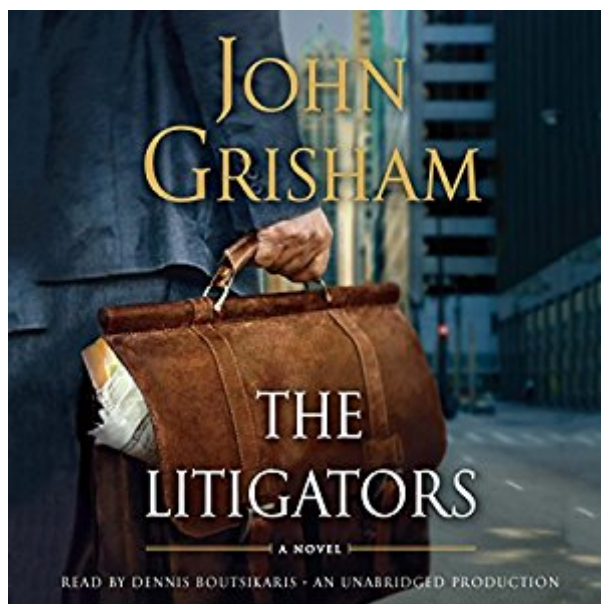


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The Litigators



Synopsis

The partners at Finley & Figg—all two of them—often refer to themselves as "a boutique law firm." Boutique, as in chic, selective, and prosperous. They are, of course, none of these things. What they are is a two-bit operation always in search of their big break, ambulance chasers who've been in the trenches much too long making way too little. Their specialties, so to speak, are quickie divorces and DUIs, with the occasional jackpot of an actual car wreck thrown in. After twenty plus years together, Oscar Finley and Wally Figg bicker like an old married couple but somehow continue to scratch out a half-decent living from their seedy bungalow offices in southwest Chicago. And then change comes their way. More accurately, it stumbles in. David Zinc, a young but already burned-out attorney, walks away from his fast-track career at a fancy downtown firm, goes on a serious bender, and finds himself literally at the doorstep of our boutique firm. Once David sobers up and comes to grips with the fact that he's suddenly unemployed, any job—even one with Finley & Figg—looks okay to him. With their new associate on board, F&F is ready to tackle a really big case, a case that could make the partners rich without requiring them to actually practice much law. An extremely popular drug, Krayoxx, the number one cholesterol reducer for the dangerously overweight, produced by Varrick Labs, a giant pharmaceutical company with annual sales of \$25 billion, has recently come under fire after several patients taking it have suffered heart attacks. Wally smells money. A little online research confirms Wally's suspicions—a huge plaintiffs' firm in Florida is putting together a class action suit against Varrick. All Finley & Figg has to do is find a handful of people who have had heart attacks while taking Krayoxx, convince them to become clients, join the class action, and ride along to fame and fortune. With any luck, they won't even have to enter a courtroom! It almost seems too good to be true. And it is.

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Customer Reviews

Early on in Grisham's career, he wrote with fire. He went off against the ills of the legal and political systems, kicked greed between the legs, and did it all with some memorable, believable characters. His success was not surprising. Then, he stumbled. He lost the fire. I barely hung on through books like "The Brethren" and "The Broker." But last year's "The Confession" showed him kindling some new heat over a subject he is passionate about, and I applauded it, even if it was a bit stale at times. "The Litigators" is the first Grisham book I've had fun reading in a long time. I get the feeling he had fun writing this one. We meet grouchy Oscar Finley and plucky, unethical Wally Figg, partners at Finley & Figg. These are some humorous, annoying, even likable guys scraping to make a living through any client and situation possible. They're propped up by the tough secretary. They're bottom feeders. Along comes David Zinc, who can no longer stomach the hundred-hour work weeks at a legal firm where 600 other lawyers are employed. He goes off the rails, decides to check out one fine morning, and ends up drunk hours later on the steps at the ignoble Finley & Figg. Despite his recent bender, he's actually a guy who loves his wife, albeit not always well, and still retains some ethical and legal standards, since he's not yet stepped foot into a court or heard the way things go down between a rascally attorney and a leering judge. With Finley & Figg adding Zinc to their recipe, the mixture bubbles over. Figg stumbles into a potentially huge torts lawsuit against a pharmaceutical manufacturer (while scraping for clients at a funeral home, no less), and he starts signing up other clients (ones who are alive, thank goodness).

Street Law has its own rules; the attorneys "chase ambulances," process no-fault divorces and literally run after cases no higher-class law firm would ever consider. Street Law litigators are often sole practitioners; Grisham fashioned a two-guy office and then added a Harvard grad making it three semi-desperate counselors. I enjoyed this book on many levels. I work in Chicago for Litigators, not the low-level "boutique" firm of Finley and Figg but a mid-sized prominent defense firm which gave me an advantage in terms of legalese and the procedures. I could not identify with Oscar Finn, the aging attorney, who felt he wasted the last 30 years with this crummy practice or Wally Figg, a drunk who is chasing the big pot of gold and will pull almost anything to sign up a client. However, I have met many David Zinc's, the burnt-out bright attorney who knows he cannot

stand one more 100 hour week of entering billable hours for his cold-hearted large firm. Grisham recaptured the heroes of his earlier books in David Zinc. We first meet David when he is enduring a full-fledged panic attack, as he is about to begin another day at the Rogan Rothberg 600 attorney firm. After losing all control, David spends the rest of his soul-searching day in a neighborhood bar and later he drunkenly washes up at the doorstep of Finn & Figg. David teams up with these low-level guys and begins to learn their ropes and seizes the moment. He is a good man with a beautiful, smart wife, Helen. He does not cut corners and uses his own money to help and investigate a horrific injury to a Burmese boy. In this case, Grisham aims his anger at American toy companies who have bought Chinese toy manufacturers that apparently manufacture lead poisoning rather than safe toys.

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