Open Season by Archer Mayor

Sets The Tone For The Gunther Series

To tie into the December release of Archer Mayors Joe Gunther hardcover Fruits of the Poisonous Tree, here is a reissue of the debut novel that first introduced Joe Gunther in 1989--out of print since 1991. Gunther investigates the murder of a juror by another juror from a three-year-old case.

My Personal Review:
Archer Mayors first Joe Gunther mystery was Open Season. It is indicative of the Gunther novels both in its strengths and (unfortunately) in its weaknesses.

Open Season (and the Gunther novels in particular) are strong in many respects. Mayor can craft an intricate plot that is difficult to unravel. Another great aspect of the Gunther novels is their New England setting; Mayor is one of those writers who makes the setting vivid and realistic.

There are also a few drawbacks to Open Season that Mayor never managed to correct as he continued with the Gunther series. Mayors characters are weaker than his plots. Unlike his settings, the characters never strike me as wholly real; to be fair, the characters are not one dimensional, but they never entirely come alive, either. Mayors novels also have a strong undercurrent of political correctness. This is a real problem for a mystery novelist; once you know Mayors viewpoint, some aspects of his novels become very predictable.

In the end, I would recommend Open Season to those who want to read a mystery with a vivid New England setting. While I would not say that Open Season qualifies as literary junk food, I would say that it is best for those readers who want simple escapism.

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