombs and used to make wood polishes and candles.

chimney breast: a part of an interior wall that projects to surround a chimney.

junk shop (*informal*): a shop selling second-hand goods or inexpensive antiques.

kettle: a metal or plastic container with a lid, spout, and handle, used for boiling water.

pad: walk with steady steps making a soft dull sound.

25 pluck up courage: make an effort to do something that frightens one.

proprietary: relating to an owner or ownership; behaving as if one owned something or someone; marketed under and protected by a registered trade name.

sand (*verb*): smooth or polish with sandpaper or a mechanical sander.

sofa bed: a sofa that can be converted into a bed, typically for occasional use.

30 stripe (*noun*): a long narrow band or strip differing in colour or texture from the surface on either side of it; (*verb*): mark with stripes.

utmost: most extreme; greatest.

wainscoting: wooden panelling that lines the lower part of the walls of a room.