



A Network Exposed: The Line Between Badges

Bo Wagoner

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A Network Exposed is a slow-moving but engaging cops-versus-criminals epic.

Bo Wagoner's ambitious police procedural thriller, *A Network Exposed: The Line Between Badges*, finds a small group of law enforcement officers fighting a growing drug threat.

An escalating illicit narcotics epidemic drives the DEA to work with local law enforcement agencies, and Agent Bo Wagoner heads a task force to stem the flow of drugs into the US. Wagoner, with a team drawn from several agencies, discovers corruption and ties to an international crime boss. The team's goals rapidly evolve from drug tracking to stopping arms deals. The number of people they can trust shrinks as they doggedly attempt to protect and serve at any cost.

The first book in a series, this title centers on the surprisingly deep network of criminals and corrupt officials that Wagoner uncovers and ultimately attempts to defeat. Ambitious in scope, it lays strong foundations for the coming books by introducing major characters thoroughly, slowly revealing the depth of the corruption, and setting the stage for future conflicts.

Wagoner serves as the main character—an interesting blend of fact and fiction, of the author and a fictional version of himself—and the primary narrator. The story unfolds slowly and in a conversational style, the voice light and easygoing without detracting from the seriousness of the subject matter. Infrequent shifts into omniscient narration are jarring. Personal thoughts are occasionally interjected as italicized asides; these are unnecessary, as preceding scenes aptly highlight what the character is thinking in context.

The plot is straightforward and realistically paced. Wagoner and his team are often stymied by red tape and paperwork, causing the story to drag. Between the conversational tone and the languid plot, the story winds up feeling padded and overextended, with strong scenes getting lost in the mix. The bulk of the narration feels like an after-action report. The story is strongest when Wagoner's personality bleeds through.

Other characters are less vivid, though they have distinct voices and traits. Characterization unfolds naturally through dialogue and subtle descriptions. Some dialogue is stilted. Irregular grammar and formatting is a consistent and glaring issue.

Wagoner and his team begin the story as outsiders, stopping criminals and struggling against interagency disputes. Over time, they earn respect even while garnering the malicious attention of the criminal organization. There is an endearing story about standing true to one's values in the face of adversity. *A Network Exposed* is a slow-moving but engaging cops-versus-criminals epic.

JOHN M. MURRAY (October 9, 2018)

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