



Badge of Madness: The True Story of a Psychotic Cop

James Willwerth

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This is the shocking true story of a New York City cop caught in a web of paranoia, guns, a distorted sense of good and evil, and impending disaster...an actual case study with chilling psychological implications.

His name was Pete Bon Viso, a poor city kid who made good by joining the Force. He knew and liked the street people. Having grown up in an impoverished neighborhood, he saw himself as a member of the 'underclass' and identified with their problems. There were few cops in the Ninth Precinct as instinctively in touch with the criminal mind as Pete Bon Viso. According to his former partners, "He was no spit and polish cop...[but] a gung-ho cop and an intense booster of the brotherhood."

Then there were reports of a strange gun battle, and rumors of an attempt to murder a state official. Pete Bon Viso was in the middle of it all and nobody knew why or how. Pete claimed he was being stalked by a drug addict he had arrested and helped to convict, that man was trying to kill him and that his only hope was to "get him first." There was a department hearing and Pete was suspended. Records showed that the addict in question was serving time, safely behind bars. But Pete persisted in his claim. His partner guessed the truth but tried to protect him. At twenty-five, married, and the father of a five-month-old son, Patrolman Pete Bon Viso was suffering from paranoid hallucinations.

James Willwerth explores in depth what happened to Pete—his background and family, his view of himself in relation to the police department, and the reasons why he came apart.

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