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The Mist Monster

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Editor's Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

Penny isn't sure about her new house. Dad suggests investigating the garden, but the dog has stolen Mum's old hat and Penny can't explore without it. Penny chases Peanut outside, only to find herself marooned in a strange, white world. Then she hears a rumble voice and spots two yellow eyes peering at her through the mist. It's a 'sort-of monster' who doesn't have a name - so Penny calls him Morris, and the two of them set off in hot pursuit of dog and hat.

'It was my mum's? she was a brilliant explorer,' explains Penny, and Morris gives her the kind of look friends give when they know they've heard something significant. But as the day progresses, having fun together becomes more important than finding the hat. 'See you tomorrow!' says Penny when it's time to go. Observant readers will notice Morris's expression and imagine they can spot a tear or two. But it doesn't occur to Penny that mist doesn't last, and when she wakes to find the sun shining and no trace of Morris, she's devastated. Outside, she allows the tears to fall. 'Who am I going to explore with now?' she asks. And in a page-turn that changes everything, Penny finds herself face to face with Archie, who lives next door and is looking for a friend?

Gently constructed around themes of loss and change, this optimistic story weaves links between imaginative worlds and the here-and now of daily reality. With their sophisticated palette and low-key charm, Beautyman's illustrations are a delight and will please younger and older audiences alike. Morris the Mist Monster's expressions add emotional impact as well as humour, allowing the pictures to take the story somewhere really quite profound, and Beautyman's treatment of the shifting insubstantiality of mist and dreams is particularly effective. It takes time for feelings of sadness and loss to pass, but opening ourselves to new experiences and enabling new connections will help friendships blossom when we least expect. There's a hint of **The Snowman** about this magical, misty book, and like Briggs' classic, it will find a place in many hearts.

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