

Mission - an African novel set in Kenya by Philip Spires

By Philip Spires

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Mission is an African novel set in 1970s Kenya by Philip Spires, published by Libros International. It deals with the concept of identity, seen through filters of poverty, religion, politics and, underpinning everything, justice.

Mission is set in mid-1970s Kenya. Five characters, a priest, a politician, a teacher, a school graduate and a retired army officer see a series of events from their own perspectives and thus respond differently to one particular event. The central chapter is thirty years later and is set in London to offer a perspective on how lives change. The novel deals with the concept of identity, seen through filters of poverty, religion, politics and, underpinning everything, an idea of justice, a continuum within which each character is seen to pursue some personal mission.

Michael, a missionary priest in Kenya, has just killed Munyasya, a retired army officer. It might have been an accident, but Mulonzya, a politician resentful of the power of foreign churches, tries to exploit the tragedy for his own ends. Boniface, a young church worker, and his wife, Josephine, have just lost their child. They did not make it to the hospital in time, possibly because Michael made a detour to retrieve a letter from the Mission, a letter from Janet, a former volunteer teacher who was the priest's neighbour for two years. It is Munyasya who has the last laugh, however, when he reveals that he was probably in control of events all along. Thirty years on, the same characters find their lives still influenced by his memory.

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