

Synopsis:

Julie is an ordinary girl living an ordinary life until she finds a marble jar in the attic. Instead of being regular marbles, each one is actually a fantasy world. Every time Julie takes out a marble she visits a new world with new problems to solve and adventures to experience. This book is written in chapter format and is suitable for ages 8 to 10.

The Marble Jar

Chapter 1: The Adventures Begin

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Words: 2111

It all began one rainy summer's day. Julie was bored. It had been raining for two weeks already and she couldn't go out and play. She sighed loudly as her mother walked into the room. "Julie, why don't you find something to do? She asked. "You have many toys and books in your room to keep you occupied."

"But I've played with all my toys and read all my books already," she whined.

"I have to clean the house and I don't want you under my feet all day," said her mother. "What if I gave you a mop and a bucket and you could help me by cleaning the attic?"

"I suppose I could do that," said Julie. Her mother quickly gave her supplies she would need and helped her get them up the stairs to the attic.

Julie set down her mop and her bucket and looked around the attic. "What a mess," she thought. It was dark as the grey clouds outside didn't let much light in. She fumbled about for the switch and turned the light on. "Much better," she thought, although the dirt was more evident now. She walked to the small attic window and peered out. Rain pelted down in sheets of silver like tin foil, waving about in the wind. As it had rained most of the summer, the grass was a deep, luscious green but Julie could barely make out the woods behind her home. When it was sunny and hot she would be right in the middle of the forest playing "house". She knew the

woods well and wasn't afraid of getting lost. She had always loved exploring and when she couldn't explore her next favourite thing to do was read.

She turned back to the mess before her. Old paintings were propped up against the wall as well as old mats that were rolled up tightly. There was a vintage bookcase with dry, dusty smelling books that made her sneeze every time she went near them. Old, brown, leather trunks containing Grandma's wedding dress and other trinkets from when she was a young woman were standing to one side. "I might as well do a good job," Julie mused as she got to work. First she swept the attic floor but the dust was so thick she began coughing. She decided to sprinkle drops of water on the floor to settle the dust before continuing. As soon as the dust pan was full she would empty it out into the bin. She soon looked like a chimney sweep. She mopped the floors thoroughly and moved the trunks so she could clean behind them. A spider scurried as she disturbed his web. She took the framed pictures one by one and carefully cleaned them. When she had finished cleaning the last picture she noticed a dirty jar in the corner. It must have been there forever as it even had cobwebs on it. "Yuck!" She carefully dusted the bottle and realised there were marbles in it. She put it to one side to inspect later. They had probably belonged to her grandfather when he was a boy. He would be so pleased to have them back. When Julie was finishing up, her mother came to check.

"Wow, Julie! You really did a good job up here!" She was so impressed with Julie's cleaning that she told Julie that she could use this room on rainy days as a play room. Julie was delighted. Mother gave her some curtains for the little window and they replaced the light bulb with a brighter one. Julie had cleaned the bookshelves and Mother now took those books and packed them into a box. "You may now use those bookshelves for your own books, Julie," said Mother. They put the couch next to the bookshelves and a trunk went next to the chair. Mother got a lamp for the trunk to give a better light for reading. A mat from by the wall went on the floor to keep the draughts out. It all looked rather cozy when it was done. Mother took one look at Julie and burst out laughing. "You look absolutely filthy, young lady. It's time for a bath." Julie grinned but was grateful for the warm bubble bath she soaked in ten minutes later. She blew bubbles and played with various cups she stashed around the bath. She play acted scenes of books aloud and sang a few songs. When she hopped out the skin on her fingertips was wrinkly

like raisins. She put on her pyjamas even though it was still only the afternoon and went back to the attic. She sat in the chair and her eye caught sight of the marble jar in the corner where she had left it earlier. She picked it up and sat back down. The lid was a bit rusty but she had a pocket knife so she carefully scraped the rust away and screwed the lid off. Inside were about a hundred marbles all seemingly different. She picked one up and looked at it closely. She held it up to the light and saw movement inside the marble. How strange. It seemed to draw her in and before she knew what was happening she was pulled into the marble by a powerful force. The marble clattered to the floor and rolled before coming to a complete stop.

Julie picked herself up from the floor and dusted herself off. She looked around and saw sand. Everything was made of sand. She was in a town and all the houses were sand castles. The clouds were made of sand, the trees, even the people were sand. She could see a bus trundling down the street. It stopped to pick up passengers and, as it drove off, it quietly disintegrated into the wind. People were walking down the streets with trolleys and prams and talking and laughing as though everything was normal. Julie was so dusty from her fall that she looked like she was made of sand too. She decided to start walking and see if she could find someone to help her. A man riding a bicycle made of sand almost bumped into her, but before she could exclaim, it disappeared. Only a pile of sand on the road remained. The wind blew it away suddenly and she continued on. Down the road she went, through a field until she heard a roaring sound that she knew. The sea! She ran over the sand dune and gasped. It wasn't the sea, but it looked like it. Waves of sand crashed into the shore also made of sand. There were sand seagulls flying around and every time a bigger than normal gust of wind came along, it would just disappear.

Julie sank to her knees in despair. She was scared she would never see home again. She sobbed. A gravelly voice startled her. "What's the matter, young un'?" She looked up. In front of her stood the largest turtle she had ever seen. "Well," she sniffed, "I suppose I'm lost." "From where?" He asked. "What do you mean, from where? From home!" "This is home," he said. "But not to me," she wailed, tears were streaming down her face once more. "There, there. Here. Take my hanky." She took the hanky and it turned to sand as soon as it touched her. She gave the turtle a watery smile and used her sleeve instead. "Why don't you go see the

North wind," He said. "Wind blows sand. Maybe he'll know a way for you to go back home." "Thank-you Mr. Turtle!" she cried. "I'll go straight away." She felt a little better and turned to wave goodbye but all that remained was a pile of sand.

She walked down a path and started to enjoy the sights around her. She hadn't walked far when she heard sniffing. She came across a small creature made of sand. "What's the matter," Julie asked. "I've lost my tail!" cried the sand mouse. "How?" "The North Wind took it, I'm sure." Julie got excited. "Do you know where he went?" "No! And I don't care! I just want my tail back!" Julie thought for a bit. Then she bent down and started to scabble about in the sand. Soon she found a long, thin stone. She carefully inserted it into the sand mouse taking care not to break him. He looked around and beamed. "That's wonderful! It's even better than my old one! Look how shiny and straight it is!" Julie was glad that she had been able to help the mouse. As she left he said, "Try the bluffs. The North Wind is often there." She thanked him kindly and went on her way.

It was terribly windy on the bluffs. She pulled up the collar of her dress as she walked towards the top. "What do you want, little one?" The North Wind blew. "I want to know how to get home. I don't belong here and I'm sad and lonely." "Why did you come and see me?" he asked. "The turtle and the sand mouse said I should." "Silly creatures! Why don't you find somewhere and go to sleep?" "What good would that do?" Julie asked. "Don't you know that the sandman comes from here? He lives in a cottage past the sand dunes. You can't miss it. Ask him to put you to sleep and you should get home in time for dinner." "Thank you North Wind! I'm much happier now that I know there is a way home." She skipped off happily towards the sand dunes.

She came upon a cottage among the biggest of sand dunes. This had to be the house of the Sand man. She knocked softly. There was no answer. She knocked louder. Still no answer. She began to bang on the door. Nothing. "Maybe he's not home", she thought. A woman ran down the path carrying a basket of bread. She stopped when she saw Julie. "Can I help you? She asked a kind smile on her face. "I'm looking for the Sandman. Is he in?" "Yes, but he's sleeping right now. You won't be able to wake him until sundown. That's when he gets ready for work, you see." "Oh," said Julie, disappointed. The woman could see that Julie was sad. "Why don't

you come and spend the day with me? I will show you the sights of our town and I'll bring you back at sundown." "That sounds lovely," said Julie. And off they went.

Julie had a lovely day with the woman who called herself Mary. They stopped at the green grocer's and bought mud pies for the street urchins. They stopped at the ice-cream stand but Julie couldn't finish her ice-cream. It was made of sand and tasted funny. They watched the seagulls and saw a boat on the ocean being tossed on the sand waves by the North Wind who winked at her. The woman bought her a small sand sculpture of a seagull to remind her of her day here and then it was time to go see the Sandman.

He was up and about and was surprised to see Julie. "Ah." He said smiling after Julie had explained what had happened. You must have found the jar of marbles that belonged to your Grandfather long ago. Each marble is a different world. You are lucky to have found me though. Here. Take this bag of sleeping dust. Use it responsibly to take you home. Sprinkle a little on yourself when you go to sleep and you will find yourself back home when you wake-up." He gave her a pouch full of gold dust and then announced that he had to go to work. She thanked him and went to a tree. She lay down beneath it and sprinkled some of the dust over herself. Almost immediately she fell into a deep sleep.

She woke up and yawned. She was in the attic on the chair. She must have fallen asleep. "What a strange dream that was." She thought as she yawned again. She felt something digging into her side and pulled it out. It was a sand sculpture of a sea gull. Her eyes widened. She felt her pockets. Out came a pouch full of gold dust. She looked around her. The marbles were still scattered all over the floor. She quickly scooped them up and put them all back carefully into the jar. She put the jar and the pouch back on the shelf and smiled. There would surely be more adventures.

The end...of chapter 1