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Bruce Coville

Juliet Dove, Queen of Love

United States (2003)

TAGS: Agape Aphrodite Athena Cupid Eris Eros Helen Hera Psyche





We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	Juliet Dove, Queen of Love
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	United States
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2003
First Edition Details	Bruce Coville, *Juliet Dove, Queen of Love*. New York: Harcourt, 2003, 190 pp.
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Genre	Fantasy fiction
Target Audience	Children (Older children)
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Creators



Bruce Coville by Ryan Johnson. Retrieved from Wikimedia Commons, licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0 (accessed: December 22, 2021).

Bruce Coville , b. 1950
(Author)

Bruce Coville is a writer for children, who was born in Syracuse, New York in 1950. He is married to Katherine Dietz, an artist and illustrator, with whom he has collaborated on several books such as *The Foolish Giant*, *Sarah's Unicorn*, and *The Monster's Ring*. They have three children, and live in Syracuse. Coville has published over 100 books, including the *My Teacher is an Alien* and the *Jeremy Thatcher, Dragon Hatcher* series. His work generally involves aspects of fantasy, the supernatural, mystery, or science fiction. He has also written retellings of Shakespeare for young readers. He is co-founder of 'Full Cast Audio,' which makes unabridged recordings of books for children and young adults.

Source:

Official website (accessed: January 19, 2019).

Bio prepared by Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au

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Additional information

Sequels, Prequels and Spin-offs

Juliet Dove, Queen of Love, is the fifth of the *Magic Shop* fantasy series for young readers. Other texts in the series do not explore classical elements.

Summary

Juliet Dove, Queen of Love is book 5 in the *Magic Shop* series of middle-grade chapter books. In this series, children in an American town named Venus Harbour have their lives transformed by visiting a mysterious 'magic shop' run by a man named Mr Elives (i.e. 'mystery lives'). In this volume, Juliet is a shy teenager who is conscious she's never had a boyfriend, and who uses her sharp tongue to push others away. In Chapter One, 'Killer Strikes Again,' running from an encounter with two girls in her class, she finds herself in a street she has not seen before, and enters the mysterious magic shop, which is not being run by Mr Elives, but by an intimidating woman: Sh. Elives (i.e. 'she lives') (a sign in the window says 'Elives' Magic Supplies, S. H. Elives, Prop') who challenges her to put on a mysterious amulet, and utters a command as she leaves, '*speak of this to no one!*' (12)).

In Chapter Two, 'Spring Fever,' Juliet goes home for dinner with her family. A guest at dinner is the librarian, Hyacinth Priest, who proclaims that she and Juliet will come to know one another well.After dinner, Juliet visits her best friend, Arturo, to do homework together, and is surprised when he admires how pretty her hair is. Walking home, she is further surprised, when she encounters a tall woman in white, who advises her to 'be wise' before disappearing into the mist.

In Chapter Three, 'Boy trouble,' Juliet and her brother Byron talk about their plans for their English Professor father's upcoming poetry festival. Shy Juliet is haunted by the memory of her disastrous attempt at performing in the previous one. Before she goes to bed, she puts on the amulet again, and looking in the mirror as she brushes her hair is surprised to see herself looking pretty. Next morning, she finds that boys think so too, asking her out, and following her around.

In Chapter Four, 'Voices in the Attic', as Juliet attempts to deal with her newfound admirers, she finds that she is not able to tell others about the amulet. In town, she encounters local man, Terry Suss (i.e. a pun on Tiresias), who is blind and who astonishes her by uttering a

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poem at her:

Past field of gold,

The key is hid.

Ignore the child,

And find the kid!

But this alone

Won't ope' the door.

The prison holds

Till mouse shall roar!

A mother's touch,

The final key,

Will break the lock

And set love free. (37–38)

In Chapter Five, 'Roxanne and Jerome,' Juliet is surprised to hear a message from Roxanne and Jerome, talking rats who work for Mr. Elives, who advise her that the amulet is dangerous and did not come from the shop. When Juliet tries to remove it, she finds that its clasp has vanished. The rats explain that they have been sent to keep an eye on Juliet, and things continue to happen in Chapter Six, 'Clarice and Mr Toe,' when her four year old sister Clarice comes to visit, explaining that her imaginary friend, 'Mr Toe,' wants to talk to Juliet, and has written a message to her in blue crayon. In Chapter Seven, Byron is introduced to the rats, and Juliet reads a message from Mr Elives, which explains that the amulet is magic, and that she can trust

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the rats. She also reads a message from 'Mr Toe,' aka the mysterious woman in white who is speaking through Clarice's imaginary friend, asking her to meet the following evening.

In Chapter Eight, 'Tales of the Gods,' Juliet asks Hyacinth Priest for advice. Ms Priest confirms that Mr Elives can be trusted, and promises to bring her some books that can help, dropping off one, *Tales of the Gods*, after dinner. She explains the origins of the Trojan War, and about the role of Eris, the goddess of discord in inciting it. Ms Priest and Mr Dove then talk about different types of love (*eros*, *philia*, *agape*), and comment that the word for love, *eros*, sounds similar to *Eris*, and discord.

In Chapter Nine, 'The Other Realm,' Juliet (in company with the rats and her brother), reads a note from Ms Priest that tells her she and Mr Elives believe the amulet is one that belonged to Helen of Troy. They also read the book, which was written by Mr Elives, and which explains that the old gods of Greece have faded from view, but that Eris still lives, and that she is fascinated by humans and draws strength from causing trouble among them. Later, Juliet goes out to meet the mysterious woman in white, who has taken on human form in the shape of an old lady neighbour, Alvina. She is in fact the goddess, Athena, who advises her to follow the cause of *agape*, 'for in its warm light wisdom grows and thrives' (97), and gives Juliet a protective kiss on the forehead, before disappearing.

Chapter Ten, 'She Who Wanders,' begins with Juliet and the rats lost in the mist. As they try to make their way home, they encounter a wizened old woman, who examines the amulet and directs them 'I think you'd better go on into the palace' (104). There, they encounter the goddess, Hera, who talks a little more about the fading of the immortals, refers to the amulet as a prison, and gives Juliet a protective kiss on the brow, telling her she is trapped in a story and must help it to its conclusion (107).

Chapter Eleven, 'Field of Gold,' involves Juliet encountering a beautiful young woman dressed in rags. She hears her story of a lost lover, separated from her by a jealous mother. She sees the amulet around Juliet's neck, and says it feels important to her, before pointing out the way home, through a tree split by lightning. Juliet follows her directions, passing through a field of gold, in which she sees a shepherd yearning for a lost baby goat. The words of Terry Suss come back to Juliet, 'find the kid', and she helps find a kid in a cave, where

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the key to the amulet is also located. Grasping the key, she is swiftly transported home, to her attic bedroom. In Chapter Twelve, 'Prisoner of Love,' she tries the key on the amulet, and is shocked when a man's finger pokes its way out of the amulet. It is the finger of Eros, the god of love, who is trapped inside. He tells her about the power of the amulet and its connection with Troy, and also about his lost love, Psyche. His mother had imprisoned him in the amulet for his association with Psyche. Now that the amulet is unlocked, he fears that chaos and disorder will spread and magnify.

Chapter Thirteen, 'Cupid's Little Helpers,' shows the power of the amulet working on Roxanne and Jerome, who have now sprouted wings. Roxanne plays a harp, and Jerome has a magic bow and arrow. Juliet has locked the amulet again, but can communicate in her mind with Cupid. She goes to school, contending with the boys who follow her and the girls who are jealous. Chapter Fourteen, 'Uproar,' begins on the day before Valentine's Day, and the day of Professor Dove's Poetry Jam. Juliet encounters Eris in the attic, who explains the extent of her enjoyment of uproar, and threatens to upset the poetry jam. At the jam the next day, Juliet is followed by 80 boys, and she realises that Eris wants to put her on television and magnify the amulet's effects even further. Juliet watches in dismay as Eris causes an argument between some bad poets, until she finds herself on stage, telling everyone to 'shut up.' (158) In Chapter Fifteen, 'Downfall,' Juliet confronts her fear, speaking a poem that comes from her heart, a poem about how to love and be loved. Through this poem, she finds self-acceptance, and is at peace. 'It was like watching a mouse roar,' says her admiring father (163), and Juliet realises that she is helping to unwind the prophecy and finish the story. She makes further peace with a girl from school, Bambi, before facing Eris. Calling on a protective circle of boys from school, she unleashes Roxanne and Jerome on Eris, who bombard the goddess with love, until she disappears, taking Jerome with her.

In Chapter Sixteen, 'Love on the Half Shell,' Juliet explains to everyone about the amulet. She learns that telling everyone to 'shut up' had broken the spell, and that they had helped her just because she was herself. Ms Priest takes Juliet to Mr Elives' shop, and together they go to the sea, where Venus arrives on a huge shell propelled by the winds. She explains that she must give the 'mother's touch' to finish the story. She frees Cupid from his prison and reunites him with Psyche. In the 'Epilogue,' Jerome reappears to Juliet in the attic, with a message from Eris, or S. H. Elives, offering Juliet another visit to the

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	Magic Shop when she is ready. Smiling, and feeling confident, Juliet goes downstairs to see her family and friends.
Analysis	*Juliet Dove, Queen of Love* is a middle-grade chapter book with comic, romantic and supernatural elements, which features a retelling of the Cupid and Psyche myth, within a frame narrative of a tween girl learning to overcome her shyness, and to be assertive. The book is plot-heavy (hence requiring a long summary), with a large cast of characters, and much incidental action, and uses the device of a magic amulet, and visiting gods from the Greek pantheon, to introduce the supernatural elements. The retelling of the myth draws on the story told by Apuleius, and made popular through Walter Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*. Coville's story highlights the fairy-tale elements of the story. Themes of self-esteem, overcoming shyness, and identifying one's singular powers are important in the novel (perhaps here relating to the trials of Psyche herself, in growing up as a soul (see Apuleius's *Golden Ass*), and Coville makes a loose exploration of different ideas about female empowerment, as seen in the various mythological figures (Morgana Le Fay; Eris, Athena, Aphrodite, Hera, Helen, and Psyche). Perhaps because of the novel's emphasis on action and an intricate plot, the relation between Juliet's real-life problems and the mythical story is not fully explored. A final point: this book is unusual in using Greek concepts (*eros, philia, agape)* to explain aspects of love for young readers.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Agape Aphrodite Athena Cupid Eris Eros Helen Hera Psyche
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adolescence Appearances Coming of age Desires Emotions Femininity Gender Gender, female Girls Love Prediction/prophecy Self Small town life

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