



The Passenger

F.R. Tallis

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1941. A German submarine, U-471, patrols the stormy inhospitable waters of the North Atlantic. It is commanded by Siegfried Lorenz, a maverick SS officer who does not believe in the war he is bound by duty and honor to fight in.

U-471 receives a triple-encoded message with instructions to collect two prisoners from a vessel located off the Icelandic coast and transport them to the base at Brest—and a British submarine commander, Sutherland, and a Norwegian academic, Professor Bjornar Grimstad, are taken on board. Contact between the prisoners and Lorenz has been forbidden, and it transpires that this special mission has been ordered by an unknown source, high up in the SS. It is rumored that Grimstad is working on a secret weapon that could change the course of the war . . .

Then, Sutherland goes rogue, and a series of shocking, brutal events occur. In the aftermath, disturbing things start happening on the boat. It seems that a lethal, supernatural force is stalking the crew, wrestling with Lorenz for control. A thousand feet under the dark, icy waves, it doesn't matter how loud you scream...

The Passenger Details

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Author : F.R. Tallis

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From Reader Review The Passenger for online ebook

Cats of Ulthar February Weird Fiction says

Review: THE PASSENGER by F. R. Tallis

I expected a great new novel from the author of VOICES, and THE PASSENGER is exactly that! A riveting, non-stop, historical thrill ride, the framework is the perils and progress of an early World War II German U-boat, against British shipping, both military and mercantile. (This period is prior to American entry against the Axis Powers.) On multiple levels, THE PASSENGER is stunning. The horrors of war, the loss of life (demonstrated both individually and multiply), the cost to the populace at home (in this case, both the German people, and the citizens of Occupied France), are all so vividly expressed that this novel could be taken as anti-war.

Then there are so many characters so excellently delineated (quite understandable as the author is a clinical psychologist), and this includes many who are of secondary and tertiary importance.

The protagonist (human) is Commander Siegfried Lorenz, commanding the unlucky U-330. He is truly exceptional: a military man who rules with a light hand, and quotes poetry in his war diary (commander's log). German Nationalism and the Reich are protagonists also, in a broader sense, as is the Nazi occultism, which by cause and effect directly bears on the imminent supernatural and paranormal events impacting and plaguing the feckless U-boat.

I seldom think of a book in a movie context, but this novel would be a superb and powerfully impacting film (emotionally, psychologically, and visually). Definitely a Best of 2016.

Albert says

The Passenger is a well written novel by F.R. Tallis that unfortunately suffers from a split personality. Is it a horror genre ghost story with a Gothic theme set in World War II aboard a German U-boat? Or is it a well written novel of the life and death aboard a German U-boat during World War II that just might have a malevolent ghost hanging around?

It is 1941 and the German U-Boat, U-471, patrols the waters of the North Atlantic. It's Captain, Siegfried Lorenz, receives an encoded message to pick up two prisoners off the Icelandic coast and transport them to the base at Brest. The prisoners, a British submarine commander and a Norwegian Professor, are picked up and the crew and Captain Lorenz are forbidden to have any contact with them. This is a special mission ordered from high up the chain of command of the SS. The rumor is that the Professor is working on a secret weapon, one that could change the course of the war. But the British sub commander has different ideas and gets his hands on a weapon and in the aftermath, both prisoners lay dead.

After the events that result in the brutal and violent deaths of the prisoners, strange and disturbing things began to happen aboard the submarine. Equipment malfunctions without reason and the crew begin to see apparitions in the dark and cramped quarters. Now Captain Lorenz is in a battle for the lives of his crew against a force he cannot begin to comprehend.

The Passenger is a good book. It really is and if it was just written about the lives of the crew at war and how they dealt with existence aboard the submarine. It would have been really great. If it had been written as a ghost story. A Gothic tale of horror with the haunted house being trapped inside the shell of the German U-boat beneath the ocean. That probably would have been pretty great too. But instead it tried to become a blend of the two and in doing so it fails on both counts.

Very little is explained about the two prisoners brought on board the U-boat and since they are integral to the foundation of the ghost story it seems a misstep not to explain in more detail how they came to be and how they were able to transform one of them into the haunting.

There is a scene in the book, where after the U-boat sinks a ship, it rises to the surface to see the survivors struggling for safety aboard life rafts. Captain Lorenz walks out on his submarine and gives the nearest raft supplies of food and water, telling them to stay where they are and a rescue ship will pass by in a day or so. It is a powerful and striking moment in war time story telling. That the Captain of the U-boat that just sunk the ship would offer the survivors supplies and aid. The depth of the character and humanity that is infused is so well done, that to have him then turn around and walk back to enter his boat, only to be enshrouded in fog and encounter an apparition that does nothing but stand there, seems an intrusion in the story telling.

The Passenger is a good book that simply could not make up its mind what kind of book it was.

Bob Milne says

I don't know what it is about them, but submarines have always fascinated me. I'm not sure if it's their clandestine nature, their inherent claustrophobia, or the impending sense of doom, but there's a massive (fictional) appeal there for me. I remember staying up way too late to watch *Das Boot* as a child, and I recall being quite content to sit alone in a nearly empty theater to enjoy *The Hunt for Red October*, but I think it was Clive Cussler who sealed the fascination for me with *Raise the Titanic*.

Given all that, *The Passenger: A Novel* would have caught my eye regardless, but toss a Gothic sort of ghost story into the mix and there was no way I could pass it by. To his credit, F.R. Tallis uses the ghost story element sparingly, allowing the real horror of submarine warfare to carry most of the plot, but there's an underlying thread of anxiety and superstition that magnifies the sense of dread throughout. It's a subtle sort of supernatural flavor, one that allows for a lot of doubt as to what's really going on. The whole story is carefully crafted so as to never come right out and declare that there are ghosts on board or that the boat is really cursed, leaving us to wonder what's real and what's imagined.

It's a small cast of characters who carry the story here, and they're all well-developed. Not necessarily the most likable of men, but admirable in their own way. Even though these are German sailors counting the tonnage of allied ships they've sunk, there's a humanity to them . . . and even a sense of mercy for their victims. In fact, the futility of war and the psychological cost is a huge part of the horror here, adding yet another layer to the story. With the exception of a prolonged section of the book where the men are on furlough with the ship in dry dock, it's a fast pasted novel that races from one near-disaster to the next. It

seems like everything that can go wrong for them does, and there were more than a few times I didn't expect the U-330 to rise again.

Readers looking for a more straightforward horror story are likely to be turned off by the amount of detail surrounding submarine warfare, maintenance, and survival, but it's those elements that drive the story home. Tallis makes us share the dread, the fear, and the hopelessness of the situation on multiple occasions, until we're almost wishing he'd wave it all away with a ghostly explanation and give them men their rest. Who and what *The Passenger* may be is, of course, the mystery that drives the novel, providing Kapitänleutnant Siegfried Lorenz with reasons to question both his superiors and himself. As much as part of me was hoping for a bit more of the supernatural going into it, I think the balance here is perfect, with the subtlety making for a much more effective story.

Originally reviewed at Beauty in Ruins

Disclaimer: I received a complimentary ARC of this title from the publisher in exchange for review consideration. This does not in any way affect the honesty or sincerity of my review.

Iain says

F R Tallis was first known as Frank Tallis for a series of well-researched and intriguing psychiatrist detective novels set in Vienna. He is now better-known for horror writing, in which he ruthlessly applies these skills and knowledge to grim effect. *The Sleep Room* and *The Voices* were good, *The Forbidden* was outstanding, but *The Passenger* plunges the reader to new depths of terror.

The Passenger is a temporary Royal Navy captive on a WW2 U-boat diverted from commerce-raiding duties. The captain and crew of U-330 will seem familiar to anyone who's read or watched 'Das Boot' and the submarine (with a huge weight of historical and technical research) is as much of a character to the reader and the superstitious submariners. The vivid setting of steel, sea and skies and the struggles of the crew dominate most of the book – 3 in 4 German submariners were lost at sea. But *The Passenger* lingers throughout the two patrols, as tension increases through repeated dangers and mishaps, the harmony of the crew disturbed by the overt Nazi presence of a propaganda journalist on the second voyage.

The supernatural presence is subdued but real enough, magnified in the fears of the submariners. But that's enough of a description without risk of spoiling the plot. There's a rich seam of extreme elements and maritime horror, Dan Simmons (*The Terror*) and Michelle Paver (*Thin Air*, *Dark Matter*) and this book continues that tradition.

2016 has been a great year for horror writing and this is close to the top of the list, certainly in a top three with Ramsey Campbell's *The Searching Dead* and Paul Tremblay's *Disappearance at Devil's Rock*.

Keith CARTER says

This is a very, very good book. The book is set onboard the German u-boat U-330 patrolling the north Atlantic and Mr Tallis creates an atmosphere of claustrophobia extreme cold and more importantly extreme creeping fear with extraordinary skill. Even though this is a novel the undoubted bravery of the men on both sides of the second world war goes without saying. Recommended reading. 5*

Rachel says

I love horror books set in a realistic historical setting. I guess I was hoping for a teensie bit more, but overall I was satisfied.

I really enjoyed Tallis's writing-style and I'll be on the look-out for more of his work.

Bonnie says

The passenger takes place in 1941 under the wartime seas of the North Atlantic. A German submarine patrols the north Atlantic commanded by Siegfried Lorenz, a naval officer who does not believe in the war he is about to face. U-330 receives a triple-encoded message with instructions to collect two prisoners from a vessel located off the Icelandic coast--a British submarine commander named Sutherland and a Norwegian academic, Professor Bjornar Grimstrad. and transport the to a base at Brest. Any contact between the prisoners and Lorenz has been forbidden. This special mission has been ordered by an unknown source, high up in the SS. It is rumored that

Grimstad is working on a secret weapon that would change the course of the war. Sutherland goes rogue and a series of brutal events occur. Disturbing things start happening on the boat and the novel takes a supernatural turn and it seems a supernatural force is stalking the crew.

Carol says

It's a good story and the events that unfold will leave the reader guessing about the two "passengers". I found this to not be actually about a supernatural happening but a much more subtle and intriguing story that focuses more on the boat's crew and the psychological stresses of war...especially a war that you are confined in a "tin can" far below the ocean surface. I would have enjoyed the book more if there had been more focus on the supernatural element. Not a bad book by any means and well worth the time to read it...just don't expect any ghost of ghoulies to appear. This is also on DVD under the title **U-471**

Magdalena aka A Bookaholic Swede says

The year is 1941 and a German submarine, U471, patrons North Atlantic when a triple-encoded message reaches its commander Siegfried Lorenz. They are to collect two prisoners from a vessel located off the Icelandic coast and transport them to the base at Brest. The prisoners are British submarine commander,

Sutherland, and a Norwegian academic, Professor Bjornar Grimstad. But after the prisoners have boarded U471 doesn't it take long before Sutherland goes rogue...

I will not give away much of the plot since I don't want to spoil the book for anyone. But there are happenings on the submarine after the two prisoners have left the submarine that seems supernatural. It's almost like the vessel is cursed. And, on the paper that sounds like a very intriguing idea. But unfortunately, the story wasn't that interesting to read. I had some real problem with the story, I was just not that interested in the happenings in the submarine and often I felt my focus shift while I read the book.

But there were moments when the book was good. For instance, I liked the part when Siegfried Lorenz was on shore leave and you get to know him and his family more. There were also moments on the submarine that I liked when you could feel the danger they were in. But the paranormal stuff, it just didn't work out (not until the very end that was good). Personally, I was disappointed over the lack of suspense. I just never felt that the paranormal events onboard were that interesting. I would have preferred the book without that and just read about its crew and its missions.

I often thought while I read the book that this would have worked so much better as a movie than book. Then you can add suspenseful music and really bring forth the claustrophobic feeling in the submarine. But, if it is to be a movie do I want Thomas Kretschmann to play Siegfried Lorenz. I may have imagined him in the role during the reading...

2.5 stars

I want to thank the publisher for proving me with a free copy through Edelweiss for an honest review!

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Simon says

I really wanted to love this book, *The Forbidden* and *The Sleep Room* are both excellent but this isn't as good. The supernatural element didn't work for me it felt like it was shoehorned in amongst the many explosions, faulty equipment and mouldy food. I did love the character of Lorenz, definitely the best thing about the book.

Sharon says

Pegasus Books and NetGalley provided me with an electronic copy of this book, in exchange for an honest review.

This World War II historical fiction involves U boat U330, whereas Captain Siegfried Lorenz is asked by the SS to transport two prisoners to Brest, France. Without question, the Captain allowed those individuals on board: British naval officer Lieutenant Commander Lawrence Sutherland and Professor Bjornar Grimstad, a Norwegian academic. For reasons unknown to any on board, Sutherland gets ahold of a pistol, shoots himself, and the Norwegian. Soon after, supernatural forces seem to be at play on the U boat, which has

disastrous effects on the crew.

The author did a great job of setting the scene, but I found the focus was too much on the daily operations of the U boat and not enough on the supernatural elements stalking it. I found it hard to forge a connection to the main character, Captain Siegfried Lorenz and, by the end of the book, I did not feel like I had experienced anything remotely like a suspense or horror. As a World War II historical fiction, not enough background was given to anchor the story to the time period. With such a unique premise, I had high hopes for this novel that, unfortunately, were not realized.

John Wiltshire says

I often ask myself in exasperated tones when I find books almost impossible, "Is it just me?" implying, of course, that it isn't and it's the fault of the writer. But this time I might have admit that it *is* just me--or Christmas in Buckland-in-the-Vale anyway. It's almost impossible to read here. Only something really, really gripping would compete with the endless discussions of which day the rubbish bags need to go out, and whether it's blue or black this week.

Unfortunately, this book isn't it. It's quite a detailed and fascinating account of life in a submarine during the War (ghastly, actually). Personally, I would think the conditions on board were bad enough without adding a ghost. It's just a bit too detailed and stilted for me. I need more horror to outdo the Devon recycling minutiae. I'll try to finish and update...

Well, I finished this quicker than I expected and I'm glad I stuck with it. The second half is a more gripping account of a patrol to the far northern oceans and conditions on board are absolutely horrendous. I personally didn't need anything supernatural in this book. It just didn't work and seemed shoehorned into an already packed plot. If you are into submarine warfare or WWII stories, then I recommend this. Horror fans? Not so much.

Mark Hodder says

When you read the description of this novel you'd be forgiven for thinking it might be a submarine-based supernatural equivalent of ALIEN or THE THING. It isn't. This is a much more subtle and intriguing story that spends more time with the U-boat's crew and with the psychological and physical stresses of war than it does with its more eerie elements. That is by no means a bad thing. Tallis is a superb writer, and so brilliantly captures the claustrophobia and discomfort felt by the crew that I was immediately hooked and would have gladly read on even if there were nothing more involved. There is, however, something more, and when it intrudes into the reality of the tale, it does so to great creepy effect. It's a rare book that can send chills up my spine. This is one of them. I loved every page of it.

Reading is my Escape says

Read by flashlight (booklight)

This is why I chose to read this book (from the book flap):

The new supernatural thrill from F.R. Tallis, who takes his readers under the wartime seas of the stormy north Atlantic in 1941. Where not all those on board are invited...

... disturbing things start happening on the boat. It seems that a lethal, supernatural force is stalking the crew, wrestling with Lorenz for control. Far under the dark, icy waves, it doesn't matter how loud you scream...

Lorenz is the captain of a U-330 Nazi submarine. He doesn't believe in the war and is kind of a maverick who only follows the rules when he must. An unexpected event leads to a death on the sub. The crew is generally superstitious to start with and this doesn't help. Afterwards, strange events begin happening that some attribute to ghostly intervention.

Granted, being on a sub and sinking towards the bottom would be incredibly frightening. I would never want to travel on a sub in the best conditions and the conditions of war are far from ideal. But, I was looking to be scared by supernatural things, not realistic things. The book is well written and interesting, but it wasn't scary. I read it quickly, mostly because I wanted to get through it.

Recommended to:

Fans of realistic or historical ghost stories.

Jackie Jameson says

Got about a third of the way through and gave up. I don't like war stories or submarines. The promised paranormal/ghost story never really materializes; I sneak peaked through to the end-and if there was a payoff, the writing just wasn't grabbing me enough to make me hold on for it. I'd read his "The Voices" and it was good and spooky and English-y. Will try another of his on the basis of that, but did not care for "The Passenger."
