



# One Blood

*Graeme Kent*

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Once again, Ben Kella has his hands full. A sergeant in the Solomon Islands Police Force, as well as an *aofia*, a hereditary spiritual peacekeeper of the Lau people, he's called to investigate acts of sabotage that threaten the local operations of a powerful international logging company.

Meanwhile, Sister Conchita, a young nun with a flair for detection, has been forced to assume command of a run-down mission in the lush Western District of the Solomon Islands. When an American tourist is murdered in the mission church, she and Kella join forces to uncover the links between these goings-on and a sudden upsurge of interest in John F. Kennedy, who was once a wartime U.S. naval officer in the area but now, in 1960, thousands of miles away, about to become the thirty-fifth American President. Set in one of the most beautiful areas of the South Pacific, *One Blood* is the second entry in an exciting new series.

## One Blood Details

Date : Published February 7th 2012 by Soho Crime (first published January 1st 2012)

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Author : Graeme Kent

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## From Reader Review *One Blood* for online ebook

### Suspense Magazine says

Graeme Kent's new novel, the second featuring Sister Conchita and Police Sergeant Kella set in the Solomon Islands, reflects his love of the lore and culture of the islands, where he served as head of the BBC Schools broadcasting for eight years.

It's 1960 and the Solomons are becoming a tourist destination, though it's not long since headhunters went on raiding parties and even shorter—seventeen years—from when the islands were liberated from the Japanese during World War II. Sister Conchita has been appointed as the temporary head of a mission school and convent on Marakosi in the western region of the Solomons. She pushes the three old nuns of the convent into having an open house, which is attended by almost everyone in the area. During the open house, she meets an odd American tourist named Ed Blamire who enquires about sanctuary within the mission. A short time later, Blamire is found dead.

Sergeant Kella is a man of the modern world yet is grounded in his tribal heritage. He's educated with degrees from universities in both Australia and England, but he is also an aofia, a justice bringer and holy man. He's dispatched to the western Solomons as well, tasked with finding out who's trying to sabotage a logging operation on one of the islands.

Kella senses that his investigation is somehow connected with the death of Blamire. There are however, other players in the game, including a beautiful young island woman with dreams of political power, a former boxer and hereditary chief who's always looking for ways to make money, and three tourists who are very interested in an incident during the war when a Japanese destroyer sank a PT boat under the command of John F. Kennedy, who's now running for the US presidency.

It's Sister Conchita though, who may hold the key to unraveling the mystery.

Kent's depth of knowledge of the Solomons is displayed throughout the book. It's part travelogue, part history lesson, all wrapped together in a very satisfying mystery.

Reviewed by David Ingram for Suspense Magazine

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### Josie says

I do love this series.

I read the first book in the series for last year's 666 shortly after spending a few weeks in the capital of the Solomon Islands, Honiara.

The 2nd book was no disappointment, and I enjoyed getting back into the Kella and Conchita duo - they really are great!

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### Kristen says

Between the easy-to-read prose, the clever plot, and the intriguing characters, *One Blood* feels like a solid

new offering in a long line-up of mysteries featuring Sister Conchita and Sergeant Kella. I was surprised to see it's only the second.

Kella is on the Solomon Islands Police Force in 1960. He's caught between whitey's culture and his own island culture, both a cop and an *aofia*, that is a hereditary spiritual peacekeeper. While it's true that an exotic location and a cop or detective caught between two cultures is a well-worn set-up in the mystery genre, it's also true that it's often used because it can work really well. Kent makes it work, especially with the addition of the feisty Sister Conchita into the mix. Sister Conchita is the new leader of a mission that's become inward rather than outward looking, and she's got to shake up three elderly nuns who would prefer things stay the same.

Sergeant Kella is investigating sabotage at a logging camp, while Sister Conchita wants to know the truth about the death of an American who died suspiciously at an open house at the mission. He died soon after reaching out to Sister Conchita, and she knows she should have slowed down long enough to talk with him. The two cases are connected, of course. The fact that these were the islands where President John F. Kennedy's PT boat sank, leaving the future president and his crew to hide in the jungle from the Japanese, also plays a role in the story.

Another great book through the Goodreads firstreads program!

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### **Kate says**

Another enjoyable mystery and a great Summer holiday read.

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### **Cathy Cole says**

First Line: The Japanese destroyer came out of the night at forty knots like a huge shark snarling across the lagoon.

Sister Conchita may be just a bit too forthright and prone to act now and ask forgiveness later. She's been sent to a run-down mission in the Western District of the Solomon Islands. Her assignment being only temporary, she's still determined to wake up the four obstinate elderly nuns and get their help in cleaning up the place. Her plans don't get off to a good start. On the mission's very first open day, they are besieged by tourists, two of the four nuns are AWOL, and a man is killed in the chapel. Sister Conchita can't believe that the government is content to call a very suspicious death a heart attack, and she is not prepared to let the matter rest.

Normally she would ask Ben Kella for help. Kella, a sergeant in the Solomon Islands Police Force and an *aofia* (hereditary spiritual peacekeeper of the Lau people), he's assigned to investigate the sabotage that's been threatening the local operations of an international logging company.

As Sister Conchita and Kella begin their investigations, they discover common elements-- especially three strange, unfriendly men who are very interested in the islands of Kasolo and Olasana. You see, it's 1960, and in a few weeks the people of the United States will be deciding whether to vote for Richard Nixon or John F. Kennedy as President. The islands of Kasolo and Olasana are where the survivors of PT 109 hid from the

Japanese and tried to recuperate. Although it's not the first time strangers have come sniffing around in search of stories about Kennedy, there's something different... something ominous... about these men.

Once again Graeme Kent has written a mystery that transported me to the Solomon Islands of the 1960s. In this place, at this time, World War II is not a thing of the past. People canoe across lagoons over the easily visible twisted hulks of fighter planes and ships. The "good old boy" colonial government is still at work, filled with officials who do not want to admit that their days are numbered and that the educated young islanders they're ignoring today will be the leaders of tomorrow. Smugglers still know the secret coves and hiding places of these waters, and they use them.

Having a main character who's not only a policeman but a spiritual leader of his people gives the reader a chance to learn the customs of the peoples of the Solomon Islands in a very non-intrusive way. Many times Kella responds to the summons for a policeman and discovers that his services as aofia are really required.

I have to admit that the plot line concerning JFK put me in a pair of blinders that shielded me from almost everything else but Kent's excellent cast of characters. The author seems to know instinctively when it's time to insert a laugh-out-loud funny piece of humor to lighten the mood, and although those old nuns in that run-down mission could be by turns infuriating and heartbreaking, they could also be extremely funny.

Sister Conchita is as headstrong and stubborn a person as one will ever meet, and one has to wonder who's going to give up first: Sister Conchita or the Catholic Church. Sister Conchita and Ben Kella are both outsiders in their own worlds who want to make things right. Pairing them is a bit of genius.

As I said earlier, the plot line concerning JFK had me so engrossed that when the solutions to the other threads concerning the murder of the man in the mission chapel and the sabotage at the logging company site were revealed, I was completely surprised. That doesn't happen very often at all.

When I read the first book in the series, Devil-Devil, I thought it could be the start of something very special. Now after reading One Blood, I know this is something very special. Let this series be your next armchair journey to a beautiful faraway land filled with fascinating customs, wonderful characters, and delectable mysteries. Then your smile will be as big and as bright as my own when I hear of Graeme Kent's newest book.

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## **Jim says**

This is a page-turner that is always interesting and often amusing. The story takes place in 1960, just prior to the U.S. presidential elections (Kennedy vs. Nixon) and part of the storyline has ties to John F. Kennedy and the crew of PT109's rescue from Olasana Island in the Solomons in 1943 (or as the islanders would say "the time before"). I found the book to be unusual in at least three different ways. First, the location—the Solomon Islands provide a unique tropical setting with much of the detritus of WWII still in evidence; second, the combination of the local beliefs, customs and dialects that are an integral part of the island culture (I particularly enjoyed the passages in Pidgin) and third, the two headed investigative team of a young nun, Sister Conchita and Sergeant Kella of the Solomon Islands Police Force. Sister Conchita has an inner drive to get to the bottom of things and Kella is both a policeman and an aofia, a hereditary spiritual peacekeeper of the Lau people. With these two great characters Kent has come up with a combination that propels the storyline from two directions at once, each investigating earthly crimes with a spiritual perspective.

Great read! I will look for the first book in this series "Devil-Devil" to find out what I missed.  
Thanks Goodreads for another First Reads win!

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### **CarolineFromConcord says**

This book was so much fun, but then I'm a sucker for unfamiliar, exotic locales and new kinds of characters.

The locale is the Solomon Islands in the South Pacific, year 1960. Kennedy is running for president, and for unknown reasons, a number of people both foreign and local seem intensely interested in visiting the island where his PT crew were marooned after a run-in with a Japanese boat in World War II.

The main characters are Ben Kella, a quasi-holy man for the Lau people and also a regular police officer, and Sister Conchita, a spunky and curious nun sent to reenergize a run-down mission where one elderly sister has never recovered from a trauma related to the search for Kennedy and crew 17 years before. Kella is supposed to stick to discovering who is sabotaging a logging company and the nun is supposed to stick to reenergizing the mission. They both have reputations for never sticking to the assignment -- deserved reputations, as we quickly learn. Coming from different angles, they converge as they try to figure out a series of mysteries, beginning with a murder at the mission's first open house.

There are lots of other interesting characters -- both nefarious and decent but complicated -- and the local color and scenery are outstanding. Fascinating.

The author knows the territory. According to the book jacket, he was head of BBC Schools broadcasting in the Soloman Islands for eight years after a teaching career in the UK and is now Educational Broadcasting Consultant for the South Pacific Commission.

The main reason I gave this a 3 and not a 4 is that I wasn't crazy about the end and the number of people who got away with things. After all, murder is murder. Goes to show you should never recommend a mystery unreservedly until you have read the very last paragraph.

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### **John says**

In my five years of leading a mystery book discussion this is the worse by far. The only mystery is how i stayed awake to finish it

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### **???? says**

Brilliantly written, brings the islands to life. Equally as good as the first in the series.

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## **Pamela says**

Sister Conchita has been sent to a mission in the Solomon Islands to deal with three awkward elderly nuns. She is just getting to grips with the situation when an American tourist is found murdered in the church. Meanwhile, Sergeant Ben Kella is investigating threats to a logging company. The two cases begin to converge, and the two friends once again find themselves joining forces to find a killer.

A very enjoyable mystery, with two likeable protagonists and a fascinating setting. This is a much pacier read than the first in the series, and the roles of Kella and Sister Conchita are better integrated into the story. My only gripe is that for much of the book they were working separately - I preferred it when the plots began to come together and they had to work as a duo - this could have happened earlier in the book.

Love the setting and all the cultural information - Kent really shows the effects of WWII on these remote islands, and the changing society of the 1960s. Looking forward to reading the third in the series.

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## **Susan says**

PT Boat 109 was sunk in the Western Solomon Islands in 1943. Seventeen years later, the captain in charge of the boat, John F. Kennedy, is running for the presidency of the United States. Not many people in the Solomons, a British protectorate, are interested in, or even aware of, the election. But a party of American tourists are spending time amid the islands where Kennedy and his crew hid from the Japanese. Police sergeant Ben Kella is assigned to investigate the vandalism of a lumbering project on a nearby island, although the Western Solomons are far from his home territory. He's also instructed in no uncertain terms to stay away from the accidental death of one of the tourists, at a mission open house. But Sister Conchita has temporarily been assigned to help the three elderly nuns at the mission, and she's sure the tourist was murdered. I loved this, though not as quite much as the first in this series, Devil-Devil, which is a book you all should read.

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## **Martina says**

#2 in the Sister Conchita series set in the Solomon Islands. Reading Devil-Devil, the first in the series with the Mystery Book Group in April 2012. Reading this one before the discussion meeting on the 24th.

A good sequel to Devil-Devil. The story takes place during the run up to John F. Kennedy's bid for the Presidency in 1960. "Tourists" are turning up in the Islands looking for evidence surrounding the events after the sinking of PT-109. Sister Conchita has been sent to run a mission after the death of the Priest, and she and Kella are crossing paths and working together throughout the book. More than one death to investigate, other skullduggery, and much wonderful material about the history, feuds, and spiritual lives of the Solomon Islanders. I liked this very much.

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## **Sue Law says**

Another enjoyable entry in the "Kella and Conchita" mini-series.

It is 1960 and Sister Conchita has been sent to take charge of 3 elderly nuns at Marakosi Mission in the Western Islands of the Solomon's. During an open day an American tourist is found dead on the edge of a bonfire at the mission. Sister Conchita is concerned as the incident doesn't seem to be being investigated properly.

At the same time Sergeant Kella is loaned to the short-handed Western Islands police group to investigate vandalism at a logging camp on one of the islands.

Add to this the interest being shown in the islands where the crew of PT109 were shipwrecked in 1943, and things start getting tangled.

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## **Mysterytribune says**

Mystery novels in exotic locales have always interested us but the new release *One Blood* set in Solomon Islands was probably one of the most refreshing ones that came to our desk in 2012. A cozy mystery in nature and the second book in a series by Graeme Kent, this book takes the reader to the heart of an investigation by a nun and a native police Sergeant.

### A Brief Summary:

Ben Kella, sergeant in the Solomon Islands Police Force, as well as an aofia, a hereditary spiritual peacekeeper of the Lau people, is called to investigate acts of sabotage that threaten the local operations of a powerful international logging company. At the same time, Sister Conchita, a young nun who has been sent to Western part of Solomon Islands gets her hands dirty with a suspicious death of an American tourist.

As each of them progress with their investigation, their path cross and finally Conchita and Kella join forces to uncover the links between these goings-on. They detect arrival of some American tourists who show unusual interest in John F. Kennedy, who was once a wartime U.S. naval officer in the area but now, in 1960, thousands of miles away, about to become the thirty-fifth American President.

Although it's not the first time tourists and strangers have come to the Islands to find out more about the Kennedy's case, American Tourist's murder and the sabotage in the logging company's facility at the same time seem less of a coincidence.

### Our Take:

Graeme Kent was head of BBC Schools broadcasting in the Solomon Islands for eight years. The experience of living in such beautiful place in the Pacific Ocean has given him an advantage in painting a unique picture of life and culture in this exotic spot. His second novel in *Sister Conchita and Sergeant Kella Mysteries*, therefore, has a sort of appeal in which is hard to find in many other stories. The author certainly takes his time to layout the foundation for the mystery: The plots are very slow moving and Kent provides a lot of back-stories and information about the native people's traditions and the local setting.

The JFK plot to me seemed a bit unrealistic and had some holes in it but at the same time I was curious to see how the story would end. There is an interesting twist at the end which I didn't expect and to the ending was satisfactory. Using humorous language and sharp funny lines was also a plus in terms of writing.

This is a slow moving story but the setting is so unique that it absorbs the reader to end. Definitely a good read.



More at <http://www.mysterytribune.com> or @mysterytribune

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## **Emmaa22 says**

Set in the Solomon Islands in the 1960s - I think it is fairly compared to the No.1 Ladies Detective Agency books - of a similar light-touched style. It is an interesting setting and easy reading.

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