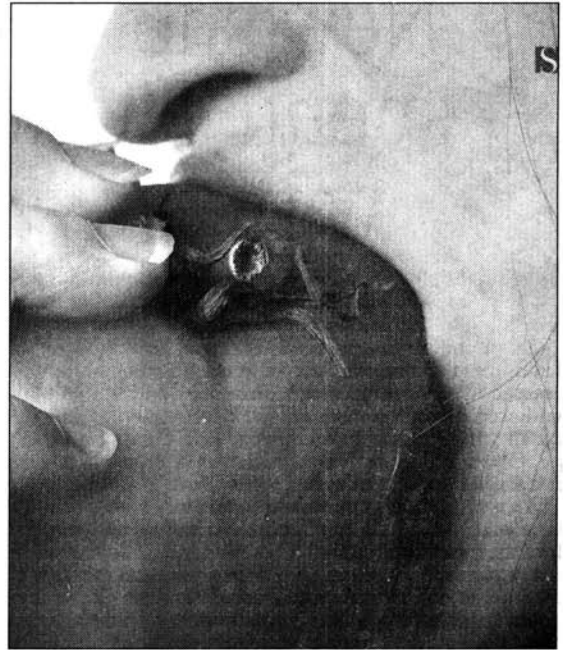


READERS AND WRITERS

Biting wit

Authors with Minnesota connections create a quartet of toothsome tales.

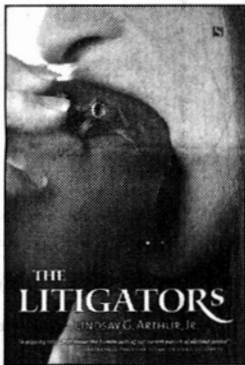


“THE LITIGATORS”

The debut writer in this quartet is Minneapolis lawyer Lindsay G. Arthur Jr. His novel, “The Litigators” (\$14.95), is also the first from Scarletta Press, one of the Twin Cities’ newest publishers.

Arthur drew on his experiences as founder of a biotech company for “The Litigators,” which deals with a lawsuit over whether a Minneapolis woman’s mysterious nervous disease was caused by an experimental biological product.

Ruthie Bergstrom is the young mother who ends up in a wheelchair. She’s good friends with the wife of Dillon Love, a lawyer who thinks her case is the one he was born to take on.



Dillon wants Bergstrom and her husband to get a settlement from Boyd Campbell, whose fledgling biotech company introduced genetically engineered organisms into soil surrounding an abandoned gas station near the Bergstrom home.

Dillon’s adversary is his former classmate and lover, hotshot trial lawyer Allison Forbes, whose big law firm is headed by hard-charging Henry Holten. Forbes’ firm has a huge staff to gather evidence. Dillon has only a secretary, who scolds him about working too hard and not dressing properly.

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As the case drags on, everyone involved finds themselves questioning the legal process.

Arthur is especially good at showing how the exhausted litigants — the Campbells and the Bergstroms — are swept along in proceedings they don’t even want. The couples have sympathy for each other and think that if they just sit down and talk it out, they can come to a resolution. But their lawyers won’t let them.

Dillon, meanwhile, pays a big price for his obsession with this case. His wife leaves him, and he starts drinking too much. Allison is doing her own soul-searching when she discovers something fishy in her firm.

The author deftly lays out scientific stuff without getting bogged down in detail. He weaves courtroom testimony into the characters’ personal lives so smoothly, the narrative is seamless. And his ambiguous ending will keep book clubs talking for hours.

Tantalizing excerpt: “Isn’t that what they taught us in law school?” Allison said. “Three years, all spent learning how to wage war. We learned all the rules of engagement, the rules of procedure, the rules of evidence, the rules for effective legal argument and artful cross-examination, all the strategy and tactics we’d need to win in court. But when did they teach us common sense? When did they teach us sensitivity? When did they teach us empathy and understanding?”

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