

The Legends of Azariah: Magnificent Armor

Earl R. Joseph

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Two soldiers and a priest walk into a mysterious land in Earl R. Joseph's fantasy *The Legends of Azariah: Magnificent Armor*. While the author sends his heroic trio on a search for knowledge, the book project would have benefited from a careful search for an editor or proofreader. Joseph has a knack for telling a story, but myriad mistakes in grammar, punctuation, capitalization, agreement, usage, and spelling sadly sabotage his work. The plot, characters, and world he has created for *Azariah* are fresh and intriguing. They attest to the depth of Joseph's imagination and to his creativity.

Unfortunately, no page is without some or several errors. Joseph spells the name of the land of the bad guys five different ways, often offering two variations of the spelling on the same page. Some mistakes are mere typos, such as when one hero and his paramour "lay at the root of a large three." Most, however, are more serious and more jarring than the image of lovers cuddled beneath a giant numeral. His mistakes make it nearly impossible for the reader to struggle through a paragraph or passage.

Nonetheless, there is a good tale here. There are heroes, an evil tyrant, warrior priests, a demon that possesses the bodies of others, sacred amulets, holy armor, secret passages, magic gates, nasty beasts, Amazon archers, the daughter of Kublai Khan, and more. Joseph weaves a version of Lucifer and the fallen angels into his fantasy, as well as themes about ethnic cleansing, intolerance, and the expulsion and forced exile of an entire race. Joseph's characters, both good and evil, are believable, although their greatest struggle is not with each other but with the prose.

In *The Legends of Azariah: Magnificent Armor*, there is a good story hiding behind a distressing facade. It just needs an editor to make it into a good book.

MARK MCLAUGHLIN (September 14, 2012)

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