

# Hashim Kha'il and Keeper of the Gates



Richard Shekari

Hashim Khail and Keeper of the Gates  
By  
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Acknowledgments.

Ayiwulu Alaku  
Israel D. Kwasu  
Gordana Misciew

...Your words of encouragement and profound support greatly influenced my  
desire to write this novella.

You're appreciated

Dedication.

*For Buhari Abu.*

## Chapter One: The Essence of Malefic.

“Father is too old.” Jamil said naughtily as he rode his white horse, his shoulders spoke of his rugged feature; bold and robust. “The good thing is, when his reign is over, the kingdom will have a greater king. I just can’t wait to see you on that throne, brother.” He smirked, “I have no doubt you’ll make this realm an envy in the eyes of all the kingdoms, Hashim.”

“Yes, he’s old.” Hashim responded, a hunk long haired fellow. He rode on a black horse, “But it’ll be wise not to envisage how the kingdom would be in his absence.” He turned to his brother, “The walls have ears, they say.”

“Aah!” Jamil remarked, “We’re in the open field, no walls here.” He giggled and turned to the guards behind them, “Hey! You see any wall around here?”

“Uh...no Prince Jamil!” Answered one of the guards.

“See, no walls here.” Jamil said, “And there are lots of guards who’d stand as witnesses that there isn’t really any wall nearby!”

“You know exactly what I mean, Jamil.” Hashim said as he giggled, “Don’t play that game with me, brother.”

“My point exactly,” he said. “No games! There’s nothing wrong in talking about the future here, brother. Even the one who created us all know that. We’re given the right to plan; be hopeful and dream dreams. Which is why even as we aspire, the gods still bless and surprise us beyond our wildest imagination! Whether we conceive of it or not. It is every good parent’s wish to become one with the earth than watch their own offspring perish before their very own eyes.”

“That, you are right.” He said, “There are a great deal of things to learn from the king. Ruling a kingdom as great as Tzuria is no small task, brother.”

“The people in any kingdom are like women...” Jamil said.

“What do you mean?” He asked.

“Find out what stimulates them,” said Jamil, “Toss it over and let the thrills occupy their mind while you execute your existent ploy from behind.”

Hashim put his horse to a halt and sighed. “Just because a few lasses throw themselves helplessly at your feet don’t mean women are all the same, brother.” He said, “Your heart hums with too much misconception and ambition, Jamil. Everything has its time, be careful, for the evil one will give thee what does not belong to him with his left hand and snatch what belongs to you with his right.”

“Aaah! You and your pious ways, Hashim.” He said, “We’re kids no more, we are men now. When you rule, all I ask is you give me an army and in four days I can bring Azikania and the rest of the domains before you on their knees; and slaves their beautiful women we shall make.”

“I’ll pretend I didn’t hear that.” He said. “When the time avails itself we shall lift the torch and light up the way to peace.”

“You have to be hard on the world if you want to be respected.” Jamil said, “Be unpredictable and show no sign of weakness. Not like father.”

“He’s a peaceful man, a merciful king, you know better.” Hashim said, “Ever wonder why the people love him?”

“Trust me, brother.” Jamil said, “The world we’ll find ourselves tomorrow will not have room for love. Hate shall be adored and chaos bred.”

A guard arrived on a horse and saluted the princes. “His majesty, the king demands your presence in the castle, my lords.” He said.

“Oh father,” Jamil said, “When will he realise that we’re grown men? Every time a man goes out, he sends for you to come home. He worries too much.”

“That’s what fathers do, brother.” Hashim said, “It’s their worries that guarantee this very future of yesterday.” He turned to the guard, “Let the king know we’re on our way.”

“Yes, prince Hashim.” Said the guard, he then rode off.

“I can bet you it’s about marriage, again.” Jamil said, “He’s too keen to become a grandfather.”

Hashim climbed down his horse.

“Don’t tell me you’re walking home.” He added.

“Mmm hmm!” Hashim responded, “Need to stretch these legs, and the big girl need some weight off of her. Right girl?” He tapped his black horse.

“Suit yourself,” Jamil said, “See you when you see me.” He galloped his white horse away, “Yahoo!”

Hashim arrived in time to meet his brother Jamil flirting with some of the maids by the entrance to the king’s chamber.

“Mind if we go in now, brother?” Hashim said.

“Oh sure,” he answered as he turned to the young women, “Don’t forget, I’m getting a full sponge bath tonight, and you girls better be in your best behaviour.”

“Yes, prince Jamil.” They all said as they giggled.

“Hmm!” Hashim remarked, “You still do that?”

“And many more great things,” he said. “You’re missing a lot, it is our right as royals. Just because the oldest of the lions rejects free meal don’t mean the youngest should choose not to consume it.” He bowed to his brother.

“You should be a writer,” Hashim said, “Shall we?”

“Sure, brother.” He replied.

Hashim led the way. They both walked into the king’s chamber and greeted their father who was standing next to his throne in a purple floor-length robe. His crown was on his throne.

“I’ve been standing here ever since I sent for you to be fetched!” Said the king, “if only your mother was here.” He stroke the fringe of grey-white hair around his balding. “You boys better be fast about it!”

“About what, father?” Said Jamil, he giggled as he winked at Hashim, “We’re old enough to lead an army into battle. You worry too much, father.”

“That’s not what I meant,” the king added, “When are you getting married? Especially you, Hashim. Thekina is gone, you’ve got to move on, my boy.”

“I just need some time, father,” Hashim responded. “Time to uh...”

“You think I don’t miss your mother?” The king interjected, “I’m just too old for that, would’ve remarried. Come on, when I was your age I was as strong as a panther both on the battlefield and in bed.”

“Father, you could have a concubine.” Jamil said, “It wouldn’t be bad to have a young woman...taking care of you.”

“The maids are doing a great job.” He said, “I do not have that strength anymore. How much time do I have left?” He coughed, “And all you boys do is throw yourselves out there every now and then.”

“Sorry about that, father,” Hashim said, “you shouldn’t worry much whenever we are out of sight, oh great king. We went deer hunting.”

“I’m not worried, nooo!” Said the King, “I am just wondering what’s so great out there that you two would abandon your father every little chance you get.”

“Father, Hashim is twenty nine, and I, just three years younger. We’re perfectly safe; besides, the guards are always around.”

“That’s the least of my problems.” Said the king, “Anyway that is a matter we shall discuss some other time. There is a package coming in from an old friend, King Zaffariah of Therakania, I’ll want you to go fetch it for me.”

“Did he send a messenger?” Hashim asked.

The king took the crown from his throne and wore it. He then gently sat down. His eyes were fatigued as he was very old, “No,” he said, “He wrote some days back, they should be by the port of Tashqbal before dusk.”

“You know how to read, father?” Hashim asked as he smiled.

“Mmm!” He remarked, “Your brother read the letter.”

“Oh, figures!” Hashim remarked, “Have you had anything yet, father?”

“Uh! Yes,” he said. “Boiled potatoes and some grapes. It seems I’m going to have to go down the garden by myself, and pick the right ones. What am I saying, huh?” He cleared his throat, “Maybe it is old age. My tongue is losing it. See?” He threw a tongue out.

“Oooh! Father.” Jamil responded.

“Ha-Ha! Father,” Hashim remarked, “You’re doing just fine old man!”

“Is it his daughter he sends?” Jamil asked. “I’ll go! Here I am, send me to go fetch the gift.”

“He has only but a son...” The King replied, “...And about two...or is it three adopted daughters, I think?”

“What is your will oh great king?” Hashim asked.

“I had wanted you to go alone,” he said. “With some of the guards of course but maybe uh...” he coughed, “Your brother should follow you so he’d learn how we welcome our guest in a civilised way.”

“Your wish is my command, father.” Hashim said as he bowed.

“You boys can leave right after lunch.” Said the king.

“In that case I’d only reveal my handsome face after we meet them!” Jamil said. “By the way, brother, from this moment henceforth, call me prince Weird; I will only talk once we see the girls. Need to save this princely tone.”

“What exactly do you have in mind?” Hashim asked.

“I know just the right thing to put on for this mission.” He said, “Let me go get my Barbute!” He quickly departed from their presence.

“A mission indeed.” Hashim laughed.

“Here we go again!” said the King as he shook his head, “I warn you Hashim; never dare a blacksnake in the game of hide-and-peek in the dark.”

They burst into laughter. Hashim and his father engaged into a conversation about the king’s plan to extend the western side of the castle.

By the time Hashim and the ten guards were ready to go, it took a while before Jamil was able join them at the city gate; he appeared riding on his white horse, royally dressed and wearing a Barbute.

“You can’t be serious!” Hashim said. Jamil only lifted his hand and cleared his throat.

“Oh, I forgot,” Hashim added, “You’re in your weird-prince-mode.”

The two princes along with the guards left for the port of Tashqbal.

“The Therakanian King has no daughter.” Hashim said as they rode to the port, “Just so you’d know. You don’t need to pick a girl that’s royal in order to make a queen out of her anyway, you know. Every woman is royal. For in the eyes of every man, his woman is queen.”

Jamil uttered no word throughout their journey. They later arrived at the small village of Tashqbal that appeared deserted.

The guards were on alert.

“Where did all the fishermen go?” Said one of the guards.

Hashim turned and gestured to Jamil to halt his horse. “Go look around, just to be sure.” Hashim ordered the guards. “Maybe they have all gone for...”

“Fire!” a voice yelled from nowhere as arrows sprang out and hit the guards. Some masked men all dressed in black from head to toe, charged toward them on black horses. Hashim jumped off his horse and drew his sword, he swung his blade swiftly and took the lives of four men who attacked him, as he turned to warn Jamil, his eyes caught his brother’s body falling off his white horse and unto the ground. Jamil did not flex a muscle; two arrows pieced through his chest and one through his throat. He was dead. Hashim was outraged by the sight of Jamil’s lifeless body. He ignored the attackers and rushed to where his brother’s body lied.

“Jamil!” He cried, “No, Jamil!”

The attackers surrounded him, all the guards were dead and he was outnumbered. As he wept, one of the attackers rode off his horse, rushed towards him and with the hilt of his sword, delivered a sharp blow to Hashim on the back of the head. Hashim fainted.

## Chapter Two: Imperial slave.

The next morning, Hashim was brought before King Yuri of Therakania. He was in shackles, as he was dragged before the king, he noticed that the one seated on the throne was a young man about his age, and there was a young beautiful lady who stood on the left side of the throne in a full length vibrant-red silk hooded cape. She looked like a princess but the hood over her magma-red hair made her appear more like a sorceress and not from it.

*Things are not as they appear, try to remain calm* said a soft female's voice that sounded in Hashim's head. He looked up and wondered if the lady in red was the one that spoke. She only crossed her arms across her chest, her visionary eyes anchored at him.

The king, a tall stalwart young man stood up and walked down to meet them, his cloak bore his royal emblem. The soldiers bowed before him.

"Hashim Khail, I presume." Said the king, "I've longed to meet you. I never expected it to be this soon, and in this manner." He stood with arms akimbo, "Pardon my men, their heart only reveres one throne."

Hashim stood 6-feet tall with his broad shoulders and bare muscular chest before the king.

"You're much taller than I expected," the king added as he looked up at Hashim. "You look more of a warrior than a prince, my friend!"

"You had my brother killed," Hashim said, with a burning lethal stare. "I swear on my mother's grave, I'll make you pay!"

Hashim sighted a dagger around the waist of one of the soldiers, he rushed for it but received a punch in the stomach, he went down on his knees, and they took turn in kicking him.

"That's enough!" Said the king. He turned and looked at the lady in the red dress. She ignored him and quietly walked out of the throne room, her elegant personality caught Hashim's attention once more.

The king bent with his hands on his knees and gazed into Hashim's vengeful eyes. "For the sake of your mother, I hope you'd keep your lips sealed about who you are while you are here," said the king, "I don't have much to say for now." He turned to the soldiers, "Rid my sight of him."

The soldiers dragged him out of the throne room and locked him down in a dungeon.

For the days that followed, Hashim tilled the soil in the fields under the scorching sun just like any other slave and was fed twice a day. Every time they returned from the field, they'd be frisked by the guards before being allowed to enter their cells. Hashim found out that Yuri has succeeded his father, King Zaffariah, who had passed away.

One day while at the field, he sighted two slaves in a brawl and made an attempt to separate them but someone stopped him.

“Don’t!” Said one of the slaves, a sinewy athletic looking man. “The guards will beat you up and tie you for days if you try to stop any fight on the field. They love it, it entertains them. Trust me, you don’t want to be tagged a killjoy by these men.”

Hashim ignored the man that spoke to him and ran towards the fighters. Before he got there, another slave who tried to stop the fight was caught, whipped and dealt with by the guards. They caught him, tied him up, and left him bare under the sun as the rest of the slaves were ordered to keep working. The fighters were ordered to continue their brawl moments later.

Hashim went back to the slave that warned him earlier.

“Thank you,” He said.

“You’re welcome, brother.” The man answered.

“What’s your name?” Hashim asked.

“Brutus Boriah.” He said as he continued working. Hashim felt the man didn’t want to be bothered, so he too went along ploughing.

The next morning, while at the field, one of the slaves began to jerk up and down as though possessed. He drooled and began to run after the other slaves, his facial structure changed, and he hissed like a snake and spoke in foreign tongues they’ve never heard. He grabbed a fellow slave and like a catapult, flung him away. It shocked and amazed all the slaves, some of the guards laughed while others got scared. The guards ignored the madman until he ran towards them and began punching the ones he laid his hands on; he’d catch two and throw them off, the possessed slave ran out of control and blasphemed.

On seeing what was unfolding, the commander ordered Brutus be brought forth. And as soon as he arrived the scene, he knelt down and whispered some words then stood up and commanded the spirits that took the man’s body hostage. The madman went down on his knees, and unto the ground. Some of the slaves came forth and took him away to a nearby tree, where he was allowed to rest. After that, the slaves began chanting Brutus’ name, they hailed him. He lowered his head and begged them to stop.

“Are you some kind of wizard?” Hashim asked him.

“No,” he replied, “I only prayed, and cast out the evil spirit that possessed him.”

“Prayed? Cast out the evil spirit?” Hashim responded, “Hmm! Where are you from?”

“I hail from Damarus.” He said.

“Uh,” he remarked, “Damarus, land of the free.”

“Land of the free indeed,” Brutus said. “Where are you from and how did you end up here? Because you don’t look like them.”

“I am Hashim.” He replied, “I am from a kingdom north of this place,” he paused. “And the day my father finds out where I am, not a damn goat will be left alive in this land.”

“You’re royal?” Brutus asked.

“I’ve never felt so.” He responded.

As Hashim and Brutus acquainted themselves, three young beautiful women arrived on a chariot, they went and had a chat with the one in charge of the slaves. Hashim recognised one of them; she was the one he saw the day he was brought before King Yuri.

“That woman...the tall pretty one.” Hashim said, “Who is she?”

“Oh, the fairest of them all?” Said Brutus, “That’s Nabil Tahil, King Yuri’s seer and protector.”

“Nabil? Seer and protector?” He whispered.

“That’s what I said.” Brutus responded.

“Is she the late king’s daughter?” Hashim asked.

“Well, in a way yes!” Brutus added, “She’s a sorceress of some sort; King Yuri’s ears are slaves to her lips, I heard.”

“The other two?” He asked again.

“They are her sisters.” Brutus answered, “Known as the gates!”

The ladies left the man in charge of the slaves and got onto their chariot then rode through the field to where Hashim and Brutus stood. The chariot halted right in front of Hashim.

“The dust from your horses’ feet would degrade thy beauty, my lady.” Hashim said as he coughed, “Where I come from...”

“Please-don’t-say-another-word.” Brutus interjected, “I beg of you.”

Nabil, who was driving the chariot stared at Hashim for a while. Her two sisters were beside her, she lashed the horses and rode off.

He was ensnared by her looks.

“When a man’s eyes are set on such beauty...” Hashim said. “...Even his soul shall become slave to her command uncoerced...not only his heart.” He sighed, “and the queen is never...jealous?”

“Jealous? No!” Brutus said, “As a matter of fact, Nabil advised King Yuri to take Haloui as his queen. Queen Haloui is not of noble birth.”

“Who are they?” Hashim asked.

“The girls are triplets,” said Brutus, “The one in red, Nabil, is the oldest, she’s the one that controls the powers of the other two.”

“Powers?” Hashim remarked, “I don’t understand.”

“Well, it is what I heard.” Brutus added, “It’s said that their mother was once a slave in this kingdom, around the time they were conceived; she died of childbirth, and Yuri’s father, the late king, took them in when the matter was reported to him. It’ll take six years before the girls would be discovered to possess certain powers. To his demise, the king treated them as though they were his own.”

“Hmm!” Hashim remarked, “So, for how long have you been here?”

“Seven months.” He said as he ploughed the field, “I was running away from persecution, decided to sleep in the valleys one night and by the time I woke up, I was surrounded by some armed men; slave traders. They chained me up and sold me to someone else who also sold me to another,” he paused, “On our way to an unknown destination, the Therakanians captured us and brought us all here.”

“Including the slave master?” Hashim asked.

“All of us,” he said. “But the old rich fellow died three months ago. He couldn’t stand the heat.”

“You said something about persecution?” Hashim said.

“Well, yes.” Brutus replied.

“Someone wasn’t happy with the colour of your skin?” Said Hashim.

“No. No!” He answered, “Anyway, certain men came to our city years back and preached about this man, whom they said could heal the sick and even raise the dead. And after some of us watched them make manifest the very thing they preached,” He smiled, “We gave our life to the one they spoke of, the saviour.”

“You gave your life to someone called the saviour?” Hashim said, “I do not understand!”

“It’s a form of uh... acceptance, commitment after an agreement to have a personal relationship with the one we worship.” He said as he laid his hoe aside and sat on the ground. “So those of us who believe, wilfully embraced the way.”

“You can’t be serious.” Hashim responded, “Your ancestors, didn’t they have like a god or some deities they worshipped before you were born?”

“They do; my father and mother both worshipped different gods,” he said, “However, when they decided to marry, my mother adopted my father’s god.”

“But you abandoned the gods of your parents?” Hashim asked, “I mean the gods your parents worshipped for another one?”

“Yes!” He answered, “No one would experience His presence, peace and mercy, and not turn away from the world.”

“Well, why would the king of your land persecute you?” said Hashim, “If what you practice is good, and if the one you serve is as good as you speak of or did you people rise against your ruler?”

“No!” He said, “When we embraced the way, our number began to grow and some gentiles weren’t comfortable with it. We were accused of creating a movement that was seen as a threat to the kingdom, its laws and way of life of the people. So they arrested us, imprisoned some of us and even killed those who resisted.”

“Why?” He said, “But you practice your way in peace, right?”

“If you ask me” Brutus replied, “Maybe the light of the way threatens the existence of darkness in these kingdoms here on earth even though they are of two different worlds.”

“Hmm! The way?” Hashim said, “Is that what the movement is called?”

“It’s not a movement,” Brutus responded, “It’s a way of life; we tend to follow the pattern of life of the author and finisher of our faith. At least that’s how it’s supposed to be.”

“I see,” said Hashim. “To cast out demons, heal the sick and...?”

“Share the good news,” Brutus interjected, “Love your neighbour as yourself and...”

“Raise the dead?” Hashim interposed.

“When the need arises, yes?” He said. “With little faith in whom I serve, you have no idea what can be achieved or made manifest.”

“You mean to tell me you watched the dead brought back to life?” Hashim asked, “This is interesting! And I thought I’ve seen all the crazy things in the world.” He snorted. “So, do you have plans of going back to your place?”

“Not anymore,” Brutus said, “The Romans invaded our lands and well, made an outpost out of it.”

“The Romans,” he said, “I heard their story. Great army.”

“You’ve got that right,” Brutus responded. “Crushes anything that stands on their path.”

“Back to work!” A guard yelled.

“Well, it’s a pleasure to meet you, Brutus.” Hashim said as he continued weeding.

“Please to meet you too, Hashim.”

### Chapter Three: Dine with the King.

After sunset, they marched back to the slave quarters. While in the cell, four guards arrived and ordered Hashim to stand on his feet. A guard entered the cell and put on shackles around his ankles, they took him on a chariot to a house in the city.

On their arrival, two guards stood behind while the other two took Hashim inside the house. He was unchained and left standing in the middle of a large empty room, painted white. Moments later, the doors in front of him came open. Two young women walked in; one dressed in a blue hooded cape and the other in green, he recognised them. They were Nabil's sisters, and behind them was their older sister in her usual red silk cape.

"Hashim Khail." Nabil said as she approached him, "Is that what you are called?"

"Yes," he answered. "Who wants to know?"

Nabil's tone resembled the voice that sounded in his head the day he was brought before King Yuri. Her two sisters stood behind her.

"Please be seated!" She said in a polite manner.

"Are you serious?" He said.

"Please," she pled with him as she pointed at something behind him.

Hashim turned and saw a white wooden chair. He looked around and saw no one. He could not remember hearing any sound or footsteps earlier, and he was sure the chair wasn't there when the guards brought him in.

"Ookay?" He emphasised, sighed and ignored her order, "How did you..."

"Please, sit!" She interposed.

Hashim crossed his arms across his chest and raised an eyebrow.

"Alright, tough guy." She said, "Shurriah!"

The one in blue dress came forward and stared at him. She raised her left arm and a vortex appeared behind him, and like the wind compelled Hashim to the chair.

"Vina!" Nabil Yelled.

The lady in green came forward and raised her left arm; roots from each handle sprouted and tied his hands. Two more roots pierced the floor and wrapped themselves around his ankles, and fastened his feet to the legs of the chair.

"Don't fight it, warrior." Nabil Whispered as she lowered her face and gazed into his eyes as though she wanted to read his mind, "It'll get tighter. Stay calm." She laid her hands on his forearm.

He was lost in her large green eyes as she was also ensnared by his. They stared into each other's eyes. Nabil couldn't talk anymore, she heaved as though he took her breath away; she held her lips together as best she could, then stood up right and took a step back without saying a word.

Shurriah and Vina looked at each other, then quietly left the room and shut the door behind them.

“How did they...do that?” He stuttered with a smirk, “And hey, did you just sneak into my...mind?”

She snorted and stared down at him as she suspired.

“Oh, I know.” He added, “You want to torture me, huh? I saw how you were staring at me back at the farm.” He paused, “So uh...if I may ask, really, what are we doing here?”

The doors came open once more.

“Aha!” King Yuri yelled, “The great prince himself tied to our little magic chair.” He walked to them and shook his head.

Nabil bowed before the king and turned to walk away.

“Hey, beautiful eyes!” Hashim said, “How can three women tie me up to a chair and leave me with this...man?”

She looked at the king, then walked out of the room.

“Hey, I am talking to you!” Hashim yelled, “You didn’t tell me your name!”

“She’s a fine one, isn’t she?” Said the king, “Be careful with her eyes, and don’t say I didn’t warn you, my....”

“One day I’m going to have my hands wrapped around your neck!” Hashim interjected, “I’ll squeeze it and watch the life in you squeal out.”

“If I had a brother, I don’t think I’ll be this fond of him.” King Yuri said, “I have nothing to do with these zany accusations you lay.”

Hashim jerked his hands and tried to free himself from the roots that held him.

“Hmm!” King Yuri responded, “Anyway, I would’ve preferred a more, you know, gentlemen kind of meeting but the way you roared at me in the presence of my men the other day suggests caution be taken. Hence the magic chair.”

“What do you want from me?” He asked.

“Nothing, nothing really!” Said the king, “I came to uh...well, it means I do really want something from you; I came to personally invite you to come dine with me and my queen later tonight!” He giggled, “That’s all.”

“That’s it?” Hashim said.

“Yes! That is all!” He answered, “However, you’ll need to get cleaned up. Some ladies are going to come back and give you a good warm bath. Mind you, my guards will come along with them just to make sure someone’s hand don’t reach out to any lass’ neck. You know what I mean, don’t you?” The king clapped.

Four young women walked in half naked, followed by six guards. Four of the men pushed in a big bathtub on small wheels filled with warm water. Two of the ladies had with them soaps and sponges.

“Off I go then.” Said the king, “See you in a jiffy, my friend. Oh! And uh...Enjoy yourself!” He tapped Hashim on the chest and walked away humming. The women and the guards bowed as he walked pass them.

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