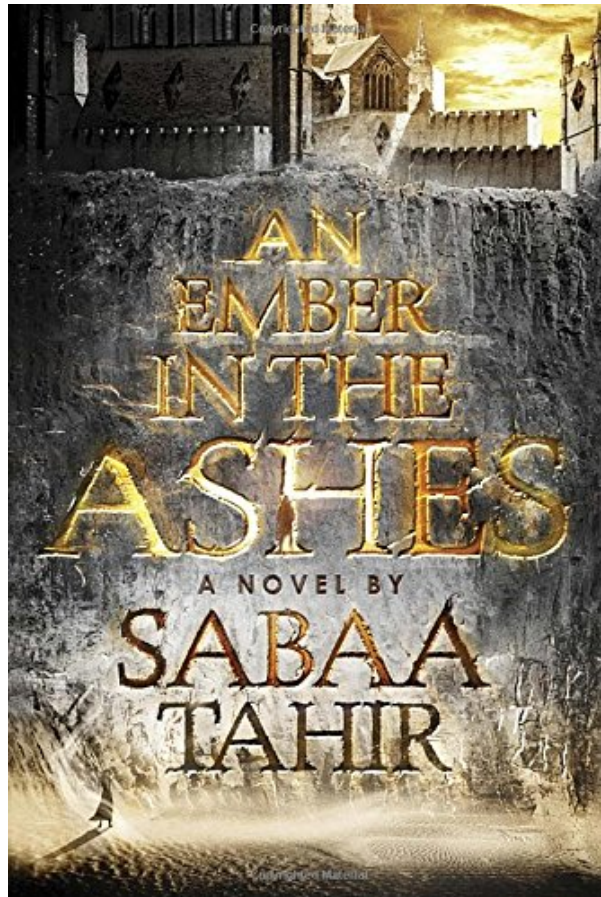
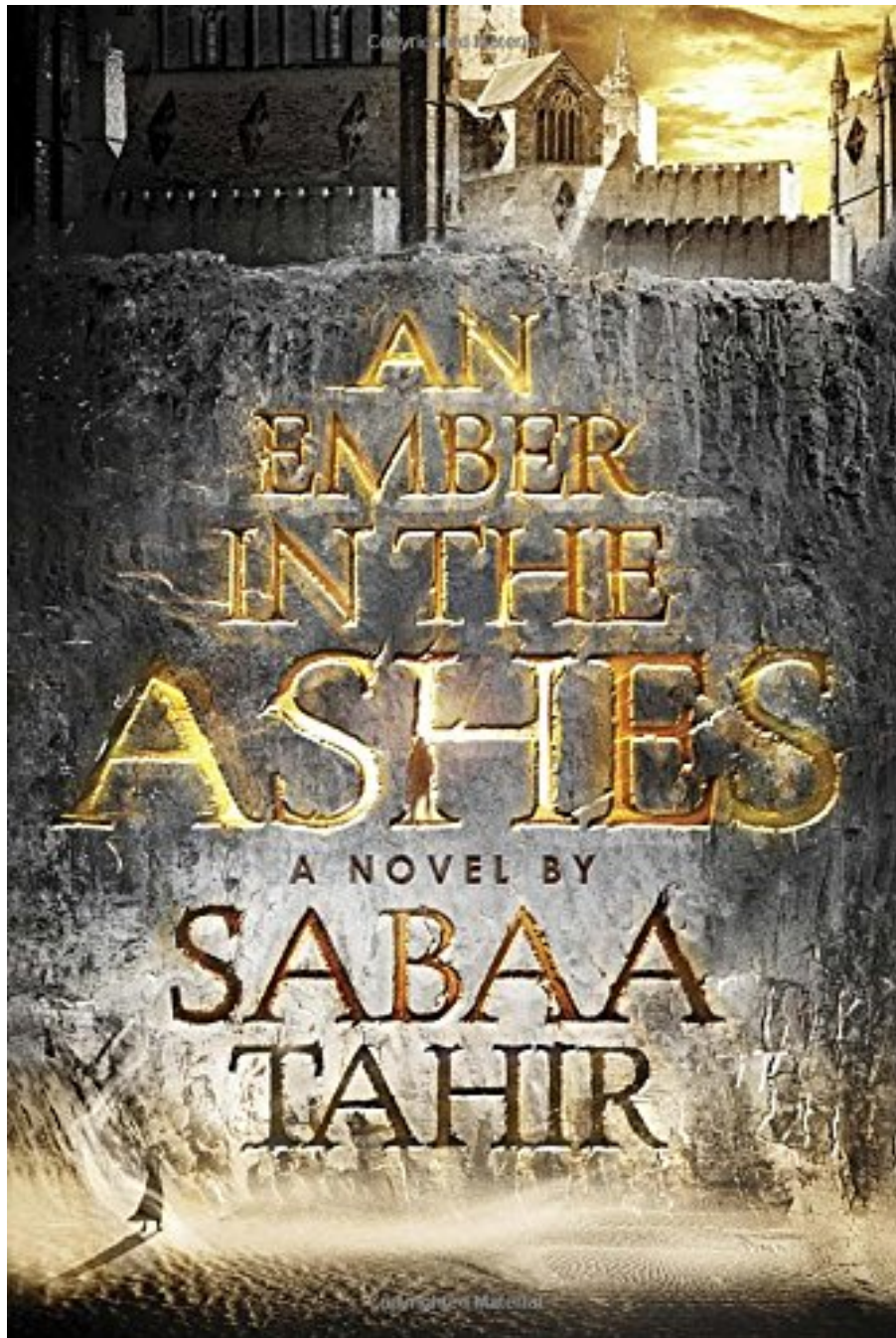


AN EMBER IN THE ASHES BY SABAA TAHIR



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A "deft, polished debut" (Publishers Weekly, starred review), Sabaa Tahir's AN EMBER IN THE ASHES is a thought-provoking, heart-wrenching and pulse-pounding read. Set in a rich, high-fantasy world with echoes of ancient Rome, it tells the story of a slave fighting for her family and a young soldier fighting for his freedom.

Laia is a slave. Elias is a soldier. Neither is free.

Under the Martial Empire, defiance is met with death. Those who do not vow their blood and bodies to the Emperor risk the execution of their loved ones and the destruction of all they hold dear.

It is in this brutal world, inspired by ancient Rome, that Laia lives with her grandparents and older brother. The family ekes out an existence in the Empire's impoverished backstreets. They do not challenge the Empire. They've seen what happens to those who do.

But when Laia's brother is arrested for treason, Laia is forced to make a decision. In exchange for help from rebels who promise to rescue her brother, she will risk her life to spy for them from within the Empire's greatest military academy.

There, Laia meets Elias, the school's finest soldier—and secretly, its most unwilling. Elias wants only to be free of the tyranny he's being trained to enforce. He and Laia will soon realize that their destinies are intertwined—and that their choices will change the fate of the Empire itself.

Look out for book two in the series, A TORCH AGAINST THE NIGHT, on sale August 30th!

- Sales Rank: #13237 in Books
- Brand: Tahir, Sabaa
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- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
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THIS BETTER NOT BE A STANDALONE!!!!!!!!!!!!

By QueenKatieMae

First of all, and I shall repeat myself, this had better not be a standalone novel as the author claims. Second, I devoured this book, unashamedly, stopping only for extraneous things like sleeping, eating, paying attention to my family. It's that captivating.

While I am old enough to be a mother or, god forbid, grandmother to members of the book's target audience, there is just something so thrilling and delightful in YA fiction that cannot be found in adult fiction. And a YA fantasy novel is the *crème de la crème* when it comes to disengaging from the real world and escaping into another. A young boy can turn into the greatest wizard ever or a young girl can become champion of the

world's deadliest game. We accept it and embrace it and absolutely love it.

An Ember In The Ashes by debut author Sabaa Tahir is a fantastic new addition to the world of YA fantasy fiction. In a world ruled by brutal, war-like Martials, the lowly Scholars are forced into slavery and poverty; their libraries destroyed, they are forbidden to learn how to read. It has been this way since the Martials took over the Scholar Empire five hundred years ago. It is a badge of honor when Martial children are accepted to the warrior school Blackcliff. They train to become a Mask, an elite assassin. The Scholars, deprived of their names, are forced to endure cruelty and depravity while serving those at Blackcliff. However, in the city outside the gated fortress, a resistance army has formed and been a thorn in the Martials' side for many years.

In the beginning of the book, Elias, a student at Blackcliff only days from graduating as a Mask, is planning his desertion. He faces a horrific death sentence if caught but Elias is sickened by the actions of the murderous Masks and does not want to become one of their cruel elite. Then it is announced that the Emperor's reign is at an end and the new Emperor must be chosen from one the top four graduates at Blackcliff who participate in the grueling tests of skill and loyalty called the Trials. An ancient seer convinces Elias that to desert would not bring him the freedom he craves, to stay and fight would.

Laia, a young Scholar who lives in the city watches in horror as Masks arrest her brother Darin, murder her grandparents and burn her home to the ground. Her only hope of finding and freeing the last member of her family is to join forces with the resistance and work as a spy for them at Blackcliff. The resistance warns her that as a slave at Blackcliff she will have to endure unbelievable cruelty by the ruling Commandante. Determined to free Darin, Laia agrees.

While most YA readers can guess the basics of what might happen between Elias and Laia, their story is much more complex than that. If Elias wins the Trials he will be Emperor. If he loses, he will die. His best friend, Helene, is competing against him in the Trials and his feelings for her are complicated by their friendship, his attraction to her, and the fact she is a formidable opponent who is fiercely loyal to the empire. Laia continues to spy for the resistance despite her conflicted feelings concerning their actions. Her family was destroyed because of a traitor within the group. But, as she repeats to herself in times of doubt, she is there to save Darin, she is his only hope.

I love the world building of An Ember In The Ashes; it is rich and full without being overcomplicated. The Trials remind me of Hunger Games or Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire. And the relationship between Elias and Laia is not "oh my God, where have you been all my life, I love you forever." It is more risky and nuanced. Elias' relationship with Helene is my favorite part of the book. He is so loyal to her and fighting against her is painful knowing that one of them will die.

When the book ends, and it better not be THE END because there are so many unanswered questions, it is not an annoying cliffhanger. By the last page, everything is perfectly set up for so much more story. So, this better not be a standalone or I will just have to curl into a ball and eat all the Ben and Jerry's in my fridge because I do not want to come back to the real world.

Highly highly highly recommended.

54 of 59 people found the following review helpful.

Author Sabaa Tahir's AN EMBER IN THE ASHES reminds us why we have to always keep the faith

By Cyrus Webb

When all hope seems to be lost will you be able to keep the faith, trust your gut and survive?

That is just one of the questions that author Sabaa Tahir poses in the powerful novel *AN EMBER IN THE ASHES*. We meet Laia, a girl who we are able to see transform as the book progresses from someone who doubts the power within into someone who learns to embrace it.

This is a book about survival, family and what it takes to keep going with all odds seemingly against you. It's hard not to read this book and be inspired, especially because it is written in first person, allowing the reader to take the treacherous journey along with our unlikely heroine and her unlikely hero Elias.

If you are looking for a book that not only reminds you of the importance of never giving up and the reward for staying the course, then this is one you definitely want to add to your reading list.

57 of 63 people found the following review helpful.

An exciting beginning

By Liviania

AN EMBER IN THE ASHES has been getting a massive push from Penguin Random House. The book was a pretty easy sell, for me. I was sold on the Roman Empire-esque setting and the heroine being a spy for the resistance, hiding out as a slave at the school where Martial Empire soldiers are taught.

AN EMBER IN THE ASHES is told between dual points of view. Laia alternates with Elias, a student soldier who plans on deserting right after graduation. I actually found myself more drawn to Elias' point of view. He has a lot going on, because he's been chosen as one of four candidates to be the next emperor. He also has a complicated relationship with his mother, the Commandant, and his best friend Helene, who is also in the running to become emperor. Beside his action-packed storyline, Laia's seems somewhat wan. Her goal is to earn the support she needs to break her brother out of prison. But she happens to be not much as a spy and mostly alternates between getting in trouble and making friends with a fellow slave.

Love triangle haters should avoid *AN EMBER IN THE ASHES*. There are two intersecting triangles: Elias must choose between Helene and Laia, and Laia must choose between Elias and a resistance fighter who barely has enough characterization to be even a faux love interest. I can see why Laia likes Elias: he's not only handsome, but also surprisingly principled and tries to make her life easier when he can. Elias' attraction to Laia actually made me like him less, because it doesn't seem to have much of a reason beyond she looks good in a dress. Given how much of *AN EMBER IN THE ASHES* hinges on their feelings for each other, I wish Elias had been shown being attracted to Laia for things other than her looks.

I do wish more history of the world had been seeded throughout the book. For instance, Laia is a Scholar, an underclass made up of a people the Martials conquered. The name of the people instantly becomes interesting when you learn they're forbidden from learning to read. Do they have tales of knowledge lost? Secret oral traditions? What sort of learning made them famed as Scholars the way Martials are known for fighting with scims? *AN EMBER IN ASHES* focuses almost entirely on Martial life, which does make some sense given that it is set in a Martial school.

Sensitive readers will want to note that in addition to violence there are a large number of rape threats in the story. They make sense in context, but it is very prevalent and a bit wearying how much it gets mentioned. I did enjoy *AN EMBER IN THE ASHES* despite its flaws. It's a very cinematic novel with a compelling hero. I also really liked Helene, who kind of baffles her friend Elias even though he knows not to underestimate her. I'm excited to read the sequel and find out what happens next.

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* "Tahir's deft, polished debut alternates between two very different perspectives on the same brutal world, deepening both in the contrast. In a tale brimming with political intrigue and haunted by supernatural forces, the true tension comes from watching Elias and Laia struggle to decide where their loyalties lie." —Publishers Weekly, starred review

"Tahir's world-building is wonderfully detailed and the setting is an unusual one for fantasy novels. All of her characters, even minor ones, are fully realized...For fans of Game of Thrones and of Melina Marchetta's Finnikin of the Rock." —School Library Journal

"An original, well-constructed fantasy world...truly engaging." —Kirkus Reviews

"An epic fantasy debut about an orphan fighting for her family and a soldier fighting for his freedom. It's a story that's literally burning to be told." —Hypable.com

“First-time novelist Tahir has written an ambitious sword-and-sand adventure story that is notable for its suspense and scope.” —Booklist

“Here's one of the year's most anticipated young-adult debuts.” —io9.com

“I was so engrossed with this book that I missed a connecting flight. If that doesn't convince you to read *An Ember in the Ashes*, I don't know what will. An explosive, heartbreaking, epic debut that will keep you glued to the pages. I hope the world's ready for Sabaa Tahir.” —Marie Lu, New York Times bestselling author of *Legend*

“With *An Ember in the Ashes*, Sabaa Tahir shows us light in the darkness, hope in a world of despair, and the human spirit reaching for greatness in difficult times.” —#1 New York Times bestselling author Brandon Sanderson

“*An Ember in the Ashes* is a spectacular page turner that asks readers to consider how far they'd go to save the ones they love. Sabaa Tahir is the next superstar in young adult fiction and her debut is as cinematic as *Gladiator* and as high-stakes as *Game of Thrones*.”—Holly Goldberg Sloan, New York Times bestselling author of *Counting by 7s*

“A heart-pounding story of love and loss, with the most original world-building I've read all year. Deeply felt and deeply moving, I could not put it down.” —Margaret Stohl, New York Times bestselling co-author of *Beautiful Creatures*

“This electric debut is a pulse-pounding action-packed Romeo and Juliet story in a richly imagined world with a great twist and heroic characters you'll root for and won't stop thinking about.” —Melissa de la Cruz, New York Times bestselling author of *Frozen* and *The Ring and the Crown*

About the Author

Sabaa Tahir grew up in California's Mojave Desert at her family's eighteen-room motel. There, she spent her time devouring fantasy novels, raiding her brother's comic book stash, and playing guitar badly. She began writing *An Ember in the Ashes* while working nights as a newspaper editor. She likes thunderous indie rock, garish socks, and all things nerd. Sabaa currently lives in the San Francisco Bay Area with her family.

For more information, please visit Sabaa at SabaaTahir.com or on Twitter @SabaaTahir.

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