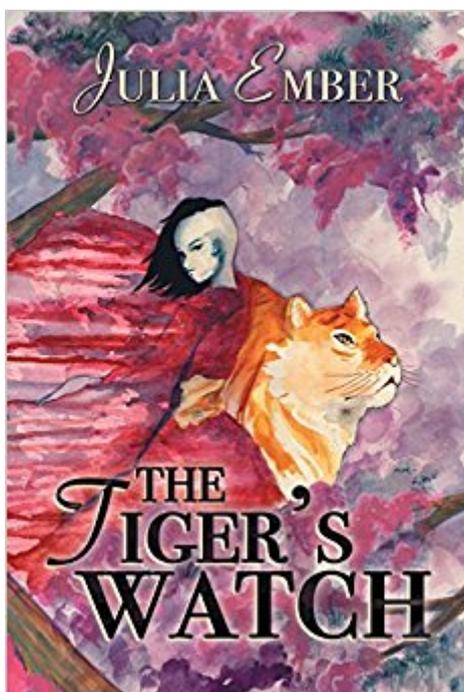


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# The Tiger's Watch (Ashes Of Gold)



## Synopsis

Ashes of Gold: Book One  
Tashi is a spy and killer—an elite warrior known as an inhabitant—taught from a young age to use their bond with the tiger Katala. When an enemy force captures the city, Tashi has no option but to escape. Their safety doesn't last long, however. Soon the conquering army arrives at the secluded monastery where Tashi is hiding, needing a place to treat their wounded. It's not long before their leader, Xian, takes an interest in Tashi. Xian is cold, ambitious, and even cruel—at least at first glance. But Tashi is skilled at watching and reading people, and they find a softer side to the young commander—one that intrigues them. Tashi's loyalties are strained when they learn they have been deceived by the people who trained them, and they must choose between their countrymen and a budding romance with Xian. But fierce Katala faces no such conflict, and she massacres the soldiers she sees as invaders. Xian's men are determined to take revenge against the tiger, but an inhabitant's bond with their animal cannot be severed—neither can survive if the other is killed.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"With a start like this I can't wait to see where the rest of the series will go ... The world Ember has created is interestingly complex and there's easily enough to fill a dozen sequels."

-- Tor.com Review

Born in Chicago, Julia Ember now lives in Edinburgh, Scotland, with her growing menagerie of pets with Harry Potter-themed names. She is an avid traveler and has visited more than sixty countries. The places she visits inspire the worlds she creates in fiction, and she populates these worlds with monsters and magic.

I just devoured this novella. TLDR: Read this for the rep and the premise AND to set you up for what will be an amazing story. Characters: I LOVED the rep for this, which is why it got bumped up, rating wise, for me (those in between ratings are always so hard to decide where it goes). While Tashi was difficult for me to like sometimes, there is a definite sense of conflict within them. Tashi's nonbinary gender identity is dealt with wonderfully and they don't really come into a lot of conflict about it. So while Tashi was one of those characters you don't know if you like or not, it was still great to read about their journey. It's rare we have characters who are really undecided, and still so until the very end. I am SO excited for the sequel mainly for that reason. Plot: We end totally abruptly, like it ended and I was thinking really? Because with ebooks I'm always thinking it will go till almost the end. So it took me aback. That being said, so many things happen and are revealed at the end, that it almost feels like this story is an animal and sort of just runs away. BUT we are well set up for the sequel, which is teased at the end, and that looks all sorts of promising to me. Theme: I enjoyed the exploration of the themes of: power/greed, knowledge/balance, and animals/humans. The animals and human comparison is the most explored because of the language and the metaphors Ember uses. The others are seen, but I think will be more developed in the next one. Setting: This is my most sad, because I was kind of missing world building here. I just wanted more depth about the society, and specifically this war invasion thing. I would have also loved to know more about the training of the inhabitants and the magic or even the history. I LOVED THE ANIMAL COMPANION THING. Like really. I just wanted to know EVERYTHING about it. OVERALL: Do I rec this? YES. This has fantastic rep and the premise is 100% fascinating. I know this will be a wonderful series and it has the foundations for such a great storyline. Disclaimer: I received this book in exchange for an honest review from Netgalley.

I wanted to read *The Seafarer's Kiss* by Julia Ember, so when I saw she had another book on Netgalley, I went and requested it. Lesson learned: when you want to read one book by an author, don't pick up a completely different book instead. You should think this would be obvious, but here I am. Tashi is an inhibitor, someone whose soul is bonded to an animal and trained to protect and serve their country,

even though their life will last only as long as their soul bonded animal. Sixteen-year-old Tashi has spent their entire life training, but they were still unprepared when their country was invaded. They and Katala, their tiger, flee to a remote monastery but the enemy follows. By chance, Tashi is chosen as a servant for the commander of regiment, placing them in the perfect position to act as a spy. The Tiger Watch has some solid core ideas, but I think they could have used more development. For one, I generally think conflict was lacking. At first, suspense comes from Tashi needing to keep their status as an inhibitor hidden, but they never seem too concerned about this, so it's hard to care. As for the spying, the major information Tashi is looking for is why the enemy regiment and their commander Xian are at the monastery. Again, Tashi doesn't seem to feel any urgency about this, so it was hard for me to get invested. A lot of the plot points described in the official blurb only happen about two thirds of the way through, and it's only then that Tashi faces real conflict. The story does improve at this point. However the major decision Tashi faces has to do with a love triangle. This is the young adult genre, after all. This is another area where I found the blurb to be misleading, since it suggests that Xian is the one Tashi is in love with. This isn't quite true. Tashi has feelings for a friend who is also an inhibitor, although there's no denying that they're lusting after Xian. Honestly, that was so off putting. Xian tortures someone in front of Tashi, and yet Tashi starts getting all these soft feelings for him? Just why? Because he's hot? Because he's nice to Tashi even if he hurts other people? Regardless, Tashi gives Xian way too much leeway and makes some really bad decisions relating to him. You may have already clued into this from the use of "they/them" pronouns, but Tashi's nonbinary (specifically genderfluid). It's not a plot point or something that the story depends on. No coming out or queer angst. It's a YA fantasy adventure story with a genderfluid protagonist, which is something I know a lot of readers are looking for. While I can't speak to the quality of the representation, currently the only review I've seen from a nonbinary reviewer is positive. Other thoughts regarding The Tiger Watch:- It's very short - under two hundred pages. I don't know if it would qualify as a novella.- Tashi's country is based on Bhutan. This is another area where I can't speak to the quality of representation, and I as yet have seen no reviewers from Bhutanese reviewers.- The supporting cast is very dude heavy. There's only

one female character in the book (looking at humans only, not Katala), and she exits the scene about half way through. I have heard that this will change in the next book in the series. Unfortunately, I'm not planning on reading the next book. While I didn't think The Tiger's Watch was terrible, I basically found it to be another mediocre YA fantasy novel. That said, someone who is really looking for nonbinary representation in fantasy would be advised to at least look into it. I received an ARC in exchange for a free and honest review.

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