

The Joe Gunther Mystery Series

By Archer Mayor

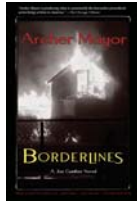


Open Season [1988]

Joe Gunther investigates the murder of a juror by another juror from a three-year-old case.

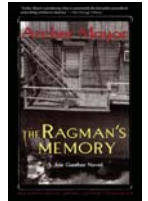
Borderlines [1990]

The second novel in the Joe Gunther re-release promotion finds Gunther in Gannet, Vermont. The quiet town is rocked by violence and murder when five members of a back-to-nature cult die in a suspicious fire.



The Ragman's Memory [1996]

It begins with an abandoned bird's nest; a nest made of human hair. Who is the victim? A trail of grisly clues leads Lt. Joe Gunther to discover the victim's identity: a teenaged girl from the wrong side of the tracks. Searching for the truth, the investigation leads from the basement dives of Brattleboro to the mansions of its leading citizens. But the key to it all lies locked in the mind of an old World War II veteran. Now Gunther must find a way to open up the ragman's memory before a killer strikes again.



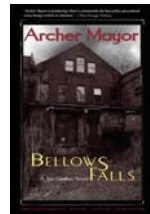
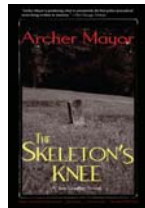
Scent of Evil [1992]

The third outing for Vermont cop Joe Gunther. A murdered stockbroker sets a sticky case into motion for Lt. Gunther. Three bodies later, Gunther must unravel a sinister puzzle involving drugs, a naive young police officer, and someone bent on

revenge.

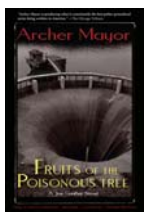
The Skeleton's Knee [1993]

In his fourth outing, after *Scent of Evil*, chief of detectives, Lt. Joe Gunther is confronted with "one very old, cold homicide" after an orthopedic patient in a local hospital dies from an aneurysm brought on by a bullet fired 20 years before. The man had given the hospital no information other than his name, Abraham Fuller, and when asked how he meant to pay, pulled out \$5000 in banded bundles of old, worn bills. Gunther investigates the isolated cabin where Fuller had lived a hermit's life since the hippie days, and discovers a chart of odd symbols, an empty holster, some ancient bullets--and a bag containing \$300,000. But it's the discovery of a skeleton in Fuller's carefully tended garden that sends Gunther to Chicago for the second half of the book.



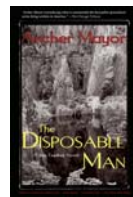
Bellows Falls [1997]

The call was routine enough - someone went ballistic at a substance abuse meeting, wrecking the furniture and causing chaos. Hiding among the onlookers was Jasper Morgan, a low-level hoodlum Lieutenant Joe Gunther has been wanting to talk with. Before he can do so, the boy runs for it, breaking a cop's nose and stealing his gun. Weeks later, Gunther is called upriver to help out the police chief of hard-luck Bellows Falls. A seemingly minor case of sexual harassment, the case involves a cop who supposedly propositioned the long-suffering wife of charismatic local drug dealer Norm Bouch. But appearances are deceiving. The more Gunther digs, the less innocent the young cop begins to look, and the more it appears Norm Bouch is pulling the strings on a classic - and rapidly criminal - frame-up. Struggling to separate fact from illusion, Gunther discovers Bouch's connection to the missing Jasper Morgan and stirs up a hornet's nest of wife abuse, sexual debauchery, teen crime, corruption...and cold-blooded murder.



Fruits of the Poisonous Tree [1994]

Police Lieutenant Joe Gunther got the call at four in the morning--Gail Zigman, his longtime friend and lover, has been savagely raped in the bed he had left only hours before. Despite the disapproval of his superiors, Gunther works the case while struggling with his own tangled emotions.

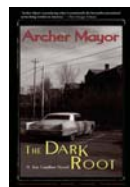


The Disposable Man [1998]

Brattleboro, Vermont police detective Joe Gunther takes on the CIA and the Russian mob. Framed for a crime he didn't commit, pursued by the very legal system he's upheld all his life, alliances and betrayals build on one another until a final showdown ensues atop a remote Vermont mountain, as Gunther becomes a fugitive in order to clear his own name.

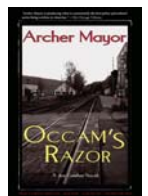
The Dark Root [1995]

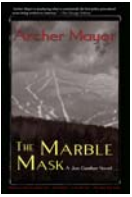
Linking a series of seemingly unrelated crimes to a Vietnamese gangster's campaign to take over a Chinese mob's operation in Vermont, Brattleboro Police Lieutenant Joe Gunther pulls out all the stops--including calling in the FBI. When Gunther's



Occam's Razor [1999]

Vermont police detective Joe Gunther faces a twisted and far-reaching case involving the murder of a trucker, the death of a blackmailing hooker, and the threat of deadly toxins.



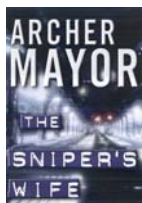
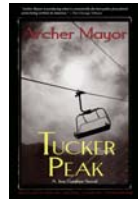


The Marble Mask [2000]

The Marble Mask marks the first full-fledged case for the new Vermont Bureau of Investigation, of which Joe Gunther is second-in-command. The story begins with the discovery of a frozen body on the top of Mount Mansfield near Stowe. This is no big news until it is found that the presumed lost hiker actually died fifty years ago and has been artificially frozen ever since. Not only that, but he's soon found to have been a French Canadian crime boss from Sherbrooke, Quebec, whose descendants are now on the brink of a major gang war. Why was he killed? Why was he kept frozen? Why has he resurfaced in such a dramatic way so many years later? Joe and his new squad travel between the cultural divide of Canada and Vermont, uncovering - among other things - some long lost secrets dating back to the Italian campaign in W.W.II, and the existence of a combat group nicknamed The Devil's Brigade.

Tucker Peak [2001]

To its visitors, the resort area Tucker Peak is Vermont personified: small, thinly populated, a fun place to ski all day and party all night. To its beleaguered owners, it is a resort on the ropes, undersized, underdeveloped, and hemorrhaging money. Their plan: expand and spend a fortune on the gamble. But two problems quickly arise when environmentalists rally to protest the development and the slope-side condo owners suffer a rash of seemingly unsolvable burglaries. Enter Joe Gunther and the newly minted Vermont Bureau of Investigation. Summoned by the embattled local sheriff, Joe doesn't take long to find out that the most likely thief has mysteriously vanished - leaving behind his dead girlfriend - or to discover that some of the protesters may have more on their agendas than protecting the environment. Soon Joe finds himself undercover and buried up to his neck in an increasingly violent game. To survive he must sort through a multitude of players in a risky town where swindlers and saboteurs run amok, corruption and deceit lurk at every turn...and the truth is the most dangerous gamble of all.



The Sniper's Wife [2002] [A Willy Kunkle novel]

The call to Detective Willy Kunkle came from the NYPD. Willy's ex-wife, Mary, had been found dead in her New York apartment and he was asked to provide the next-of-kin ID. Although he hadn't

been in touch with Mary since their divorce, Willy knew he was the only one left to vouch for her remains. Willy returns laden with misgivings that are deepened all the more by seeing Mary's pathetic corpse on a gurney. Driven by his loss, his doubts, and a blossoming guilt, Willy defies the authorities in an increasingly dangerous search for answers along New York's mean streets. From gutted slums to the townhouses of Brooklyn Heights, Willy will plummet through the dark shadows of

his past, confront his demons . . . and live up to his menacing nickname.



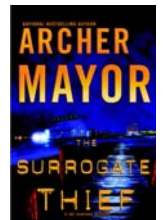
Gatekeeper [2003]

"Picturesque" is the word for rustic Vermont, with its green mountains, maple syrup, and famous fall foliage. Yet for Joe Gunther, head of the state's Bureau of Investigation, urban Vermont presents a vastly different image. Along dark streets and in run-down motels, an appetite for the less savory offerings of the

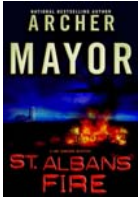
cities to the south is rapidly escalating. This is brutally brought to Joe's attention when a young woman is shot during an attempted robbery in his hometown of Battleboro. Sadly, she is a heroin addict who is desperate to feed her habit. Worse, Joe discovers she is also his girlfriend's niece. When a known dealer is found hanging from a train trestle and the relative of a political bigwig dies of a suspicious overdose, Gunther realizes that what was once a trickle of drugs from a neighboring state is threatening to become a flood. Scrambling to meet this menace, Gunther and his team must test their resourcefulness to the limit. Female detective Sammie Martens will go undercover as an operative for a local pusher - in a world where young women are routinely used as fodder. Detective Lester Spinney will confront his own demons when he realizes that the scourge of drugs may have hit him close to home. And Gunther's girlfriend, Gail Zigman, driven to discover what doomed her niece, will snoop for clues in dangerous quarters where even Gunther cannot protect her. For Joe Gunther, the choices are agonizing. Should he continue a war effort that can save countless potential victims of a deadly drug...while risking the lives of those he loves most?

The Surrogate Thief [2004]

Brattleboro is the epitome of scenic Vermont. Quaint in its architecture and plainspoken in its politics, it dominates the state's southeast corner as both an employment hub and an election year powerhouse - all while looking like a genteel, postindustrial New England mill town. And yet there is darkness here, too, and nobody knows it better than Joe Gunther. Over the years he has battled drug pushers and corporate swindlers, grappled with environmental conspirators, and foiled gangs and home invaders. But while usually successful in his fight for the town's future, Gunther hasn't always come out on top. Thirty years earlier store owner Klaus Oberfeldt was robbed and beaten senseless. When Klaus died six months later, a case of assault and battery become first degree murder. The guilty man eventually appeared to be a well-known, small-time crook, but enough time had elapsed for him to vanish. Gunther, distracted by his wife's losing struggle with cancer in the same hospital where Klaus was slipping from life, did something that would plague him for the rest of his career: He let the case go cold, burying it in the past along with his private sorrows. Now serendipitously reopened, the Oberfeldt investigation forces Gunther to revisit ancient history and open old wounds. Torn between righting the past and confronting his demons, the veteran cop faces the most personal and dangerous case of his career. For somewhere on the idyllic Brattleboro streets stalks a long-lost murderer



who never quite disappeared - and with Joe's renewed interest, now has good reason to kill again.



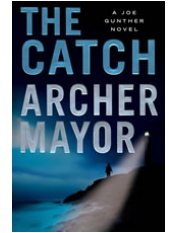
St. Alban's Fire [2005]

Winter is on the wane in northwestern Vermont. The moon hangs bright and cold in the silvery night sky over hundreds of square miles of a peaceful, dormant landscape of dairy farms. Young Bobby Cutts enters the family barn to tend to the beasts within...and encounters a nightmare. Suddenly surrounded by bolts of fire, Bobby and the entire herd perish in a stampeding, hellish circle of flames. Called to the scene to investigate, Joe Gunther instantly recognizes arson. But by whom? And for what possible reason? There is little insurance, the family is loving and tightly knit, and there are few neighborhood animosities. Yet murder this is, and Gunther quickly discovers that someone is wreaking havoc across the bucolic farmlands surrounding the town of St. Albans. Somewhere in the dense social fabric of the community, in the hearts and souls of Bobby's family, and in the cutthroat farming business underneath the region's placid exterior are the truths Joe Gunther and his team must ferret out. But what looked like a local case is about to take them from the barns of Vermont to the gritty streets of Newark, New Jersey. Before all is said and done, Joe Gunther will meet one of his deadliest opponents to date...and he will need far more than his skills as a policeman to protect the people closest to his heart.

sometimes impossible to know who can be trusted. Gunther soon finds himself opposing criminals more menacing than any he has ever encountered in order to save those he holds closest to his heart.

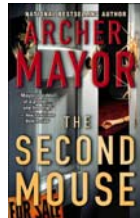
The Catch [2008]

Joe's 19th adventure is on schedule to be released this fall by St. Martin's Press. It's called *The Catch*, and it is primarily placed in Maine and focuses on the activities of one Alan Budney, the disaffected son of an old-time lobsterman. The book begins, however, in Vermont, where a deputy sheriff is shot to death during a routine traffic stop on a dark country road. It is believed that his killers (caught partially on the cruiser's tape recorder) were a couple of Boston-based drug runners who had just crossed into Vermont from Canada, presumably carrying a load they didn't want interdicted by the cop. This shooting gets Joe Gunther and the VBI involved in the investigation, pursuing the two bad guys, and headed toward a rendezvous, of sorts, with Budney and his plans to usurp and replace Maine's biggest drug lord. (And that's just the beginning...) [From author's website]

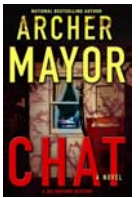


The Second Mouse [2006]

On the edge of town Joe Gunther encounters the lifeless body of Michelle Fisher. Her corpse offers him no clues about who she was or how she died. Snapshots and postcards show a woman who laughed hard and lived harder, while diaries reveal a rootless life marred by depression and drink. Suicide seems a reasonable conclusion, but Gunther suspects foul play.



Handout prepared for the Just Desserts mystery fiction discussion group – July 31, 2008 – Covers from the author's web site.



Chat [2007]

News travels fast in the small state of Vermont. In this tight-knit society, police officers and investigators proudly maintain a kinship that transcends the boundaries of their jurisdictions. When an unidentified body is found in the peaceful town of Brattleboro, local police and the Vermont Bureau of Investigation both appear at the scene. But before investigator Joe Gunther can begin to gather evidence of murder, a family emergency sends him to his hometown, where the lives of his mother and brother have suddenly been threatened. Gunther reaches out to a network of police officers who know him only by name and reputation as he attempts to discover the source of this imminent danger. Meanwhile, his investigative team chases an elusive murderer who has no apparent ties to the victim. In a state that is more like a neighborhood community, secrets are difficult to keep, and it's