

# THE TORCH

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**John Boston**

Jeff Pascal was a professional arsonist by trade. He would burn anything for you, as long as the price was right and the price had better be right. No job was too big or too small. He had burnt boats, cars, even vacation homes for his clients. No one ever said a word. Their lips were forever sealed. Jeff didn't have to threaten anyone.

*Cause if he went down.....then they went down with him. Simple as that. No one likes a snitch.*

His latest client was named Walter. He never bothered with last names. Jeff had been a claims adjuster for a large insurance company. He knew the insurance scam inside and out. Investigators knew it was arson but they had to be able to legally prove it in court. That's where Jeff had them beat. His arson methods were untraceable and undetectable. Even the FBI had been beaten by him. He was that damn good. Walter seemed somewhat skeptical.

"I'm in trouble. I'm in over my head with these properties. That eviction ban killed me. All it did was destroy the commercial real estate market so the hedge funds can scoop them up for next to nothing. I can't believe it's come to this."

"Walter.....I don't just start fires. I hold your hand throughout all of this. It doesn't do me any good to burn the building to the ground if I don't get paid. I'm paid to make sure you get paid." said Jeff.

"I don't want to go to prison, but I don't want to be bankrupt either. It's not much of a choice."

"I can't make it for you, that's something you've got to do on your own."

"How much?"

"I get half of your settlement," said Jeff.

"Half? Are you nuts?"

"Walter.....any arson investigator will know it's arson in five minutes. They will look into your financial history and find out how bad off you are. Right there, they know they have you, it's just a matter of time. You hire some dip shit right out of prison and you'd be taking his place. They have to prove it's arson in court. They can't do that with my fires. I've beaten them every time."

"Yeah, but half?"

"What's your policy on the building?"

"It's insured for half a million."

"Two hundred and fifty thousand in your pocket for doing nothing? Doesn't seem so bad to me?"

"The property is worthless. If the lot was cleared, I might be able to sell it to a developer. Demolition is very expensive."

"So, there you go. We're going into business together. We both make out in the end."

"I just don't want to go to prison. I'm too old and.....just scared. I wouldn't last five minutes in prison."

"You stick with me and you won't. Just make sure you have a rock-solid alibi and you're home free. Knowing its arson and proving it are two completely different things. If they can't prove it, you can't be charged."

"You're awfully sure of yourself," said Walter.

"I'm successful. Of course, I'm sure of myself. Remember, once it's done, we only meet face to face. No phone calls. We meet twice a week. Is that understood?"

"Understood. Will you do it?"

"Yes. I'll need 48 hours to prepare the chemical solution. So four nights from tonight. Saturday night. Take your wife out. Make certain you're seen. At midnight, the building gets torched."

"Just like that?"

"Just like that."

Four days later at 12:22, the fire department received a call for a fire at Walter's commercial building. By the time they arrived, the fire had engulfed about fifty percent of the building. It took the fire department about an hour to bring the blaze under control. It wasn't until the next morning that they discovered the bodies of two homeless people that had been squatting in the building when the fire started. Walter could barely contain himself when they met the next morning in the underground parking lot. He was shaking so badly, he could barely sit still.

"Jesus.....what the hell have I done?"

"Relax Walter. Cops can't even identify them."

"How could I be so stupid? Now, I'm going to prison for sure."

"Walter, the only way you're going to prison is if you put yourself there. How did the interview with the cops go?"

"Good. I took my wife to a ball game. I kept the ticket stubs."

"Good. I hope you put on a good performance."

"It was Oscar-worthy. I acted shocked. I even went down there with them to look over the property. I certainly didn't act guilty."

"They might want a second interview. It's pretty standard. Ace that and we're home free."

"What about the two dead bodies?"

"What about them?"

"We killed them."

"Walter, they were homeless junkies. The cops aren't going to care. No one is going to do any serious investigating, except maybe the insurance company. I hope you're ready for that one."

"How could you not have seen them?"

"Walter, it was dark. It's a big building. Shit happens, man. We can't control every little variable in the equation. Just keep cool and don't go to pieces on me. Make sure you rehearse your story several times before the interview. Once they establish your alibi, the case is going to run into a brick wall. It's not even a huge payout. Your insurance company may not even fight it in court."

"Do you think the cops followed me? Could they be sitting in one of these cars listening to us?" asked Walter.

"Walter.....relax. Without that arson report, the cops don't have shit. Go home. Get a hooker or do some blow or something to take your mind off all this. Two dead junkies is not going to be a priority for the cops. They might follow up on it, but unless you hang yourself, you're home free."

"Right. Look, I'm not used to talking to cops. I get nervous."

"Walter.....if cops were any good at their jobs, I'd be sitting in prison right now," said Jeff.

The cops did do another follow-up interview, but it was only one uniformed officer, not a detective. He didn't even seem to care about the case at all. The arson report came back and was *inconclusive*, meaning the cops knew it was arson, they just couldn't prove it. That pretty much ended their involvement in the case. Jeff had been right all along. The officer handling the case did ask to see the ticket stubs from the game he attended. Walter also stopped for gas on the way home and made certain he was seen on camera. No one was able to positively identify the bodies found in the rubble.

"What's going to happen to them?" asked Walter

"No idea." replied the officer.

"I just feel horrible about all this."

"Most of the empty buildings in this city have homeless people in them. Last year one burned down with two kids inside. Shit happens all the time." said the officer.

Dealing with the cops was easy. Dealing with his insurance company was going to be another matter entirely. When money changed hands, there were bound to be questions asked.....*and answers needed.*

"I think there's someone following me," said Walter at their next rendezvous.

"No one's following you, Walter. If they were, you wouldn't even know it."

"I keep seeing someone. At least I think they do."

"So, are they following you or not?"

"I don't know. I keep seeing two people, but I'm not sure if they're actually there, or if's just my imagination.....or my guilty conscience."

"Walter.....don't do pieces on me now. We're practically home free," said Jeff sipping his coffee.

"I can't believe I got mixed up in all this."

"Walter, for fuck's sake, you did the only sensible thing a person in your situation could do. You didn't know there was anyone in the building and neither did I. It was an accident. They weren't supposed to be in your building anyway."

"I know. I keep telling myself that."

"Having them inside is the best thing that could have happened to your claim anyway."

"How do you figure?"

"Walter.....the insurance investigator isn't going to find any trace of an accelerant. He's not going to find a trace of anything, cause the chemicals I use break down completely in less than an hour. They won't know if you set the fire, or the junkies did. They're going to have to pay. We're going to be rich. Just don't do anything stupid and we're home free. If you act guilty, everyone is going to think you are guilty."

"Yeah....I see what you mean. That money sure would be nice. I might actually be able to get back on my feet."

"I knew you weren't a quitter. Just play the part. That's all you have to do. Don't do anything out of the ordinary and whatever you do, don't tell your damn wife. Am I clear?"

"Yeah. I just hate lying to her. She knows something is wrong."

"Walter.....sometimes we have to lie and cheat and steal to get ahead in this world. You're old enough to know that. Sometimes we have to make hard choices. We're not going to lose this one, I promise you." said Jeff.

Jeff was getting nervous about old Walter. He could derail this whole operation with just a slip of the tongue. Loose lips sink ships and send people to prison every day. Jeff followed Walter home

after their second meeting. He knew where his office was and where he spent his free time. When Walter missed their weekly meeting, Jeff had to assume the worst. If Walter really was a suspect, the first thing the cops would do is to search his phone records. Jeff wanted to make their job as difficult as possible. He did not make rookie mistakes.....because he was no rookie.

Walter did make his second appointment. Jeff could tell he was very nervous. He looked like he was *out on the tiles* as his old man used to say. He was reasonably sure that Walter was now packing. That made for a very uneasy situation.....*very uneasy*. Jeff never carried a gun. He always thought they were for amateurs trying to look cool with no real criminal skills to get them through.

"Morning, Walter," said Jeff.

Walter said nothing and got in the car.

"What's new?"

"I'm being followed," he said

"Followed? By who?"

"I don't know who they are, but they're following me. I see them everywhere. I'm just not sure if I'm imagining the whole thing, or if they even exist. I would give anything just to know I'm not crazy. Being crazy is overrated. It sucks."

"Walter.....you may as well have the word guilty written all over your face. If the cops talk to you, it's over."

"Easy for you to say. They aren't following you."

"You're not leaving me many good options here, old boy."

"What are you going to do? Kill me to shut me up? Go ahead. At least I'll be free of them."

"Free of who?"

"I think they're the same people who died in that fire. They've come back to get their revenge."

Jeff looked at Walter with both pity and disgust. Problem was, if he killed Walter, he'd get nothing. If he kept him alive, he ran the risk of getting arrested. It wouldn't take very much to get Walter to spill the beans about everything. Jeff really didn't have any good options right now. He'd been in one situation like this before. He had to silence the man before he was interviewed by the cops. Jeff hated violence and killing, but he had no choice. Going to prison wasn't an option either.

"So, you think ghosts are following you? Can ghosts talk to cops?"

"You think I'm a nut. I think you'll be next Jeffery."

"Walter.....how do you know my name?"

"I had you followed one night. I know where you live. I know where you went to college. I know you majored in Chemical Engineering at BYU. Don't worry Jeffery, if I go down, you're going down with me."

"Walter.....you have to be the dumbest motherfucker on Earth. You are about to be given a check for half a million dollars? Do you think anyone on Earth will ever see that much money? They dream about it. I can't believe you're going to screw this up."

"Jeff.....they're real. The ghosts are real. Sometimes they look like real people, other times they just look like shadows, but they're always there. Every time I think I've escaped them, they're right there in the shadows, just waiting for me. I don't even care about the money at this point. The hell good is it going to me if I'm dead?"

"You aren't dead."

"No, not yet. I will be soon. They're just toying with me before they finally do it. They're stalking their prey."

"You're very selfish.....do you know that? I hate selfish people. Only thinking of themselves and no one else. Makes me sick to my stomach."

"I'm sorry it has to be this way, Jeff. We won't be meeting anymore. Our business contract is officially terminated." said Walter.

"It isn't terminated until I get paid, then it's officially terminated. You're a lousy businessman, Walter."

"I just want to stay alive. I don't want to die. I don't want those things to take me."

"Walter, if I don't have my money in 90 days, I go to the cops. Am I clear?"

Walter pulled out a small pistol from his pocket. Jeff pulled out his 9mm. He was quicker on the draw than Walter. They said nothing as they drew on one another in the car.

"The insurance company has ninety days to pay out on the claim unless they fight it in court, which they won't do unless you do something stupid. All you have to do is keep your goddamn mouth shut. Can you do that?"

"Yeah.....yeah, I can do that," he said and put his pistol back in his pocket.

"We will meet back here exactly ninety days from tonight. You better have my money. If you don't, well, we won't think about that right now. Go home. If you see any more boogeymen, then shoot them."

Walter got out of Jeff's car. Jeff grabbed him and pulled him back in.

"You weren't recording this conversation were you?" he asked.

"What? No. I left my phone in my car. Were you recording this conversation?" asked Walter.

"Of course I was," said Jeff and held up a small microcassette recorder.

"The worst mistake I ever made in my life was to get mixed up with someone like you. You're garbage," said Walter.

"Remember Walter.....*you searched for me*. This entire operation was yours from the beginning. If you go to prison, it's your own fault.....not mine or anyone else." said Jeff as he let him go.

"Fuck you!"

"Ninety days from now you never have to see me again. I'm out of your life completely. Don't screw this up." said Jeff as Walter stepped out of his car.

Jeff sat in his little condo and mulled his options. Walter was becoming a major liability at this point. He had no choice. Walter was going to have to be killed. He had decided. He just had to figure out how he was going to do it. The last one he killed was easy. He simply injected him with a synthetic drug that would induce a heart attack. Shot him full of it, then just waited for him to die. Two agonizingly long hours later, he finally did. Jeff hated to do it, but there was no other way. Sometimes in his line of work, you had to do some very horrible things to stay out of prison. That was the nature of the beast. Walter would never let him get that close. He was going to have to hire it out. That meant more loose ends. This simple operation had turned into a nightmare. He couldn't believe how stupid some people can be. A man Walter's age should have known what he was getting into.

*Criminals aren't nice people.....that's why they're criminals.*

It had been over three weeks since he had last seen Walter. He was making dinner and about to watch his favorite podcast when he heard a knock at the door. Jeff grabbed his gun and looked through the peephole. He could see two men in suits standing outside his door.

"Who is it?"

"Long Beach Police Department. I'm Detective Malheur. This is Detective Ruiz. Are you Jeff Pascal?" they asked on the other side of the door.

He opened the door.

"We would like you to come down to our precinct headquarters to answer some questions," said Ruiz

"Right now?"

"Yes."

"What's this about?"

"I think you know what this is about," said Ruiz

"No, I'm sorry. I most certainly do not."

"We'll explain on the way."

"Okay," said Jeff. He grabbed his jacket and locked his door. He had been mentally preparing for this since his last meeting with Walter. He knew it was going to be a battle of wits. He also knew they wouldn't be able to pin anything on him, even if Walter did confess.

"Did you know Walter Levinson?" asked Ruiz

"Walter Levinson.....yeah. I met him last year at a conference for online start-ups. I think that's him."

"Well, he died last night at his house. He was burned to death in his car. We've never seen a car fire like this one. It took the fire department almost three hours to put it out." said Malheur.

"That's horrible. What's that got to do with me?"

"He left a note. He said he hired you to burn down one of his apartment buildings a few months ago. He said they were following him. It was a complete confession. Did you burn down that building?" asked Ruiz.

"I didn't burn down any building."

"Cut the crap, Jeff. We know you're a chemistry wiz. We know you did an internship for DUPONT Chemical. You're a torch, a professional fire setter."

"Excuse me? You guys think just because I majored in chemistry twenty years ago that somehow makes me an arsonist?"

"Jeff, we know you set the fire. It's just a matter of time until we can prove it. Where were you on the night of July 18th of this year?"

"I have no idea where I was. Probably at home, why?"

"That was the night one of his distressed properties near the pier burned to the ground, along with two homeless people inside. You're looking at two counts of first-degree murder."

"Wait.....July 18th.....yes, I do know where I was. I was in Phoenix for a conference of chemical engineers."

Ruiz and Malheur looked at one another. Jeff had not only made sure Walter had an alibi, he had made sure *he* had an alibi as well. If the shit hit the fan, he always had an escape plan. Clearly, he had just thrown a major wrench into their case.

"You can prove that?"



"Yes, I can prove that. I have photos on my phone with several of the people attending. I saw some old friends there." said Jeff as he scrolled through the pictures on his phone and showed them to the detectives."

"I even spoke for about fifteen minutes that night to a small group of foreign investors," said Jeff.

Ruiz and Maheur stepped outside. Jeff knew he was a free man. He had to restrain himself from smiling. They didn't have a damn thing to tie him to the fire. They were gone for almost twenty minutes. They returned with a manila folder.

"Jeff.....you're much more intelligent than most of the criminals we drag in here, but you're no different. We going to nail you and when we do, we're going to throw the book at you. You'll spend the rest of your life in prison." said Ruiz, getting up in his face.

"Look. Walter did approach me and ask me to burn some of his properties. I told him no. I never thought he would actually do it. If I knew he had done this, I would have come to you and told you. I didn't know he had done it until right now. The man was clearly not well. That does not make me an accomplice. You can't accuse someone of committing a crime when you have zero evidence to make your case. That's what idiots do. You guys aren't idiots, right?"

"Jeff, people don't lie in suicide notes. I've seen enough of them to know that."

"Yeah, I'm sure that will hold up in court. People lie about everything and anything. The person you should be grilling is dear old Walter, he's the one who did this."

"You're good Jeff. I have to give you that. We had two arson investigations done. One by the city, the other by the state Fire Marshal's office. Neither one could come up with the cause of the fire. Just because we can't charge you, doesn't mean you're innocent. Even an idiot would understand that." said Ruiz

"Am I being charged?"

"No. Not right now. You're free to go. Keep in touch if you plan on going anywhere." said Malheur.

"The person who burned that building was Walter. Unless you are going to dig up his corpse, I think this ends right here and right now. If you want to talk to me again, I'll have an attorney present. Good night, gentlemen." he said and left the interview room. He was escorted out of the building by Ruiz who said nothing as he left.

Jeff was grinning from ear to ear. These idiot cops had no idea who they were dealing with. Jeff had run circles around them. He had a backup plan and a backup plan for that plan. The beauty of his fire-starting system was the timing. He used separate chemicals in plastic bowls that slowly dissolved. When the chemicals interacted with one another, they released all of their energy very quickly. The plastic bowls were incinerated in the fire. It gave him ample time for an alibi. That was his get-out-of-jail-free card. No jury was going to convict him knowing he was over five hundred miles away at the time of the fire. Ruiz and Malheur had discovered very quickly that Jeff is always the smartest person in the room.....*by a long shot.*

He first noticed them when he was taking out the trash one evening. Two of them, standing in the shadows, almost motionless. He kept a pistol with him everywhere he went, even just to take out the trash. When he turned and looked once more, the figures were gone. He wasn't certain if they were real, or just shadows. It was creepy either way.

He saw them the next day, standing on the side of the road. Two figures dressed in black. He couldn't see their faces. One of them raised his arm and waved at Jeff very slowly. His skin was black. Jeff stopped the car and backed up to where the men had been standing. When he stopped again, the figures were gone. He had only taken his eyes off them for a second and they were gone.

*Like they never existed.*

He would see them more and more with each passing day. Only quick glimpses out of the corner of his eye. Sometimes they would wave to him and expose their blackened skin. One of the men didn't have blackened skin, as much as he had charred skin. Jeff ran over to him. The figures turned the corner and walked away. By the time he had crossed the street and ran around the corner, they were both gone. Vanished into thin air. There was no place for them to go, yet they were nowhere to be found. Jeff was now more than just a little bit unnerved.

*Easy old boy.....maybe whatever Walter had was contagious. Don't go to pieces now, when you're so close to the finish line. It's the cops you have to worry about, not ghosts. Ghosts can arrest and convict you. Keep it together and you're home free.*

He was beginning to grow increasingly nervous about the mysterious apparitions that seemed to be following him wherever he went. Now, he understood what Walter meant. This was weird. He knew they didn't exist. Maybe it was his conscience finally catching up to him. He didn't like not being in control. Jeff was always in control of the situation.

*Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.*

He was watching a movie when he heard a loud knock at his door. He didn't need his gun. He knew exactly who it was. He put on his shoes and grabbed his jacket before opening the door. Two uniformed police officers were standing in his doorway.

"Jeff Pascal?" one of them asked.

"Yes?"

"We have a warrant for your arrest for first-degree arson with homicide."

"Of course you do. Well, let's go," he said as they put the handcuffs on him.

They took him to jail, where he was booked on the charges. He was given an orange jumpsuit. He called his attorney who promised to be there during his interview with Ruiz and Malheur. Jeff knew they were desperate. He knew he would beat the charge, but he also knew he might be stuck in here for months. He figured the bail would be for around half a million. If he bonded. He was going to need about fifty or sixty thousand upfront for the bondsman. He could swing it, but

it was going to be tight. He would have to hope and pray his lawyer didn't empty his bank account. It wasn't his first time in jail, but it didn't make it any easier. His mind began to wander. He wondered if he was ever going to make it out of here. He wasn't nervous. He was luring the cops into a very carefully selected trap. He was waiting for them to formally charge him, then he would drop the hammer on them. Not only did he have an air-tight alibi, but he had also recorded all the conversations between him and Walter and had edited some of them to make it seem like he refused Walter's offer and suggested he get some help. All he would be guilty of was not going to the cops. That wasn't even a crime. He liked to play games with people. Jeff was very good at it. He was a mental boxer, one who had been unbeaten thus far. One who would remain champion indefinitely. He even had the microcassette recordings with him when he was booked. He was going to deliver a knockout punch very quickly. There would be no way any forensics team would be able to prove the tape had been edited. It was primitive technology, but effective technology. He couldn't wait to see the looks on their faces when he played the tape. It was better than he could have hoped.

Ruiz and Malheur were both stunned. Jeff had outfoxed them once more. They knew their case just went out the window. Even Jeff's Lawyer was in shock. He played his part right on cue.

"So, when will my client be released and the charges dropped?" he asked.

"It doesn't mean anything. You only recorded the one you wanted us to hear, not the others.....and there were others," said Malheur.

"For heaven's sake officers.....he's on record refusing to commit the crime. He even suggested Walter get professional help. You and I know as soon as a jury hears this, it's over. As soon as the not guilty verdict comes back, our civil suit against your department begins."

"Jeff, the fire that killed Walter was so hot, it actually caused telephone poles nearby ignite. That was no ordinary fire. The fire department still has no idea how it was started or what was used to get a flame that hot. I think you wanted Walter dead so he wouldn't talk. Whatever happened in that car, it happened very quickly.....*like within seconds.*" said Ruiz leaning over the table.

"I did not kill Walter," said Jeff

"Prove it. I think you did. I think you wanted to shut him up."

"I see. How certain are you I killed him?" asked Jeff.

"One hundred percent," said Ruiz with his eyeballs almost popping out of his head.

"I see. Well, I did some checking on his death myself. See, I couldn't have set that fire."

"What do you mean?"

"I was at the Indian Springs Casino. I won two thousand on a KENO ticket that night. I have it right here if you'd like to see it. The time and date are stamped on the bottom." said Jeff, handing the ticket to Ruiz. He looked like his first-grade teacher had just handed him the first 'F' he had ever received. Jeff had just drop-kicked him right in his nuts.

"Okay. Give us a minute. We have some calls to make." said Ruiz as they left the room.

His attorney put his hand on his shoulder. Jeff would have made one hell of a lawyer.

"Jeff, you're slicker than snot. I got to give you that. Right now those two don't know whether to shit or go sailing."

"I can't believe this happened to me. We are going to sue, right?" he said, being careful to watch what was said. He assumed he was still being recorded, even if his attorney was in the room.

"If that's what you want."

"Yeah. I want these two to sweat a little. Make them feel like the victim for a moment."

Ruiz and Malheur came back about twenty minutes later. Jeff knew by the looks on their faces that he had won. A defeated man always has the same look on their face, no matter who they are.

"The District Attorney's Office says we don't have enough evidence to go forward. You're off the hook for right now. You're free to go." said Ruiz.

"This isn't over detective. Just because you have a badge, doesn't give you the right to ruin people's lives," said Jeff

"We both know you set that fire. It's just a matter of time before I put those cuffs on you again. Enjoy your temporary freedom." said Malheur.

"Nothing like a cop who can't admit when they're wrong. You'll be seeing us soon, detective," said Jeff's attorney as they left the interview room. Ruiz and Malheur both sat down at the table to lick their wounds.

"I've never wanted a collar so bad in my life. I'm going to get this asshole if it's the last thing I ever do," said Ruiz.

"He's good. I got to give the man that. He's one step ahead of us every time we meet."

"If only Walter had talked to somebody else about what happened. If we could just get one witness to testify he heard Walter involve Jeff, we could nail him."

"I don't know, Buddy. It's a long shot. Between the recording and the tape, we're going to have a hard enough time just getting the DA to file charges, let alone get a conviction. We got bigger cases than just this one."

"Yeah.....but this one stings the worst. I hate to let a guilty man just walk right out of here and there's not a damn thing I can do about it." said Ruiz.

"We aren't going to win them all."

"I can't believe this asshole is going to get away with it." said Ruiz

"He'll answer for what he's done. If not in this world, then in the next. He will never escape what he's done." said Malheur looking out the window.

"Call me if you need anything Jeff." said his lawyer on his way out.

"I have to wait for these clowns to release me. I'll go back to the pod and say goodbye to the boys. Some of these guys are in the same boat I'm in. I have to get my bedding. I'll call you tonight. We can go out to dinner. It's on me." said Jeff.

"Sounds good."

Jeff was escorted back to his cell and closed the door behind him. He heard it lock, which was unusual since the doors are supposed to be left open during the day. He pressed the intercom switch to speak to the control room to open his door but didn't get a response.

"You've got to be kidding me," he said when he looked outside his window and saw the two figures standing in the middle of the pod waving at him. They were the strangest-looking people he had ever seen. They were dressed in clothes that looked as if they had been burnt. They looked like two corpses you would pull out of the remains of a giant fire.

*They were still on fire. Jeff could see smoke coming off of their clothes.*

He began to frantically press the intercom button to speak with the control room. He kept frantically pressing and pressing the button, but there was no response. He looked outside his door again, through the pane of shatterproof glass. The figures were both waving at him now.

*Almost as if they were saying goodbye.*

Jeff felt something on his skin. It tingled at first, then it became painful. Pretty soon, he was overcome with the horrible pain that seemed to engulf his entire body. It was like he had just landed on the surface of the sun. He began screaming in agony. He could almost feel his skin being cooked right off his body. He was now a human barbecue. In his last brief moments of consciousness, he looked through the pane of glass in his doorway, as he tried desperately to open the door. He saw the two figures, who were now on the other side of the glass, which was melting. One of them was Walter. He could distinctly hear Walter's voice as he lost consciousness. His skin was charred black. His eyelids were cooked. Walter's voice was unmistakable.

*Welcome to the party, Jeffery!*

Jeff's entire world became lost in smoke and fire. The temperature in the room was now at over a thousand degrees. Even the concrete blocks separating the cells were beginning to melt. It was so hot, even his bones started to disintegrate. Jeff Pascal had finally gotten a taste of his own medicine.....and he didn't like it one bit.