



12-1-2011

The Litigators, by John Grisham, Doubleday, 2011

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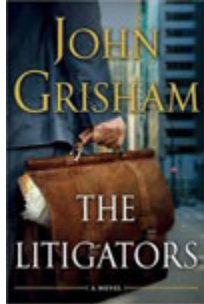
Riggs, Larry, "*The Litigators*, by John Grisham, Doubleday, 2011" (2011). *LAS Faculty Book Reviews*. 95.
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Recommended Readings



The Litigators

by John Grisham, Doubleday 2011

Reviewed by Larry Riggs

This is another in the long series of what I think of as Grisham's sociology-of-the-law novels. This one, though, is more comprehensive than any of the previous ones. David Zinc, a still-young graduate of Harvard Law working in one of Chicago's most prestigious law firms, melts down in the firm's elevator one morning and spends the day drinking in a seedy local bar. Thus begins an odyssey that leads Zinc, and us, through the labyrinthine world of the Law. From the top-drawer corporate and defense firm, where he has put in 5 years of 80-hour weeks as an associate, Zinc moves-drunkenly-to the store-front offices of a team of marginally competent ambulance chasers.

Zinc's involvement with what his new employers try lamely to pass off as a "boutique firm" leads him, and us, into contact with fabulously wealthy, and still rapaciously greedy, mass tort specialists; equally affluent and cynical tort defense practitioners; ruthless "Big Pharma" executives; a pompous, egomaniacal judge; and a horribly exploited Burmese immigrant family with a lead-poisoned child.

Grisham tells this story smoothly, and his denunciation of the pervasive greed and the paucity of truth or justice in the legal system never becomes a screed. The characters have some plausibility, and their motives are always recognizably human. I have found some of Grisham's novels too long, and they have not always held my interest. This one is engaging and readable throughout. It's a casual read with just enough serious social commentary.

- Larry Riggs is Professor of French at Butler University.