

Move Over Grisham, More Lawyers Moonlight in Fiction

SAN FRANCISCO — Reece Hirsch saw it coming: *Intrusion*, the latest legal thriller by the Morgan, Lewis & Bockius partner, is all about state-sponsored hacking.

In the novel, data privacy attorney Chris Bruen travels to China seeking evidence that the country's government may be responsible for stealing search algorithms from the world's most popular search engine.

Hirsch's first novel, *The Insider*, appeared in 2010 and imagined the National Security Agency was collaborating with major tech companies. "That was a couple years ahead of the curve," Hirsch said.

Hirsch, a transactional and regulatory lawyer and co-head of his firm's privacy practice, said he had long harbored a desire to write fiction. "When I turned 40 I got serious about completing a novel."

After taking six years to complete *The Insider*, he signed a contract with Amazon's mystery imprint Thomas & Mercer to complete three standalone novels following the Bruen character, a former DOJ cybercrime prosecutor with what Hirsch described as a life much more exciting than his own. At work on the third, Hirsch writes on his laptop while on BART.

"I have to expunge all of the precise wording that transactional and regulatory lawyers use," Hirsch said. "You have to un-learn that when you're writing fiction."

But once the "legalese" barrier is breached, lawyers are natural storytellers, and it's no surprise that more than a few of them harbor dreams of fiction writing—or have succeeded at it (see: Scott Turow; John Grisham; former Mc-



Cutcheon partner Richard North Patterson; Sheppard Mullin's Sheldon Siegel).

Kevin Dunne, the former chair of Sedgwick, joined the attorney-author club in August with his self-published novel *The Chairman*.

The novel's title came to Dunne when he noticed that role was missing from Grisham's repertoire. Grisham wrote *The Firm*, *The Client*, *The Partner*, *The Associate*, *The Rainmaker*—but never *The Chairman*.

"It's not autobiographical, but I used my experience," explained Dunne, a trial lawyer who led Sedgwick for six years. It follows Boxer Tate, a young San Francisco attorney hungry for success but without the usual pedigree for it. Tate graduated from an unaccredited law school, but gets ahead by his courage and creativity as he defends insurance

companies against major class actions. The book chronicles Tate's "ethical dilemmas and the conflicts he deals with between clients, and between lawyers cheating and stealing," Dunne explained.

Dunne began writing when he became of counsel at the firm, as he neared retirement. "The thing that really motivates me is if people read what I'm reading," he said. "If people read this one, I'll write more."

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