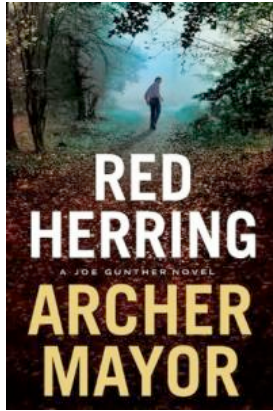


## REVIEWS



In Vermont, there are 10 to 12 murders per year. Most are ordinary crimes with obvious suspects: spouses or

family members. But when three bodies turn up, and investigation shows them to be murders disguised as something else, Joe Gunther's Vermont Bureau of Investigation is under the figurative gun to find a clever serial killer. The victims seem sober, stolid Vermonters, but each body displays a single drop of blood, and the blood isn't the victims'—or the killer's. Gunther turns to cutting-edge science unavailable to forensics investigators, but the solution must come from old-fashioned police work. This is the twenty-first Joe Gunther novel. Faithful fans have aged along with the shrewd and decent Gunther, and his team of detectives has passed from being inexperienced youths to seasoned investigators. Gunther has learned to laugh at Detective Willy Kunkel's enduring misanthropies even as he parries the demands of state politicians and aggressive journalists. Readers have been schooled in the state's societal changes over the last two-plus decades, and they've come to love Mayor's elegant tributes to Vermont's weather extremes and beauty. If this sounds like a valediction to one of the best police procedural series going, it's because Red Herring ends with Gunther pondering retirement. Mayor's faithful following will simply have to hope he returns. *Thomas Gaughan*



Joe Gunther (*The Price of Malice*, 2009, etc.) pursues a vindictive killer and pays heavily for catching him. Three people meet sudden deaths: two middle-aged

women and a 19-year-old boy. A car wreck kills one; another dies horribly in the aftermath of a home invasion and rape; the third is an apparent suicide. None of them knew each other, or so it seems, yet soon enough the deaths turn out to be connected by three blood spots. Carefully placed on each lifeless body, they amount to a message, a catch-me-if-you-can taunt from a brilliant sociopath to a slew-footed police force apparently not up

to the challenge. And for a while at least, Joe and his team at the Vermont Bureau of Investigation, lured into a frustrating cat-and-mouse game, do feel overmatched. Hubris, however, can lead brilliant bad guys into dumb mistakes. Seen through the smart scopes of a highly sophisticated forensics lab, those galling blood spots speak volumes. Meanwhile, Joe's former lover, beautiful, politically ambitious Gail Zigman—"the most talked about woman in the state"—is racing hell-for-leather to the governor's mansion. Will Joe's chase impinge on Gail's race? Yes, and explosively. Compassionate by nature, self-schooled to be tough when he needs to be, the sage of Brattleboro is as usual a pleasure to spend time with.



Three people are dead in Vermont. There is a dearth of clues, except for a single drop of blood left at the scene of each death. The Vermont Bureau of

Investigation is called in, and Joe Gunther's (*The Price of Malice*) team must use every new investigation technique available (this even involves a trip to Long Island's Brookhaven National Laboratory) as well plain, old-fashioned legwork to catch the guilty. With cool forensic details for CSI fans, Mayor's heart-racing tale ends in a dramatic finish that will leave readers gasping. Verdict An excellent police procedural series that deserves a wider readership. [See *Prepub Mystery*, LJ 5/1/10; library marketing; 20-city tour in New England.]



Gunther in Mayor's engrossing 21st novel to feature the Vermont Bureau of Investigation police detective (after 2009's *The Price of Malice*). The three victims—two middle-aged women and a young

man who had a bright future—led apparently unblemished lives in rural Vermont. Gunther and his team take a detour to the Brookhaven National Lab on Long Island for lessons in cutting-edge forensics. Meanwhile, the gubernatorial race of Gail Zigman, Gunther's former girlfriend, spotlights the politics surrounding how the VBI was established and affects his current relationship with bar owner Lyn Silva. As usual, Mayor skillfully combines a gripping police procedural with a view of small town life balanced by bits of humor applied at just the right time. The suspense builds toward an ending that reveals a surprising motive and a chillingly realistic villain. Author tour. (Oct.)