

*A lonely boy seeks acceptance and finds himself in a magical world filled with adventure and danger.*

## **The Water Globe**

By J. P. Fisher

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THE  
**Water Globe**  
by J.P. FISHER

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## Chapter 1:

### Michael

The church bells rang, *bong! bong! bong!* a final warning that the service was about to begin. The Franklin family hustled into the cathedral, hoping no one had noticed they were running late for mass. Michael stopped to look at the looming statue of St. Michael the Archangel, whose dark eyes stared back at him, seeming to follow his every move. The war angel was kneeling by his sword, his large body dressed in armor as if heading into battle.

Michael often wondered why he was named for such a brave and heroic angel. After all, St. Michael was beloved and respected, the leader of God's army and the protector of the Church. Michael felt nothing like the famous warrior, and in fact, felt quite the opposite. His parents seemed to regard him as more of a demon.

As Michael admired the magnificent icon, he felt a familiar flick on the back of his head. "Come on, Michael. Keep moving!" ordered his father, Jeff, almost pushing his eldest son through the wooden church doors, eager to get inside before the service started.

Everything Michael did annoyed his parents, even something as simple as smiling at them. He was tall and lanky with bright blue eyes and had curly red hair and a mouth filled with large, crooked teeth, which his mother commented on often.

"Michael, for heaven's sake! Cover your mouth when you speak!" Annie Franklin would remark. Each time she looked at him, she cringed and

turned away, causing Michael to follow her advice by covering his mouth with his hand before he grinned or spoke.

Michael had two younger siblings, a brother and a sister. Six-year-old Harry, who was five years his junior, was smart, witty, and perfect and could do no wrong. Little Clare was the family darling - a sweet, bright-eyed girl with an angelic face. The three-year-old had a beautiful smile and an infectious laugh; an adorable child who was easy to embrace and love.

Harry and Clare favored their father, inheriting his dark-brown eyes and his smooth brown hair, nothing like the out-of-control fiery-red mop that sprouted from Michael's head. Although they were both tall, Michael bore no resemblance to his father's natural good looks. But his father rarely smiled, unlike Michael who smiled all the time, even though he was discouraged from doing so.

Each Sunday, the family of five attended the noon mass at St. Michael's Cathedral. Annie woke her family early to make sure they were groomed and well-dressed before heading to church. She wanted to be sure that the other parishioners took notice of her family's grand appearance as they paraded up the middle aisle, taking their usual place in the front pew of the sanctuary.

As the family took center stage before the congregation, the Franklin children were warned to behave during mass and not to act up. Little Harry usually remained quiet and vigilant, kneeling and praying at all the right times. But darling Clare would babble and wiggle throughout the entire service, providing entertainment to her doting onlookers. This was acceptable, of course, because it filled her mother with delight to hear the adoring comments about her irresistible daughter from the surrounding audience.

When Michael scooted across the pew to make room for his family, he could smell his mother's cologne, resembling an overbearing gardenia bouquet that invariably caused him to sneeze. Annie poured it on generously whenever she left the house, whether to attend church, a school meeting, or indulge in one of her monthly outings with her aloof neighborhood friends. Sometimes she wore it even when staying at home, inevitably keeping Michael at a distance. Michael wondered if she did it on purpose, knowing the strong scent would keep him away from her. He hoped that she wouldn't sit next to him and set off his allergies, for he knew if he started sneezing and coughing, she would scold him for his rude interruption during the church service.

Michael was reprimanded often during mass for fidgeting or making too much noise. He became bored much of the time since the service was conducted in Latin and he couldn't understand a thing the priest was saying. To keep himself amused, he sat quietly in the pew and played with the items from his backpack, which his mother permitted him to bring along each week. She only allowed him this luxury because she knew Michael needed something to keep him busy to prevent him from acting up or disturbing the worshippers around him.

His backpack, which was made of a plain blue jean fabric by his grandmother a few years prior, held his favorite toys or "treasures": a few army figurines, a super-hero comic book, a colorful hacky sack ball, and a water globe which was given to him on his eighth birthday by his grandmother whom he lovingly called "*Meems*."

The sparkling water globe was Michael's favorite item from the bag. The round glass dome encased an inviting city that was filled with brightly painted buildings and engaged city dwellers who appeared to be eagerly shopping as they strolled through the streets with their beloved pets.

The charming city had a sweet shop, a flower stand, and a fish market, plus a jolly-looking man holding a cluster of colorful balloons to the delight of his customers. Black forest-filled mountains topped with snow-covered peaks surrounded the city to protect its citizens, completing the picturesque setting of a quaint, highland village. In the center of the city stood an old-fashioned town square with a rotunda gazebo and an impressive podium, just waiting for a speaker to herald the latest news to its residents. Glistening specks of silver showered down upon the city, twinkling like magic to the beholder when the globe was turned upside down or over on its side.

Michael gazed into the cherished globe, rotating it in his hands as he watched the captivating city and visualized what it might be like to live there. He imagined himself proudly taking his place at the lectern where he would recite a compelling speech to all who were willing to listen.

“Ladies and Gentlemen of Contento Barrio! I have just returned from Nuevo, where I saved a cat, a dog, and a llama from the hands of the evil sorcerer,” he quietly murmured, pretending to address an admiring crowd of onlookers. Michael whispered softly, keeping his voice low so his mother wouldn’t hear him, while his younger sister lovingly looked on and giggled, entertained by her older brother’s make-believe play. Noticing his amused sibling, he gently rolled his hacky sack ball to her, warmed by the young child’s attention. Michael adored his baby sister, Clare, who always smiled at him, regardless of the imperfections in his unattractive smile.

As the ball rolled to Clare, she could not grasp it and let out a loud squeal as it fell to the floor. When Michael reached down to pick it up, he was stopped by the firm grip of his mother’s hand on his arm.

“Michael, leave her alone and don’t bother her again! We are in the Lord’s house, and I don’t want her to get fussy,” Annie warned in a harsh whisper. Michael obediently turned his head and moved away from Clare, shamefully looking down at the floor. He cautiously glanced over at his father to see if he had noticed the altercation. Jeff was sternly staring back at him, having witnessed the entire incident, but in his usual fashion, turned his head in the opposite direction and clasped his hands together in prayer, saying and doing nothing.

Michael often wondered what it was about him that his parents disliked so much. Was it his hideous appearance? The twisted teeth he had been cursed with? His coarse, out-of-control red hair? Or was it just him – a below-average, ugly, unlikeable kid? Forcing back his tears, he quickly swallowed his angst, then wiped his eyes and returned to his play-acting which he often did when he felt rejected or alone. Picking up the water globe and turning it around in his hands, Michael drifted back into his fantasy world where he felt safe and happy. The inviting city was filled with smiling people who looked friendly and cheerful as they went about their daily activities in the bright, lively town. Michael’s vivid imagination placed him once again at the podium where he continued to address the energetic and attentive crowd.

“Hear ye! Hear ye, good people of Contento Barrio! I have rescued three poor creatures from the evil sorcerer,” Michael whispered under his breath. “I was wickedly assaulted with his venomous wand, as you can see by the scars I bear. But, fear not! I am both humbled and honored to have performed these courageous acts. I will continue to protect the good citizens of Contento Barrio as long as I am able!” Michael mumbled, staring into the glass dome while he imagined a cheering crowd enthusiastically clapping in praise of his heroic deeds.

As Michael romanticized about being in the enchanted city, his thoughts were interrupted by a gentle thump on the back of the pew where he was sitting. Startled, he turned around and caught the eye of an elderly woman who was smiling at him. She had been watching his antics as he toyed with the water globe, and was obviously amused by his make-believe play. Michael glanced at her, and feeling somewhat embarrassed, returned the smile then quickly turned back around. He had only half-grinned at her, being conscious not to show too much of his awkward smile, and out of habit, slid his hand over his mouth to hide his dreadful teeth. He prayed that he had not been a bother to the woman, concerned that he would once again be scolded by his mother.

The old woman had a gentle face and twinkling eyes, outlined with a generous amount of laugh lines that had been honestly earned throughout the years. She sported an old-fashioned cloche-style hat with a small blue feather and a dark-green coat, accented by a scarf with blue and green flowers which was held in place by a silver heart-shaped broach.

Her kind face reminded him of Meems. Meems was the most loving person Michael had ever known. She had a warm, gentle smile and always spoke kindly to him, never hesitating to give him one of her generous hugs. Meems often cared for him when his parents were out, taking the time to play games with him and tell him his favorite stories. But most importantly, she never failed to let him know how much she loved him and how important he was. "Someday, Michael, you will do something amazing! You are a very special boy with a kind and loving heart."

Michael peered suspiciously at the old woman, wondering if she was going to tell his mother that he was distracting her or being a bother. He began to utter an apology, but the friendly woman spoke up first.

“Hello, dear boy. There’s no need for concern. Please continue playing, as you are thoroughly amusing me during this most boring of services,” the woman whispered. Michael nodded then turned back around, relieved that he had not disturbed her. The old woman continued watching Michael while he turned the water globe over in his hands, each of them mesmerized by the sparkling silver specks which gently fluttered like soft-falling rain throughout the fascinating globe filled with water.

At the end of the church service, Annie frivolously chatted with two easily impressed ladies from the congregation. To show off her new diamond ring, she extended her arm as far as she could to be sure they had gotten a good glimpse of it. Michael was gathering up his belongings, thoroughly checking all around to be sure he had not forgotten anything, when his mother glanced over at him and loudly commented, “Michael, be sure you’ve picked up all your things. We don’t want to leave anything behind this week because we simply don’t have time to return. So, do us all a favor the first time, and be sure you put everything away in that sack of yours,” she snipped. She then nonchalantly returned to her conversation with the enthralled parish women, proudly bragging about her younger son’s scores in the school’s first-grade placement test.

While Michael finished putting the toys back into his backpack, the old woman once more interrupted him, lightly touching him on his shoulder, “My, my! What a beautiful water globe you have there. I have enjoyed watching you play with it. You seem to love it so. It reminds me of one I

had as a child,” she reminisced. Michael shyly looked up at her, surprised that someone took an interest in what he was doing.

“Thank you. It’s my very favorite toy. My Meems gave it to me for my birthday when I was eight”, Michael responded, once again holding his hand over his teeth as he spoke.

The old woman warmly replied, “I’m sure Meems was very special – and so is that water globe. May I have a look at it, please?”

Taking the water globe back out of his backpack, he reluctantly handed it over to her, concerned she might drop it. The elderly woman carefully held the globe and gently turned it over in her hands as she gazed at the sparkling city surrounded by water. Michael watched her stare into the water globe, and for an instant, he thought he saw his treasured gift light up like a Christmas tree. He rubbed his eyes, assuming he was imagining things, then continued watching her as she studied the globe with interest. She rubbed her hands all around it and mumbled something under her breath which Michael couldn’t understand, then carefully returned it to him.

“You are a very lucky boy. Very lucky, indeed. This is one of the finest water globes I have ever seen. It looks extremely old and valuable, too. Why it’s probably an antique! Take very good care of it, my dear boy, as it may bring you good fortune one day. When you least expect it, something magical will happen to you... something that will show everyone your true self and how brave and kind you really are,” she whispered softly in his ear.

Michael didn’t know what to say. He carefully put the water globe back in his backpack, treating it even more delicately than he had before. The old woman’s comments felt genuine and special. But what had she

meant by “may bring you good fortune” and “magical will happen to you”? Why did she think that something magical would happen to him?

Jeff took Harry by the hand and led his younger son out the heavy parish doors to the parking lot. Annie picked up Clare and followed close behind him, then turned around to see where Michael was. As she noticed him lagging behind, she rolled her eyes then barked at her eldest child.

“Come on, Michael! It’s time to go! What’s taking you so long to put that junk away? Dad and Harry have already headed to the car!”

The old woman heard the harsh tone in which Michael’s mother spoke to him and quickly hustled to catch up to the tense young mother. “My dear, you have a fascinating son here. He is a delightful boy, one of the most enchanting children I have ever met. Don’t be a fool by putting your selfish desires before his needs. Love him and enjoy him every moment you can, or the day may come when you no longer are given that precious opportunity.”

Annie’s mouth dropped wide open! Without uttering a word, she stared back at the elderly woman in disbelief. The polite woman tipped her hat and nodded, then shuffled off to a nearby bus stop with the assistance of her walking cane, immediately hopping onto the first bus that pulled into the stop.

Taken back by the old woman’s comments, Annie fumed while making her way through the parking lot, loudly exclaiming, “The nerve of that old busy-body! Who does she think she is telling me what to do? Why, I should have given her a piece of my mind!”

Jeff did not say a word and continued walking toward his brand-new minivan with Harry. He was used to Annie’s seething outbursts and just let her ramble on until she wore herself out. When he got to the shiny

blue van, he unlocked the doors then fastened Harry into his car seat before climbing into his prized spot in the driver's seat. Jeff smiled with delight as he settled in and began fiddling with the fancy gadgets on the dashboard while waiting for the rest of his family to load into the vehicle.

The remainder of the day played out like every other Sunday afternoon at the Franklin house. After enjoying a tasty chicken dinner with all the trimmings, Michael cleared the table, then dried and put away the dishes after Annie washed them. Jeff had comfortably settled down in his usual spot, fixed like a statue in his leather recliner while enjoying a beer or two as he tuned in to a local sports program on his 70-inch flatscreen television. Harry quietly played with his trucks on the floor near his father, and Clare sat in her teddy bear rocker, jabbering and chattering as she attempted to heap her colorful stacking rings into the correct order, time and time again.

Michael continued helping his mother with the kitchen chores, being extra careful to put the dishes away in their proper places. He was aware that his mother was very particular about the orderliness of her newly remodeled kitchen, so he strived to gain some points with her by completing the task with perfection. But as mother and son worked together in the kitchen, very few words, if any, passed between them. The cold silence was only occasionally broken by the clatter of a dish as it was cautiously and precisely returned to its exact spot in one of the tidy new cabinets.

Each week Michael thought about pouring out his heart to his mother, hoping to find out why she disliked him so much. But time after time, he could never work up the nerve to speak to her about his feelings. Today she seemed particularly annoyed with him, probably because of the incident with the old woman at church, so he decided once again that

today would not be the right time to bring up the delicate subject. Michael was carefully drying and putting away the silverware when Harry ran into the kitchen and shouted, "Come on, Michael! I can see some of the boys heading to the ballfield! Mom, can Michael and I go now?"

Michael and Harry were in the habit of playing baseball with the neighborhood boys every Sunday afternoon. Most of the boys were Michael's age, but Michael was only permitted to go if he took little Harry along. At only six years old, it was rather difficult for Harry to keep up with his brother and the others, but he always begged Michael to take him along, and Michael never made a fuss.

"Oh, go on, Harry, and have fun with your brother. Michael, be sure to keep an eye on him. You know how he follows you around like he's your shadow. Be sure he doesn't get hurt or bullied by any of those boys. Some of those friends of yours aren't exactly the most desirable boys in town, you know. Be home in a couple of hours," she warned.

Michael nodded then shouted, "Come on, Harry! Get your hat and mitt, and let's get going! They've probably already started picking teams by now!" The two boys quickly grabbed their gear and headed to the baseball field, which was located just a couple of blocks down the street from the Franklin's affluent, suburban house in the middle of Ohio.

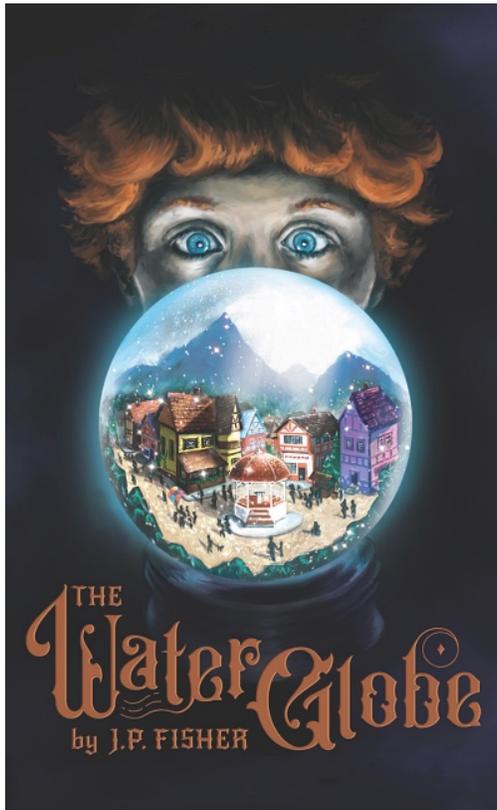
## About the Author



J. P. Fisher lives with her husband in Kentucky, and their four fish - Ivy, Dalmatian, Tango, and Speedy, and garden spider, Charlotte. She has previously published two books, *The River Fairies* in 2019, and *Fairies of the Forest* in 2020.

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