THE FROST DIAMOND

by P.M.H. Atwater, L.H.D.
This book is lovingly dedicated to my mother, who somehow managed to put up with me until I was grown, and to my four grandchildren: Balint, Sara, Aaron, and Myriam.
"Sara! Sara, wake up!"

Her mother's words mingled in with the most wonderful dream she had ever had, a dream of kings and queens and a fairy castle which shone bright as the sun. With a big sigh, Sara snuggled deeper into her warm, fluffy quilt. In dreamland, she could pretend anything she pleased, and right now she pretended not to hear her mother.

"Sara, you slept in. Hurry or you will miss your bus."

She jolted upright. Miss the school bus? Oh, no, that would be horrible. Dreamland would have to wait. She flipped off her many blankets, shivering at the sudden exposure to icy air. Her skin even began to prickle because of the cold. Although March had come, the farm fields of southern Idaho were still frozen.

Sara's house sat on a small acreage near the edge of Rock Creek Canyon, several miles south of Twin Falls. Her father drove the family's only car to work each day, so catching a ride on the bus was a must.
She jumped for a nearby rug, hoping to avoid stepping on the floor, but it scooted out from under her. She fell fanny first.

"B-r-r-r-r," grumbled Sara, as she clambered into her robe and house slippers. Bedroom doors were shut each night, so the single oil stove could heat both the living room and kitchen. This morning, though, was unusually frigid.

She peeked out the corner of her window shade for a quick glance at the countryside. The long dirt road she had to walk could be seen most days from her window, but not the bus stop located at the far end near the highway.

All she saw this time was gray. In fact, there was so much gray, she could not tell where the ground stopped and the sky began. The road seemed to have vanished.

"No one should have to go to school on a day like this," she muttered. "Besides, that old road is too hard to walk. There's too many ruts in it."

Her mood turned foul. Nothing had gone right so far and she had no reason to believe her luck would change.

"I wish I did not have to go to school today," Sara bellowed. "It's too ugly outside." But her words went unheard. Like it or not, she would have to hurry. Buses do not wait, neither does school.
Her bad mood acted like a magnet, attracting problem after problem to her. As she washed in the bathroom, most of the water fell in puddles on the floor. When she bent over to clean the mess, she banged her head on the sink. She gulped down her breakfast oatmeal so fast it stuck in her throat. This made her cough so hard she spilled her milk, creating yet another mess. When she jerked on her clothes, she wound up looking crooked and backwards at the same time.

"Sara, just look at you! If you would pay more attention to what you are doing and quit complaining, you would not have so much trouble."

"But I don't want to go to school," Sara moaned, as her mother tugged and pulled to straighten her clothing. "I just want to stay home and dream some more."

"Don't be silly," scolded her mother. "Now, stick this lunch money in your mitten. If you hurry, you should be able to reach the bus stop in time."

Her heavy coat, leggings, muff-cap, scarf, boots, and mittens, made her appear more like a fat snowball than a big third grader. With a kiss and a playful shove from her mother, still grumpy Sara stamped out the front door, not bothering to notice anything.

Part way up the road the sun escaped from the sky
and shot radiant light-bolts across the land. Yet it was
Sara's boots that first caught her eye. Suddenly aglow,
they scattered sparkles in all directions with every step.

As she looked up, brilliant sunshine temporarily
blinded her. The whole world, everywhere, was alive with
tiny, twinkling stars. No matter which way she turned, the
very air glittered, then winked at her.

Questions tumbled through Sara's mind as she stared
in disbelief. Where were the fences that once bordered
each side of the road? What happened to the clumps of dead
grass and the skeleton trees and the barren bushes and the
deep road ruts?
No answers came.

She just stood there, silently, not believing the
garden of crystal and silver spread before her, or the lace
garlands stretching gracefully to the horizon.

The scene was impossible!

Never had Sara seen anything like it. Never.
Frost didn't look like this, neither did snow. So what was
the stuff? What had happened?

She stiffened. Maybe this whole thing is a trick of
my imagination, she puzzled to herself. Mother says I like
to dream too much. Maybe I just walked into one of my
dreams. Or, maybe, I'm still in bed and sound asleep.
Sara pulled off both her mittens and decided to pinch the backs of her hands, as a test to see if she was awake. She pinched until her hands hurt. Yet the starry world around her remained, twinkling more and more as the sun shone brighter in the sky.

Her lunch money caught her attention, as it lay atop the glittering blanket of stars in front of her. The coins had fallen out when she had yanked off her mittens. When she bent over to pick them up, she realized none of this could be a dream. That's because her dreams had never been so beautiful, and she had most certainly never ever dreamed about lunch money. Whatever had happened here, well, it was real - really, really real!

With that thought, Sara screamed for joy. She ran and jumped and twirled, causing whirlwinds of crystal-like beads to spin around her. She flung herself into such a dancing frenzy that stars seemed to rain from the heavens.

This was paradise. This was a true fairyland of mountains and heaps of flashing mirrors, jeweled sprays, and cascades of crystal waterfalls. In Sara's mind, the paradise she saw before her transformed into the Queen’s Courtyard she had dreamt about earlier that morning.

"Such lavish decorations must be for some kind of celebration," she giggled out loud. "Oh, I know, the Queen
is going to have a Ball."

As she danced, she began to sing. Her song was about the people who would attend the Ball. She sang of knights in princely dress, ladies in shimmering gowns, gatekeepers in silver uniforms, and waiters and footmen and guards, and a palace of solid crystal. Tiny bells seemed to ring as Sara lost herself in the magic of her song.

She greeted her imaginary crowd by bowing to each. "How are you today, my lord? Oh, what lovely flowers you have. Are they for the Queen?" Thinking that everyone who attended the Ball should bring the Queen a gift, Sara gasped, for she had nothing to offer. Her only possession was the lunch money she had stuffed into one mitten.

Just then a rainbow flashed. She dove for the nearby spot where she had seen the colors, crashing through clouds of silver as she did, and sending glittering stars skyward. This must be something special, she mused. Perhaps it is a gift I can bring.

There, tucked away, next to what appeared to be a curtain of beaded jewels, was the biggest, brightest, and most beautiful diamond in all the world. Rays of each color in the rainbow bounced from its surface as if it were lit by some inner fire.

Sara squealed. "Look at the size of that diamond!
It is exactly what I need.” She quickly removed the mitten without money in it, so she could get a good grip on the priceless treasure with her fingers, but the diamond was so heavy and sharp she dropped it. On her second try to pick it up, she glanced something yellow moving straight toward her.

"The bus," she shrieked. "I forgot all about the school bus."

Shouting farewell to the starry spangles around her, and the imagined royalty of the Queen's Court, Sara dashed to the bus stop. She barely made it, huffing and puffing, with hardly enough breath to clamber aboard and find a seat.

Laughter filled the bus, as the children exchanged stories about the magic fairyland they had discovered that morning, and how much fun it had been to explore. No one knew what had caused the miracle, not even the bus driver.

At school, part of a class session was devoted to a discussion about the morning's "Big Event." And Nature's surprise was revealed. It was hoar frost.

Hoar frost?

Now, Sara knew all about frost and what caused it, at least she thought she did. She had already learned that if outside temperatures dropped fast enough, while moisture is present, the moisture will freeze into delicate, fan-
like designs of thin ice called jack frost. She had seen jack frost on windows lots of times, especially in late autumn and early spring. She also knew that a thick coating of water would become a solid sheet of ice once temperatures dropped really low. But hoar frost was something new.

Her teacher explained that yesterday, outside temperatures had warmed, allowing for a brief melting, which had left plenty of water clinging to everything. But on this particular morning, temperatures had plunged farther and faster than usual. A heavy blanket of miniature ice needles and tiny ice crystals resulted. When the sun came out, these icy formations reflected the sun's rays, turning the entire countryside into a brilliant wonderland.

According to the Weather Bureau, the long, slender ice needles were so unique there was nothing written about them in any of the local weather records, some going back in history for over a hundred years. Although hoar frost is common in many northern states, it was a rare event in southern Idaho.

"Hoar frost," repeated Sara. "What a silly name."

After school ended, she hopped aboard the bus home. When her stop came she jumped out, and started skipping along the old dirt road. The magical hoar frost was gone,
leaving no trace. What little sunlight the sky would let peek through, lit only the dullness left over from winter.

Sara carefully avoided the deep ruts in the road as she skipped. Then, suddenly, a flicker of light winked at her. Turning, she glanced a rainbow barely visible through a large tangle of weeds.

The diamond!

She had forgotten about the diamond.

"But it can't be real," she stammered loudly. "The hoar frost melted away. The Queen and her Ball were just pretend. They never..." Her voice trailed off into nothing as the beautiful beam flashed again.

Sara edged closer to the fence line, knelt, and pulled off a mitten. With her bare hand, she fingered the weeds, hoping her touch could locate the light source.

Then something sharp jabbed a finger.

"Ouch!"

Before another word could tumble from her mouth, Sara snatched the shining object in front of her and held it high over her head. The sun's rays bounced through the treasure, making it come to life with an inner fire.

Glass.

Sara laughed so hard she nearly fell over. Her priceless diamond was nothing more than a broken piece of
glass! When she stopped laughing, she studied the shard, changing its colors by the way she tipped or angled it in the sun's light.

"Dear frost diamond," she whispered, “I threw you away this morning, but you came back. You are such an ugly thing, yet you are also, ever so pretty. You are just like the wide-awake world - sometimes beautiful, and sometimes not. I guess it is up to me how I see you.”

With a toss, the broken shard of glass landed once more in a weed patch. Sara stood. Somehow she felt taller than before, and much happier about the real world that was all around her.

She flew past the lifeless tangles in one great leap, landing on the dirt road. Sara had quite a story to tell, and she could hardly wait to share it with her mother.
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An accomplished rune caster specializing in the Elder or Yin Runes, she authored “THE MAGICAL LANGUAGE OF RUNES” (now out-of-print), and the newly released “GODDESS RUNES” and the “GODDESS RUNES KIT.”

A recipient of numerous awards, her biography is in sixteen Who’s Who books, half of them international editions. She has lectured extensively, her writings appearing in many national publications. She attended Boise State University in Boise, Idaho, and received her humanities doctorate in 1992 from the International College of Psychic Studies, Montreal, Canada.