

Catching Diamonds

In reading Linda Collins' book, I am frequently reminded of Einstein's famous quote, "Imagination is more important than knowledge." Collins urges us to be fully present in each moment with a child or grandchild, seizing every opportunity to see the unusual, the quirky, and the everyday potential for magic. As all of us, adults and children alike, become daily more dependent on device-based entertainment, this book emerges at the right time with all the makings of a classic. Traveling along this road with the children in your life will inspire curiosity in their young minds and will fire their imaginations—as well as your own.

Sarie Mackay
Artist & Writer

Catching Diamonds is an absolute gem! Linda Collins beautifully inspires her readers to see, feel, and fully reconnect with the magical world of fairies, elves, imaginary friends, and make-believe. This book took me straight back to my own childhood, reminding me of the pure joy of imagination, enchantment, and play in everyday life. I wish I would have had this book on my bedside as my daughter was growing up! It is a map all grown-ups will delight in as they journey into the hearts and souls of the children in their lives, creating connection and treasured memories that will last a lifetime.

Michelle Pittack
MS. Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor

Linda Fleischhauer Collins

In Linda Fleischhauer Collins' professional career as a nurse specializing in rehabilitation and in her personal life as a wife, mother, grandmother, and friend, she has been showing those around her how to joyfully and artistically engage with life itself.

This essential book reveals Linda's secrets of entering into these expansive realities and outlines easy ways to remember that we are all artists weaving magic and wonder into moments in our lives when we are curious, playful, and aware.



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Catching Diamonds

By Linda
Fleischhauer
Collins

Fostering Imagination and Creating
Enchantment with the Children
in Your Life, and with Yourself



Catching Diamonds

*Fostering Imagination and Creating
Enchantment with the Children in
Your Life, and with Yourself*

Linda Fleischhauer Collins

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

Jim Collins

This book is dedicated to my mother,
Clara Suzanne McFarland Fleischhauer
She planted seeds of curiosity, imagination,
laughter, and wonder that are growing strong now
and will flower in many generations to come.
She lived in the wisdom of love, protection,
gratitude and joy for all those she encountered.

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FOREWORD



I met Linda Collins when I was pregnant with my daughter, Coco, and I've had the privilege to be Linda's friend for more than 30 years since. As my daughter was growing up, Linda was instrumental in helping bring imagination and creative play into Coco's young life. Like a duck to water, Coco fully embraced imaginative play, like the idea that fairies and leprechauns were her secret friends and that the autumn ground was covered in glowing paint left by mischievous wee ones. Linda tutored her in the fine art of seeing sparkling life all around her.

If not for Linda's support and guidance, I could not have given my daughter the same experience of rich, inspired creativity that she had in childhood. And the creative outlook Linda fostered in that childhood has continued into adulthood. Because Linda is so naturally geared to being imaginative, it is truly infectious for those of us around her. I'm so pleased to be able to now support Linda in her endeavor to spread her gifts to a wider audience with this book.

My professional career as executive coach, management consultant, author, and trainer in the field of positive human and organizational change gives me a unique perspective on how imagination, or vision, and positive focus helps people grow into the best version of themselves. This is what Linda nurtures in the children she connects with—a strong belief in their inner capacity to blossom under the right guidance and encouragement.

Children are individually unique, and each child has the potential to grow and develop into a well-functioning and playful adult—unless they do not have access to the social, economic, cultural, and familial advantages that foster such growth. Linda's book helps address that gap by offering a myriad of suggestions to help children truly be able to engage in positive and inventive play. Most of Linda's ideas can be implemented at no cost, making them accessible to anyone reading this book. She also

wants to touch adults who may not have been raised with or exposed to ways of seeing the world in the way she does, which is through the lens of spontaneity, beauty, adventure, and sheer potential. Many of us might not know how to access that in ourselves and are limited in how we can do that for the children in our lives. Linda's book speaks to us adults as well, encouraging us with another chance in life to grow and learn.

Linda herself has used her gifts professionally in her role as a case manager, supporting her seriously ill and disabled clients in seeing the beauty around them, no matter how challenging the circumstances.

It is a true gift to be able bring light into the world around you. I am so happy that Linda's brightness can now reach so many more of us.

~ ANN L. CLANCY, PH.D.
Author of *Appreciative Coaching:
A Positive Process for Change*
May 2021



PREFACE

Over the years, many of my friends and family members, have asked me to help them bring more of the enchantment of the moment into their interactions with their children and grandchildren. They started calling for me to write a book. I shared my stories, ideas, and suggestions with them, but they wanted a book they could take home with them to refer to in a moment's notice, or to give as a gift to a new parent or grandparent. I wanted to write that book, but it was not something I had done before. I had no idea how it could actually happen. So, I sent out the wish, intention, and desire for a way forward to creating this book from both a parental and professional point of view. I opened myself up to enchantment and to mystery and watched to see what happened.

In the spring of 2018, I took an unusual journey to Mexico City and the ancient temple site of Teotihuacan. This was not like any trip I had taken before. I went with a group of three of my good friends. We joined up with a larger group with a very knowledgeable guide who led us through the ancient ruins and the vibrant, life-enhancing energies that still swirl around Teotihuacan. One of our adventures was to the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the Church of Miracles, in Mexico City. People all over Mexico and Central and South America revere Our Lady of Guadalupe as the one who ended the violence against the native people after the Spanish arrived in the Americas. Her Basilica is truly a place of miracles and magic, and many pilgrims come to visit.

After leaving the Basilica, my mind and heart were immediately captivated by the vast, colorful beauty and abundant energy of Mexico City on that brilliantly sunny day. I had almost forgotten the fact that moments before I had said a heartfelt prayer asking that I get a sign about writing this book—or a sign if I needed to let the idea go.

Within two minutes after leaving the church, I started walking with one of the members of our group. The first question out of

my mouth to her was, “Do you work inside the home or out of it?” I know, what an unusual question this was to immediately ask someone that you are just getting to know, but it popped right out of my mouth.

“Well,” she replied, “I am an editor, writer, and journalist.”

I couldn’t believe what I was hearing. I had just asked for a sign and there it was, standing right next to me. I immediately launched into my story. I told her, “I feel like I’m supposed to write this book, but I have never written one. I’m a bit overwhelmed by the idea of this process.” I was really just being honest and in awe that she was the one who happened to start walking next to me.

With a smiling, angelic face, she looked at me and said, “That is exactly what I do. I help people create and edit their books.”

With a new lightness and a great feeling of support around the idea of this book materializing, I looked straight back at her, and simply said, “You are my Miracle!” We started working together in May of 2019. And now you are holding the book in your hands—if that is not magic, I don’t know what is!

When children and adults together build imaginative, interactive worlds, everyone involved receives the gift of expansiveness and belonging to a community where they are seen, heard, protected, and loved. These are also miracles in my mind.

As this book unfolded, not only did it take the direction of supporting interactions between adults and children, but it also became a reference for adults expanding their ways of interacting within their own worlds while supporting themselves in our fast-paced world of roles and demands.

The sharing in this book is a combination of interactions with children and others in my life, educational, work experience, personal experiences, and just from life itself. This is the type of book you can enjoy reading from cover to cover or picking and choosing as your interests lead you. It can be a reference book for ideas for interacting, playing, and creating experiences with children. The stories and enchantments are written for children to hear and enjoy.

INTRODUCTION



I believe one of the reasons others were so eager to broaden their knowledge of playful interactions with children is the promise these exchanges will include refreshing sprinkles of joy and delight without complicated rules, and, generally, involve little planning. These types of connections with children can be explored anywhere from vibrant, individual moments to captivating hours to absorbing days of liveliness and sharing. The stories and ideas in this book can help enhance memories, teachings, and all-consuming pleasure and laughter. They are heart-rich! This type of play is there for anyone. All you need is an open heart and a good-natured imagination.

What exactly am I talking about? What are these magical times with children? They are the times when your attention, your imagination, and your love are in sync with a child’s attention, imagination, and love. They are the times when you are treating the child as a unique and beautiful expression of themselves. They are the times when you are appreciating the gift that child is to you and to the whole world. They are the times of collaboration. They are the times of unexpected outcomes. They are the times when you take off your “must do” hat and put on your “fun do” one. They are the times when you really see the spirit of the young one. They are the times when you remember the young one that you once were and still are.

The beauty and essence of this book is encouraging adults and children to spend time together wrapped in experiences that touch hearts and build supportive connections while creating rich memories and learning in conscious moments which can include your own rich culture’s lore and imaginings. In this book, I have included stories, wisdom and adventures with the elves and fairies which were part of my experiences and folklore of playfulness growing up. I have continued to pass the joy of these imaginings on to my children and grandchildren. You can pass

on the stories you value and bring you joy from your own history, just as I have.

Please note that this lore is compatible and not exclusive with learning about things scientifically, which are also included in this book. The richness of imagination and scientific knowledge go hand-in-hand in developing a deep curiosity and enthusiasm for the richness and potency of connection in the worlds around us.

This book is about creating these times by:

Helping instill in children a solid sense of creativity, self-esteem, and wonder.

Helping you get in touch with your inner child, youthful self, and stories from your own childhood.

Reminding you of the beauty you're already creating. You will find that you are already engaging in many of these elements and ways of being with your children, others, and yourself that are described in this book. This book is a reminder for you to stop and appreciate yourself and all you contribute to life and to those around you.

Be on the lookout throughout the book for "ENCHANTMENT ALERTS." These words tell you that we are going right into the imaginative scene—a land of pretend—fully engaged with the moment and the scenario that's being presented. This approach is a portal into another way of seeing the world and a different way to use our senses. By evoking your own Enchantment Alerts, like by including the ideas of elves and fairies or the playful characters from your own specific culture's legends and lore, you are signaling to yourself and to the child that you are on high alert for beauty and wonder. And that you are willing to fully focus on the world around you for those moments. Plus, you are also creating a specific shared reality with the child. It is an agreed upon way to see the world at that moment. This agreement creates a special community between you and the child. And that special community is where real connection can occur.

Here is the first ENCHANTMENT ALERT:

Elves and Fairies ENCHANTMENT ALERT!: You will note as you read through the book that my imagination leads me down the path to the magical realm of elves, fairies, and other elusive creatures living among us. In fact, throughout the years, the most frequent request that I get from those who know about the way elves and fairies appear in my interactions with the children in my life is to explain how they too can make these delightful creatures appear in their lives. Now, here's the thing: there is no forcing it. Either the elves and fairies appeal to you and it makes sense to you to invite them into your world, or there is something else that awaits you such as a secret pal or friend. Either way, in the infinite expanse of imaginative play, there are scenarios available to suit you and the children around you. The imaginative world that you build with a child will be as unique as the individuals that you all are.

What if children learn how to be positive and comfortable with their abilities to brainstorm for the best possible outcome to any question or problem early in their growing lives? My experience is if children have been encouraged, guided, and supported in learning life skills through the loving attention of the adults in their lives, they will innately use those skills throughout their lives. So, as important as the joy that these encounters bring, is the extra benefit that children can playfully acquire important skills and patterns that will allow them to tap into the "Fountain of Youth" throughout their entire lives. Being lively and enveloped in the treasures of life are natural inclinations of the young. Being able to nurture and reinforce these natural abilities is a privilege for those of us who get to spend time with children. These positive ways of navigating life are sought after in dealing with work, activities, friendships, and romantic relationships. They can be utilized in all aspects of life. Children who have the gift of imagination and awareness learn how to creatively work past their fears and refine positive habits. These varied abilities

support them in working towards their own dreams and how they want their lives to be, to feel, and to unfold. They won't settle for just existing as they grow; they will innately and naturally be drawn to creating a harmony in their lives that brings them back to the peace and wholeness they learned and felt as children. They will live more internally motivated versus being more externally motivated. What better gifts could you arrange for the children in your life as they are accumulating and refining their toolbox of life skills?

So, while you are having a great time exploring imaginative realms with the children in your life, you will also be teaching them how to support themselves in good times as well as difficult times.

You will be reading stories of some memories from my childhood with my mom, and times with my children, grandchildren, and others in my life. And, yes, playful descriptions of elves and fairies, as well as encouragement for you to engage with these enchanting beings, will be sprinkled throughout these pages. Many of you will have seen the "I Spy"-type books where there are hidden objects in the pictures. Well, this book is similar, but instead of hidden objects, you will be looking for hidden ways of increasing the richness of adventures and time spent together with children, others, and yourselves.




To deepen your involvement with these stories, look for clues signaling when you feel your heart is touched. If you are inspired to imagine a scene or idea unfolding, you are meeting the challenge of finding clues. You will know you are on the right track if you find yourself thinking you would like to explore, learn, or jump into the moment. (Be on the lookout for those "Enchantment Alerts!" which herald a moment of playful imagination.) I hope your curiosity is stirred and you can't resist exploring some of your own twists and takes on learning and connection.

Pop into these stories with a full heart while involving all of your senses, and bring their feeling cousins along to create an even fuller picture.

(Oh, and don't forget to keep a stack of sticky notes next to you while you are reading. You can mark places in the book that you want to revisit and you can jot down ideas you have for fun activities.)

Adults are here to help children maintain the awe and freshness of living in moments while encouraging their independence and maturing selves. The best scientific research that you can read about this subject is still just second-hand information. This book is about a living experiment, about self-inquiry and self-discovery. There is no substitute for one's own observation. My 45-plus years of experience with children shows me that inspiring a healthy curiosity in children at a young age will equip them in the fullest of ways to be imaginative and grounded in their own lives as they grow. Some think imagination and creativity are not the most important skills to acquire. Those people may feel they fall under the headings of frivolous, flighty, irresponsible, or not having a sense of purpose or value. If these are some impressions that come to mind for you, I hope you will test that theory by doing your own investigative experiments and see what results you get.

The following list will give you a taste of the ideas in this book. This book is about:

-  Discovering how imagination and creativity can happen anywhere.
-  Developing an increased sense of purpose, enjoying your capabilities, exploring potential to encourage a youthful spirit that is maintained and refined into adulthood. Keeping a genuine sense of anticipation and hope into adulthood. Understanding the importance of cultivating and weaving a sense of wonder into one's life, which includes valuing a sense of adventure and play.
-  Helping children who are curiously learning to question and educate themselves. Being a doer rather than just a watcher. Being both an inspired leader and an enthusiastic student. Becoming a bit of a detective when looking for new ideas and possibilities.

🌀 Building a solid go-to support system beginning with parents and grandparents. Gaining interests which can be healthy coping skills and supports. Learning and finetuning skills of patience, positivity, and resilience.

🌀 Learning how to put ideas, dreams, needs, and possibilities out there, and move towards them as they move towards you. Developing perseverance in achieving goals. Seeing wider visions of ways to engage in and create one's life.

🌀 Understanding the connectedness and appreciation of the vast environments around us and in the world. Learning to understand and appreciate difference and diversity in people, life, and our worlds.

🌀 Learning to entertain ourselves in active ways verses always being entertained.

🌀 Cultivating humor and lightheartedness.

🌀 Learning how choices create consequences while knowing outcomes can be positive or negative.

🌀 Turning the ordinary into extraordinary. Finding joy and richness around every corner are real treasures in life.

🌀 Being comfortable with the idea of challenging ourselves without the assurance of known outcomes; in other words, taking a leap in faith in trying new ideas, interests, and directions. A good part of a new adventure is in the creativeness, anticipation, and the journey. With this approach, the idea of fear, anxiety, or self-judgements dissipate as the experience becomes about engagement rather than perfection or mastery. This leads to the genuine peacefulness of the world being wide open to explore in our own ways.



PART 1

STORIES OF IMAGINATION AND ENCHANTMENT