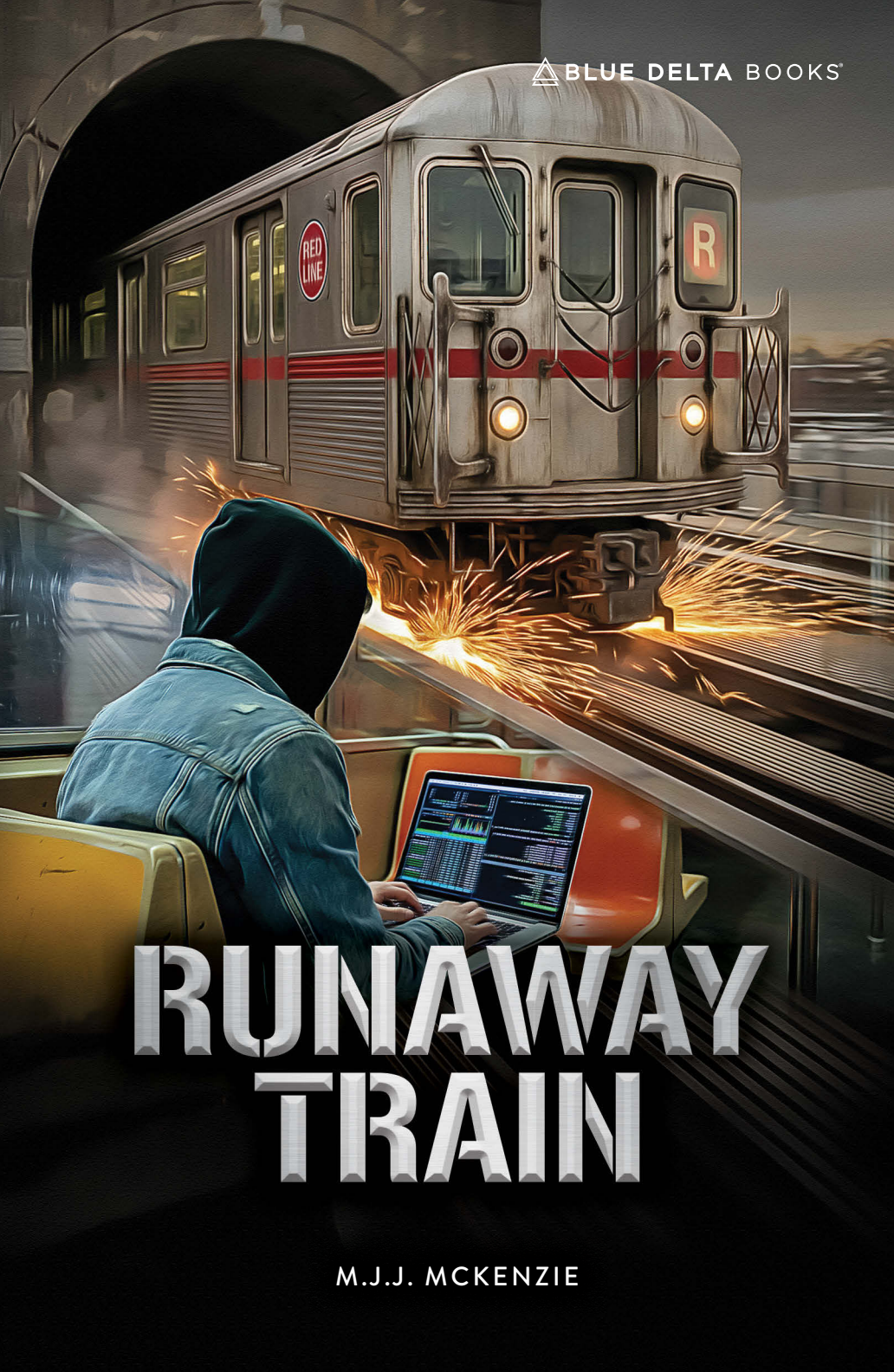


BLUE DELTA BOOKS



RUNAWAY TRAIN

M.J.J. MCKENZIE

CHAPTER 1

SKIP DAY

Today is the big day.” Marcus was so excited. “Are you ready?”

Kenan laughed. “Of course I am. We’ve been planning this for months.”

“Do you have the train schedule?” Marcus asked.

“I don’t need it.” Kenan tapped a finger against his temple. “It’s all up here. The red line leaves at 10:30 a.m. It’s only an hour ride to Point Park.”

That was the biggest amusement park in the area. The teens had always wanted to go. They decided the time had come.

Still, Kenan didn't like keeping secrets from his mom. She couldn't find out he was skipping school. He would be grounded for sure.

"I should have known. You never forget anything." Marcus gave Kenan a high five. "Let's meet by the gym after second period. It's next to the exit. No security guards sit over there."

Kenan gave him a thumbs-up. "Don't worry. I'll be there."

English class seemed to take forever. Kenan couldn't focus. His mind was on Point Park. There was so much he wanted to ride. Roller coasters were at the top of his list.

Finally, the bell rang. Kenan ran out of the classroom. Friends greeted him. His response

was a smile and a nod. He didn't stop to talk. All that mattered was getting to the gym.

The teen made it on time. Kenan saw a few students standing around chatting. But Marcus wasn't there.

As others headed to class, Kenan waited for his friend. A teacher spotted Kenan. It was Ms. Corley. She was strict. Kenan turned away from her. He knew she would prompt him to go to class. Trying to look busy, he pretended to search for something in his backpack.

Come on, Marcus, he thought. Don't let me down.

He glanced down the hall. Ms. Corley headed toward him.

Kenan cringed. *Oh no! What do I do now?*

CHAPTER 2

TIME TO GO

Kenan felt a hand on his shoulder. He yelped and spun around. “Marcus! You made it.”

“I’m sorry, dude. Mr. Hanson kept us after the bell.”

Ms. Corley was now only a few yards away. She frowned at them.

Marcus pasted a charming smile on his face. “Hi, Ms. Corley. We would love to stay and chat. But we’re late for class.” He yanked on Kenan’s arm. “Come on.”

The two scurried around the corner. They rushed out the side door. Marcus burst out laughing.

Kenan took a deep breath. He felt free. Yet his stomach felt uneasy. This was the first time he'd ever cut class. As they crossed the street, Kenan swallowed hard. Now they were officially off school grounds.

“What if people stop us, Marcus? They may ask why we're not in school.”

Marcus shrugged. “People are too busy. Look how fast everyone walks. They aren't thinking about us. You just need to relax.”

The teens went to the subway stop. Kenan liked trains. His plan was to be a civil engineer.

He still remembered his first train set. His dad had bought it when Kenan was four. Kenan had loved trains ever since.

Marcus looked around. People were

streaming into the subway. It was busier than he'd expected. "Just keep your head down. Don't draw attention to yourself. We'll be at Point Park in less than an hour. Then we can ride roller coasters."

The boys took out their subway passes. Marcus went first. He slid his pass through the scanner. It lit up green. Then he proceeded through the turnstile.

Kenan went next. After he went through the turnstile, the boys headed down to the train platform.

In a weird way, this place felt like Kenan's second home. His father had driven this route until two years ago. That was when the trains in their city had become automated. It was also when Kenan's dad had lost his job.

Marcus noticed how quiet his friend was. "Are you thinking about your dad?"

Kenan stared down the track. “I guess I was.” He smiled sadly. “I still remember when he showed me how all the train controls worked. I used to think I would drive this route one day.”

“Have you talked to your dad lately?” Marcus asked.

Kenan studied the smudge on his shoe. “We video chat when he’s not too tired.”

After his dad was laid off, he had a hard time finding work. Finally, he found a job in a different city. Kenan remembered the day his dad told him the news.

“I might get to go see him this summer,” Kenan added.

“That would be cool!” Marcus tried to sound excited. He knew how much Kenan missed his dad.

The sound of the train coming made the boys look up.

“Yes!” Marcus said. “Let’s sit up front.”

When the train stopped, the boys ran to the first car. They stood by the front window. Kenan looked into what used to be the control area. There was no person there now.

Other passengers followed the boys into the first car. An older woman glanced at them as she sat. Her lips pursed. She reminded Kenan of Ms. Corley. “Shouldn’t you boys be in school?”

Marcus smiled. “Today was early dismissal.”

She nodded slowly. The look on her face made Kenan nervous. He started to offer up another excuse. But Marcus elbowed him. Kenan knew that was his friend’s signal to keep quiet. When Kenan got nervous, he talked too much.

The boys stared out the window. Green signals rushed by them in the dark tunnel. Then the train slowed. This was the last stop before it emerged from below ground.

Doors slid open. The woman across from them stood up. She gave the boys one last look. Then she got off the train.

Kenan exhaled. But his relief didn't last long. More people exited. A few got on. One person rushed into their car just before the doors closed.

Marcus and Kenan looked up to see the back of a teenage boy. The boy planted his feet and grabbed a pole to steady himself.

“Wait until the train goes outside,” Marcus said to Kenan. “I can show you my old house.”

At the sound of Marcus's voice, the boy standing near them stiffened. Slowly, he turned.

Kenan knew him from school. He could tell the boy recognized them too. They were busted.

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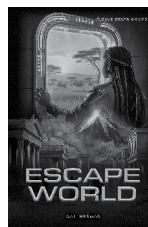
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THRILLER

RUNAWAY TRAIN

Kenan has always been a good student, so skipping one day of school for an adventure with his best friend, Marcus, seems harmless. Their plan is to take the train to an amusement park and enjoy a day of fun. But their excitement soon turns to terror. Can Kenan and Marcus face the danger in front of them and stop the runaway train before it's too late?



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