

*A sample chapter from:*

*Delfine the Dream Girl*

*By Patricia Garfield*





## CHAPTER 1

### *I Use Curl Power in Battle*

*Diary, August 15<sup>th</sup>.*

I'm not trying to be a superheroine, I'm trying to rescue my Mom. Every night since she disappeared, I kiss Mom's photograph before turning out the light and lying down to sleep. In the dark I can't stop thinking about what fun we used to have. And now that Dad's gone back to search for clues in the "dig" where Mom vanished a week ago, I miss her even more.

Mom's an anthropologist who studies how people lived in ancient times, so she knows all the old myths and

legends by heart. Dad's an archeologist who specializes in the structure of ancient buildings. The two of them work together every summer in some exotic location. When they return, they teach at the university and write books and articles about the people who once lived in the area they just visited.

My parents are usually home by now, but school's already started so my Aunt Evie, Mom's neat freak sister, has to stay in the house with me until they come back.

This summer, Mom and Dad were excavating a site on the Greek mainland (near some place that sounds like My-scene-ah but it's spelled *Mycenae*). It's where some famous Greek kings lived during the time of the Trojan War.

Before she disappeared, Dad mailed home Mom's latest travel log where she records her findings. He'd have kept it, if he'd known she'd vanish. As soon as the brown paper package tied in string and with tons of colored stamps arrived at the house, I ripped it open to look up her last entry. Here's what she wrote:

Mom's Travel Log: August 7<sup>th</sup>. The "Lion Gate" at

Mycenae has given me a fantastic idea that I must

check out on Crete before we leave for home. I'm sure I saw that same triangular design containing two lions, rampant, one on either side, facing a central column above a door in the temple of the Great Goddess we explored.

Mom's drawn a picture of the lions in the triangle above the lion gate. Crete's a nearby island where my parents were working the week before—she must have gone back there when something happened. But Dad will find her...he *must!*

Mom tells such great bedtime stories. Sometimes it's one of the many versions of *Cinderella*. Or it might be a story about King Arthur's court and Merlin. At times she reads from Grandma's books, like *The Secret Garden*. Or she just invents a tale!

These nights, without her stories, it's sometimes hard to sleep. I feel lonely without my parents. It helps a little to write what's happened in my diary. Mom and Dad gave it to me before leaving for the dig—it feels kind of like a connection to them. It's got my name, *Delfine Remi*, printed in gold on the cover. I write in it what happens each day and also describe the vivid dreams I've had lately. The strange stuff began a couple nights ago when I first studied

Mom's travel log in bed—some really, *really* odd dreams.

Tonight, I read Mom's translation of some ancient chant she'd found inscribed in stone at the site she and Dad were excavating on the Greek mainland. Mom's translations always make ancient things sound modern and jazzy. She says the literal translation for the line "Hair rise up" is, "Oh, long hair, arise, and like the divine Medusa, snake-like, lift me to high Olympus."

Mom's notes say that the ancient people who wrote this chant used it as a magic spell to produce "curl power." Curl power, she says, allows a person to sense when someone else is having a nightmare. This turns the chanter's hair curly! Then the curls carry the chanter into another person's nightmare in order to rescue them. I've just memorized the spell. I'm planning to test it to see if it works.

I'm not sure it *will* work. I'm not totally sure I *want* it to work. Maybe it will just give me another strange dream. It might be too risky to try, anyway, with Aunt Evie downstairs reading—she doesn't understand. Only Mom gets it. And she's disappeared! But Dad will find her... How could he lose track of her? They always work so closely together.

Lying here tonight, the full moon looks as if it's unrolling a white ribbon of light through the open window directly to the edge of my pillow. O.K., I've decided. I'm going to test the spell. Here goes! I start chanting the first verse:

Swirl! Swirl!  
Hair loose,  
Hair curl;  
Hair rise up  
And twirl me  
into  
*Dream Girl!*

Ahh... I *feel* something—prickles of energy are spreading across my scalp.

I sit up. The tingling gets stronger and now there's an odd tug-tug at the root of every single hair. *Oh-oh! This means someone's having a nightmare!* Any second my stick-straight hair's going to turn curly and pull me out of bed.

I touch my Moonpearl locket to make sure I'm wearing it, with its precious curl of Mom's hair. *I'll need every bit of curl-power.* I don't understand why or how, but the curl of Mom's hair in the locket she gave me makes me

feel safe. I think it's a kind of protection, like a lucky charm. But Mom writes that curl power only lasts for a limited time. I've got to hurry.

Quickly, I yank out the ribbon clips Aunt Evie has pinned on tight to the ends of my braids to keep them neat. I drop the clips with a clink on the bedside table, and shake my hair free.

It's working! With the first verse, my body lifts off the bed and floats above it, like a feather. I try to keep focused on the buzzing tingle that's traveling up from my scalp into my straight hair, turning each strand curly.

I get so excited, I forget to focus on the buzzing and it fades. Suddenly I plop back onto my bed. Oof! I breathe deeply to calm myself. O.K., here comes the tingling again. I breathe slowly and deeply and, in a soft voice, repeat the first verse. Yes, it's working. I'm lifting up, up, up above the bed. I keep focused on the buzz, as if it's a lifeline in swimming class. Holding the focus, breathing, feeling the buzzing light...Now I'm floating toward the window, like a feather blown along the moonlit ribbon.

*So far, so good. Yes...go, go, go!* I take another deep breath and chant the second verse...

By star light,

By moon bright,  
Spiral me to  
Nightmare fright;  
Where I fight  
To set all right.

Guided by the buzz that flows into my curls as if they were conductors, I tune myself to the current leading me out through the window into the silvery night, as I say...

Whirl! Whirl!  
Hair loose,  
Hair curl,  
I'm *Dream Girl!*  
I bring light.

By the end of the third verse, I'm soaring. *It feels so good to fly!*

Cool wind blows against my flushed cheeks; my ringlet-receptors are directing me forward. I feel so free, so full of joy, and energy, it's as dazzling as the full moon hanging above me. My Moonpearl locket glows.

I sail over the housetops, skimming the tallest trees in the park where nestlings chirp in their bird-dreams, past the



rooftops of sleeping neighbors and my grade school with the vacant playground, the swings dangling, empty. A watchful owl hoots. Soon I'm high in the night sky.

Suddenly, my flying curls dip downward and I plunge, fast. *Faster*. Like a diving bird, I plummet directly into the murkiness of a sleeping boy's nightmare...

At first all I can see is a dead tree. I hear sounds like metal weapons clashing and clanging all around. I can smell burning torches. I narrow my eyes trying to grasp what's happening through the smoky haze. Total confusion: screams, grunts, shuffling sounds in the fog but I can't tell what's causing what.

"Help! Help me!" I hear someone scream.

When I can finally make out the scene, *it looks like a medieval battleground*. Then I spot an injured boy of about twelve lying at the base of the dying tree. He looks pale and weak, with a gaping wound in his thigh, blood red in the gray mist. His sword lays several feet away. Then I see three enemy warriors closing in on him.

"Quick!" I whisper to the boy, "Remember your dagger!"

“I...I don’t have one,” the boy mumbles as he looks around, puzzled, to see who has spoken.

“Yes, you do!” I say, touching his pocket. The boy places his hand in his pocket and then looks astonished because, a dagger *is* there. (Mom says that in dreams, you have to *believe* to make things appear.)

“Defend yourself!” I whisper.

Then I spin in front of the nearest warrior as he raises his mace for the death stroke. *This is the part I like best.* I swirl a whirlwind of dust.

The man gasps and chokes. “What’s this...?!” He coughs as he swings the mace wildly in the thick air, missing his target.

Meanwhile, the other two warriors are closing in on the boy. With his good leg the kid kicks one man backwards and fends off the other with his dagger.

I can feel my ringlets bouncing as I swivel more dust in the shape of a giant curl. The dream dust doesn’t bother me but confuses others.

“Where, where’d he go?” stammers one warrior.

“Can’t get far with that bum leg,” says the other.

“Forget him. He’s done for.”

“Brutal weather. All this dust—I need to wet my throat!” croaks the third, still hacking and coughing.

“This way...”

They move off in the murky darkness.

No need to chase them. The boy can now deal with them himself if they return. I pick a few leaves from the plant near the base of the tree. Mom drew a picture in her journal of the plant that heals dream wounds. I nibble a small bit of the tangy herb to be sure it’s the right remedy. I dip them in some water that’s gathered in the tree’s hollow, squeeze them to release their healing juice, and then I press the leaves on top of the boy’s wound.

“Hold these down firmly until you wake up,” I murmur.

“Is...is this a dream?” the boy asks. “It’s so dark. Who are you?”

“Your *dream friend*,” I say, placing his sword back at his side. (Saying this makes me feel like a superhero when people ask the crowd, “Who is that stranger?”)

But this is what Mom's journal says to do. *Never tell your name.*)

“You must have felt scared today. Did you have some trouble? Bad guys in the daytime are different from nighttime ones. When dream enemies attack you've got to fight back. *Face them.* You'll be all right now.”

“Wait!” the boy cries as he realizes I am leaving.

“I'm Mike. Thank you! Thank you...”

My curls are twitching. That must mean it's time to go.

The boy's bleeding has stopped. He's sitting up and alert.

*Kind of cute!*

I launch myself into the night sky, chanting the return charm:

Still...Still...

Hair bind,

Hair uncurl:

Hair lie flat

And turn me back

To *Real Girl.*

Straight back!

Straight back!

I have to hurry because even if Aunt Evie fell asleep reading, she'll wake up and come check on me. I've got to be quick.

I fly home the same route I came. I feel my curl power fading, my hair straightening. And my Moonpearl locket is turning cloudy. I think this must mean my power is almost gone. It's hard to rise over the last rooftops...

At the final line of the chant, "Straight back!" I barely manage to squeeze through the bedroom window, slip under my blue blanket, pull up the sheet and close my eyes as Aunt Evie opens the door and walks in. She bends over to tuck in my blanket tightly.

"Oh, Delfine! *Look* at your hair!" I hear her whisper. "*What does the child do? It's a total tangle,*" she says. I pretend as if I've been sound asleep every minute. I feel Aunt Evie's warm breath in my ear as she sighs while leaning over to kiss me goodnight.

I peek slightly as Aunt E. closes the bedroom door; then I scrunch deep under the covers, eyes shut.

*It works!* I'm smiling to myself. *My curl-power works...*



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*Stay tuned for the next installment of  
Delfine the Dream Girl  
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