

The Gardens of Byzantium

ABOUT THE BOOK

Set in 622 A.D. during the decades-long war between the Persian and Eastern Roman empires, *The Gardens of Byzantium* offers a unique backdrop for a tragic love story. The main characters, Asana and Antonius, are on opposing sides of the war, which began before Asana was even born. Her entire life has been one of turmoil and change. Every year found her uprooted and brought to another foreign land to live an austere life in a garrison with her father, an officer in the Persian Army. But the middle of a war is no place for such a gentle soul. Before long, she is swept away from her family and forced to flee on the back of her beloved horse. Fate leads her into the hands of a handsome and mysterious Roman soldier named Antonius who sequesters her in a beautiful palace in the heart of Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine empire. Asana begins to fall for him, and at last it seems as though she may have found an oasis of happiness in her war-torn world. That is, until news of a Persian army marching toward the city upends her life again, setting in motion an unstoppable chain of events that bring the story to its breathtaking and tragic conclusion.

The author curated a chapter-by-chapter playlist to accompany *The Gardens of Byzantium*. Readers can listen on Spotify or YouTube.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Born in New York City and raised in New Jersey, J.F. Hughes graduated college with a degree in Business. He works full-time as a property manager and moonlights as a music teacher. Creative at heart, Hughes has been actively pursuing his passion for writing and is excited to launch his debut fiction novel, *The Gardens of Byzantium*.

To learn more, please visit JFHbooks.com or follow him on Twitter/X [@JFHbooks](https://twitter.com/JFHbooks).



The Gardens of Byzantium

ISBN: 979-8218219819

Pages: 190

Format: Paperback

Price: \$10.99

Release date: Oct 24, 2023

More details
www.jfhbooks.com

PRAISE FOR THE GARDENS OF BYZANTIUM

"An evocative, rich portrait of a tumultuous time, in which the main characters must ascertain which of them is indeed the captive of the other; humans reduced to themselves through the vicissitudes of history, and the limitations of landscape, class, and war. Hughes possesses a sense of the past that enables us to see and sometimes even to hear his various subjects, conveying a compelling sense of mystery and inevitability."

-Susanna Moore, author of *In the Cut*, *The Whiteness of Bones*, and *The Lost Wife*

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J.F. Hughes

FULL AUTHOR BIO

Born in New York City and raised in New Jersey, J.F. Hughes graduated college with a degree in Business. He is the father of five children, raising them with his wife, Kaitlin. He works full-time as a property manager, and moonlights as a music teacher. He has been a lecturer at colleges, a freelance musician, a landscaper, and founder of a real estate business among many other things. Creative at heart, Hughes has been actively pursuing his passion for writing and is excited to launch his debut fiction novel, *The Gardens of Byzantium*. To learn more, please visit JFHbooks.com or follow him on Twitter/X @JFHbooks.



SHORT AUTHOR BIO



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Sample Interview Questions for J.F. Hughes

1. How long did it take to write *The Gardens of Byzantium*?
2. Why did you choose 622 A.D. as the setting?
3. Why are the Romans and Persians at war during this time period?
4. How accurate are the historical references in your story?
5. Did you consider giving your story a happy ending?
6. What is the most difficult part of the writing process for you?
7. What advice do you have for other fiction authors?
8. What is one important lesson you learned during the self-publishing process?
9. How would you describe your style of writing?
10. Where can readers find out more about *The Gardens of Byzantium*?



Excerpt from “The Gardens of Byzantium” by J.F. Hughes

Pages 85-88

Asana lay against the cool stone, peering up at the night sky through the oriel windows of the tower. Her life, it seemed, was to be one misery after another. Happiness, like the stars above, was forever out of reach. She listened to the breeze rustling the leaves outside. The gentle sound was like a lullaby, and she used it to drift off, just like she had with the sound of the waves when she was trapped in the hold of that dreadful ship.

She had nearly fallen asleep when she heard the outer door open quietly and slow footsteps entering. *The barbarian has finally returned*, she thought to herself. The footsteps approached the steps to her chamber door. The door opened slowly, and there he was again. *What does he want?* He looked at her sitting down against the stone, looking back at him.

After a moment, he spoke, “I must go to the Hippodrome tomorrow with several of the other officers. I need to know that you will stay here and not try to leave.”

Asana said nothing and stared coldly.

“Listen, I cannot keep you safe in this city. They will know you for a Persian, and you will be sold to another merchant, and they will likely have my head for harboring you.” Again, Asana said nothing. Antonius inhaled, his exasperation getting the better of him. “Don’t you understand what a risk I have taken? You won’t even tell me if you understand me!” Asana continued staring for a moment and then looked away, indifferently gazing toward the sky. Antonius felt his blood beginning to boil, and he rushed up and grabbed her roughly by the shoulders and turned Asana so she faced him. “Answer me!”

Asana pushed as hard as she could to free herself, but it was like pushing against a stone pillar. She flailed, clawing at his chest, drawing blood, and tearing his tunic. He released her and pushed her down in frustration. “Bah!” he grumbled as he waved his hand at her dismissively.

He made his way to the door. Just before he stepped out of the chamber, Asana caught a glimpse of something curious around his neck. A small glint of metal was revealed by the tear in his tunic: a ring... a silver ring with a single crescent jade...

Early the next day, the chattering birds could be heard through the palace windows. The morning sun was chasing off the cool dampness that had settled in overnight. Antonius had risen early. He brought the girl water and food and headed back towards the door without speaking.

As he was nearly through the doorway, she spoke, “The ring around your neck.” Antonius was stunned into silence. First by hearing her voice for the first time, second by the fact that this Persian girl was fluent in Greek, and third by the unexpected topic of conversation. “The ring... how did you come to possess such a ring?”

Antonius laughed to himself and shook his head. “You keep silent for days, refusing to even say a word, and suddenly I am supposed to start telling you stories? You have nerve, Persian. Enjoy your meal.”

He stepped away but was interrupted again.

“Please... the ring. Tell me,” she persisted, her voice taking on an earnest tone.

Antonius was persuaded, not necessarily by her, but by his own curiosity. *What is this ring to her?* he wondered.