



# Squire With Fire

• When Sparks Fly •

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WRITTEN & ILLUSTRATED BY Joseph Cassis

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**“What are you doing up there, Grandpa?”**

said Mac, as she stared up the steps of a very tall ladder. Her grandpa pulled out a small gray safe from the top shelf in the bedroom closet.



"Grandpa, what's in that metal box?"

"Family mementos," responded Grandpa.

# "What are MEMENTOS?" asked Mac.

Grandpa answered, "Oh, mementos are things that have been saved because they have special meaning, or because they remind people of events or other persons. In this case, your grandma and I saved these things to give you someday. They were handed down from your ancestors, who lived a very long time ago."

Grandpa climbed down the ladder. "This safe has an old wooden chest in it that has many treasures."

"Treasures like pirates have?" Mac asked excitedly.

"Well, kind of, but better," said Grandpa. "They belong to our family, which makes them priceless. Let's go out to the garage, Mac, since this is pretty dirty and needs some cleaning. I have several things to show you."







Mac and her grandpa entered the garage and walked over to the workbench with the safe. Grandpa placed it on the scuffed-up table next to the lawnmower.

Spinning the combination lock to several spots on the dial, Grandpa opened the safe and carefully took an old wooden chest out of it.

Mac eagerly climbed up on the stool next to the table so she could see inside this mysterious container.



**"THOSE**  
**GREAT, GREAT,**  
**ANCESTORS ...**  
**are you talking about the**  
**KNIGHTS, SQUIRES, and**  
**SPITFIRE THE DRAGON?"**



Grandpa chuckled, "Oh, so you remember my last story about Squire Mackenzie and the friendly dragon she named Spitfire who helped warm up the castle?"

"Yes, Grandpa, I do! It was a great story. And I was named after her, right?"

Grandpa took a clean rag that was hanging on a hook and wiped off the top of the chest. Dust went flying. He and Mac coughed.

"That's correct Mac. Don't you like your name, Mackenzie, or Mac, for short?"



Mac responded sadly, "Yes, except when people think I'm a boy."

Grandpa smiled as he advised Mac,

**"OH, DON'T LET THAT BOTHER  
YOU. ALWAYS KEEP PEOPLE  
GUESSING SO YOU CAN  
SURPRISE  
THEM."**

"Why, Grandpa?"

"Because many people are prejudiced."

Mac was confused and asked, "What does prejudiced mean?"

Grandpa thought for a moment and then said, "Good question, Mac. It's when people are for or against someone or something before they actually get to know the person or situation. They make judgements for the wrong reasons."

Mac nodded. "Oh, that isn't good."





Mac coughed again as her grandpa waved his arms to try to scatter the fine particles hovering in the air. "I'm so sorry, Mackenzie. I didn't realize there was so much dust that piled up on this chest," Grandpa said, as they choked on the cloud of dust.

"What's in there, Grandpa? Let's see the treasure," said Mac.

Grandpa slowly lifted the top. The hinges creaked very loudly. "Needs some oil, huh? We have to be careful with this chest. It's very old."

Mac nodded again.

"I'm so excited," she said. "Let's see what's in there." Mac tapped her hands several times on her thighs with eagerness.



Grandpa pulled out some crinkled old parchment with drawings on it.

# “WHAT’S THAT, GRANDPA?”

asked Mac.

“Oh, these are actual drawings of a map drawn on parchment, which is the specially prepared very thin skin of a sheep or a goat. Parchment was used during ancient and medieval times like we use paper made from wood.”

“Grandpa, this is so exciting. May I see the map?”

“The parchments are very fragile and can easily tear. Here, hold very carefully, Mac.”

Mac slowly reached for the very old map and held it gently. She looked at all the lines, circles, and other shapes, as well as unusual words written on the parchment.



“What does all this mean?” she asked.

Grandpa pointed to the map and explained, “The map has special markings that shows where your ancestors buried their swords and shields in case there was danger.”

“Wow! Where are the swords and shields buried? We should go to Scotland and find them, right, Grandpa?”



"Excellent, Mac. You remembered that your ancestors lived in Scotland. Maybe someday we'll travel there and see if those swords and shields still exist." Grandpa said this as he cautiously took the parchment back from Mac and placed it into the chest. Mac saw something else in the box.

"What's that, Grandpa?"

"Oh, that's a bag of marbles. It's an ancient game going back thousands of years," explained Grandpa, as he pulled a purple cloth bag from the chest.

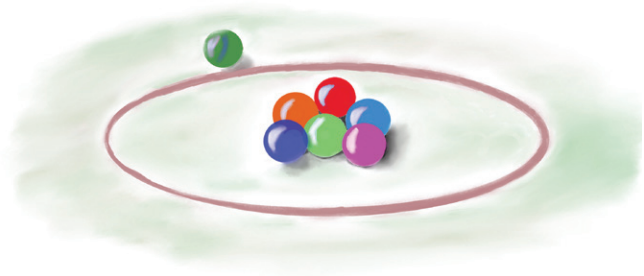


"They used rocks that were smoothed into small balls by the rushing river water. Later in history, marbles were made from glass. The players would make a circle on the ground and then try to hit the marbles out of it."



Grandpa took a couple of the beautiful, colorful glass marbles out of the bag and handed one to Mac. He bent down and drew a circle on the dusty garage floor.

Then Grandpa placed six marbles in the middle of the circle. Each was clear like glass, but had different colors inside.





As Grandpa went down on his knees, he told Mac, "Try to hit the center marbles out of the circle with your 'shooter' marble, which is the big marble like this." He carefully aimed the larger marble by holding his thumb against the shooter marble while balancing it on top of his thumb. He released this shiny marble with a quick flick of his thumb.

The shooter marble rolled fast toward the center of the circle. It hit three smaller marbles and knocked them out of the circle.

"Wow, Grandpa, that's amazing. You're really good!"

Grandpa collected all of the marbles and placed them back into the center of the circle.

"Normally, each person tries to get as many marbles knocked out of the circle as they can. Those with the most knocked out wins the game. There are many other games you can play, too. But, for now, let's just try shooting the marbles."

Grandpa handed the shooter marble to Mac. "Now you try it, Mac," he said.

Mackenzie went down on her knees and held her marble like Grandpa had shown her. She released her shooter and it rolled quickly to the center, but with less force. Three marbles were hit and they moved a few inches out of the circle.



“I DID IT!”

**I Hit the other  
Marbles!!**

screamed Mac.

“That’s excellent, Mackenzie, especially for your very first shot. To be good, you have to keep practicing. I had a lot of practice in my day. It’s so much fun when you build confidence knowing you can aim, shoot and hit with lots of force.”

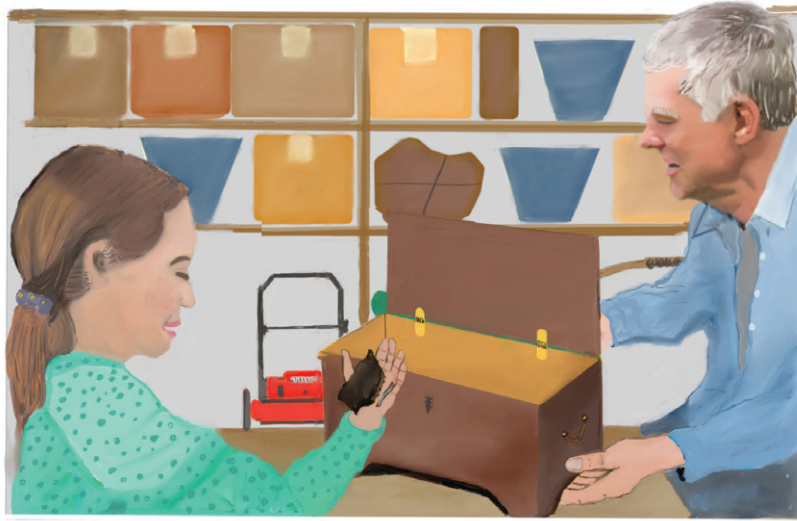
“So did Squire Mackenzie know how to play with these marbles?” asked Mac.

“Oh, yes, exactly. That’s how the squires and knights learned ways to beat their opponents.

The game showed them how to think and be creative to win. It was called battle planning. Let’s put these away for now and see what else is in the box.”

“OK. The marble game is really fun, Grandpa, said Mac. Grandpa and Mac collected the marbles and placed them back into the bag. Mac peeked into the wooden box again.





"There's more. What is this? Why are you saving these old rocks and that piece of metal?" she asked.

"They aren't just any old rocks, Mac. They make fire," exclaimed Grandpa.

"No way, Grandpa. Rocks don't make fire! You have to use a match or a lighter."

Grandpa responded, "That's also true, but knights and squires didn't have matches or lighters back 600 years ago."

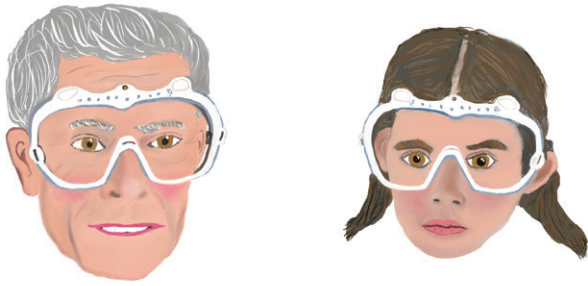
"That's so funny, Grandpa. What, you hit the rocks together and, ka-boom, there is instant fire? That's so funny," Mac chuckled.

"That's true, too, Mac!" Grandpa laughed at Mac's surprise.

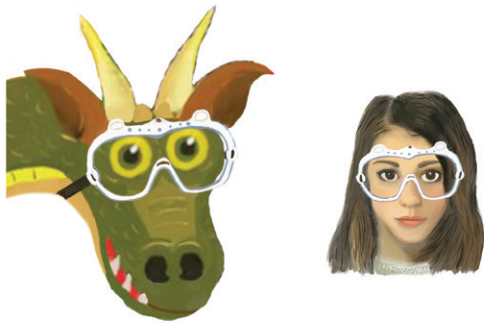
"What? No way, Grandpa. I was only kidding," roared Mac.

"Well, I'm not. I'll show you, but we have to go out into the yard." Grandpa grabbed the small rocks and the piece of metal.

"Let's go!" he said, and motioned Mac to follow him out the door.



Grandpa went into the garage and came back with two pairs of safety goggles. He placed one on his head covering his eyes and handed the other to Mac. "Please put these on to protect your eyes," he said.



**"THE KNIGHTS AND  
SQUIRES HAD GOGGLES,  
TOO?"** asked Mac.

"No, silly, but we know now how pieces of rock can get chipped off and possibly fly up into your eyes. You don't want to lose your eyesight, do you?"

**"NO WAY!"**

shouted Mac.

"And, remember, don't you play with matches, lighters, or even these 'cherts,'" said Grandpa.

"Those are rocks!" exclaimed Mac.

"Well, these aren't just any old rocks. They are called cherts or flints, and were very plentiful in the area in Scotland where Squire Mackenzie and your other ancestors lived. When you strike a chert with another chert or, better yet, a piece of metal, sparks will fly and you can start a fire," explained Grandpa.

"I didn't know that, Grandpa," said Mac.

"The fire builder aims the shooting sparks next to some tinder or small shavings of wood or very small twigs."







Grandpa sternly reminded Mac, "Be careful when doing this, especially anytime you are working with fire, or else you can get burned very badly or possibly burn down something like your house. Understand?"

Mac shook her head up and down several times. "Yes, Grandpa. I promise."

With that, Grandpa struck the rock sharply with the metal rod and sparks shot out.

**"Wow, Grandpa!! That  
IS AMAZING!"**

"Where's Spitfire when you need him?" asked Grandpa, laughing.

"Yep," said Mac, giggling. "That dragon would simply aim his fiery breath at some logs and blow a flame on them to start a fire."



"Like in that story you told me where the dragon would aim his fiery breath and heat that big kettle."

"Yes, but when you don't have a dragon around, you have to rely upon your chert. That's what the other knights and squires had to use to make a fire. "OK, now let's try it again near some of these dried-up leaves," said Grandpa as he collected some leaves and placed them to form a pile.

He struck the rock again and sparks hit the pile of leaves.



Grandpa gently blew on the leaves and smoke started to bellow. He quickly placed some twigs on the pile and blew on it again. The smoke ignited into a small fire.

"There you go! We have a small fire. Mac, you've got to promise me not to play with fire or try to start a fire without your parents or me around to be sure all goes well. OK?" Grandpa sternly warned his granddaughter again.

"I promise, Grandpa, but you said the squires built fires and they were only seven years old like me, remember?"

"Yes, but the young squires always had their older squires or knights near them," explained Grandpa.

"Really? I will be careful and won't do it by myself. I remember Billy's dad accidentally burned down their house when he fell asleep smoking a cigarette," said Mac.

"Oh, no. That is so sad. Did anyone get hurt?" Grandpa frowned.

"No. Everyone was safe. By the way, I did learn how to start campfires in scouting, but we only used matches . . . not rocks!"

Grandpa was pleased to hear that Mac understood. "Very good. Yes, fire can be very dangerous, but it is also good for heating our homes, making engines in our cars work, cooking our food. OK, enough. Now you know how the knights and squires made fire to keep warm and cook their food when they traveled.

"Thanks, Grandpa, for showing me. That was amazing," said Mac.

"There you go, Mac. Now, let me tell you what you must know about your ancestors and what they did to live and survive."

"That would be great, Grandpa. Maybe you can help me with my school report. Mrs. Akre assigned our class to pick a country where one or more of our relatives lived. Any ideas?"



"Oh, yes, I have a few," said Grandpa, and grinned a big smile.

"Did I ever tell you about how Squire Mackenzie and Spitfire stopped an invasion of their castle by Vikings?"

"No, I don't think so."

## What's an INVASION?"

Grandpa turned to Mac, held out the cherts, and said, "That's when bad people attack or fight good people to take over their place or steal things from them. These rocks or cherts belonged to your ancestor, Mackenzie Stewart, who was a knight. Before being a knight, she was a strong squire and actually saved the castle from being overtaken by Vikings who invaded the land."

"So, what happened to Squire Mackenzie and Spitfire?" asked Mac.

"Let's go into the house and I'll show you."







Grandpa and Mac walked back into the house with the cherts and the metal rod. They sat down on the floor.

"Before being a knight, she was a strong squire and actually saved the castle from being overtaken by Vikings who invaded the land," explained Grandpa.

**"VIKINGS?  
WHO ARE THEY?"**

"Vikings came from the area now known as Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. These warriors were also known as Norsemen, but women were Vikings, too. The Vikings controlled Scotland, where those cherts came from near the Rothesay Castle."

Grandpa pointed toward the cherts now lying on some magazines.

"Oh, I remember that castle from the first story about Squire Mackenzie and Spitfire."



Grandpa continued. "So, the Vikings surrounded the castle and were about to attack to control the village and surrounding area."

"But Spitfire will save them, right?" asked Mac.

"Squire Mackenzie and Spitfire were out in the forest. They didn't know these invaders were about to storm the castle," said Grandpa.



"OH, NO!"

**THE CASTLE IS IN TROUBLE!"**

yelled Mac.

"Yes, big trouble, Mac. The Vikings got their large ramming log and lined up on the bridge after crossing the moat. They were going to pound the log against the huge, thick doors protecting the castle's entrance."

Mac continued to be surprised and asked, "Why wasn't the bridge up so the Vikings couldn't cross the moat to go through the doors?"

Grandpa continued telling his story. "The Vikings had waited until dark and snuck up to the bridge without being spotted by the castle guards. When the castle guards saw them in the morning, it was too late. They started to bring up the bridge, but because there were so many Vikings on it, the guards could not lift it up to protect the castle from invasion.

"The Viking mob would strike the door several times. The powerful vibrations would shatter the wood and loosen the big bolts holding the timbers together.

"Most of the Vikings were lined up on the bridge to rush into the castle once the doors broke open. Just about when it looked like the doors were about to burst open, a loud cry could be heard.





# RHeeeee!

and Spitfire came swooping down blowing fire across the group of Vikings. They immediately tried to scatter, knowing Spitfire was turning around in flight to blow more fire at them. Many Vikings bumped into each other. Some lost their balance and fell into the moat where snakes and snapping turtles bit them. Those Vikings screamed, 'Ooeeee...yowl.'



"Meanwhile, Mackenzie had snuck up to the bridge and built a fire line, which was made up of hay from the nearby hay stokes along with tree branches."

Mac was fascinated with the story and asked, "Grandpa, why didn't the Vikings see Squire Mackenzie build the fire line?"

"Great question, Mac. They didn't because all the Vikings were so focused on breaking down the big doors. They did not look behind them or have a lookout Viking watching to ensure they were safe. Meanwhile, Spitfire was busy blowing fire on the Vikings."

Mac smiled and said, "She is so smart."



Grandpa continued: "Then, just like I showed you, she took out her chert, or 'fire rock,' and struck it with a metal rod. A big spark lit the hay on fire. She blew on the flame and the fire followed the path of the fire line, forming a huge fire wall that was about six feet tall and trapped the Vikings on the bridge."

"Did the bridge catch on fire?" asked Mac.



"No, Squire Mackenzie was smart and did not want to burn down the bridge. She built the fire line several feet in front of the bridge entrance. Meanwhile, Spitfire had enough time to come back, flying over the Vikings and breathing more fire on them.

"Oh, didn't the snakes and snapping turtles in the moat bite them?" asked Mac.

"Yes, it was either fighting off the snakes and turtles or burning to death by Spitfire's

**Fierce breath."**

Mac quickly responded, "Yes, I would probably fight off the snakes and turtles, but I don't like snakes. They scare me!"

Grandpa chuckled. "Me, too! I don't like snakes, but many snakes are not mean or poisonous. In fact, some are milked for their venom or poison to make powerful drugs for humans."

Surprised to learn this about snakes, Mac asked, "So they are like people—some are good and others are not so good?"

"Yes, Mac, you have to be careful and always be alert or you can get into trouble."







Mac shook her head and said, "Like Sally, who was approached by a bad guy in a van. She ran home because she thought he was a bad person. My mom and one of my teachers always remind me, saying, "stranger danger!"

Grandpa said, "Yes, very good to know. Yet, there are many people who come to the aid of strangers. In that case, they are good strangers. Just trust your instincts and always be smart."

Mac responded, "Like Mackenzie. She saw a chance to save the day by trapping the Vikings so that Spitfire could scare them away, right, Grandpa?"

"Exactly. Spitfire scared them so much the Vikings even ran through the fire wall to escape

the possibility of Spitfire coming back to burn them to death.

"Meanwhile, the guards in the castle had opened up one of the two doors to come out to fight the Vikings who were either thinking of jumping off the bridge or running through the fire wall to escape the battle. The Vikings were overrun by the guards with the help of Spitfire. Those that remained decided to jump through the firewall and darted back into the woods.

"Squire Mackenzie told Spitfire, 'Follow the Vikings and keep blowing fire on them until they go far away from the castle.' Spitfire nodded and flew after the Vikings.



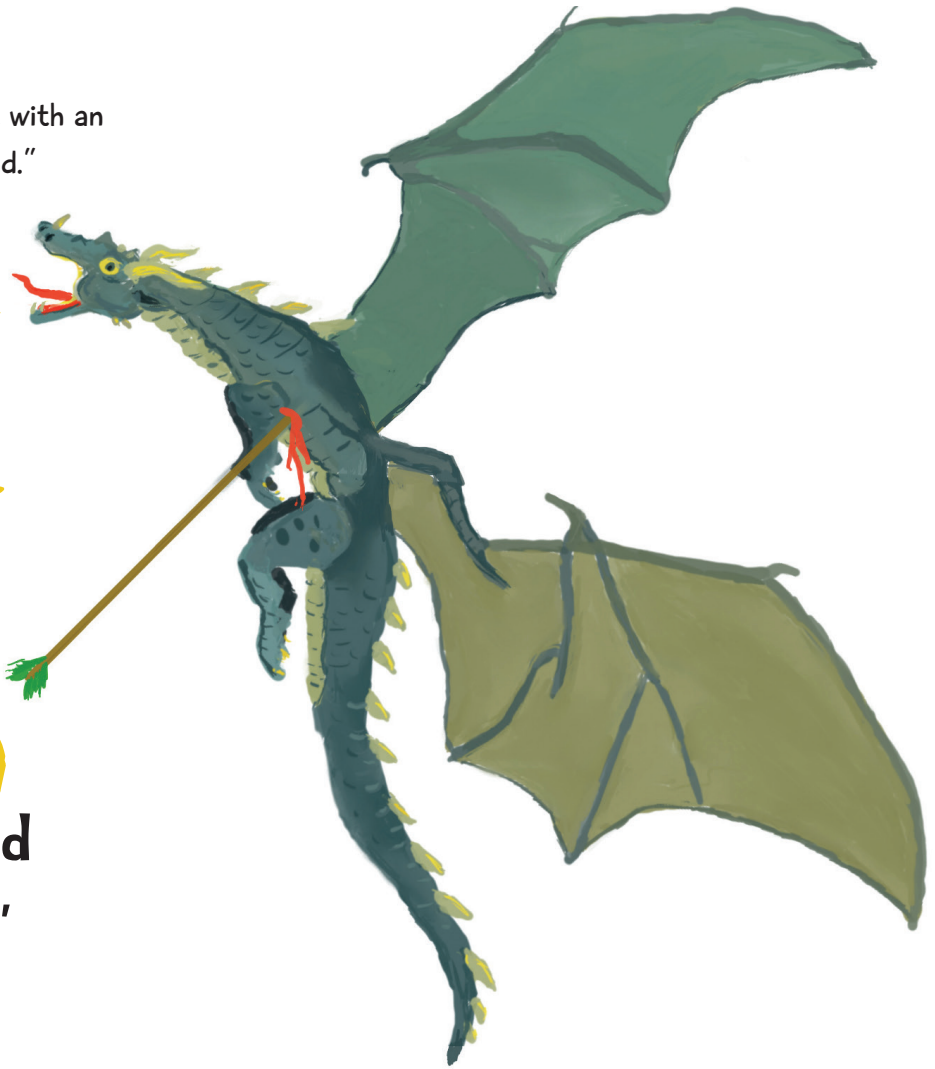
"Then, suddenly, Spitfire got hit with an arrow and fell to the ground."

"OH

NO,

What happened  
to Spitfire!?"

asked Mac.





Grandpa saw that Mac was extremely sad and quickly told her the great and amazing news. "He and the villagers were saved by another dragon called Sparky!! Meanwhile, the nearby villagers took the arrow out of Spitfire's wing and applied medicine as Sparky flew around them for protection from the Vikings."

"Yeah, Spitfire. Glad he was rescued. So, Sparky is another dragon?" Mac asked excitedly. "Wow, where did he come from?"







“Sparky was a girl dragon. She was flying by the castle and wanted to meet Spitfire. She had heard he was doing great things to help the village and Mackenzie’s castle. Sparky thought this was what she wanted to do, too. Other castles were hunting down dragons and she was scared that she would be next. Fortunately, she saw the fighting that was going on. She also saw Spitfire needing help and went to his aid.”

“Great!

**THE CASTLE WAS SAVED BY  
MACKENZIE AND SPITFIRE,”**  
exclaimed Mac.



“And Sparky—don’t forget her,” said Grandpa. “Yes, in fact, Squire Mackenzie told Spitfire she’d never seen him looking so mean. Spitfire told her in dragon language, ‘I had to be mean because those Vikings were after everyone in the castle. Those people are my family and I must protect my family.’”

"They probably didn't have time to have s'mores, right?" asked Mac giggling.



Grandpa laughed. "That's funny, Mac. You remembered how I teased you with Squire Mackenzie and Spitfire having s'mores. Unfortunately, they didn't have them back in those days."

Mac quickly responded, "Yes, I remembered from the first story about Mackenzie and Spitfire. Too bad! I loved those s'mores!"

"Yes, me too! Having s'mores would have been a great way to celebrate the team effort. Squire Mackenzie used a battle plan she remembered

from playing those marbles. Mackenzie also remembered her training on how to start a fire with her fire rock and metal rod."

Mac added to Grandpa's observation. "Yes, Mackenzie is so clever. She remembered how to use those cherts to start her fire."

"But the trouble hadn't stopped. The Vikings came back to fight again, even though there were two dragons protecting the castle," explained Grandpa.

**"OH MY GOSH.**

**Did the Vikings hurt or  
kill Mackenzie and the  
people in the castle?"**



Grandpa calmly continued the story. "Actually, Squire Mackenzie told the attacking Vikings to stop as she laid down her sword. They were stunned. She told them that it made no sense to attack the castle again and try to kill everyone. The villagers were the ones who would be supplying the Vikings with food and clothing, and not just once, but for a long time."

"Why would she put her sword down on the ground?" asked Mac. "Was she crazy? The

dragons were going to protect Mackenzie and all the villagers, right?"

Grandpa responded, "Exactly. Mackenzie knew the dragons would protect them, but if they were to continue to battle and even win, many people—Vikings, knights, squires, and villagers—would get hurt or, worse, be killed."

"But how did she convince the Vikings to stop fighting?" asked Mac.



"Odin, the Viking leader was stunned to see this type of thinking," explained Grandpa. "Squire Mackenzie challenged Odin to three games of marbles. Odin agreed, but only if they would play three games of *Hnefatafl*. If the Vikings won, the castle would have to provide food and clothing to the Vikings for two years. If Mackenzie won, the Vikings would not attack the castle

... **Forever.**"

"Very smart of Mackenzie. What is the *Neffa-thingy* game?"

"Hnefatafl, pronounced 'neffa-taffle,' was also known as 'the King's Table.'"

"It's a funny name, neffa-taffle," Mac said, and laughed. "So, it's like Mackenzie's marble game, right?"







Grandpa clarified, "Not exactly. Many people considered the game as the greatest board game in history. It was the Vikings' game of strategy. The pieces are set out on the board with the king piece on the center square, his defenders around him, and the attackers at each edge of the board."

"Instead of a king, could it be a queen?" asked Mac.

"Well, yes, the Vikings would set up the game the way they wanted to pretend who they may attack in real life," explained Grandpa.

## "SO, WHO WON?"

"Squire Mackenzie, of course! She won all three marble games because she practiced so many times. She won the last game of Hnefatafl, giving her the highest total score. Mackenzie was a quick learner."

Just then, Joyce, Mackenzie's mom, came into the living room from the garage.





"Hi, Dad and Mackenzie. How are you doing? Hey, what are those rocks doing in the living room!?" she asked.

Mac explained, "They aren't just any rocks, Mom. They are fire rocks, called cherts or flints!"

"I'm sorry, my little rock collectors, but please take those rocks, or whatever you called them, outside, where they belong," Joyce sternly stated.

"Now, my dear daughter, Joyce, be cool," said Grandpa calmly. "I placed them on a pile of magazines so they wouldn't scratch the floor. I was telling Mac how our ancestors used them to build fires to live."

Mackenzie's mom immediately looked back at Grandpa.

"Oh, great. Now you're teaching her how to start fires!"

Mac immediately said, "No, Mom, I'm not going to start fires. Besides, they teach us in scouting how to build a campfire. You never know when a person may need to know this."

"That's right, Mackenzie," said Grandpa.

Joyce answered, "I know you are a very responsible person, so I trust you will always do the right thing."

"I will, Mom. Like Grandpa says, 'I need to follow the same rules as Squire Mackenzie did.' Oh, and be as creative by playing marbles and Hnefatafl."

"What? Playing marbles and Naffa-what?" asked Joyce.

Grandpa and Mackenzie laughed. Mackenzie quickly responded. "It's a Viking game called Hnefatafl," she said. "Funny name huh? And the knights and squires played marbles made from round rocks."

Mom responded with smile, "Well, that's much better than playing with fire."

Mac chuckled. "You can only win when you practice . . . lots of practice."

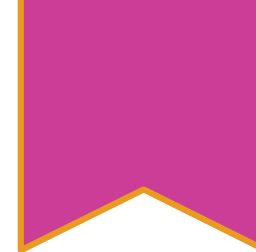




**THE END — Let's play MARBLES!**



Dedicated to Joyce,  
the spark in my life.



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*1. JUVENILE FICTION, FAIRY TALES & FOLKLORE*

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# Enjoy your imagination.

**S**quire with Fire – When Sparks Fly is a follow-up to the award-winning *Squire with Fire – A Happy Dragon's Tale*. This second tale is an equally fantastic romp through legendary times. With similar myths and magic, the story is cozily told by a grandfather imparting heritage lessons to his grandchild, Mackenzie.

A mysterious old wooden chest containing several family mementos inspires Grandpa and Mackenzie to explore the amazing story these relics exemplify about their ancestor, also named Mackenzie. Squire Mackenzie uses these antiquities, marbles, and cherts to fight Vikings invading their castle. She works with Spitfire, a friendly dragon who she helped save, to cleverly thwart these invaders. However, when Spitfire is injured, another caring dragon named Sparky happens to see Spitfire suffering on the ground. She works with the villagers to mend his wound and then the two dragons join forces to help Squire Mackenzie prevail over the invaders with fire and cunning actions.

By sharing this enchanting story, Grandpa connects Mackenzie to her past, teaches her the importance of being understanding, practice skills to be the best and have persistence to achieve goals.



Joseph Cassis launched the *Squire with Fire* series to fulfill a promise he had made to his daughter, Mallory, when she was a two-year-old to write her a book about knights and dragons. Though he did not fulfill his promise until Mallory became an adult with Isla, her own daughter, he successfully authored the series providing them with a memorable legacy.

Joseph has a diversified professional background which include restaurants, marketing, information technology and telecommunications as well as being avid life-long learner with a passion for unique historical stories. He participated in the renowned University of Iowa's Writers' Workshop program and has written three screenplays, one of which was optioned in Hollywood. Joseph resides in Johnston, Iowa with his wife, Joyce, and their Labrador Retriever, Carmella.

*Squire with Fire: A Happy Dragon's Tale*, published by FriesenPress in 2018, has won four awards as of press time: the Mom's Choice Gold Award, the 5 Star Readers' Favorite Award, the Purple Dragonfly Book Award, and the Family Choice Award.

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