



The Sea-God at Sunrise

G.L. Tysk

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It is 1841. Japanese fisherman Shima and his younger brother, out on a routine fishing expedition, are wrecked on an uninhabited island by a freak typhoon. Their rescue by a passing American whaling ship proves a short-lived miracle when, barred from reentering Japan, the ship heads for the whaling grounds of the South Pacific.

Shima becomes an unwilling passenger in a strange floating world filled with foreign faces, a new language, and a hostile chief mate. But when the reclusive captain suddenly falls ill, Shima and third mate Daniel Ellis stumble upon a secret from his past that brings together their previously isolated worlds.

Inspired by the true story of John Manjiro, one of the first Japanese in America and later interpreter to the shogun, "The Sea-God at Sunrise" is a tale of friendship and forgiveness across two cultures at the height of America's Golden Age of Whaling.

The Sea-God at Sunrise Details

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From Reader Review The Sea-God at Sunrise for online ebook

Patrick Dorsey says

The sea has long been a place of mystery, romance, and adventure for travelers and writers alike. Between vast distance from home, ever-present danger, exotic lands and peoples, and the prospects of wealth and treasure, it's long been an inspiration for fiction to explore themes of loneliness, friendship, duty, and courage in works from Homer to Defoe, Swift to Stevenson, Hemingway to Melville.

And it's in Melville's *MOBY-DICK* that first-time historical author G.L. Tysk found inspiration for her debut novel *THE SEA-GOD AT SUNRISE*.

THE SEA-GOD AT SUNRISE is told in chapters alternating between the perspectives of Shima, a barely-adolescent fisherman from Japan shipwrecked along with his younger brother Takao, and of Ellis, a young mate aboard the whaling ship "Archer." Their stories come together when Ellis and the whaling crew rescue the starving young brothers from slow death on the deserted island they. Plans to return the boys home are thwarted because of Japan's strict isolationism during that time?no foreigners were allowed on Japanese soil, and none who left Japan were allowed to return.

What then, are the boys to do? Welcomed by the ship's crew, they have little choice but to adjust to life as foreigners among the American whalers and join the crew in their voyage and hunts?a prospect the younger Takao embraces and his older brother doubts.

The premise is intriguing. Based loosely on the life of John Manjiro, a Japanese castaway, who, like Shima and his brother, was rescued by an American whaler and eventually went on to travel the world before returning to Japan and earning an important role as translator for the shogun during the Opening of Japan, *THE SEA-GOD AT SUNRISE* held me as I watched the two worlds come together, the boys' story of desperate island survival shifting to a story of loss and struggle aboard ship as they try to define new lives for themselves among a crew facing what are ultimately almost the same struggles, with all seeking their place in the order of things as the ship becomes a microcosm of the much larger world.

What I know about whaling I learned from *MOBY-DICK* and *20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA*—and according to Tysk, most of that was made up—so her well-researched, carefully-crafted sequences of whale hunting and processing were intriguing and instructive. Action, though, is what sets this novel apart from many other sea-faring tales.

Tysk's writing is gripping when the whale hunts commence. Boats slicing over the water in deadly chase behind the enormous whales in their own element, you can smell the sea, feel the spray of saltwater in your eyes, the rise and drop of the hull beneath your feet. You can hear the shouts of the mate over the pounding of your own heart. And you know the icy desperation of impact, of the crash of the beast shattering the planks of your boat, and the cold water swallowing you.

Needless to say, I was held. Honestly, though, the book did begin to flag for me about two-thirds of the way in, the adventure and danger of the earlier chapters giving away to posturing and politics among the crew as troubles develop for them at sea. Fortunately, those parts are short-lived, and the story is soon back on course. Also, because I knew a bit about Manjiro's life, I was a bit disappointed as I realized the novel was to tell only of his literary doppelganger's time aboard the whaler. I was expecting a tale bigger in scale, something paralleling Manjiro's travels that after years would ultimately take him not just home to Japan, but

to its corridors of power. But that's what sequels are for. And I have it on good authority Tysk has one in the works—which I'll be sure to pick up.

A very assured first novel from an author I'll be keeping an eye out for. And you should do the same.

Dianne says

Does the smell of the sea, the rolling waves, or the feel of salt spray on your face make you long to leave the sight of land behind and sail the oceans for an indefinite time? Are you interested in historical maritime fiction, especially as part of a wonderfully written novel? Get ready to live a high sea adventure with **The Sea-God at Sunrise** by G. L. Tysk, it may be safer than the real thing, but just as satisfying!

Let G. L. Tysk take you back to the mid-nineteenth century, when indiscriminate whaling was a booming industry and unrest and possible war between nations and cultures weighed heavily on the horizon. Two young Japanese brothers stranded on an uninhabited island are rescued by an American whaling ship, but the Feudal Japanese Shogun has prohibited foreign ships from entering their ports. What results is a long and eventful journey for both the boys and the crew of the Archer as both cultures learn to shed the ignorance of the unknown and trust in the spirit and honor of an individual, in spite of their differences. From despair to enlightenment, Takao and his brother Shima cross the language and cultural barriers while learning that what they have heard about the foreigners may not be true. Was it fate that put them on that small island that started a journey far greater than they could ever realize?

Told alternately from the point of view of Shima and then Ellis, a young American crew member, Ms. Tysk creates a beautiful patchwork of perception and growing understanding from different cultural viewpoints. Her ability to pull me into the story and the attention she has paid to historical detail is amazing, as page after page, the lives of those on the Archer unfold. Her words flow smoothly, her tone is almost musical at times, from the hard crescendos of tension to the soft tones that mark the gradual changes aboard ship. For Ellis and Shima, as well as Takao, it is a coming of age story as they learn more about themselves through both the eyes of others and their own inner voices. Each wave that crashes, each brutal capture and kill of a whale is told with the same intensely rich style, full of vivid descriptions capturing both the background and the physical actions of the characters with realistic dialogue and the sense of frustration felt at the initial language barriers. You'll feel you are a part of this hard life and you'll also feel the close ties these hardened sailors have to those around them. Well told, well done, educational, enlightening and entertaining! I highly recommend it to historical fiction readers, as well as anyone looking for their next great read-worth leaving your "preferred" genre for!

I received a review copy of **The Sea-God at Sunrise** as part of the author's virtual book tour in exchange for my honest review. This tour stops at Tome Tender October 2, 2013.

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Available at: Amazon / Barnes & Noble

For more reviews check out *Tome Tender's Book Blog* or find us on Facebook.

Dawn says

I received a copy of this book from the author for an honest review.

The Sea-God at Sunrise reads like a classic. It is nautical and historical fiction at its best. G.L.Tysk is knowledgeable of Japanese culture as well as the art of whaling. She takes you on a sea adventure and, even though I know nothing about the sea or whaling, I was able to follow and understand what was going on on the ship.

The cultural barrier between the 2 boys who were rescued and the rest of the crew was related well. I was also impressed with how she portrayed the language barrier at the beginning and the progression of Shima's language skills as the story progressed.

The characters are well developed and you feel like you know the crew members and Shima and Takao. It was interesting to see how my perception of some of the characters changed as the story progressed and I learned more about them.

If you like historical fiction and/or nautical fiction, you will definitely enjoy this book.

Indiebrag says

We are proud to announce that THE SEA-GOD AT SUNRISE by G.L. Tysk is a B.R.A.G. Medallion Honoree. This tells a reader that this book is well worth their time and money!

Karin says

As you can see from my five star rating, I absolutely loved this book. I read the e-book version on my NOOK, and if the thing didn't need to be recharged every now and then, I probably would not have put it down.

This is G.L. Tysk's debut novel. Her research of all things nautical is evident. If you did not know better, you would think it was written by someone who had spent quite a bit of time living aboard a whaling vessel.

What I like most about her writing, is the care she takes in developing her characters. Once introduced to the crew of the Archer, you feel as if you know them. They are well rounded characters; she shows their strengths, their flaws and some peeks into their pasts. Their humanness makes them likable. (even the hardened Mr. Cassock!)

The two young Japanese brothers who come aboard the Archer after being rescued by the Captain and crew make this a story within a story. Their story makes The Sea God at Sunrise more than just another sea tale.

I truly hope we hear more from G.L. Tysk in the future.
Thanks to Christopher for the recommend on this one.

Anne-Rae Vasquez says

The Sea-god at Sunrise by G.L. Tysk

A masterfully written tale of two young Japanese boys, Shima and his litter brother Takao--shipwrecked on an isolated island after a terrible typhoon. Left to die, their story may have ended when the crew of an American whaling ship finds them by chance and takes them on board. Unfortunately it is 1841 and Japan and America are at war which complicates the rescue mission--the boys can no longer land on Japanese soil having now been on board an enemy ship. The boys have no choice but to sail with the Americans to the South Pacific for a whale hunting expedition. Shima resists his rescuers' attempts to help—he was taught that foreigners were devils so he naturally does not trust them and being homesick does not help matters. However, little Takao picks up the English language quickly, having a natural talent for learning dialects even back in their village when pilgrims would pass through. Unlike his older brother, Takao embraces the adventure and the opportunity of being on board a big ship.

The story telling is interesting in that it is told through the eyes of Shima and Takao with the following chapter told in the perspective of Daniel Ellis, third mate continuing consecutively in this fashion through to the ending. It was refreshing in that I saw the whole story in both perspectives-- as a young Japanese stowaway aboard a ship among foreigners who look and speak funny with no chance of going home; and as one of the crew members; you learn about their attitudes about each other, their feelings towards the Japanese, the war and their profession.

Author Tysk brings to the story a true sea adventure. Her words paint in detail the sights, sounds and smells of the ship, the crew. She also describes the whaling industry and the people whose professions and career depend on it. The elaborative detail helped me, someone who knows little about ships or whaling, to understand and learn about what is involved in the profession. I enjoyed following the journey on the ocean with Shima and Takao, Captain Noble, Ellis, Clarke and the others while they encountered many events, some inspirational and others horrific and tragic. A great book for those who enjoy reading epic novels, sea adventures, cultural stories and history. For those interested in learning about the whaling industry, through the eyes of those in the profession, this is definitely a must read.

Jan says

Historical fiction.

In the 1840's two Japanese boys on a fishing boat are stranded on a desert island. The same typhoon damages a New Bedford whaler. The boys are taken on board, but cannot be returned to Japan - they are tainted by contact with outsiders. Inspired by a true story, the conflict of two cultures and the impact of that conflict on boys and crew is compelling.

Rebecca Scaglione says

I received this book from Closed the Cover in exchange for a fair and honest review.

The The Sea-G-d at Sunrise by G. L. Tysk is an adventure story featuring two young Japanese boys who are shipwrecked, and the American whalers who find them.

I personally had a tough time getting into this novel. I enjoyed Shima's tale (about the plight of being shipwrecked and stuck on the whaling ship with people who can't speak your language) more than the story of the American whalers. Part of the reason for this is because I was very much uninterested in the story of the whalers themselves. It's not something that gripped me based on any of my interests.

However, I seem to be alone in my thinking. According to the reviewers on Goodreads and Amazon the book is consistently rating between a 4 and a 5 star review, both from people who have received the book from the author and those who found it of their own accord. This indicates to me that The Sea-G-d at Sunrise is a book you might need multiple opinions of.

Take a look at the reviews on Goodreads, check out the other tour stops, and decide for yourself. Plus, enter the giveaway to win your own copy! (Giveaway onLove at First Book)

If you were stranded on a deserted island, what would you want to have with you?

Brianna C says

4.5 out of 5 stars

received a copy from the author in exchange for an honest review

"The sun was only a sliver on the horizon now, the stars were coming out, the fires leapt into the night, and this ship was our world, a tiny, tiny part of the lives we'd left behind hovering between sea and sky."

I have a soft spot of historical fiction. I love it. I would read it all the time if not for all my other loves of different genres. That said, I am extremely happy I was able to read this and participate in the tour. This is what historical fiction needs to be. It seems so well-written, unique, realistic, gripping, just amazing. You fall for all the characters and by the end, your jaw will drop.

"It is not our place to question the way of the gods, Shima. We in our imperfect wisdom see the world as it is - but they - they see the world as it will be."

Shima and Takao are two Japanese fishermen who end up stranded and then picked up by the American whaling ship. I felt that Shima was the strongest of the characters. He felt to be the most developed and the one you felt the most for. Not only does he have to adjust to this new way of life, culture, and language, he now has to come to terms with what it is to be Japanese and how to balance the two. While it is never expressed exactly how old he is, at the beginning he seems rather young. Throughout the story, you do see him start to grow up. He definitely becomes well-rounded individual.

"It is strange," I said, "that we all spend our days chasing after creatures we cannot see."

Ellis is the other main character throughout this epic adventure. The third mate on the whaling ship, you get to follow his journey from quiet, nice guy to a man who becomes hardened by the events. While still likable, he seems to loose steam about half way through. The main thing he learns is how hard life can be and how you must be careful about your decisions. I did still enjoy his side of the story though.

"I believed in clemency, once," Captain Noble said, at last, "A long time ago, before I learned that the world is a hard place, and those who cannot bear what befalls them, no matter how ill, will be crushed in favor of those who will. There is no clemency, Ellis, only survival."

The supporting cast of characters certainly did add to this story. There are some historical fictions where the additional cast of characters detract from the story. This is not the case. Everyone added a different element to the story to enhance it. They even had a different way of speaking at times. One character would have a different voice from any others.

"Ah, the life of a whaleman, always leaving and never for home."

The only thing that really bothered me was how drawn out it seemed in the middle. I feel it could have been shorter/less repetitive, but once it got back into the swing of things it really came back swinging! The prose was beautiful, and very descriptive (but not too descriptive). I would strongly recommend this to anyone who enjoys historical fiction, but doesn't mind some vivid descriptions about the whaling portions of the story.

This review and more on my blog Listful Booking.

Filipe says

The book was inspired by a true story but doesn't recounts that story.

It tells the (fictional) story of two Nipponese fisherman castaways (a young man and a boy) that are rescued by an American whaling ship, in a time where Japan was closed to the world (1841).

The story is exclusively told by two "points of view" (POV): the japonese young man and an american crew member (third mate).

The language and cultural barrier between the fisherman and the whalers, the whaling activity, the relationship between the crew are very well told and the two distinct POVs improve that exposition.

While reading the book I almost could feel the sea salt taste :-).

It's a hard story as was (and still is) a hard life.

If you like to read sea adventures this is a book to read!

The only lower point for me (a small one) was that in one chapter of Shima (the Nipponese young man) you can "ear" a full american sentence before Shima acknowledged that understanding.

I received this book for free through Goodreads First Reads.

Fiona says

I really want to read this, since it's based on John Manjiro's story.

I'm wondering if it will be similar to Heart of a Samurai.

Ashley says

G.L. Tysk's passion for Japanese history, whaling and nautical fiction are evident in the details in The Sea-God at Sunrise. The meticulous research that went into this novel is impeccable. I remain shocked that not only is this Ms. Tysk's debut novel but it is also self-published.

Shima and his little brother, Takao, find themselves isolated on an island off the coast of Japan after being shipwrecked during a typhoon. A few days have passed and the boys are suffering from dehydration and starvation when they are discovered and rescued by crew members of the American whaling ship, The Archer. Unfortunately, it is 1841 and during the Shogun rule of Japan. Feudal Japan does not allow outsiders to reach their shores and these two Japanese boys are considered tainted and dishonored after being aboard a ship with foreign devils. The young boys, despite their desperate yearning to return to the shores of Japan, are forced to take refuge on The Archer and try to find ways to embrace their new lives.

This novel is unique in that it is told from the perspective of two protagonist characters. There is Shima who is the eldest Japanese fisherman boy and Ellis who is a ship mate aboard the American whaling ship. In a book that is built around the conflict between two cultures and the adjustment of two boys into a new world it is fascinating to be able to read the story from two perspectives. In one chapter we can feel Shima's distrust of the foreigners and his fear over being surrounded by men who look, act and speak differently than him and his brother. In the next chapter we will read the continuation of the story from the perspective of Ellis who is trying to make sense of these two Japanese boys, understand why their country won't allow their return, and break through the cultural barriers to help them adjust. It's an intriguing contrast of cultures and a very enjoyable read. Takao, the younger brother, isn't identified as a protagonist that writes his own chapters of the story but he does remain a central figure. I'm supposing that because of his youth he has an easier time learning the English language and adapting to life aboard The Archer.

All of the characters in The Sea-God at Sunrise are well-developed and likable. Although there is little detail into the history of the characters prior to their whaling life aboard The Archer, Ms. Tysk provides just enough information to provide a general history. Reading through this story it's easy to understand that Cuffee enjoys life at sea, Captain and Cassock have a deeply rooted personal history in which a past tragedy has torn a major rift inside the friendship, Hutch is a compassionate spiritual man who provides moral guidance to the ship and Ellis is a young man trying to find his way on a ship sailing the wild and unpredictable seas.

G.L. Tysk describes, in the author's short biography, that she spent time studying abroad in Japan and was inspired by Herman Melville and his nautical fiction, Moby Dick. While Ms. Tysk's writing style is similar to Melville it is more apparent that she drew great inspiration from Moby Dick and her nautical research. The Sea-God at Sunrise is also loosely based on the true-life story of John Manjiro which is another fascinating

story I encourage you to research. Ms. Tysk wrote with a comfort about the sea and nautical language that would lead you to believe she had spent her life at sea. Her book, her debut novel, is absolute perfection. I recently learned that she is currently working on a sequel to *The Sea-God at Sunrise* and I, for one, cannot wait to read it.

Ashley LaMar
Closed the Cover

Matthew says

For the past 13 years I have lived my life on and around the sea. Being in the Navy is a little different than working on a whaling ship I admit. However, I believe that those things which draw men to the sea are similar regardless of what type of work you do upon the water.

I have been a big fan of nautical fiction including the works of Alexander Kent, Patrick O'Brian, Herman Melville, and others. My shelves are full of good (and bad) nautical works.

This tale was really well written. I was surprised to find out that it was the author's first work. Very well researched and superbly written. I enjoyed how the author alternated chapters between the main characters. It reminded me of *The Grapes of Wrath* in the way it showed the same story from multiple sides.

I enjoyed this book greatly. There are others here who have reviewed this in more detail and you can read their thoughts as well. Suffice it to say if you enjoy maritime history, nautical fiction, historical fiction, whaling, the ocean, coming of age tales, or pretty much just enjoy a good story, then I would recommend this book to you.

I am looking forward to future offerings by this fine writer.

Ailyn says

A great book set in the era where Japanese closed its borders to the world, it is mysterious and fun. As the audience, you will be treated to a world where men are brothers and the ship is their world, it is thrilling to read as the story unfolds, the history of the ships and its crew...

Christopher says

Only 50 pages in, I began having a hard time believing that this was Tysk's first novel. By the midway point, I was already recommending it to friends. Her background bio shows that she's an English Lit major but that doesn't explain the maturity of her writing; she seems to have put out her first work already fully-developed. And I have no idea how she could acquire not merely the "knowledge" of the sea and ships and seamanship and nautical terminology, but she also has demonstrated an "understanding" of it all. I spent a good portion of my life on the water and worked on many different types of ships with all sorts of different people in many different parts of the world (including all of the places mentioned in this book save for New Bedford) and I can assuredly say Tysk has nailed it. It's something that can't be faked.

The greatest compliment I think I can pay to Tysk here is to mention that she writes with great masculinity, and this is vital to this type of sea-writing. It's not a wistful reminiscence upon the beach or a poetic memoir of the beauties of the deep. It is a very realistic tale of survival - body, mind, and soul - under the most trying conditions and she reveals it all to be quite beautiful and triumphant despite the loneliness and sadness that pervades it. Tysk lists Melville as her inspiration and she certainly weaves an exciting and fantastic yarn, but her prose is akin much more to Conrad, I think.

So, another self-published author has left me jealous and miffed. Why Tysk didn't shop this until it was accepted by a publisher, I don't know. It's as good or better as anything out there. And I've been following her social media and why she hasn't been marketing more and "pushing" sales for this, I don't know. If I'd accomplished what she's done in *The Sea-God at Sunrise*, I'd be shouting it from the rooftops. Instead, she seems to have done something remarkable and simply set it quietly aside as a monument to her talent. I hope not, I'd love to read more from her and would love to live some more adventure with the characters in her book.

4 rock-solid stars. On my list of the ten best books I read in 2012.
