

# A MEASURE OF RHYME

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PROLOGUE EXCERPT

AGES OF MALICE, BOOK II

LLOYD JEFFRIES



## PROLOGUE

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This place bristles; vibrant, opalescent. Red and yellow, subtle orange, pearl, onyx; shimmering, sliding.

I'm not numb, not unaware. Consciousness hovers, floats, teeters on the slick edge between reality and something else, something all-consuming, something awesome. I'm unafraid.

The place I left: twinkling, beeping, harsh, has become this corridor. The light, a super nova. Yet I don't squint. I'm calm, my body whole. I glide along.

I should be frightened, I think, more inquisitive. Yet, those emotions have abandoned me. Am I senseless? Mentally deficient? Dead? My heart should be racing, hands trembling.

There's a figure in front of me, a shadow, if such a thing can exist in a place this brilliant. It steps close, and I realize I know the man.

"Emery, welcome," he says.

I should be surprised but my emotions are muted. I can't remember how I got here.

"John?"

His smile is genuine, his embrace comforting.

"I was sent to collect you and answer your questions," he says.  
"You have a very specific task."

I laugh, feel somewhat joyous. “Where am I?”

John’s beard crinkles around a smile, warm and soft. I see the gleam in his eye. The peace, the unshakeable confidence.

“You’re not going to believe this,” he says, “but this is Heaven.”

My mouth falls open as I squint into the brightness. “I made it to Heaven?” I look down the corridor, realize it has no walls, no floor or ceiling, just an endless rainbow of space. “Shouldn’t I feel more elated? More, I don’t know, overjoyed?”

John laughs. “Ah, curiosity. Waiting for the other shoe to drop, eh?” He slaps me on the back. “I’ve missed you Emery.”

Is it possible to miss someone if you’re in Heaven? Do emotions exist here? They seem so distant, like every other care: hunger, anger, jealousy, revenge.

Before I can ask, John speaks again. “You’re a very special guest. A wonder, if I might venture such a statement. I think if these were normal times, you’d be surrounded by angels who’d examine you from head to foot. You’d be a hit for sure.” He raises a finger. “If times were different. For now, though, you’re a guest of the Father. One of only a handful of humans who’ve ever seen this place while still alive.”

“I’m not dead?” I say. “Not here because I’m dead?”

John grasps my hand, and we start to move. Upward it seems. I see an endless expanse, an ocean of light and space. No clouds above, no structures below, floating in the void, holding the hand of the Apostle who speaks as we rise.

“You are to witness and record as I did on Patmos so long ago. You are chosen. You cannot be harmed, neither can you interact. The Father decided to show you these things for whatever His purpose. Please observe carefully.”

The light parts as if breaking through a cloud. I’m presented with endlessness, a tourist at a scenic overlook on some mountain highway. I’ve never witnessed such vastness in my life, certainly not on Earth, as if I’m standing atop the Empire State Building and can see all the way to California.

As we rise structures become visible. Curved, shining, beautiful, shimmering with the same opalescence as the corridor through which I

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entered. There are levels, or sections, above, below, under, beside me. Figures move between them, serene, unhurried, content.

You'd think I'd be an oddity as we rise through these levels, bend around these structures, but these *people*, if they are people, either don't see me or don't care. Perhaps they're shielded from seeing me. Perhaps not people at all, bipeds maybe, in the tradition of a good sci-fi novel.

We gain speed as we rise. The structures become a blur; the bipeds, shooting stars. Then, high above, we approach a castle, an estate maybe, but something grander, something larger than anything a human could possibly hope to build, as if some Beverly Hills neighborhood took all its mansions and joined them together, then every other mansion from every other elite zip code in the world was joined with that, creating a sort of super mansion, a super colossal mega mansion, the mother of all mansions, stretching for as far as I can see.

I squint as if it will improve my vision. I see angels of every race and color. They're stunning. Their wings glorious and glistening. Not feathered, yet something feather-like, splaying colored arrays in breathtaking hues. They seem crazed with haste, dashing around the huge structures, wings flapping easily, moving them with great speed.

One streaks toward me and I flinch. Its face is stern, eyebrows creased above alert eyes, hair curled and flowing behind as wings, every bit of ten feet, pump the air and push the being along.

I reach out as it flashes by, but it flows through as if I'm made only of air. I crane my head as it zips past, white robes flowing, full of speed and wind like boat sails in that famous Rembrandt.

I look to John, who looks skyward. Or I guess up, as I can't tell if there is a sky per se.

"War has come." His features are stern yet serene. He betrays no fear.

"War? Didn't you say we're in Heaven?"

He averts his gaze to me. "Yes," he says, "we are. That's why you're here."

"Great. I get to Heaven just as it gets wrecked."

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John laughs. “Same old Emery,” he says, shaking his head. “We don’t get much sarcasm here.”

I look up and see the multitude. So hard to describe, so many beings at once. My mind scrambles, unable to process the enormity of what’s before me.

War rages...

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