

"Archer Mayor is producing what is consistently the best police-procedural series being written in America." (*The Chicago Tribune*) Here's a look at his newest Joe Gunther novel, *The Price of Malice*.

And try your hand at the clues with a Joe Gunther Puzzle... click [here](#) to play.

It was incredibly hot, and very quiet, the temperature having either driven everyone indoors, or reduced their activities to merely breathing, like iguanas on a rock. In fact, she did see a few people, sitting in the shade, moving as little as possible.

Sam reached the address and slowly rolled to a stop, the back of her shirt already sticking to the car seat.

She opened the door, got out, and looked around. The heat almost buzzed inside her head-echoing the sound of distant grasshoppers and the gentle hum of traffic.

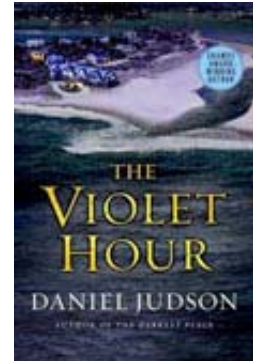
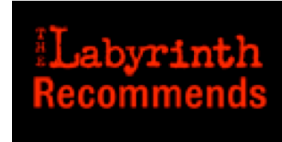
"My mom's not here."

She tried locating the source of the boy's voice, but saw nothing moving.

"How do you know I'm looking for her?" she asked.

"You're a cop, right?"

"Your mom get a lot of visits from us?"



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"Wouldn't you know that?"

Sam smiled at the emptiness all around her. "Yeah, we probably would."

"So, you either know or you didn't check, which makes you pretty sloppy."

That made her laugh. "Ouch. Are you the family member who gets all the high grades?"

"I hate school."

"Maybe you're too smart for it."

There was no answer. For a moment, she wondered if that would be an end to it, and that she'd be left wondering if the conversation had ever taken place.

But the suspense was broken by a single word, "Here," and the tiniest movement of what looked to be a child's finger, wiggling from between the criss-crossed slats skirting the foundation of the trailer.

Sam crouched low by the latticework. "That your clubhouse?" she asked.

"I don't call it that," the voice answered. She could make out the faintest of shadows in the gloom.

"Right," Sam agreed. "Kind of dorky."

"Yeah. What's your name?"

"Sam."

"Really?"

"Yeah. It's short for Samantha, but nobody calls me that."

"Just Sam?"

"And Sammie, sometimes. I don't mind that. What's yours?"

"Richard. Nobody calls me that, though."

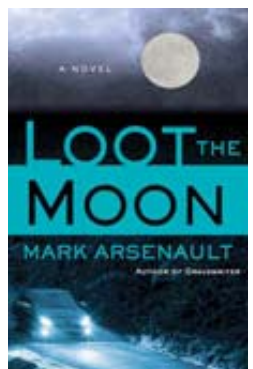
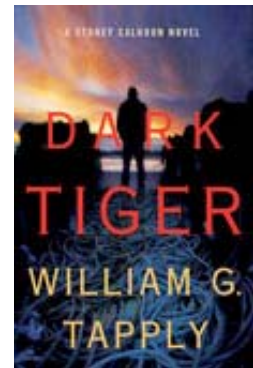
"Why not?"

"They like Ricky, or Richie. I hate those."

"Kid stuff," Sam agreed. "Okay if I call you Richard?"

She could hear the pleasure in his voice. "Yeah."

"What's your last name?"



"Vial."

She passed her sleeve across her forehead. She was squatting in the full sun and it was starting to bear down on her.

"You wanna be where it's cooler?" Richard asked.

"I wouldn't mind it. I'm cooking out here. Is anyone home?"

"Just me."

Suddenly, a section of the latticework popped away from its surroundings, revealing a narrow entrance. "Come in. You'll like it."

She hesitated. She only had his word for it that he was alone, didn't know when that might end, and also had to assume that the lair he was offering came with a decades-long accumulation of dirt, pet shit, and garbage—exactly what he would never notice, but which would force her to maybe throw out her clothes afterward.

But she liked him, and liked having even an underage ally on site. Given what little she already knew of this address and its residents, this was not likely to be a one-time visit.

She pulled open the slat and slipped in beside the boy, closing the latticework behind her. To her double surprise, she found herself on an old, fairly clean rug, and ventilated by a nearby oscillating fan.

She laughed gently, looking around. There were toys, books, bedding, and assorted childish accoutrements. "These are quite the digs," she commented.

He smiled in the gloom. "Yeah. I sleep down here sometimes."

"I bet," she said admiringly. "Lot of people know about this?"

"Not too many," he admitted.

She stuck her hand out for a shake. "Well, I'm privileged to be one of a small group, then."

He took her hand awkwardly, and only for a second. His hand was tiny, cool, and as muscular as a piece of liver.

"You been a cop for long?" he asked.

She studied him closely, now that she was out of the glare and could actually see him. He was thin, with a blade-like face and worried, watchful eyes.

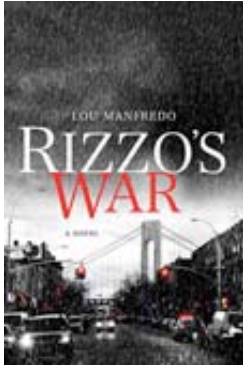
"Yeah—years."

"You local or state?"

"Neither, really," she told him. "VBI."



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With 25 years working in the Brooklyn criminal justice system, debut author Lou Manfredo delivers a stunning authentic thriller that draws you deep into the world of New York's finest.

Labyrinth: *What is your own background in law enforcement, and how did it lead you to write Rizzo's War?*

LM: I spent ten years working in uniform as a court officer in Brooklyn's criminal court system, then fifteen more as a Court Clerk. During my years in uniform, I made numerous arrests and dealt with a variety of tough situations on a daily basis. Throughout my career, many duties were in conjuncture with street cops, and our experiences were quite similar. When I chose to write 'Case Closed,' the short story from which *Rizzo's War* evolved, it seemed a natural background to draw upon.

Labyrinth: *Rizzo's War has an extremely authentic feel. Did you mine actual experiences for your book?*

LM: I've always strived for authenticity in my writing, regardless of the topic. A good writer should be able to tell many stories from many different perspectives. I've written short stories about speakeasy denizens, cowboys and World War II soldiers without ever having actually experienced those locales, time frames or life conditions. Having said that, let me now say that, yes, I did mine quite heavily from my law enforcement days. Much of the dialogue, and more than a few events, are culled from that experience. In addition, I spent my entire youth on the streets of Brooklyn, Bensonhurst specifically, and much of the feel of the novel, as well as composite characters, come from those experiences. In fact, it seems there are richer pastures to explore in those days of my youth than perhaps even in my twenty-five year career in criminal justice. Looking back at my teenage days, I've discovered a world of memories most suitable for future novels and stories.

Labyrinth: *Much of the book takes place in Brooklyn; is Brooklyn an especially good place to set a story about cops navigating through gray areas, or is it the setting that you know best? Could a cop like Rizzo have come from any other place besides Brooklyn?*

LM: There's a book out there entitled, *When Brooklyn Was The World*. It's a good title, but a better one would be, *Brooklyn Is The World*. It's a great place to set any story, not just one about cops and gray areas. And although it is certainly the place I know best, as I mentioned previously, I know a lot of cops from a lot of places. There are cops everywhere facing what Rizzo faces. There are gray areas everywhere. Believe me.

Now, CLICK [HERE](#) TO HEAR CHAPTER ONE OF *RIZZO'S WAR*.

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