

# A Roof Over One's Head

**Mairi Neil**

Clouds scattered rain throughout the city as Sue struggled with her umbrella. The wind grabbed and pushed the broom inside out tearing the scarlet skin from its broken frame. *'Just as well my skin is waterproof,'* she muttered as she dumped it in a rubbish bin before hurrying along the street with collar pulled up and freezing hands jammed deep in coat pockets.

Raindrops stabbed and stung her face and exposed legs; water swirled from gutters to slap her shoes. Gusts of wind blustered and moaned from empty laneways drowning the noise from traffic grinding to a halt on the clogged roads.

The town hall clock struck ten o'clock and she sped up, ignoring the rising water on the pavement. Splashes licked the back of her knees to join trickles working their way down her coat to lodge in her shoes.

Will he wait? Will he even be there? What if he heard the weather forecast and decided to stay home? Maybe assumed she wouldn't try and make her way across town on foot.

Tears mingled with raindrops and crept down her cheeks. She imagined two railway lines of mascara joining non-existing lipstick. She knew carefully applied make-up to be ruined and stopped rushing to sneak a glance in a shop window.

The proverbial drowned rat stared back - hair plastered, woollen coat wet and wrinkled, mud splattered stockings. There will be no photographic shoot, no magazine contract, no career breakthrough today.

The reflection of a homeless man huddled in a doorway across the road caught her eye before a delivery truck blocked the view. She pulled her coat tighter and began the trudge home grateful she hadn't given her notice.

