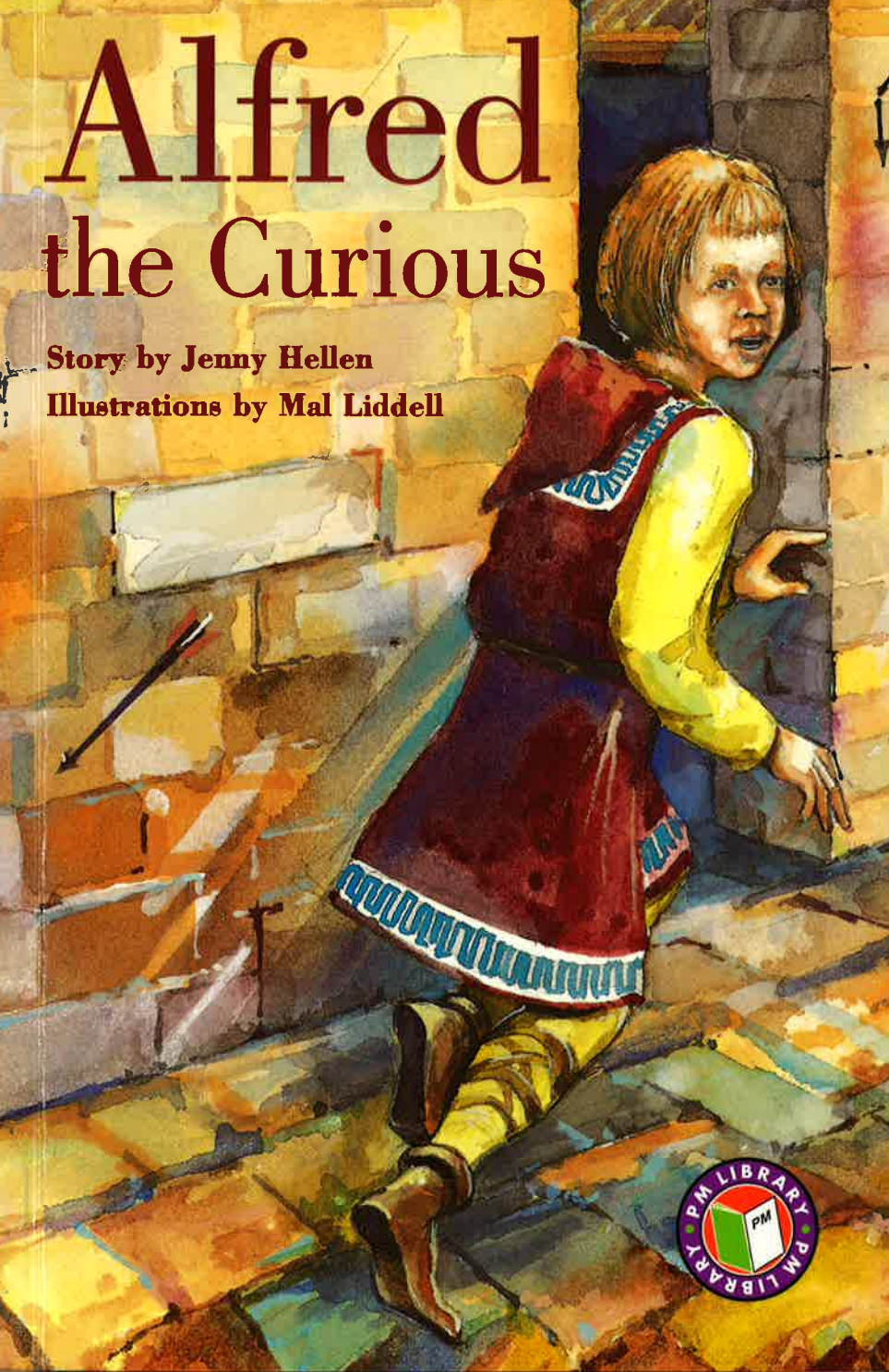
Alfred the Curious

Story by Jenny Hellen
Illustrations by Mal Liddell



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Chapter 1

Preparing for Battle



Alfred was running down the spiral stairs of Lord Edward's castle, when he heard the pounding noise of horses' hooves. Through the narrow slit in the tower wall, he could see men on horses, galloping hard and fast. They were coming towards the castle!

Alfred realised it was Lord Edward and his knights. But behind them, clouds of dust rose higher and higher. Lord William and his army were coming after Lord Edward!

The two lords had been fighting over the castle for a long time.



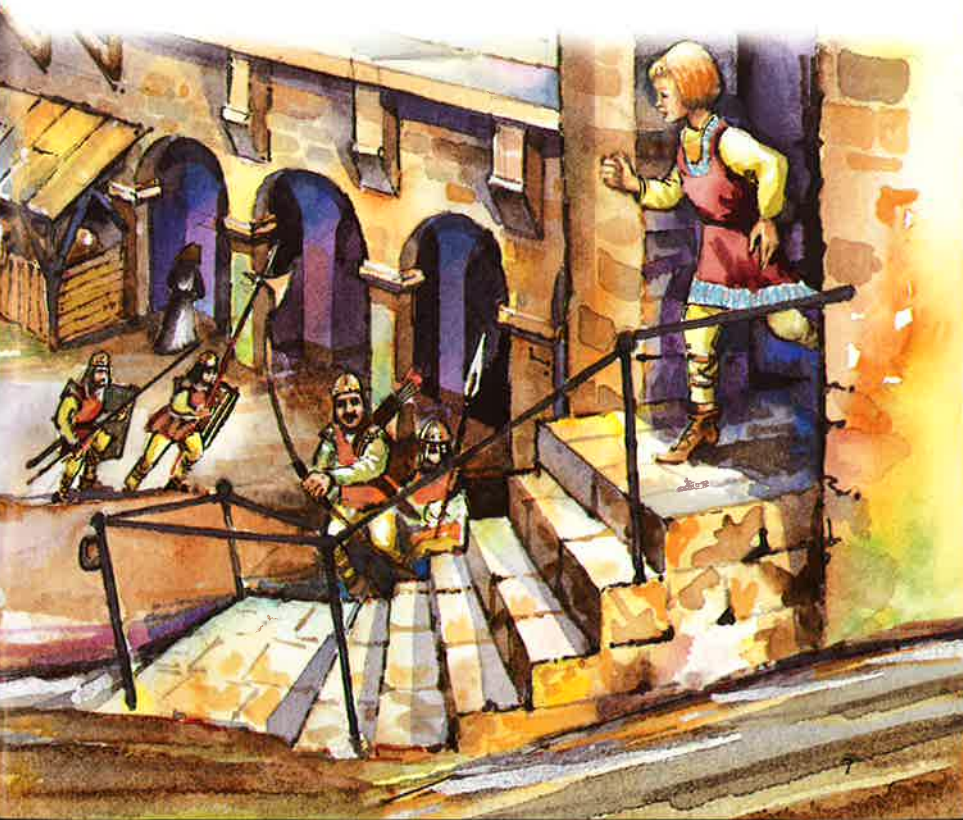
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Alfred was scared and excited at the same time. There'd be no more running messages for Lady Eleanor today, and no more French lessons; being a page could be so boring. But now there'd be some action!



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When Alfred reached the courtyard, people were running in all directions. The animals were being shut into their pens. The children were being hurried inside. The archers were racing up the stairs to take their positions along the parapet. Foot soldiers were getting their lances and pikes, and heading towards the gatehouse.



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The gatehouse keepers were ready to winch the drawbridge up once Lord Edward and his knights were safely inside.



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Alfred saw the archers above the gatehouse getting their bows ready to fire on the enemy. Along the parapet, foot soldiers were preparing huge pots of boiling water. They would pour the water on any of Lord William's men who came too close to the castle walls.



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