

The image is a vertical rectangular composition. The top half shows a clear blue sky with the white, snow-capped peak of Mount Fuji in the distance. Below the mountain is a dense urban skyline of various skyscrapers and buildings, including a prominent, curved, glass-clad tower. The bottom half of the image is a dark, perspective view of a tunnel. The tunnel's interior is lined with a series of vertical, metallic-looking panels that create a strong sense of depth and reflection. A bright light source at the far end of the tunnel creates a lens flare effect, and a train is visible in the distance, its lights reflecting on the tunnel walls.

CADE McCRANE

TUNNEL VISION
A DETECTIVE LIGHTHOUSE MYSTERY

Tunnel Vision

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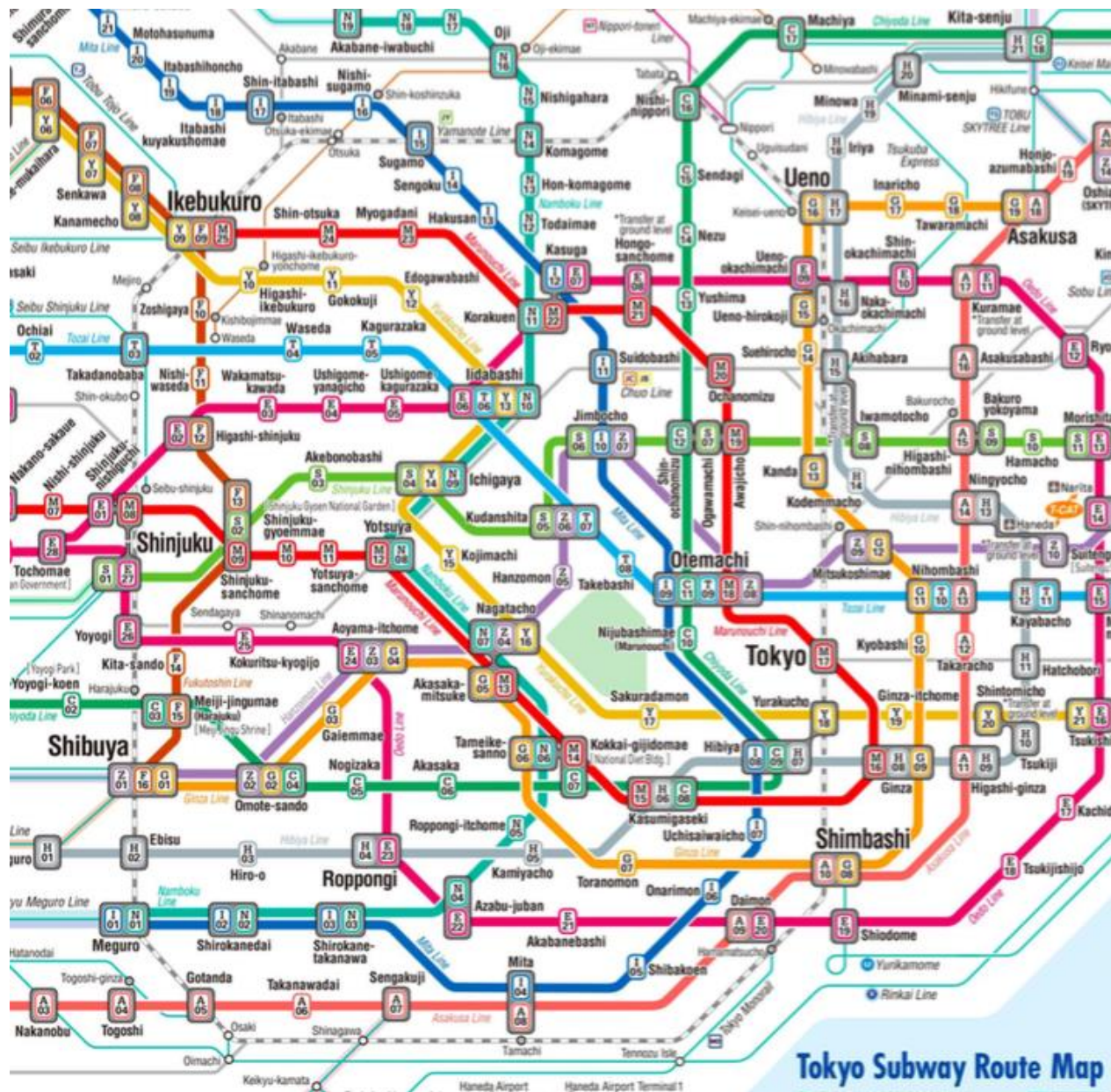
Novels by Cade McCrane

Detective Lighthouse Mysteries

The Herrick Solution

The Lion Tamer

The Aymarán



Chapter 1

Tuesday, April 29, 2003—Day 1

Two stories underground in the cavernous Tokyo Metro Ginza Station, Detective Mieko Ito snapped on a pair of blue nitrile gloves, tightened the white mask on her face and peered out across Platform 2. The station's usual throngs of black-haired Japanese had been evacuated and replaced with police and uniformed subway personnel.

Mieko blinked. Her weary eyes needed time to adjust to the high-intensity emergency lights blasting into every crevice of the underground.

She walked in closer to investigate. The tiled floor in front of her was crisscrossed with two distinct blood spatter patterns, one of which led to a severed head lying face down on the tracks. The skull was badly crushed, and the only identifying object remaining was a single earring dangling from its bloody lobe. The cleaning staff were tasked with the unenviable job of cleaning up the morbid scene.

Across the tracks, the remains of a man's forearm was wedged between the concrete pillars that anchored the adjacent waiting platform. Below it a lone finger rested on the ground with an unscathed gold wedding band glinting in the lights. But the most gruesome sight of all was his pulverized body on the rails, the train holding no sympathy for human flesh nor bone.

Mieko sighed. It was an all too familiar scene, this being the fifth such attack in as many weeks.

The air was dry and stale, and she licked her thin lips.

She looked down the tracks to where the train had been backed up to the entrance of the tunnel. Somehow it appeared the woman had fared worse than the man. Blood and hair were splattered across the windscreen and her body was stuck up into the wheel-well of the subway car.

Mieko bowed her head. One had died instantly on impact, the other dragged violently down the tracks.

She pulled out her small Olympus digital camera and started snapping photos. On the tracks, a half dozen members of the crime scene unit were meticulously performing their duties collecting body parts and setting them in blue biohazard bags. Subway cleaners trailed behind them mopping up the blood-streaked rails. Off in the hallway, shocked witnesses were giving first-

hand accounts to officers. As usual, a few last remaining onlookers were lingering around purely for curiosity's sake.

She took pictures of the items marked with short numbered yellow cones then moved on to multiple shots of the subway cars. She followed that up by taking a few snaps of the small crowd. She needed to be extra thorough. It was well-documented that serial killers returned to the scenes of their crimes to revel in the destruction wrought by their own hands.

"Mieko-san, in here please," her superior, Inspector Hiro Sumoto, called out, waving at her from an office door near the center of the platform.

She looked in his direction, obediently nodded then quickly shuffled over to the compact little office. Inside, Inspector Sumoto stood over a serious-faced man in a subway uniform manning the controls of the video monitors.

"Yes, Sumoto-san?" Mieko inquired, using the ubiquitous Japanese 'san' when referring to a person's name.

Inspector Sumoto shook his head. He tossed two mangled, bloodstained navy blue passports on a short table. "Both victims are American. Contact their embassy right away. There'll be no keeping a lid on this now," he added, discontentedly.

"Nm," Mieko muttered, using the Japanese colloquialism to agree with her superior. She glanced at the passports. It was atrocious. The eleventh and twelfth victims were foreign tourists. Worse, the suspect got away, again. The ugly truth was they had no one in custody for any of the crimes.

"Here," the subway worker called out, his fingers effortlessly dancing over the buttons. "This is a better picture of the man we're looking for."

Mieko and the Inspector leaned in for a closer look. It was a black and white image but easy to discern that the man frozen on the screen was Japanese. He had straight black hair and wore the ubiquitous dark suit and black shoes of the average salary man. His head was down, hiding his eyes.

"Check every camera you have," Inspector Sumoto ordered. "Stay here until you find us a complete face shot."

"Yes sir," the subway technician replied, nodding.

Mieko bowed to her superior then looked at her watch: it was 8:24 p.m.

She pulled a clear plastic evidence bag from her jacket pocket, waved it open then tried to carefully place the passports inside. She grumbled as her gloves stuck slightly to the congealed blood on the covers, and she had to wiggle her fingers to get them to release.

“Okay, I’ll head over to the U.S. Embassy now,” she stated morosely, and left the office.