
Advance Praise for *Bottled Lightning*

Bottled Lightning is a blistering high stakes story revolving around a cutting-edge energy invention designed to dramatically reduce the earth's carbon footprint, those working to bring it to the world, and those determined to not let it see the light of day. Savvy tech lawyer, Torn Sagara, who heads the Tokyo office of his international law firm, is forced to take matters into his own hands to protect magnetic super-scientist, Saya Brooks, and her world-changing creation. Who is behind the desperate attempts to stop Brooks, and ally Sagara, dead in their tracks—literally? Is it industry or government forces or some combination of the two that wants to bury Saya's technology? Author L. M. Weeks has written a highly entertaining, engaging, and provocative thriller that will keep you on your toes and guessing the answers until the final page.

— **Ronald S. Barak, author of the bestselling
Brooks/Lotello thriller series**

L. M. Weeks takes us on a journey of underworld violence, boardroom intrigue, and high-tech advances with geo-political implications. Weeks's combination of nerdish attention to detail and sweeping cinematic plot takes us on a breathless ride akin to his hero's daring motorcycle escapades. Torn, the lawyer-turned-action hero, as well as other biracial characters in the novel, provide a unique and revealing perspective of life and social interaction in Japan. *Bottled Lightning* is a page turner!

—**Roy Tomizawa, author of the highly acclaimed 1964
*The Greatest Year in the History of Japan:
How the Tokyo Olympics Symbolized
Japan's Miraculous Rise from the Ashes***

This action-packed saga follows Torn Sagara—biracial lawyer, motorcycle maniac, and flawed ladies' man—on a quest to stop a series of mysterious attacks on his inventor client. As the story escalates into murder and international intrigue, the reader is in for a wild ride from Tokyo to Alaska to the Russian Far East. Fans of Barry Eisler and Barry Lancet will want to jump right in! An impressive and intelligent debut.

—**Leza Lowitz, author of *Jet Black and the Ninja Wind***

The heart of this fast-paced and enjoyable novel is its protagonist, Tornait Masao Sagara. Also known as Torn. He's a high-powered lawyer based in Tokyo. Half American-half Japanese, a passionate motorcyclist, a man with a complicated family and romantic background, Torn's life is turned upside down when he and his beautiful client are almost killed by a motorcycle gang during a high-speed chase through the streets of Tokyo. The twists and turns of this novel are engaging and cinematic. The behind-the-scenes details about life in upper-class corporate Japan are fascinating. Well done! I can highly recommend L.M. Weeks's *Bottled Lightning*.

—**Susan Breen, author of *The Fiction Class* and the Maggie Dove mystery series**

Bottled Lightning reveals both the author's deep experience and expertise on the book's many topics and his keen ability to craft and deliver a thrilling, fascinating, and sexy tale of international intrigue.

As a fellow American with a long history of living in Japan, I was impressed not only by Weeks's thoughtful and accurate depictions and explanations of Japanese traditions and society, but also of international business transactions, motorcycle culture in Japan, and the inner workings of Japan's notoriously opaque justice system.

Weaving together sophistication, detail, and knowledge into a high-energy story that consistently keeps up the pace set in its opening scenes, *Bottled Lightning* is tightly written with a wide scope of topics all expertly conveyed. Really a joy to read.

—**Jeff Wexler, producer, Studio Ghibli and Studio Ponoc, and cross-border entertainment and intellectual property lawyer**

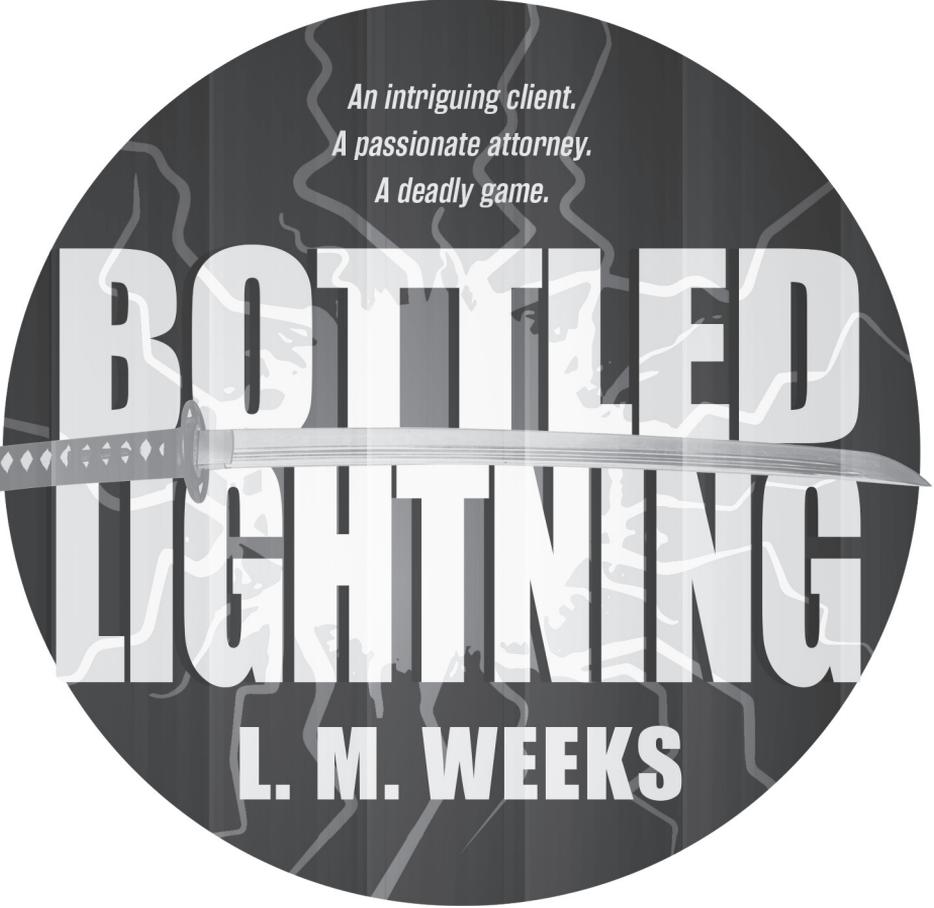
Never in my wildest dreams would I have thought that writing a captivating and page-turning novel about a corporate lawyer in Japan would be possible. *Bottled Lightning* proved me wrong! Pulls you in from the first page and leaves you wanting more. The best part is that *Bottled Lightning* accomplishes this without using the poetic license that other authors so often utilize to make lawyering seem like something it's not. The author's bona fides as an attorney who knows Japan are clear. The book manages to draw you in without once straying from the path of authenticity. Reads like a James Bond novel, if (and no disrespect meant) Ian Fleming actually knew something about Japan. Brilliant!

—**Tony Andriotis, Partner and Head of International Arbitration, DLA Piper, Tokyo**

Not your father's legal thriller. L. M. Weeks's debut novel, *Bottled Lightning*, hurtles the reader from one chapter to the next. The combination of his cinematic writing style and command of details, such as the book's futuristic technology, motorcycle racing, legal ins and outs of international business, and cultural touchstones of Japan, have enabled Weeks to craft an exhilarating and thought-provoking thriller like none I've ever read. Truly a winner!

—**Larry Bates, General Counsel at Panasonic; former Chief Legal Officer of LIXIL Global; former General Counsel, Japan at GE; former president of The American Chamber of Commerce in Japan**

*An intriguing client.
A passionate attorney.
A deadly game.*



**BOTTLED
LIGHTNING**

L. M. WEEKS



**SOUTH
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Publishers

Nampa, Idaho

BOTTLED LIGHTNING

L. M. WEEKS

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To Brendan, who represents the best of both worlds.



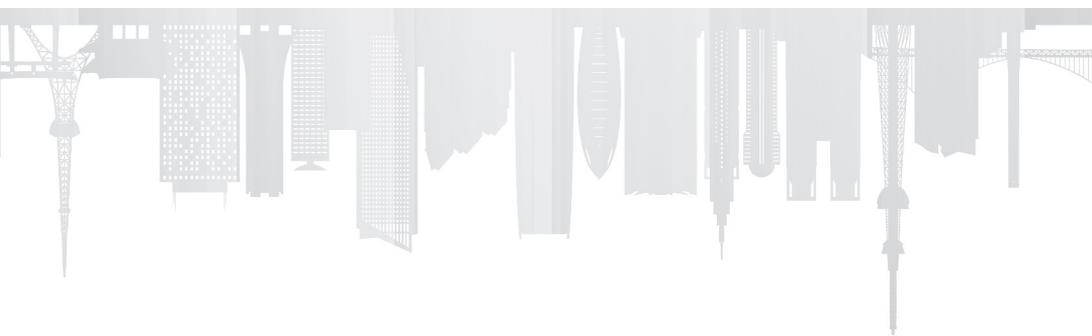




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Dramatis Personae

Agency for Natural Resources and Energy

Japanese agency considering financing Raijin Clean's development of lightning generation and energy storage technology

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Lawyer in the Russian Far East

Asahi Susono

Executive Assistant to Tamayo Watanabe

ChinaPetrol Co., Ltd.

A Chinese state-owned enterprise (SOE), parent company of CPV

China PV, Inc. (CPV)

Renewable energy subsidiary of ChinaPetrol

Harden Industries, Inc.

A company founded and owned by Vince Harden

Hilsberry & Carter

Law firm in which Torn Sagara is Managing Partner of its Tokyo office

Hiroki Okaguchi

Head of the Yamakawa Gumi

Kenji Ishikawa

Yukie Sagara's older brother

Kiwako Meyers

Torn Sagara's long-distance girlfriend and former flame from college

Larisa Anismova

Managing Partner of Hilsberry & Carter's Moscow Office

Magadan Oil & Mining

Russian company doing business with Harden Industries and Wakkanai Drilling

Makoto ("Mak") Karahashi

Torn Sagara's private investigator and best friend

Mayumi Ino

Torn Sagara's borderline personality girlfriend

Miki Watanabe

Daughter of Tamayo Watanabe; Member, Board of Directors, Wakkanai Drilling

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Technology company founded by Saya Brooks

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Inventor of lightning generation and energy storage technology

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Wakkanai Drilling Co., Ltd.

Japanese company run by Tamayo Watanabe

Yamakawa Gumi

One of Japan’s largest organized crime yakuza syndicates

Yasuo Tsujikawa

Prosecuting attorney

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Husband of Miki Watanabe; Member, Board of Directors,
Wakkanai Drilling

Yukie Sagara

Estranged wife of Torn Sagara

Zephyrus Oil & Drilling, GmbH

German company Wakkanai Drilling is purchasing
in Project Ibis deal



Russian Far East

China

S. Korea

Japan

North Pacific
Ocean

Harbin

Khabarovsk

Komsomolsk-on-Amur

Sakhalin
Island

Sea of
Okhotsk

Bering Sea

Chukchi
Sea

Alaska

Anchorage

McCarthy

Gulf of Alaska



CHAPTER
1

Savior

救世主

“Go faster!” Saya yelled as Torn hit the expressway, merging into the Tokyo-bound traffic.

Giving in to the fun, he laughed. “No need to yell. I can hear you just fine!” Torn said through the mic in his helmet. He throttled up to 120 kilometers per hour and seamlessly moved the motorcycle from the left lane through the middle lane to the outside passing lane.

Saya released the passenger side handles she’d been holding and wrapped her arms around Torn’s chest. He felt warm all over but tried to suppress the feeling. Saya was a client, after all. And not just any client, but the most intriguing client he’d ever had.

He’d been surprised when she’d asked for a ride, but it was obvious she was serious. She’d let her dark hair down and swapped her business clothes for jeans and a navy-blue leather jacket.

When he had half-heartedly suggested she’d be better off schmoozing with her investors, she’d cocked her head and smiled. “The technology does all the schmoozing necessary, don’t you think? It’s like showing someone lightning in a bottle.”

Torn agreed. He’d been impressed by her demonstration, even though he’d seen it before. “I like the imagery of selling little bottles of lightning at convenience stores,” he’d said enthusiastically.

Saya had smiled. “I’m glad to hear that. Anyway, I told them I needed a few minutes to discuss an IP matter with my lawyer

before I met them at the hotel. So..." She'd paused playfully, her piercing green eyes meeting his. "Do I get a ride or not?"

He'd had to pull himself away from those eyes, which he never tired of looking at. Sometimes he wondered whether they were real or contacts, but he'd never seen them any other color. He'd handed her a full-face helmet.

Only a few minutes had passed since she'd hopped on his BMW K 1200 LT, but that conversation already seemed like yesterday.

Now, he accelerated to 140, taking advantage of any openings in the three lanes to pass slower traffic.

Saya hugged him tighter, as if she found the frequent weaving in and out of traffic exhilarating.

"It's like the motorcycle in the movie *Tron*," she said. "Can't you go faster?"

Torn grinned. "I guess it's now or never. Traffic will slow as we get closer to downtown. And we gotta exit at Hatsudai because tandem riding's illegal on the inner city Circuit."

"Why's that?"

"Back in the seventies, Japan banned it on expressways because *bosozoku* used to attack cars with chains."

"What're *bosozoku*?"

"Car and motorcycle gangs. You've really lived a sheltered life, haven't you?"

He couldn't see her blushing.

"Anyway, the ban was lifted for most expressways but kept in central Tokyo. The older, narrower winding expressways were considered too dangerous for tandem riding."

"It's not as if the narrow local streets are any safer," Saya replied.

"Preaching to the choir."

He raised the adjustable windshield to its maximum height and accelerated to 180. The aerodynamically shaped fairing

and the bike's weight kept the rubber side down. Even this speed didn't feel too fast because of the bike's stability and the protection against buffeting provided by the windshield. But the louder engine and much faster rate at which they passed the guardrail posts were proof of their speed.

"Oh my God!" Saya put her helmeted head on his shoulder.

Torn smiled. It was intoxicating when the bike had the desired effect of lowering a woman's inhibitions.

Traffic reappeared as they got closer to Hachioji.

"Please don't slow down!"

"Sorry. Got to." He throttled down, knowing there were tollbooths ahead. He weaved in and out of the cars, using all three lanes to keep progressing faster than the flow of traffic until they had reached the toll plaza.

Just enough traffic remained after the tollbooths to make things fun. He pulled into the left-hand lane and toggled to Imagine Dragons. "Demon" poured from the bike's speakers.

"This is more fun than I ever dreamed!"

Despite himself, Torn agreed. He sensed her interest in him was more than as just her lawyer. For the first time in his career, his resolve never to become romantically involved with a client began to waver, but he knew it was a bad idea. He already had enough problems.

A few minutes later, a big black Mercedes pulled up behind them, its front bumper almost touching the bike's license plate. Torn sped up, but the car continued to tailgate.

Saya, eyes closed and lost in the music, didn't notice.

The car sped up, forcing its way past them on the left between the bike and the shoulder. Torn swerved into the middle lane to avoid a collision. He turned off the music, causing Saya to open her eyes. The Mercedes pulled in front of them and slowed down, forcing Torn to decelerate and swerve back into the left lane. It had no rear license plate, rare and illegal in Japan.

“What’s that guy doing?” Saya asked, alarmed.

“I don’t know.”

The big Mercedes changed lanes, slowing down in the middle lane until it was parallel with them. The tinted rear window opened. Before Torn could react, a man stuck a gun out of the window and fired. The bullet passed through the soft padding under Saya, exiting the other side of her seat.

With well-practiced fluidity, Torn squeezed the left handlebar lever to open the clutch and shifted down to fourth gear with his left foot, then throttled up with his right hand while releasing the clutch lever with his left. The Beemer raced away from the Mercedes. He shifted back up to fifth gear as the RPMs shot up.

“Holy shit!” Saya exclaimed, tightening her hold even more.

“Are you hit?” Torn asked as calmly as he could. He’d broken into a cold sweat.

“I don’t think so.”

“Thank God!” he replied, wondering what the hell just happened.

Things moved in slow motion. Torn thought, *No one has a gun in Japan except yaks*. He was relieved neither of them had been hit, scared shitless about being chased by yakuza types, and pissed off at the damage to his motorcycle.

The big car again appeared next to them in the center lane.

Torn slammed on the brakes with his right hand and foot, letting the Mercedes fly by. He shifted down two gears to third and throttled up, accelerating to 120 so fast he almost popped a wheelie. He flew by the driver’s side of the car, the high RPMs making the bike’s engine scream. Shifting up to fourth gear, he rocketed to 160.

The powerful car caught him quickly. He sped up to 180 but the big Mercedes stayed on them. They approached more traffic, forcing both vehicles to slow down. As they reached

the Mitaka Highway Bus Turnout, the three lanes of traffic became two, creating a traffic jam.

Salvation.

Torn threaded between the two lanes of stalled traffic. Their pursuer briefly flanked them on the left shoulder until being thwarted by a wall built to protect surrounding homes from expressway noise.

They were safe, but only for a moment. He heard a motorcycle engine being revved to the ugly, deafening sound of a bike with its muffler removed. At the same time, he saw the blinding light of a single high beam behind him and heard loud death metal music. His heart sank.

“Motherfucking Yankee,” he muttered, forgetting his mic was still on.

“Yankee?” Saya repeated.

“Over-the-hill punk *ex-bosozoku*,” he explained, doubting this was a coincidence. He wasn’t even sure if it was a real Yankee. He had encountered them many times, and while always obnoxiously loud, they’d never hassled him.

“Great,” Saya replied wryly.

The bike veered left onto the narrow shoulder and flanked them, barely squeaking by between cars in the left lane and the five-meter-high soundproofing wall.

Torn saw that the hot-pink bike had the Yankee trademark Norton Commando-like fairing with the headlight recessed into a bubble in the fairing’s front and a heavily padded extra-long sissy bar attached to the back of the empty passenger seat. The rider wore a silver Nazi helmet and black mask. What looked like a long PVC pipe was attached to the bike’s side.

Another screamingly loud bike with its high beam on appeared immediately behind them, revving its engine. It pulled into the right lane and flanked him on the narrow shoulder between the cars and the center guardrail.

Torn accelerated to get ahead, then swerved slightly to the right and left in front of cars in each lane. As expected, the cars moved toward the outside of their lanes, leaving no room for the pursuing bikes to proceed between the cars in the left lane and the wall on the left and the cars in the right lane and the central guardrail on the right. Still, this slowed the Yankees down for only a moment and they soon caught up to Torn and Saya again.

With the Yankees continuing to flank them on both sides, they approached the Eifukucho Exit, which was both an exit and a connector between the Chuo Expressway coming into the city center from the west and the inner city Metropolitan Expressway.

“Why didn’t you get off?” Saya screamed.

The fear in her voice made Torn’s heart beat even faster. He took a deep breath and responded calmly, “They’d catch us at the first light. They’re smaller and more maneuverable.”

The matter-of-fact nature of his response worked. She lowered her voice. “We could find a cop.”

“Not before those guys would be on us. Hey, try to squeeze the bike with your knees and move with the bike. Don’t fight it.”

“Okay.” Saya loosened her death hug.

On the other side of the Eifukucho Tollbooth, traffic thinned for a moment as more cars exited. It would soon increase again, and it would be difficult for the big BMW to lane split because the lanes were narrower on the much older inner city expressways.

The Yankee bikes pulled up next to them. The driver on the left drew a long metal pipe with a chain and spiked ball from a sheath.

“Is that a mace on the end? He has a mace!” Saya shouted.

“It’s a flail,” he corrected her.

“Right,” she said, then closed her mouth.

Torn decided to go on the offensive with his much larger bike, which was surprisingly nimble for its size. He swerved toward the biker wielding the homemade weapon.

His move had the desired effect. The smaller bike swerved away. Torn accelerated like a rocket, pulling away from both bikes, but he soon heard them gaining. He could not outrun them in the afternoon traffic. They again pulled up on either side of him with their ridiculous—but lethal—weapons in hand. Torn slammed on both the hand and foot brakes so hard he thought he might pop a reverse wheelie, but the Beemer only skidded slightly before the antilock brakes did their job. The Yankee bikes flew by, then quickly slowed down.

Now Torn needed to pass them. He aimed for the left side of the bike on his left. He calculated that, because the biker held the threatening pipe in his right hand, placing himself and Saya on the left would make it difficult for the assailant to swing at them across his own chest.

Torn forced his way between the Yankee and the wall. Despite the maneuver, Torn had underestimated the biker’s resolve and dexterity; he was able to swing at them across his body and shatter the BMW’s windshield, spraying safety glass on Torn and grazing his right arm. Torn grimaced when the flail’s spikes tore through his jacket and into his right triceps, while his body shielded Saya from harm.

He couldn’t avoid them much longer. The Yankees would get them sooner than later.

“I’m going to crash into them. Watch your legs,” he warned.

The other biker approached on their left, swinging his flail with his right hand. Torn shifted down and countersteered the left handlebar hard, instantly flicking the BMW left into the other bike. The Yankee tried to avoid the big bike but it was too late. The motorcycles collided with a hard fiberglass-on-metal

crunching sound. The smaller bike, already headed toward the wall as the driver tried to avoid Torn's bike, slammed into it with a loud crash followed by the clanging of metal on asphalt. The rider bounced off the wall and cartwheeled across the expressway at an angle before hitting the center guardrail. The BMW's fairing and front left fin had protected Torn and Saya as it hit the other bike, leaving them unhurt.

One to go.

Traffic increased as rush-hour cars merged onto the expressway from the local roads.

"Look at that sign. Aren't we supposed to get off?!"

Torn saw the sign showing a bright red circle-backslash symbol over two figures on a motorcycle. He saw another sign directing tandem riders to exit at Hatsudai.

"Yes, but driving tandem may save us if we stay on."

"Oh, I feel so much better now," she said, totally deadpan.

"I thought you would," he replied. They passed Hatsudai on the right. Torn could see the remaining Yankee gaining on them in his side-view mirrors. When they reached the Shinjuku on-ramp, traffic slowed to a crawl as more cars merged onto the two narrow curved expressway lanes. The moment of truth.

He maneuvered the bike to the centerline.

"Torn! There's not enough room!"

"Who needs mirrors? Keep your legs in tight."

He sped up. The right mirror was the first to go, then the left, followed by angry honking from the cars his mirrors hit as he threaded the needle between the narrow lanes. The bike remained upright because the big mirrors were designed to pop off on impact.

Torn saw the Yankee's high beam in the side-view mirrors of the cars he drove between and heard the bike's screaming engine.

"He's right behind us!"

"I know. We're almost there."

Traffic thinned out right before the Yoyogi Rest Area. Torn accelerated. *Please be there.*

As he passed the on-ramp from the Yoyogi Rest Area, he heard a siren.

Yes! And there's our savior.

The patrol car pulled up next to them.

"What's he doing?" Torn asked, his eyes trained on the road.

"He's waving you over!"

The loudspeaker command rang out. "You there, on the blue motorcycle. Safely pull over at the next exit."

Torn exited at Gaenmae. He stopped at the bottom of the off-ramp and held the bike as Saya got off.

The police car pulled up behind them, lights flashing.

Torn stood while straddling the bike as he pressed a button to lower the electric center stand. The bike lifted slightly as the small electric motor whined and then dropped back down when the stand locked into place. He dismounted and removed his helmet.

The Yankee bike followed them off the expressway a moment later. The helmet and mask obscured the driver's face. There was no license plate.

Torn wished he had a gun. He made eye contact and flipped the guy off.

He turned to Saya. "Are you all right?"

She already had her helmet off and was shooting the Yankee with her phone as he drove by.

She stopped filming. "Yes. At least I think so."

"Good," he said, not even bothering to hide the relief in his voice. "Great idea. Please AirDrop those to me."

Saya hugged Torn as hard as she could, burying her head into his chest for what felt like an eternity. She was shaking.

He wondered if he was shaking too.

Saya looked up, green eyes flashing, and kissed him on the

cheek. “You’re amazing, and here I thought you were just a lawyer.” She kissed him again, this time on the lips.

Before he could reply, two uniformed police officers, one visibly much younger than his partner, approached.

Releasing Saya, Torn turned and said, “That guy on the Yankee bike tried to kill us!”

The young officer, eyes wide, hesitated before saying, a bit shakily, “You’re under arrest.”



CHAPTER
2

How Did I Get Here?

俺は誰、ここはどこ？

Hungry and thirsty, his right arm aching and head throbbing, Torn sat alone on a hard metal chair in a small gray windowless interrogation room, his mind racing. He needed to talk to Mak.

He tried to focus on the positives: they were alive and his client was unhurt. And the cops had arranged for a doctor to sew up his arm. But being almost killed, and then arrested, and now stuck in this gloomy room with no food or water made it difficult to look on the bright side.

Being a lawyer, he dwelled on issues and risks. Who attacked them and why? Who were they after? Saya? Him? Both? Is Saya safe? Would the police hold him for as long as they legally could? He had no clue. Regardless, he assumed the worst: someone had hired the Mercedes goons and the Yankees, and whoever it was now had unfinished business. Did they know where he lived, where Saya lived? Probably. What would his firm and clients say when they found out? His reputation was everything. *But at least I'm alive.*

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About the Author

L. M. (“Mark”) Weeks is uniquely qualified to write this international legal thriller. Like Torn, Mark was born in Alaska and for many years has practiced law in Tokyo, representing technology companies from all over the world in connection with their fundraising, intellectual property matters, cross-border mergers and acquisitions, and related disputes. For more than 10 years, Mark was the Managing Partner of the Tokyo office of the global law firm Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP. He speaks, reads, and writes fluent Japanese, was an International Rotary Club scholar to Japan during high school, and graduated from International Christian University, a Japanese liberal arts college. Mark attended Fordham University School of Law in New York City, where he practiced law for almost sixteen years before relocating to Orrick’s Tokyo office in 2004. During his formative years in Japan, Mark earned a black belt in aikido. Also like Torn, he is an avid motorcyclist, and his adult son is biracial and bilingual and lives in Tokyo. In addition to riding motorcycles and writing, Mark’s other passion is saltwater fly fishing.

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