

## CHAPTER 1. THE DREAM

The noise of the crowd continues to rise, growing rapidly from the shouting of individual voices to the din and cacophony of a maddened crowd. Yet, with all this noise, the words themselves are unintelligible. In addition, there is an ever-present feeling of spinning and falling while, at the same time, the feeling of being physically gripped by an unknown and unseen force. Then—the eyes. No face, just eyes. Piercing, glaring, and fiery eyes that speak as loudly as the actual voice that follows. A booming, echoing voice uttering only one word—“YOU!!!”

The scene ends as quickly as it begins. Reality returns in the same manner as always, replete with sweating, gasping, shudders, and wide-eyed terror. The sound of the crowd is instantly replaced by the pounding sound of the blood coursing through the ears being pumped by a hyperactive heart. The cold but familiar darkness of the room once again reassures Simon that while he was shaken, he is safe. Safe but, at the same time, troubled.

Fortunately for him, his greatest reassurance also comes at that very moment, in a much more desirable and welcome form. A soft voice and a warm touch let him know that his loving wife, Chana, is awake now as well.

“Are you alright, my husband?” she whispers.

“I am—don’t worry,” he says, squeezing her hand as he gets out of bed. “Just that dream again.”

She sighs, “The same one?”

“Yes, exactly the same one,” he answers.

There is no mistaking his frustration—or his deep concern. He is convinced that there is no doubt a message here, but what is it and from whom? Once again, however, he must put all his thoughts and questions on hold.

It’s another new day in Cyrene. Another day, and it is time to get ready for whatever this day will bring. Though the outcome of this day is yet to be seen, one thing is for sure—there will be nothing routine about it. Cyrene is a lady of many faces. She has her wonders... her beauties... her mysteries...and her challenges. To live here is to know that, sooner or later, for better or for worse, one will come to know her. All of her.