



## A Portion of Malice: Ages of Malice, Book I

**Lloyd Jeffries**

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*A Portion of Malice is an epic spiritual thriller in which a depressed journalist chronicles the fulfillment of a biblical prophecy.*

In Lloyd Jeffries's religious thriller *A Portion of Malice*, a journalist discovers an ancient plot to appease the vengeful God of the Bible.

Emery thinks he's at his lowest point. He's mid-divorce; he lost his unborn child. But just as he's contemplating suicide, a stranger taps him to ghostwrite the memoir of a renowned billionaire, Thaddeus Drake. Drake wants to record his whole story, leading up to a momentous peace deal in the Middle East. The first revelation that he shares with Emery is that of his true identity: he is actually Cain, punished by God to walk the Earth forever.

In the thousands of years since God handed down his punishment, Thaddeus built up a personal empire. His longest-running, most successful act was the creation of a now ancient society whose sole purpose is to fulfill a forgotten prophecy related to the end of days. His story, Emery learns, is the story of humanity's buildup toward Armageddon: to achieve his ultimate goals, Thaddeus has to rebuild an ancient temple and enslave generations of "clean" children, among other tasks.

The narrative alternates between Emery's present-day initiation into Thaddeus's confidence and the backstories of Cain and his two trusted allies. The contemporary-set sections are straightforward and unsettling; in them, Thaddeus's dark nature slowly comes to light. The past-set narrative, in contrast, is more poetic, even when detailing horrific circumstances. Its fight scenes come in staccato bursts of short sentences.

Most of the book's major characters are lifted from the Bible and history, with many operating behind the scenes, merely biding their time until Thaddeus moves to fulfill the relevant prophecies. Beyond them, Emery is distinguished and developed in intriguing terms; in addition to his losses, he's witnessed some unusual events, and these are mentioned in passing. Those who are immortal, in contrast, are not developed beyond their prophetic roles, and though they have little reason to mature further after thousands of years spent pursuing their goals, they are comparatively flat. Thaddeus's charming speeches, however, conceal the unsettling truth to compelling effect; in his company, Emery effects a light, joking tone to conceal his discomfort.

Ending with a cliffhanger that sets up future series developments, *A Portion of Malice* is an epic spiritual thriller in which a depressed journalist chronicles the fulfillment of a biblical prophecy.

JOHN M. MURRAY (October 12, 2022)

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