

FICTION

**The Blood Bond**

by Bey Logan

B&E Productions

HK\$120

★★★★☆

Richard Lord

The dust jacket blurb sells *The Blood Bond* short. It doesn't

tell you anything of the novel's sharp dialogue and sometimes interesting characters. It does tell you, however, about the plot – and therein lies a problem. This is because the plot of the debut novel from Hong Kong-based cinephile, screenwriter and producer Bey Logan is just about as mental as it sounds.

A religious leader, with a demeanour not a million miles from that of the Dalai Lama, is attacked on a visit to Bangkok by anti-religion terrorists. After the attack, he needs a blood transfusion within 12 hours to save his life and just happens to have

an ultra-rare blood type. So the terrorist group, called Red Dawn and apparently in possession of supernatural powers, sets about killing off all the potential donors – as you do.

Enter Deva, our religious leader's young, female, mystical protector, who sees another potential donor in a vision, and sets off to find him. You probably don't need to be told that he turns out to be a bitter, cynical, drunken, middle-aged Westerner, in this case with the vaguely Die Hard-ish name of John Tremayne, or that their journey from Chiang Rai to Bangkok brings all manner of innovative peril.

It's testimony to Logan's skill as a storyteller that he manages not only to make an utterly preposterous set-up seem faintly plausible, but also grip the reader with a very silly plot that has more holes in it than a Red Dawn victim. *The Blood Bond* is pacy, lacking in any form of narratorial self-indulgence, and the main characters are given some very plausible dialogue.

Originally written as a film script and then adapted by Logan into a novel, the book's cinematic seams show. It moves with cinematic pace, but the extremely detailed, made-for-the-screen battle descriptions get a bit dull; endless narrow escapes work much better when you can see them happening.

The book could really have done with a bit more proofreading. It's littered with missing apostrophes, unindented paragraphs and verbs deployed extremely haphazardly.

But the real problem with *The Blood Bond* is that it never bothers to explain just how or why anti-religious zombie ninjas with supernatural powers are wandering around Thailand. It just sort of happens, it's all a bit monster movie, and the implausibility makes it a bit more difficult to care about the characters. Without Logan's pacing and ear for dialogue, we could have had something more akin to *The Da Vinci Code*, probably the silliest artefact human culture has yet produced. Be thankful we don't.