



There is much to recommend this unusual thriller featuring New York attorney Tug Wyler, a wise-cracking personal injury lawyer with a creative legal mind and the ingenuity to elude legal dilemmas that might bring down those with fewer skills. His quick wit and incisive legal mind give Wyler an edge that serves him well in this particular area of expertise, although his recent acceptance of personal injury cases from another attorney bring a slew of extra problems not usually included in the specialty. The new clients have a disturbing tendency to take out their dissatisfaction with results in a personal manner. Most recently, a disgruntled ex-husband demands half of his wife's settlement, his size and threatening demeanor suggesting harm should Tug not cooperate. Though Wyler excels at defeating such foes, he isn't prepared for the level of threat to life and limb involved this time.

Wading through the eccentricities of these cases while making a tidy profit for himself and the other attorney, Wyler is confronted with a case that challenges him on every level, legally and emotionally—that of Suzy Williams. Since a medical crisis during treatment for her sickle cell anemia, Suzy has been severely compromised, confined to a wheelchair and able to speak but a few words, her bright future erased in seconds that day in the hospital. Expected to remove himself (and the other attorney) from a suit that is described as “no case,” Tug is confronted by Suzy's mother and most determined advocate, June, who strongly suggests that Tug investigate more conscientiously before he declines representation. With a personality to match Wyler's, June makes a solid argument on Suzy's behalf.

Tug delves into a case rife with problems, from what really happened the day of the incident that changed Suzy's life to the layered compromises and deals inherent in a legal system that favors the corporations represented by teams of expensive attorneys. Wyler interviews an inept nurse asked to perform a task beyond the level of her training and a team of lawyers headed by a woman Tug nicknames “the weasel” who consistently stonewalls his requests for documents pertaining to the hospital where the incident occurred. Meeting the defendant's expert of record opens up yet another series of problems, from a greedy office manager to a hematologist who nervously avoids standing behind her own recommendation, especially when Wyler presents new evidence that changes the complexion of the whole case.

Siegel fills his novel with colorful characters: an assortment of clients from the streets of New York; a hot-tempered Latina paralegal; pot-smoking tenants of his office building; the seedy side of medical-legal cases; “retired” experts he calls for legal advice; and a wife more concerned with her tennis lessons and self-care than the well-being of her husband. Though Tug bears his wife's indifference with grace, Tyler Wyler (yes, that's her name) creates some doubt about an otherwise extremely likeable protagonist. While the tale is wildly entertaining, Suzy's dilemma is tragic and treated with sensitivity and compassion. The resourceful June (and her associate from the hood, “the Fidge”) adds yet another layer to the amusing cast. Justice prevails, though Wyler bears significant battle scars, certainly on tap to don his crusader's cape again.