



The Beach at Galle Road: Stories from Sri Lanka

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When rumors of civil war between the ruling Sinhalese and the Tamils in the northern sector of Sri Lanka reach those who live in the south, somehow it seems not to be happening in their own country. At least not until Janaki's sister, Lakshmi—now a refugee whose husband, a Tamil, has disappeared—comes back to live with her family. And when Sam, an American Peace Corps worker who boards with Janaki's family, falls in love with one of his students, a young girl from the north, he, too, becomes acutely aware of the dangers that exist for any- one who gets drawn into the conflict, however marginally.

Skillfully weaving together the stories of these and other intersecting lives, *The Beach at Galle Road* explores themes of memory and identity amid the consequences of the Sri Lankan civil war. From different points of view, across generations and geographies, it pits the destructive power of war against the resilient power of family, individual will, and the act of storytelling itself.

The Beach at Galle Road: Stories from Sri Lanka Details

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Author : Joanna Luloff

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From Reader Review The Beach at Galle Road: Stories from Sri Lanka for online ebook

Robin Yacovetta says

My Mom bought this book for me shortly after I came back from a trip to Sri Lanka. She does a wonderful job of taking a minor character from one chapter, then making her the main character in the following chapter, then repeating the pattern. Very creative but I still left wanting more....since each character is never fully developed.

Shan says

This collection is outstanding. I loved how we get to revisit different characters from various perspectives -- people pop in and out of each other's stories, sometimes never to be seen again, sometimes to return later where you least expect them. There's a building sense of horror as the war, far away from some, eventually finds every character and changes her or him in some way.

WanderShopper says

A collection of short stories woven together with a common character, sometimes a few more, "The Beach at Galle Road" gives voice to experiences in Sri Lanka during its civil war. Melancholy and madness hang over many of the characters including the westerners there to teach and do aid work. Perhaps the impact of the shifting people prevents you from becoming too attached to anyone as the book accelerates its pace toward its tragic end.

Sarah says

wow I actually read this book twice in 2 weeks, because I didnt not see it coming until it was too late. Reading it over again, with the knowledge of the ending, made the story that much more heart wrenching. Its quite valuable in the fact that it does point out a fact which most of us have ignored or forgotten in the genocide of 2009, but the war happened in Colombo and other places, not just Jafna and the north. But, it is a story of lives, joined together, and the fall is devastating. Its crazy and very sad but not melodramatic and doesnt pull at your heartstrings, but damn, the fall is hard and it hurts, but there is a very tiny glimmer of hope at the end. Excellent book, very good.

Patty Hanahoe-Dosch says

Excellent stories! She depicts life in Sri Lanka beautifully, but also expresses what life in a war zone is like, especially for foreigners living at the edge of it, looking in.

J. Whitley says

Luloff is a great storyteller. She weaves several stories of Sri Lankan families together that show the complexities of a country being torn by war. The stories with international volunteers give us glimpses into the challenges, mixed emotions or intentions that may motivate individuals who go into countries torn by civil war.

Cheryl Scaccio says

This is a beautiful, atmospheric collection of interconnected stories set in Sri Lanka. I was inspired to request the book because I had a friend from a foreign service family who was born and raised all over Asia. When I asked her what her favorite country was she said Sri Lanka without hesitation, even though the civil war was raging. I knew almost nothing of the country besides seeing the movie *The Terrorist*, which I recommend. This is not a book that propels you along, but each story grabs you in its own way. The stories center on the inner voices of ordinary people, both foreign and domestic, and as such create an intimate perspective of everyday lives on the verge of seismic change. I would say take a long afternoon and let yourself be immersed in this exotic, hopeful and tragic world.

Koby says

This book portrays in lush detail the world of Sri Lanka during the civil war, but may fall short of describing some of the violence.

Galle Road is a collection of short stories jumping between characters and crisscrossing the entire island nation, and all fronts of the war are covered. However, there is never a breakout into full violence. Instead, Luloff introduces characters on the brink of war, living in angst and fear of what may happen to them or their loved ones. Both native and foreign perspectives are considered, reflecting the author's history as a Peace Corps worker.

The prose is at its best when Ms. Luloff details the world around the characters, which she does well with frequency. If you're looking for a book about war, this isn't the one for you. However, if you're looking for a book about what war does to a nation, then this is a reasonable jumpoff point.

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(I try not to promote other novels in reviews, but I personally believe that Nayomi Munaweera's *Island of A Thousand Mirrors* does a better job of portraying the Sri Lankan Civil War)

Hina Ahmed says

This book had a very realistic set of characters. There was no black and white and the author did a great job at holding back her political views.

I found the concept of interconnected stories to be very clever and interesting.

This book had a large number of characters, from a middle aged Peace Corp worker to a Sri Lankan school girl, it had many perspectives. So, you are bound to relate to someone.

Trudy Lewis says

Wisdom, discernment, unity, and a surprising asymmetrical form. Joanna is a former student and it's great to see her work getting such critical acclaim.

Diane S ? says

I have not read anything set in Sri Lanka before, nor knew anything about the Civil War that raged in their country from 1983 to 2009. This novel does a wonderful job of highlighting the effects of this war, and on all different people: from Peace Corp workers, to volunteers who teach, families in the South who are away from the main action and the people in the North who are directly impacted. These linking stories are narrated each in a different voice and a different viewpoint, but always carrying over a character from the previous story. A mother who is afraid her son will be taken to join the military, a wife who cannot find her missing husband and many others. There are no graphic scenes of violence, just quiet contemplations of war, relationships and family. Reading this novel is like reading about real people, people one would know, in real situations, highlighting the stamina of individuals regardless of the situations in which they find themselves. I believe this is another first time novelist nbt one cannot tell that this is so from reading this novel. Very well done.

LindaJ^ says

These 13 stories are set in Sri Lanka during that country's civil war that took place, I believe, in the 1990's. I admit to knowing nothing about Sri Lanka, let alone its civil war. But war is war and there are universals that play out in this book. And because it is civil war, it divides families and neighbors. The stories reminded me of some that I heard from locals when I visited the countries that used to form Yugoslavia.

These stories are interconnected in that one or more characters in one story show up in another story. Sometimes it is a minor character who then has a major role or vice versa. The stories are mostly about the lives of individuals and families and about Peace Corps volunteers who work in Sri Lanka. There is one story about an American woman who falls in neither category. There are a number of themes that run through the stories, but I was especially struck by the theme of loss and all the different kinds of loss there are.

The most poignant stories for me were those at the end that concern the devastation of one family and friends of the family as a result of the civil war. They are not stories about the fighting, but about the impact of the war on the lives of the people in the country. Once again I was reminded of the horror of war and how those who suffer the most are not those who decide to fight.

Mike Davis says

I find it interesting to read novels set in different places in the world. This one contains a group of individual

biographies of fictional characters set in Sri Lanka amid pressures of civil war. Normally I don't tend to read what might be called "collections" of short stories, but I found this an interesting and captivating look at Luloff's characters. The last characters are somewhat tragic, but the message is clear and revenge can be somewhat sweet in its own way.

This book was a copy sent by the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

Annette Mardis says

Imagine living in a place where children wade into a river to recover their mothers' bodies as they float by. Where teenagers kill themselves by drinking lye.

Where other desperate, homeless girls become suicide bombers.

Where little brothers of 16 leave without a goodbye to join the rebel forces and return home only as ghostly visitors.

That is the civil-war-torn Sri Lanka that former Peace Corps volunteer Luloff chronicles in her book debut, a connected series of stories about life, love, grace, friendship, brutality and death among the ruling Sinhalese and the minority Tamils.

The Sri Lanka of Luloff's experience is a land of tea estates and rice paddies; a caste-based society where making a good marriage match is vital, as are keeping a tidy home, excelling at school, being modest and not shaming one's family.

As a glimpse at a faraway culture, the stories are interesting reading, although the awkward social dynamics get a little old as mostly females — young, old and in between — watch every word and gesture in a way that seems trivial to those of us living fast-paced, high-technology lifestyles.

But even the American teachers and aid workers in "Galle Road" are filled with angst, mostly about fitting in, finding themselves and keeping loved ones back home off their backs.

"It took me a long time to start writing the stories I brought home with me from Sri Lanka," Luloff, a Peace Corps volunteer there from 1996-98, says in a publicity release. "I asked myself a lot of questions. What voices were politically and ethically appropriate for me to take on? What points of view should these stories be told from? Where in these stories was I and the other volunteers and aid workers I met during my time there?

"When I began writing this book, I crafted individual discrete stories that stood on their own with complete narrative arcs. But as I moved forward with the narratives, I realized that certain characters refused to stay put, and a conversation among the stories began to take place."

As a slice of life, such a construction works. But there is an abruptness in the transition between the stories that may frustrate readers. It's also disconcerting that many of the characters are simply dropped just when a reader may start to care about them.

Of those whose fates readers do learn, the resolutions are not pleasant.

The moral, of course, is that war does not lend itself to happy endings.

Jennifer says

I was interested in this book because when we were in graduate school we had neighbors who were refugees from Sri Lanka. They never talked much about the specifics, but we knew that they felt they could not go back. We became friends through their little daughter who thought I looked like her Aunt and so she always

called me Auntie.

This collection of short stories is mostly about average families living in Sri Lanka and how their lives are torn apart by the war. There are occasional stories about Westerners who are in Sri Lanka as English teachers or Red Cross workers. When the stories intersect, there is a sense of the tension between East and West and a sense that the Westerners don't quite understand Sri Lanka or the conflict. The stories are engaging and well written. The characters are believable and interesting. In the end, however, I still felt that there was a significant disconnect in regards to the war. The stories only skirt around the conflict and never really deal with it at all. Maybe that was the point, to show the disconnect, but I only felt the lack of completion.
