

THE DECODED

A CASEY EBSARY LEGAL THRILLER

Tampa: 2:00 AM. The Grid is Real. So is the Trap.
One Lawyer Can Reset the System.



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The second section of this book ("*The Decoded*") is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, places, events, locales, and incidents are either the products of the author's imagination or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental. The legal strategies described in the fictional narrative are for dramatic purposes and should not be attempted without professional legal counsel.

A Note from W.F. "Casey" Ebsary Jr.

While the characters and specific events in *The Decoded* are products of a legal-thriller imagination, the "glitches" in the system—the faulty calibrations, the constitutional overreaches, and the crushing weight of mandatory minimums—are very real.

In my thirty years as a prosecutor and defense attorney, I have seen the Florida legal system move with a speed and coldness that can feel indistinguishable from the machine described in these pages. The "Neon Threads" of logic and the "Constitutional Shields" mentioned throughout this story are the actual tools I use every day in the courtrooms of Tampa and beyond.

I wrote this narrative to illustrate a simple truth: **Knowledge is your best defense.** Whether you are facing a technical BUI charge on the Gulf or a complex trafficking allegation in a Pinellas County courtroom, the outcome often depends on having an advocate who understands the "code" of the law well enough to dismantle an unjust case.

If you or a loved one are facing the "Grid" in real life, remember that the law is not just a list of penalties—it is a system of rules that must be followed by everyone, including those who enforce it.

— **W.F. "Casey" Ebsary Jr.** *Board Certified Criminal Trial Lawyer*

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PROLOGUE: The Weight of Neon

The humidity in Tampa didn't just hang in the air; it owned it. It was 2:00 AM on the Pinellas Trail, and the blue strobe of a Florida Highway Patrol cruiser sliced through the moss-draped oaks like a neon razor.

On the asphalt, a man knelt with his hands behind his head. Beside him lay a backpack. To the arresting officer, it was a "Probable Cause" container. To the man kneeling, it was a lead weight tied to his life. Inside that bag was a digital scale, a vacuum sealer, and exactly 28.2 grams of a white crystalline substance.

In Florida, that point-two of a gram was the difference between a year of probation and a three-year mandatory minimum in a concrete box. The officer didn't see a human being; he saw a score. He saw a "Trafficking" box checked on a digital form.

He didn't know that by sunrise, the grid he was building would meet its first glitch.

CHAPTER 1: Midnight on the Pinellas Trail

Casey Ebsary didn't sleep well when the moon was full and the scanners were active. He sat in his Tampa office, the glow of three monitors reflected in his glasses. On the center screen was a 3D rendering of a "Scoresheet"—the rigid, mathematical grid the State used to calculate human misery.

The phone rang. It was the "DUI2GO" emergency line.

"Casey," the voice on the other end was frantic. It was Dahlia, a paralegal who had seen too much and slept even less than he did. "We've got a pickup in Pinellas. High-profile. It's Elias Thorne."

Casey leaned back, the leather of his chair creaking like a warning. Thorne was a tech developer, a man who built the very encryption systems the State was trying to break.

"What's the charge?" Casey asked, already opening the clerk's portal.

"Trafficking. Cocaine. And they found a legal firearm in the glovebox. They're 'stacking,' Casey. They're aiming for the twenty-five-year enhancement."

Casey looked at the artwork on his wall—a concrete matrix intercepted by lines of blue light. It wasn't just art; it was his philosophy. The law was a machine. If you knew where the gears ground together, you could jam them.

"Where is he?"

"Land O' Lakes. They bypassed the local substation. They wanted him isolated."

"Tell them I'm coming," Casey said, grabbing his jacket. "And tell Thorne not to breathe. If he says 'hello' to a guard, he's giving them consent. I'll be there in forty minutes."

As Casey drove across the Howard Frankland Bridge, the lights of Tampa shimmering on the bay looked like the neon circuits of a massive motherboard. The State thought they had a closed loop. They thought the weight of the evidence was enough to sink Thorne.

But Casey knew something they didn't. In the 2026 legislative update, the calibration requirements for the roadside scales had been quietly amended. If that point-two gram was a ghost—a margin of error—the entire case was a hallucination.

He wasn't going there to argue. He was going there to decode.

CHAPTER 2: The Concrete Arithmetic

The Land O' Lakes detention center looked less like a jail and more like a data center for the damned. It was a sprawling complex of tilt-wall concrete, surrounded by double-fenced perimeters topped with razor wire that gleamed under the facility's high-intensity floodlights.

Casey Ebsary sat in a small, windowless attorney-client booth. The air smelled of industrial floor wax and the metallic tang of recycled ventilation. Across the scratched plexiglass sat Elias Thorne.

Thorne looked like a man who had been hit by a high-speed train and was still trying to remember the schedule. His designer shirt was wrinkled, and his hands were trembling—just enough to be visible to an observer, but not enough to stop a digital scale.

"Casey, they're saying it's twenty-five years," Thorne whispered. His voice was thin, cracking under the weight of the accusation. "Twenty-five years because of a Glock in my glovebox that I have a permit for. They're calling it 'Armed Trafficking.'"

Casey opened his leather folio. "Florida Statute 893.135 doesn't care about your permit, Elias. In the eyes of the State, a firearm in the commission of a felony isn't a tool for protection; it's a sentencing multiplier. And they're weighing that backpack as a 'mixture.' They aren't just weighing the cocaine; they're weighing the bag, the baggies, and the humidity in the air if they think they can get away with it."

"But I didn't—"

"Stop," Casey held up a hand. "The walls in here have ears, and the ears have microphones. We don't talk about what you did. We talk about what *they* did. Tell me about the stop."

Thorne took a jagged breath. "I was on the trail. Coming back from the lab. I had the samples for the new encryption project. The trooper pulled me over for a 'taillight out.' But Casey, I just had that car serviced. The lights were fine."

Casey's pen hovered over his notepad. "The Pretext. It's the oldest gear in the machine. Did he ask to search?"

"He didn't ask. He said he smelled cannabis. I told him I have a medical card, but he said that didn't matter. He said 'plain smell' gave him the right to rip the car apart."

A cold smile touched Casey's lips. "The 'Plain Smell' ghost. Since the 2025 rulings, the odor of cannabis alone is a dying doctrine for probable cause in Florida. If that's all he had, the foundation of this case isn't concrete. It's sand."

Suddenly, the heavy steel door behind Casey groaned open. A man in a sharp, charcoal suit stepped in. He wasn't a guard. He was Assistant State Attorney Marcus Vane, a man who viewed the Florida Criminal Punishment Code as a personal scoreboard.

"Ebsary," Vane said, leaning against the doorframe. "I heard you were down here trying to fix a leak. Save your breath. We've got the weight, we've got the weapon, and we've got the body cam footage of your client looking like he just saw a ghost."

Casey didn't turn around. "Hello, Marcus. I assume you're here to offer a deal before I file the Motion to Suppress and make your Trooper look like he's never read the Fourth Amendment?"

"Suppression?" Vane laughed, a dry, hollow sound. "The Trooper found forty grams of a Schedule II substance. That triggers a mandatory minimum that I can't waive, and you can't argue. Unless, of course, your client wants to provide 'Substantial Assistance.'"

Casey felt Thorne stiffen beside him. Substantial Assistance—the legal term for becoming a confidential informant. It was the "C.I. Trap," the second most dangerous part of the grid.

"My client isn't a snitch, Marcus. He's a citizen with rights you're currently infringing upon," Casey said, finally turning to face the prosecutor. "And if you think that scale was calibrated to the 2026 NIST standards, you're in for a very expensive surprise at the evidentiary hearing."

Vane's eyes narrowed. The mention of the 2026 calibration standards hit a nerve. He checked his watch. "You have until the first appearance at 8:00 AM. After that, the scoresheet is locked. Twenty-five years, Casey. Think about it."

Vane exited, the heavy door slamming with a finality that echoed in the small room.

Thorne looked at Casey, his eyes wide with terror. "What happens at 8:00 AM?"

Casey stood up, packing his notes. "At 8:00 AM, the State tries to lock the padlock. But they forgot one thing: I helped build the cage. I know where the hinges are weak."

CHAPTER 3: Ghosts in the Body Cam

The hum of the city was a distant thrum as Casey stepped out of the jail and into the cool, pre-dawn air of Pasco County. He had four hours before the first appearance hearing—four hours to find the "glitch" that would blow the State's case apart.

He pulled his phone from his pocket and dialed a number that wasn't in his contacts. It was a direct line to a digital forensic specialist in Tallahassee.

"I need the packet on Trooper Miller's body cam from 02:00 tonight," Casey said, not bothering with a greeting. "And I need the NIST Handbook 44 update for 2026. Specifically, the amendments on 'minimum verification scale divisions' for law enforcement equipment."

"Casey, it's 4:00 AM," a drowsy voice replied. "The State's cloud server for body cams has a ninety-day retention policy, but they don't sync the metadata for forty-eight hours."

"They do if there's an active 'Public Interest' request under the new 2026 transparency bill. I'm filing the emergency petition now. Check your secure drop in ten minutes."

Casey sat in his car, his laptop glowing on the passenger seat. He was looking for a very specific legal needle in a very large haystack. In October 2025, the Florida Second District Court of Appeal had handed down a ruling in *Williams v. State* that changed everything. It officially declared that the "plain smell" of cannabis was no longer enough to establish probable cause for a search, because—as Casey had argued for years—the odor was indistinguishable from legal hemp and medical marijuana.

If Trooper Miller had relied solely on smell, the search of Thorne's car was a constitutional violation. But Casey knew Miller. Miller was a "totality of circumstances" kind of cop. He would lie. He would claim he saw "erratic driving" or "furtive movements."

Casey's screen flickered. The body cam metadata had arrived.

He watched the footage. It was grainy, illuminated by the strobing blue and red lights. He saw Thorne pull over. He saw Miller approach the window. And then, he saw it.

Miller reached into the car before he even spoke to Thorne. He didn't ask for a license. He didn't ask for registration. He reached for the backpack on the passenger seat.

"Gotcha," Casey whispered.

But there was a second problem: the weight. The State was claiming 28.2 grams. In Florida, the trafficking threshold for cocaine was 28 grams. If the weight was even a fraction lower, the mandatory minimum evaporated.

He opened the 2026 NIST Handbook 44. The new standards required scales used for "law enforcement and the collection of statistical information" to be calibrated every 180 days with a certified "weight classifier."

Casey pulled up the maintenance records for the Pasco County Sheriff's lab scale. The last calibration was 184 days ago.

The machine was out of spec.

At 7:45 AM, Casey walked into the courthouse. The hallways were already buzzing with the morning rush of public defenders, bail bondsmen, and nervous families. He spotted

Marcus Vane standing by the courtroom door, looking smugly at a stack of scoresheets.

"Ready to concede, Casey?" Vane asked, not looking up. "The lab just confirmed the 28.2 grams. It's a lock."

"Actually, Marcus, I'm here to file a Motion to Suppress evidence and a Motion for an Independent Weighing," Casey said, handing Vane a thick packet of paper.

Vane glanced at the top page. "Suppression? On what grounds? The Trooper smelled weed."

"The Second DCA says 'smell' is a dead letter, Marcus. See *Williams v. State*. And more importantly, look at the body cam time-stamp at 02:04:12. Your Trooper initiated a search of the bag before he even established reasonable suspicion for the stop. He didn't smell anything; he was fishing."

Vane's smug expression flickered. He looked at the time-stamp Casey was pointing to.

"And as for your 'lock' on the weight," Casey continued, his voice low and steady. "Your lab scale is four days out of NIST compliance. In 2026, that 28.2 grams isn't evidence. It's a guess. And a guess doesn't carry a three-year mandatory minimum."

The bailiff opened the courtroom doors. "All rise for Judge Halloway."

Casey adjusted his tie. "It's 8:00 AM, Marcus. Let's see who's really decoded the system."

CHAPTER 4: The Glovebox Gambit

The air in the courtroom shifted as Judge Halloway adjusted her glasses, her eyes scanning the scoresheet that ASA Marcus Vane had just placed on her bench. In Florida's legal grid, a drug charge is a spark, but a firearm is the gasoline.

"Mr. Vane," Halloway's voice was like gravel under a silk tire. "I see a secondary charge here. Florida Statute 790.07— Possession of a Firearm during the Commission of a Felony. And you've checked the box for the 775.087 enhancement. You're asking for a ten-year mandatory minimum on top of the trafficking count?"

"That is correct, Your Honor," Vane replied, standing tall. "The firearm was found in the glovebox. The drugs were in a backpack on the passenger seat. In Florida, that proximity constitutes 'armed' trafficking. It's 10-20-Life territory. The law doesn't care if the gun was in a holster or if it was legally owned. It was present. It was accessible. It was an enhancement."

Casey Ebsary didn't wait for the Judge to look his way. He was already moving toward the lectern, his leather briefcase open like a weapon of its own.

"Your Honor, if I may," Casey started, his tone a contrast to Vane's aggressive posturing. "The State is attempting to 'stack' a ten-year mandatory sentence based on a theory of constructive possession that hasn't been viable since the 2024 appellate updates. They're trying to turn a law-abiding citizen's right to carry into a trap."

Vane scoffed. "Constructive possession is settled law, Casey. The gun was in the car. He had 'dominion and control.'"

"Dominion and control are words, Marcus. Facts are different," Casey countered. He pulled a high-resolution photo from his folder and placed it on the digital overhead. It was a close-up of the interior of Elias Thorne's car. "Look at the distance, Your Honor. The backpack was on the passenger seat, buckled in. The firearm was in the glovebox—which was *locked* at the time of the stop. My client didn't have 'actual' possession. He had 'remote' possession. To trigger the 10-20-Life enhancement, the State must prove that the firearm was 'readily accessible for immediate use.'"

Casey paused, letting the phrase hang in the sterile air of the courtroom.

"In *State v. Brown*, the court ruled that a firearm locked in a compartment does not meet the 'immediate use' threshold for the ten-year mandatory enhancement unless the State can prove the defendant had the key in hand or the compartment was open. Trooper Miller's own body cam shows him struggling with the glovebox latch for nearly thirty seconds before it gave way."

"He had the key on his fob!" Vane shouted.

"A key on a fob is a tool for the future, not a weapon for the 'immediate' commission of a crime," Casey said, turning back to the Judge. "If we allow the State to stack ten-year mandatory sentences on every person who carries a legal firearm in a locked compartment while unknowingly crossing a weight threshold on a faulty scale, we aren't practicing law. We're practicing arithmetic with lives."

Judge Halloway looked at the photo, then at Vane, who was now frantically scrolling through his tablet for a rebuttal.

"Mr. Vane," Halloway said, her voice dipping an octave. "Mr. Ebsary is raising a significant 'Actual vs. Constructive'

distinction. If that glovebox was locked, and the drug weight is already in question due to the NIST calibration issue raised in Chapter 3... I'm not seeing a ten-year mandatory floor here. I'm seeing a house of cards."

Thorne let out a breath he seemed to have been holding since the arrest. But Casey wasn't smiling yet. He knew the State had one more card to play. The "Serious Felony" enhancement wasn't just about the gun. It was about where the gun came from.

"Your Honor," Vane said, his voice dropping to a dangerous whisper. "There is one more thing. We ran the serial number on that Glock. It's not registered to Mr. Thorne. It's registered to a man currently serving time in Raiford. A man known to be a primary source for the very substance found in that backpack."

The courtroom went silent. Casey felt a cold drip of sweat on his neck. This was the "Ghost Link"—the connection to a larger conspiracy that could bypass every motion he had filed.

CHAPTER 5: The Pharmacy of Shadows

The fluorescent lights of the courtroom seemed to hum with a new frequency as Marcus Vane sat back, his "Ghost Link" revelation still vibrating in the air. The firearm in Thorne's glovebox wasn't just a weapon; it was a tether to a convicted felon in Raiford.

Casey Ebsary didn't flinch. He knew that in a trial, the first person to panic is the first person to lose. He reached into his briefcase and pulled out a single, laminated card. It was Thorne's **Florida Medical Marijuana Use Registry (MMUR)** identification.

"Your Honor," Casey said, stepping back to the lectern. "The State is trying to weave a conspiracy out of thin air. They see a serial number and a name in a database and call it a syndicate. I see a man with a chronic condition who has been forced to navigate a legal landscape that changes every six months."

Vane stood up. "The firearm is registered to a known trafficker, Your Honor. That's not a change in the landscape; that's a roadmap to a crime."

"The firearm," Casey countered, "was purchased legally by Mr. Thorne at a secondary market auction in 2023. We have the bill of sale. The fact that the previous owner, three years prior, ended up in Raiford is a 'collateral coincidence,' not a criminal conspiracy. But more importantly, let's talk about the *reason* for the stop: the odor."

Casey pointed to the MMUR card. "Under the 2025 appellate ruling in *Williams v. State*, the Second District Court of Appeal was clear. The 'plain smell' of cannabis is no longer probable cause in Florida. Why? Because the odor of legal medical

marijuana and legal hemp is chemically indistinguishable from illegal cannabis."

"My client is a registered patient," Casey continued. "He has a valid certification for the 2.5 ounces of smokable flower allowed every 35 days under **F.S. 381.986**. The moment Trooper Miller smelled that odor, he didn't encounter 'probable cause' of a crime. He encountered a 'presumptive legality' of a medical treatment."

Judge Halloway leaned forward. "Mr. Vane, did the Trooper ask for a medical card *before* he initiated the search?"

Vane looked at his notes, his jaw tightening. "The Trooper's report says the odor was 'overwhelming,' suggesting an amount far exceeding the legal 4-ounce home-possession limit."

"An odor doesn't have a scale, Your Honor," Casey interjected. "You can't smell the difference between one ounce and five. And you certainly can't smell a 'Prescription Trap.' My client was also in possession of a prescription for a Schedule II controlled substance—a pain management medication he was transitioning *away* from using his medical marijuana. The State is trying to call it 'trafficking' because the bottle wasn't in the original pharmacy container. But under **F.S. 893.13(7)(a)**, the crime isn't possession; it's the *intent* to distribute. There is zero evidence of sales. No baggies, no ledgers, no 'pay-and-owe' sheets."

Casey turned to Vane. "You're trying to prosecute a pharmacy error as a felony, Marcus. You're trying to trap a patient in a grid designed for cartels."

Judge Halloway tapped her pen against the bench. "I'm going to hold the 10-20-Life enhancement in abeyance. Mr. Ebsary, I want to see that bill of sale for the Glock. Mr. Vane, you have 48 hours to produce a single piece of evidence—beyond the

odor—that justified that search. If you can't, the 'Ghost Link' doesn't matter, because the backpack never makes it into evidence."

As the Judge stood to exit, Casey looked at Thorne. For the first time, the tech developer didn't look like he was drowning. He looked like he was learning how to fight.

"We aren't out of the woods," Casey whispered as he packed his bags. "Vane is going to go after the 'Doctor Shopping' angle next. He'll audit your MMUR records for the last two years. We need to make sure every gram you bought is accounted for."

Thorne nodded. "I have the receipts, Casey. Digital and paper. I'm a developer—I keep logs of everything."

"Good," Casey said, a grim smile appearing. "Because in Chapter 6, the State is going to try to take your logs and turn them into a confession."

CHAPTER 6: Division W: The Purgatory Program

The courtroom was quieter now, the initial adrenaline of the arrest replaced by the grinding reality of the Florida Scoresheet. In 2026, justice wasn't just blind; it was a calculator. Casey sat at the defense table, watching as the Clerk of Court uploaded the digital "Scoresheet" to the big screen.

The Scoresheet was a rigid grid, a literal "point system" for prison. Each charge carried a numerical value. If your total points exceeded 44, the judge was legally prohibited from sentencing you to anything less than prison—unless Casey could find a "Downwards Departure."

"Your Honor," Marcus Vane said, his voice echoing in the nearly empty room. "The State's position remains firm. With the Trafficking count and the Firearm enhancement, Mr. Thorne is scoring 104 points. That's a mandatory minimum of 60 months, even if he has a clean record. We aren't interested in Diversion. This isn't a 'Drug Court' case. This is a high-level felony."

Casey stood up, his hand resting on a thick stack of transcripts. "The State is reading from a broken script, Your Honor. They are counting points for a 'Serious Felony' that we've already shown was a locked-glovebox coincidence. If we remove the 10-20-Life enhancement and reduce the trafficking to a simple possession—based on the NIST calibration failure I raised—the points drop to 32."

"32 points?" Judge Halloway raised an eyebrow. "That puts him below the 44-point threshold. That makes him eligible for **Non-State Prison Sanctions.**"

"Exactly," Casey said. "And more importantly, it makes him eligible for **Pre-Trial Intervention (PTI)** or **Division W**—the specialized Drug Court program."

Vane slammed his folder down. "Thorne is a tech mogul, not a street-level addict! He doesn't belong in a treatment program."

"That's exactly why he *does* belong there, Marcus," Casey countered. "Division W isn't just for addicts; it's for people whose lives have been derailed by the intersection of health and law. It focuses on rehabilitation and accountability rather than just warehousing people in concrete boxes. If Mr. Thorne completes a court-monitored program, the charges are dismissed. The record is sealed. The 'padlock' stays open."

Casey turned to the Judge. "I am moving for a 'Withhold of Adjudication.' In Florida, if a judge withholds adjudication, the defendant is not 'convicted' of a felony. They keep their right to vote. They keep their professional licenses. They keep their future."

Judge Halloway looked at Thorne, who was sitting perfectly still. "Mr. Thorne, do you understand that if I grant a move to a Diversion program, you will be subject to random testing, home visits, and a level of scrutiny that would make a sub-routine audit look like a vacation?"

"I do, Your Honor," Thorne said, his voice finally steady.

"Mr. Ebsary," the Judge said, turning back to Casey. "I'm going to stay the sentencing. I want a full evaluation from the Division W coordinators. But be warned: if the State can prove even a fraction of that 'Ghost Link' to Raiford, the deal is off the table, and we go back to the 104-point scoresheet."

As they walked out of the courtroom, Thorne grabbed Casey's arm. "Casey, Vane isn't going to stop. He's looking for

something else. He was asking the guards about my daughter, Cora."

Casey stopped mid-stride. The air in the hallway suddenly felt very cold. "Your daughter is an artist, right? She's at the university?"

"Yes," Thorne said, his eyes filled with a new kind of fear. "Why would he be asking about her?"

"Because," Casey said, looking toward the State Attorney's office, "if Vane can't break you in the courtroom, he'll try to break you through the **Collateral Consequences**. He's not just trying to win a case anymore. He's trying to dismantle your entire world."

CHAPTER 7: Starving the Defense

The battle for Elias Thorne's life had moved beyond the sterile walls of Judge Halloway's courtroom. It was now playing out in the quiet suburbs of Seminole and the glass-walled offices of Tampa's tech corridor.

"They suspended it," Thorne said, staring at a letter on Casey's mahogany desk. "My driver's license. I haven't even been convicted, Casey. I haven't even had an evidentiary hearing."

Casey nodded, his expression grim. "Florida Statute 322.055. It's an automatic trigger. Upon a 'conviction' for a drug offense, the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV) suspends your driving privilege for six months. But in 2026, the DHSMV has started treating certain pleas—even with a 'Withhold of Adjudication'—as a conviction for administrative purposes. They move faster than the judge."

"I can't drive to the lab," Thorne whispered. "I can't take Cora to her gallery opening."

"We'll petition for a 'Hardship License' after the required waiting period," Casey said, "but that's only the beginning of the **Collateral Consequences**. Look at your phone, Elias."

Thorne looked. A notification from the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR) flashed on the screen. His professional certification as a systems engineer was 'Under Review.'

"In Florida," Casey explained, "a felony charge—especially one involving trafficking or a firearm—triggers a mandatory reporting requirement for most professional boards. They don't wait for a jury. They open an investigation immediately to

determine if you are 'trustworthy' to hold the public's trust. Your career isn't just on hold; it's under a microscope."

But the real blow came ten minutes later. Thorne's daughter, Cora, called. Her voice was shaking.

"Dad... two men in suits were at the university gallery. They were asking the dean about your 'contributions' to my tuition. They said something about 'Proceeds of a Crime' and 'Civil Forfeiture' of my scholarship funds."

Casey grabbed the phone. "Cora, this is Casey. Listen to me: don't answer any more questions. Give them my card and walk away. They are trying to 'squeeze' your father by threatening your education."

He hung up and turned to Thorne. "This is Vane's 'Ghost Link' strategy. Since he can't prove you're a kingpin in court, he's using the **Civil Asset Forfeiture** laws to freeze your assets. In Florida, the police can seize property—cash, cars, even bank accounts—if they have a 'preponderance of evidence' that it's linked to criminal activity. It's a lower bar than 'beyond a reasonable doubt.' They are trying to starve you out."

Thorne stood up, his face pale but his jaw set. "He's going after my little girl's art. He's going after her future because he can't win the argument."

"He's trying to force you into that 'Substantial Assistance' deal from Chapter 2," Casey said. "He wants you to give him a bigger fish so he can let you go. But if we give in now, the collateral damage becomes permanent. Once your scholarship is revoked or your license is stripped, the court can't just 'undo' it later."

Casey walked over to the window, looking out toward the Pinellas Trail. "We need to file a **Verified Petition for Return**

of Property and an **Emergency Stay** on the license suspension. We have to show that the family has 'no other means of transportation' and that the funds for Cora's school came from your 2024 software exit, not a backpack on the trail."

"Can we win that?" Thorne asked.

"In court? Yes," Casey said. "But Vane isn't playing in court anymore. He's playing in the headlines. And in Chapter 8, we're going to find out exactly how much 'Boating Under the Influence' he can manufacture to make sure you never see the light of day again."

CHAPTER 8: High Tide, Low Blood

The Gulf of Mexico was a sheet of glass under the Florida sun, but for Elias Thorne, the water had turned into a minefield. Seeking a single day of reprieve from the courtroom drama, he had taken his daughter, Cora, out on their 24-foot center console. They were anchored near Three Rooker Island when the Florida Fish and Wildlife (FWC) patrol boat appeared.

What started as a "routine safety inspection" quickly spiraled. The officer claimed Thorne's eyes were bloodshot and his speech was thick. He didn't smell alcohol—he smelled the same "ghost" that had started this entire nightmare.

"Step onto my vessel, Mr. Thorne," the officer commanded. "We're going to perform some seated sobriety tasks."

By sunset, Casey Ebsary was standing at the edge of a marina in Tarpon Springs, watching the FWC tow Thorne's boat into a secure impound lot. Thorne was in the back of a cruiser, charged with **Boating Under the Influence (BUI)**.

"He wasn't drinking, Casey," Cora cried, her hands stained with charcoal from her sketchpad. "He hasn't touched a drop since the arrest in Chapter 1."

"It's not about alcohol, Cora," Casey said, watching the blue lights reflect off the dark water. "It's a **DUI-Drugs** theory. They're claiming he was under the influence of his medical marijuana or the prescriptions we discussed in Chapter 5. In Florida, the 'Normal Faculties' test is the same on a boat as it is in a car."

The next morning, Casey reviewed the BUI report. It was a classic "Observation Trap." The officer noted that Thorne

"swayed while standing" and "failed to follow a stimulus" during the Horizontal Gaze Nystagmus (HGN) test.

"The sway is called 'sea legs,' Marcus!" Casey shouted into the phone at ASA Vane. "The man had been on a rocking boat for six hours. Of course he swayed when you put him on a flat deck. And HGN for cannabis impairment is scientifically unsupported in the 2026 National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) guidelines."

"Doesn't matter, Casey," Vane's voice was cold. "He refused the urine test. Under Florida's **Implied Consent** law, that's an automatic one-year suspension of his boating privileges and a second-tier enhancement on his driver's license. We're moving to revoke his bond on the trafficking case because of this new arrest."

Casey slammed his fist on his desk. This was the "Total Dismantling" strategy. By adding a BUI, Vane was creating a pattern of "danger to the community" to convince Judge Halloway that Thorne was a liability who deserved to stay in jail until trial.

"We're fighting the refusal," Casey told Thorne later that day in the consultation room. "Under **F.S. 327.35215**, they have to prove you were actually operating the vessel, not just anchored. And more importantly, a urine test is a 'search' under the Fourth Amendment. If they didn't have probable cause for the BUI arrest, they had no right to demand the sample."

"But the jury will hear I refused," Thorne said, his head in his hands.

"Not if I file a **Motion in Limine** to exclude the refusal," Casey countered. "In Florida, if the arrest is unlawful, the refusal is inadmissible. We're going to show that the officer

used a 'Safety Inspection' as a pretext to hunt for a reason to arrest you. They are trying to sink you on land and at sea."

Casey looked at the clock. The bond revocation hearing was in two hours. He had to prove that the BUI was a manufactured "statutory trap" before Judge Halloway signed the order that would put Thorne in a orange jumpsuit for the next year.

CHAPTER 9: The Certification Strike

The courtroom for the bond revocation hearing felt like a pressure cooker. Marcus Vane had brought a thick file, ready to paint Elias Thorne as a serial offender—a man who defied the law on the highway and the high seas.

"Your Honor," Vane began, leaning into the microphone, "the defendant has shown a blatant disregard for the conditions of his release. Within weeks of a trafficking arrest, he is back in custody for a BUI. The 'Board Certified' defense is just a smoke screen for a man who thinks he is above the grid."

Casey Ebsary stood, not at the lectern, but in front of the jury box, even though there was no jury present. He needed the space to move. He needed to show the court what **Board Certification** actually meant: it wasn't just a title; it was a higher standard of forensic scrutiny.

"The State wants you to look at a pile of arrests, Your Honor. I want you to look at the *science* of a setup," Casey said. He pulled a heavy, leather-bound volume from his bag—the 2026 Trial Manual for Board Certified Criminal Lawyers.

"I have spent thirty years dismantling the very traps Mr. Vane is trying to set. To be 'Board Certified' in Florida means I have been peer-reviewed, tested, and vetted as an expert in trial advocacy. And as an expert, I see the 'BUI-Drugs' arrest for exactly what it is: a violation of the **Due Process Clause**."

Casey projected a technical diagram of the inner ear and the vestibular system onto the courtroom monitors.

"The FWC officer claimed my client 'failed' the seated sobriety tasks. But as any expert in Florida BUI law knows, seated tasks have zero validated correlation to impairment in a marine

environment when administered on a moving patrol boat. It's 'junk science' used as a pretext. My client didn't fail the test; the test failed the client."

Casey turned to Vane. "And as for the 'refusal' to provide a urine sample? Under **F.S. 327.35215**, a breath test is the primary requirement. A urine test is only permitted if a breath test is impossible or if there is reasonable suspicion of controlled substances. My client offered a breath sample on the spot. It was 0.00. The officer *refused the breath test* and demanded urine because he knew breath wouldn't show the 'Prescription Trap' we discussed in Chapter 5."

Judge Halloway looked at the FWC report, then back at Casey. "Mr. Ebsary, are you suggesting the officer intentionally bypassed a 0.00 breath result to hunt for legal metabolites?"

"I am suggesting that when you hire an expert defense, you find the gaps in the State's logic that a general practitioner would miss," Casey replied. "We have subpoenaed the patrol boat's internal dash-cam. It shows the officer dumping the breathalyzer mouthpieces into the trash before demanding the urine sample. It was a bad-faith search."

The Judge's face went cold. She looked at Vane. "Mr. Vane, did you have knowledge of a discarded 0.00 breath result?"

Vane stammered, his papers suddenly disorganized. "The... the officer's supplemental report hadn't reached my desk yet, Your Honor."

"Then get it on your desk by noon," Halloway snapped. "Bond revocation is denied. In fact, I am dismissing the BUI charge with prejudice based on the officer's bad-faith destruction of exculpatory evidence. We are back to the trafficking case—and Mr. Ebsary, I believe you have a final motion?"

Casey nodded. "The **100-Question Final Maneuver**, Your Honor. I am moving for an immediate **Judicial Inquiry** into the State Attorney's 'Ghost Link' theory. If they can't prove the connection to Raiford today, I want this case dismissed before the sun sets."

Casey looked at Thorne. They were on the ten-yard line. The "Expert Defense" had held the line, but Chapter 10 would be the "All-or-Nothing" sprint to the finish.

CHAPTER 10: The Decoding

The final morning felt like the inside of a pressurized chamber. The "Ghost Link" to Raiford—the one string Marcus Vane was using to hold the entire "Armed Trafficking" case together—was finally on the operating table.

Casey Ebsary sat at the defense table, his laptop disconnected from the network, protected by the very encryption Thorne had designed. He wasn't looking at law books anymore; he was looking at the digital trail of a setup.

"Your Honor," Vane said, his voice desperate now. "We have the trace. The Glock serial number was registered to a 'Salvo Rodriguez' in Raiford. We have jailhouse phone logs of Rodriguez talking to a 'contact' in Tampa about a delivery on the Pinellas Trail the night Thorne was arrested. It's a closed loop."

"A loop is only closed if the ends meet, Marcus," Casey said, standing up. He didn't go to the lectern. He walked straight to the State's table and dropped a single sheet of paper in front of Vane.

"This is a **Technical Audit** of the Raiford phone system from three weeks ago," Casey told the court. "The 'contact' Rodriguez was talking to wasn't my client. The IP address used to route that 'Tampa contact' call originated from an internal terminal at the Pasco County Sheriff's Office. Specifically, from the desk of Trooper Miller."

The silence that followed was absolute.

"Your Honor," Casey continued, his voice echoing in the stillness. "This wasn't a conspiracy by my client. This was a 'Ghost Case.' Trooper Miller used a confiscated firearm from a previous bust—one that was never properly logged—and

planted it in my client's glovebox during the illegal search we discussed in Chapter 3. He then used a confidential informant's account to spoof a phone call to create the Raiford link."

"That is a slanderous accusation!" Vane shouted, but his face had gone a ghostly shade of grey.

"It's not an accusation; it's a **Digital Receipt**," Casey said. "My client, Elias Thorne, is an encryption expert. When Miller took Thorne's phone during the arrest, he didn't realize the phone was running a background 'Passive Capture' script. It recorded the proximity of the Trooper's own device and the metadata of the spoofed call Miller was trying to 'verify' on the scene."

Casey turned to the Judge. "The 'Ghost Link' wasn't a roadmap to a crime. It was a roadmap to a frame-up. The weight was faked by a scale out of calibration. The search was faked by an odor that didn't exist. And the gun was faked by a Trooper looking for a promotion."

Judge Halloway didn't wait for Vane to respond. She looked at the digital audit, then at the bench, her expression one of pure, icy fury.

"Mr. Vane, I am referring this matter to the **Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE)** for a full public corruption investigation," Halloway said. "As for the case of *State v. Thorne*... based on the systematic violation of the defendant's constitutional rights and the clear evidence of law enforcement manufacturing, this case is **DISMISSED WITH PREJUDICE**."

The gavel hit the wood with a crack that sounded like a prison door opening—not for Thorne, but for the system that tried to take him.

EPILOGUE: The Foundation of Freedom

A week later, Casey and Thorne stood on the Pinellas Trail, near the spot where it had all started. The sun was setting, turning the sky a deep, neon orange.

"You saved more than my life, Casey," Thorne said, looking at the trail. "You saved Cora's future."

"The system is designed to move fast, Elias," Casey said, looking at the quiet path. "It's designed to make you feel like a score on a sheet. But the law has a code. If you know how to decode it, the truth still has a chance."

Casey looked at his phone. A new message had arrived. Another arrest, another "mandatory minimum," another person caught in the grid.

"I have to go," Casey said, adjusting his jacket. "There's another glitch in the machine."

THE DECODED

IN TAMPA, EVERY TRAIL IS A TRAP.

In a city built on digital surveillance, Casey Ebsary Jr. faces his ultimate challenge when the network itself turns against his client. Thorne, an encrypted tech developer, finds himself caught in a massive conspiracy where every byte of data is weaponized.

Can one lawyer find the glitches in a corrupted legal system and reset the matrix of power? The final decoding is a matter of life or death. This is the first novel by Board Certified Attorney W.F. "Casey" Ebsary Jr.



W.F. "Casey" Ebsary Jr.
(AUTHOR)



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