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workshops

Beanie

by Edna Murdoch

‘Beanie’ just isn’t right for him. ‘Beanie’, with its feminine ending, is for small, sweet types, but not for him. ‘Beanie’ men are fun, good for a laugh and easy to be around. It might have suited a less manly man, but not this Beanie. Even thinking that name as I look at him standing tall by the water butt, makes the incongruity even greater.

The thing about *this* Beanie, is that he seems to stand tall wherever he is – even sitting down, if you get my meaning. I’ve watched him these last few days, his movement graceful and his presence, strong. It is impossible not to notice him. He is popular in this abandoned group, has plenty to say in our crazy meetings and is one of the ones who is helping us survive, both physically and mentally. There is nothing ‘Beanie’ about him! He is more the hero type, a natural Gregory Peck leading us all to safety. But I’m drifting off again.

Actually, I have no idea who he is, no idea where he came from; in this setting, no-one knows much about anyone – yet. We are still scrambling to get our various bearings and keep our spirits up. Still on good behaviour after 3 difficult days. No doubt that will change, if we can’t get out of here soon.

Yet, I’m still thinking about him and looking. Who gave him that name, I wonder? Maybe an old flame and the name stuck - probably an affectionate, ironic title for someone like him. Maybe a jealous older brother making sure he didn’t get above his station. Maybe he often wears a funny little hat covering his blond locks.

All right, I know that my daft musings about Beanie, function as an escape from our conditions here. Since the group got separated from the main party and got lost in this part of the Old Woods, I’ve been struggling to keep my nerves intact. Many of us are still in shock and it’s people like Beanie who are holding us together.

There's so much time to muse – we have only one mobile phone still working and the old shack in here doesn't have electricity. No radio, nothing. So there are acres of time - time to think and time to worry. Why has no one from the main party come back for us? Three days in and it all feels endless, like we are drifting. At least we have basic shelter and, miraculously, some water.

I'm still watching him; he's still standing tall by the water butt and talking to George. Now, George could be a 'Beanie'. He has tried to sweeten our situation, joking regularly with whoever can bear joking. But he is also developing into Beanie's main support – he would make a fine 'Beanie' man and his jokes are not too irritating.

I'm wittering again; actually, my head is a broiling nest of fear. Distraction is what I need. I keep looking at Beanie; I could try talking with him. Later. Much later. Late night talking hasn't failed me yet.