



*Paradise Revisited* - review by Susan Statham

*Paradise Revisited* by Shane Joseph is a collection of short stories united by time and place. The time is the 1970's and 80's. The place is "the pearl of the Indian Ocean," Sri Lanka, famed for its natural beauty. The lush descriptions of that beauty put one in mind of a heaven on earth - "rolling hills and majestic green mara, red flowered flamboyant and purple flowering jacaranda trees spreading their branches and fragrances on the edges of a dozen waterfalls." His prose is made more powerful as Joseph deftly contrasts the country's natural beauty with the destruction wrought by human conflict as Sri Lanka

steps ever closer to civil war.

Individual characters such as the wily Bandu, in 'Nombera Eka' is a man without a conscience - a tout courting his tourists from a luxury beach resort - a victim creating victims. In 'Rebel of Lost Causes,' Joseph takes the reader to Kotte where the contrasts continue - the shanty town and the affluent suburbs, the educated boy and the street urchin. As the lives of these boys rise and fall the reader would be wise to fasten his seatbelt for the unexpected twists that keep the pages turning.

'A Lie Oft Repeated' reveals a young man losing his innocence while gaining a family, but in 'Survivor' a family is torn apart by greed and then reunited by faith. The boy in 'Paradise Revisited' sees much, understands little and grows up in the shadows of lies.

'Inheritance' features three siblings who only begin to grow up because of the wisdom of a father who for most of their lives was too busy to offer them what they needed. War puts an end to many lives, erodes the human spirit and kills the truth. But in 'Uphill or Down,' the final story in *Paradise Revisited*, Joseph writes a way to keep truth alive.

(Susan Statham is the author of *The Painter's Craft* – a mystery set around an artist's studio in Toronto)