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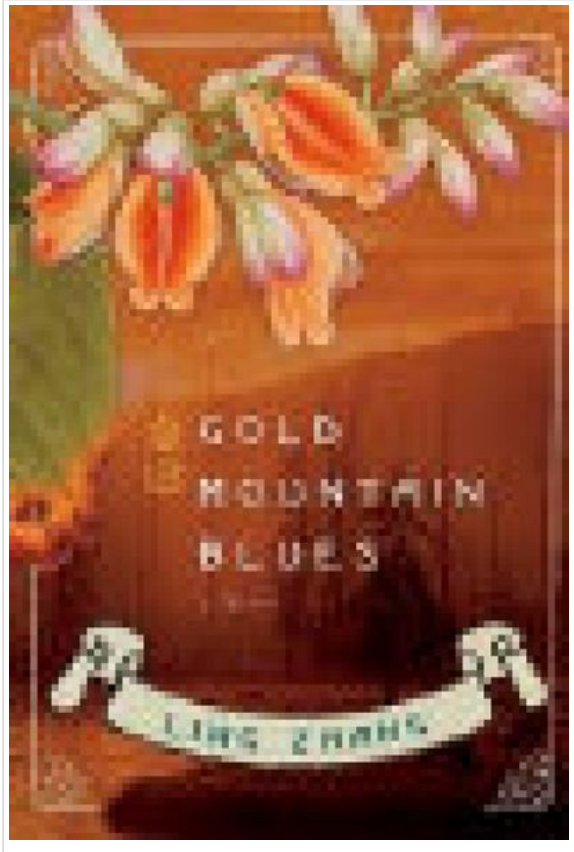

Three prominent Canadian authors launched a $6 million lawsuit Wednesday against Penguin Canada, the publisher of Gold Mountain Blues, for copyright infringement.

Wayson Choy, Paul Yee and Sky Lee are suing Pearson Canada Inc., the parent company of Penguin, along with Toronto author Zhang Ling and U.K.-based translator Nicky Harman for “blatant disregard ... in deliberately calculating to generate profit and gain” at the expense of the authors.

Zhang is also accused of “purposely copying multiple elements” of their stories.

In addition, the authors want an additional $1 million against each of the defendants for punitive damages. The suit was served Wednesday. The allegations still have to be proven in court and Zhang has denied all accusations.

Penguin has said they hired a third party to review the book and found similarities were minor.

Gold Mountain Blues was released Oct. 8 in 12 global markets to a firestorm of controversy over allegations that many parts of the book were similar to the works of Choy, Yee and Lee, and another Canadian author, Denise Chong, who is not a party to the lawsuit.

Gold Mountain Blues was originally published in China in 2009, where it won major literary awards and is a national bestseller. It has also been optioned for movie and television rights.

But the suit says the Canadian authors now face “significant potential losses” when they are eventually published in China because “it will appear to Chinese readers in China that the plaintiffs have copied portions of Gold Mountain Blues” when the authors were long-published before the book came out. The suit says the authors have identified more than 50 key examples of original elements that have been substantially copied.

In an earlier statement Zhang, who lives in Toronto, said she had not read The Jade Peony, Disappearing Moon Café, or Yee's Tales From Gold Mountain.

“Gold Mountain Blues is the result of years of research and several field trips to China and Western Canada,” said Zhang in a statement.

Penguin officials did not immediately respond to email queries sent Wednesday about the suit.