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Mystery

Eastward in Eden
Terence Faherty
The Mystery Company
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A truly good, cozy mystery, if one doesn't mind death by machete, crafted by a maestro of character, setting, and narrative.

Owen Keane, failed seminarian and amateur detective, initially rejects a suggestion from a former teacher, Brother Dennis Feeney, to travel to Kenya and learn what's amiss with Keane's old classmate, Father Philip Swickard, whose recent communications are unsettling. Keane soon, however, finds himself in Kenya, flying to the village where Swickard's mission is located. In this intelligent thriller, Keane confronts spiritual confusion, corruption, tribal conflict, and a grisly murder.

Set in 1997, Faherty's eighth in his Owen Keane series proves he hasn't lost his touch. Owen Keane is a flawed hero, depressed over his last case—one ending in a woman's suicide—near suicidal, even considering Kenya a chance to put himself in harm's way without interference. In this insightful portrayal of a person haunted by self-imposed guilt, Faherty draws Keane as someone who wouldn't mind if a stray buffalo or a random mugging ended his troubled life.

Keane discovers that the valley's people face violence from a plot to drive farmers off their land, and interesting characters come into play in mysteries both spiritual and practical. Father Swickard loses a possible postulant to Mugo, a Gandhi-like mystic and enemy of the church. The area's ethnic peace is threatened by Wauki, who claims to be the reincarnation of a legendary Nihuru chief. Faherty makes Mugo, despite his small part in the narrative, the more believable character, but Wauki, more central to the story because of his apparent claim on tribal land, is far less substantial.

Wauki is murdered on Father Swickard's doorstep, and the priest is jailed as perpetrator, but Faherty's novel isn't page upon page of violence. Instead there is dramatic tension as

Faherty draws Keane as a man confronting his own fears and guilt as he attempts to prove his friend innocent in a land and among people most unfamiliar. Guided by a mission boy, Keane slowly uncovers secrets—and the murderer—as he searches through connections leading back to the bloody Mau Mau rebellion, and to his own acceptance of his place in the world.

Gary Presley