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DIV. 2

SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF ARIZONA

COUNTY OF COCHISE

18 AMBER HEARD, an individual,

19 Plaintiff,

20 v.

21 DOUG STANHOPE, an individual;
22 and DOES 1-20, inclusive,

23 Defendants.
24

Case No. **CV 201600280**

COMPLAINT

DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

27 1. Defendants orchestrated a plot to write an article, which was published at
28 TheWrap.com, which falsely accuses plaintiff Amber Heard of "blackmail" and other criminal

1 behavior towards her husband, Johnny Depp, from whom she is seeking a divorce. The
2 allegations about Heard in the article are completely false and defamatory, and have caused and
3 will continue to cause her tremendous harm. Defendants engaged in this scheme to try to divert
4 public attention away from the true facts regarding Depp which caused their marriage to fail,
5 namely, that Depp repeatedly abused Heard throughout their marriage, at times to the point of her
6 fearing for her life. Heard was forced to seek a court protective order, to protect her from the
7 ongoing physical abuse and violence by her husband, Depp. During their marriage, Heard gave
8 Depp numerous chances to get and stay sober and change his violent behavior towards her. When
9 she finally realized that Depp was not changing his behavior, and to avoid further injury and risk
10 to her life, Heard took the very difficult step of filing for divorce and seeking a protective order.

11 2. In response to Heard's truthful and necessary court filings, Defendants took action
12 to publicly defame Ms. Heard by falsely accusing her of "blackmail" and other criminal conduct,
13 **knowing** that he had no factual basis to make the allegations. Defendants' statements are
14 completely false and highly defamatory. Defendants are engaged in a classic case of "attacking
15 the victim," in an effort to discredit Heard, destroy her good name and reputation, and severely
16 harm her hard-earned entertainment career, on top of the campaign of violence that Depp has
17 inflicted upon her for years.

18 3. To counter the setback to the progress of women by the Defendants' actions,
19 Amber Heard pursues the maximum possible damages against the Defendants, and will donate all
20 of the proceeds of this lawsuit to a battered women's shelter in Arizona.

21 THE PARTIES

22 4. Plaintiff Amber Heard ("Heard") is an individual residing in Los Angeles County,
23 California.

24 5. Defendant Doug Stanhope ("Stanhope") is an individual residing in Bisbee,
25 Arizona. Stanhope is one of Depp's closest personal friends.

26 6. Heard is informed and believes, and based thereon alleges, that defendants, and
27 each of them, designated herein as DOES 1 through 20, inclusive, are responsible in some manner
28 for the occurrences and happenings herein alleged, and that Heard's damages as herein alleged

1 were and are the direct and proximate result of the actions of said defendants, and each of them.
2 Said defendants are sued as principals or agents, partners, servants and employees of said
3 principals, or any combination thereof, and all of the acts performed by them as agents, partners,
4 servants and employees were performed within the course and scope of their employment, and
5 with the knowledge, consent, approval and ratification of said principals, and each of them.
6 (Stanhope and DOES 1 through 20, inclusive, are collectively referred to herein as "Defendants.")

7 7. Heard is informed and believes, and based thereon alleges, that at all times
8 mentioned herein, each of the defendants was the agent, employee and partner of each of the
9 remaining defendants, and was acting within the scope and authority of such agency, employment
10 and partnership and with the knowledge, consent, approval and ratification of the remaining
11 defendants, and each of them.

12 8. Whenever in this complaint reference is made to any act of a defendant, such
13 allegation shall be deemed to mean the acts of the defendants named in the particular cause of
14 action, and each of them, acting individually, jointly and severally.

15 **FACTS COMMON TO ALL CAUSES OF ACTION**

16 9. Amber Heard is an award-winning actress who has credits in more than 40 movies
17 and television shows.

18 10. Heard has been in a relationship with Depp for five years, and married to Depp
19 since February 3, 2015.

20 11. During the course of his relationship with Heard, Depp has repeatedly been
21 physically and verbally abusive towards her. Depp has hit and kicked Heard on numerous
22 occasions, has thrown objects at her, at one point nearly suffocated her to the point where she
23 feared for her life. Depp is an alcoholic and drug addict, and these violent episodes occurred
24 mostly after Depp had relapsed into a cycle of substance abuse. His drug and alcohol abuse has
25 increased dramatically in recent years, as has his violent behavior.

26 12. Heard repeatedly returned to Depp, despite his verbal and physical mistreatment of
27 her, hoping optimistically that the man she married would change his behavior. Each time Heard
28 returned, however, within months, the cycle of substance abuse and violence repeated.

1 13. Throughout the years, Heard has documented the effects of the abuse that she
2 suffered at the hands of Depp, including numerous photographs of bruises and injuries caused by
3 Depp's abuse, among other forms of evidence.

4 14. In May 2016, after 15 months of marriage and numerous instances of abuse,
5 matters came to a head when Heard was consoling Depp after his mother died. In his altered state,
6 Depp was incensed by a delusion, blew up at Heard and flew into a rage, threw her phone at her,
7 then violently grabbed Heard by the hair while assaulting her, and verbally and physically
8 threatened neighbors and witnesses who came into the house to help.

9 15. Heard reached a breaking point, and filed for divorce promptly thereafter.

10 16. As part of the divorce filing, Heard sought a domestic violence restraining order
11 against Depp which included a photograph (one of many) showing the bruises and injuries caused
12 by Depp's abuse.

13 17. Heard's divorce filing received substantial publicity because Depp is a noted
14 Hollywood celebrity whose personal life is routinely covered by the entertainment industry press.
15 Depp and his representatives have numerous connections in the entertainment industry and the
16 entertainment industry press who will do his bidding and serve his interests, to obtain from him, in
17 turn, favors, access and other benefits.

18 18. After the May 2016 domestic violence incident, Depp commenced a publicity tour
19 for his new film, and his representatives contacted numerous members of the press to discredit
20 Heard and subvert her truthful allegations. Depp and his representatives further "went on the
21 offensive" during the publicity tour by repeatedly making false public allegations about Heard to
22 the press, accusing her of being manipulative, a blackmailer, and blaming her for the breakup of
23 the marriage—as if Depp's alcoholism, drug addiction and campaign of violence against his wife
24 played no part.

25 19. Depp's publicity tour was coordinated by Depp and his powerful representatives,
26 who surreptitiously disseminated numerous false statements about Heard. As a result of this
27 coordinated, malicious campaign, a number of news organizations have repeated these false
28 statements, disparaging Heard and harming her reputation and career. Defendants were well-

1 aware that their defamatory statements to press organizations would have this affect on Heard, and
2 Defendants had the specific intent to cause harm to Heard, when they made these false statements
3 to the press.

4 20. On May 29, 2015, an article written by Stanhope entitled
5 “Johnny Depp Is Being Blackmailed by Amber Heard – Here’s How I Know (Guest Column)”
6 (the “Defamatory Article”) was posted on the website TheWrap.com. On information and belief,
7 Stanhope wrote the Defamatory Article at the request of, and with active input from others, whose
8 identities are currently unknown and, therefore, have been named in this action as “Doe”
9 defendants. When their identities have been revealed, through further investigation and discovery,
10 their names will be identified herein and included as named defendants.

11 21. The Defamatory Article contains the following false and defamatory statements:

12 a. The headline: “Johnny Depp Is Being Blackmailed by Amber Heard.”

13 b. “Heard was ‘threatening to lie about [Depp] publicly in any and every
14 possible duplicitous way if he didn’t agree to her terms’.”

15 c. “Today, a friend of mine was pilloried in the press for domestic violence.
16 Coupled with a picture of his wife with a bruise, he was murdered on social media. I
17 watched it happen and I didn’t say a f—ing word. Even though I knew it was bulls—.”

18 d. “We’d watched it build like this since before they were married. We’d
19 watched her manipulate and f— with him for years.”

20 e. “When your friend is in an awful, abusive relationship — man or woman —
21 and you risk weighing in that their counterpart [referring to Heard] is a demon, you know
22 the odds are they will jump right back into the fire and then dump you from their life for
23 being honest.”

24 f. “My girlfriend, Bingo, and I have known Johnny Depp for a few years now.
25 We have watched Amber Heard f— with him at his weakest — or watched him at his
26 weakest from being f—ed with — for the entire time we’ve known him.”

27 g. “Bingo and I were at Johnny’s house for most of that Saturday until just
28 before the alleged assault. We assumed initially that his dour mood was because of his

1 mother's death the day before. But he opened up in the most vulnerable of ways that it
2 was not only his mother, but that Amber was now going to leave him, threatening to lie
3 about him publicly in any and every possible duplicitous way if he didn't agree to her
4 terms. Blackmail is what I would imagine other people might put it, including the manner
5 in which he is now being vilified."

6 h. "Bingo and I together, and then separately, told him how much we were
7 aware of this manipulative a-hole, how his closest circle had all agreed on this since the
8 day we met and that we all feared that telling him outright might alienate us all."

9 i. "He still pronounced his love for Amber but was presciently aware that she
10 was going to pull off some kind of ruse to f--- him over."

11 j. "From what we now read in the news, later that night the police were called
12 to his house for a domestic dispute. Finding no criminal act had occurred and no signs of
13 physical abuse, the police left. Everything Johnny had told us that she'd been threatening
14 had actually come to be. It blew up in the news, raced through the Internet like a plague
15 and blew up on Twitter like it was the McMartin child abuse scandal. People are swarming
16 with torches on social media."

17 k. "Johnny doesn't abuse anyone. And he told me that day ahead of time that
18 she'd pull some kind of s--- like this. Johnny Depp got used, manipulated, set up and
19 made to look like an a-hole."

20 22. Each of these statements is false and defamatory. Heard never undertook any
21 action that could even remotely be described as "blackmail." Quite to the contrary, Heard told
22 Depp that if he did not change his alcohol and drug-fueled abusive behavior towards her, that she
23 would have no alternative but to leave him, even though she loved him and wanted their marriage
24 to work.

25 23. Heard has never threatened to lie about Depp in public. To the contrary, all of the
26 allegations Heard has made in her marital dissolution proceeding and request for a restraining
27 order, including her accounts of physical and verbal abuse by Depp against her, are true. Heard
28 has never attempted to improperly manipulate Depp or "f--- with him." Rather, she loved him and

1 gave him numerous chances to change his behavior, and end the cycle of alcoholism, drug abuse,
2 and physical and verbal abuse of her. Yet Depp would not and has not changed his behavior,
3 precipitating Heard to file for divorce and seek a restraining order.

4 24. On information and belief, Defendants' many defamatory statements in the
5 Defamatory Article were made as part of a calculated publicity campaign to smear Heard for
6 having the temerity to file for divorce and seek a court order to protect her physical safety.
7 Defendants knew the statements about Heard in the Defamatory Article were completely untrue
8 and fabricated, and they did not care, because their only concern was helping Depp by trashing the
9 reputation of his wife, who loved Depp, even though she had been repeatedly physically and
10 verbally abused by him.

11 25. Heard, through her attorney, demanded that TheWrap.com to take down the
12 Defamatory Article and issue a retraction. TheWrap.com refused to do so.

13 **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

14 **(Defamation – Against All Defendants)**

15 26. Heard incorporates by this reference Paragraphs 1 through 25 of this Complaint as
16 though fully set forth herein.

17 27. The statements in the Defamatory Article were and are false.

18 28. The statements in the Defamatory Article were of and concerning Heard.

19 29. The statements in the Defamatory Article brought Heard into disrepute, contempt,
20 or ridicule, and purported to impeach Heard's honesty, integrity, virtue and/or reputation.

21 30. Defendants published the Defamatory Article knowing or recklessly disregarding
22 that the statements therein were false.

23 31. The statements in the Defamatory Article were defamatory *per se*.

24 32. Heard has suffered actual damages to her personal and professional reputation and
25 career in an amount to be proven at trial.

26 33. Defendants intended to injure Heard, were motivated by spite or ill will, acted to
27 serve their own interests, having reason to know and consciously disregarding a substantial risk
28

1 that his conduct might significantly injure Heard, and consciously pursued a course of conduct
2 knowing that it created a substantial risk of significant harm to Heard.

3 **SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION**

4 **(Intentional Infliction of Emotional Distress – Against All Defendants)**

5 34. Heard incorporates by this reference Paragraphs 1 through 33 of this Complaint as
6 though fully set forth herein.

7 35. Defendants' conduct was extreme and outrageous.

8 36. Defendants intended to cause Heard emotional distress and/or recklessly
9 disregarded that their conduct would do so.

10 37. Defendants' conduct has resulted in Heard suffering severe emotional distress.

11 38. Defendants knew that their false statements of fact in the Defamatory Article were
12 false at the time the statements were made and/or with reckless disregard to the truth.

13 39. Heard has suffered actual damages in an amount to be proven at trial.

14 40. Defendants intended to injure Heard, were motivated by spite or ill will, acted to
15 serve their own interests, having reason to know and consciously disregarding a substantial risk
16 that their conduct might significantly injure Heard, and consciously pursued a course of conduct
17 knowing that it created a substantial risk of significant harm to Heard.

18 **THIRD CAUSE OF ACTION**

19 **(Tortious Interference with Existing and Prospective Economic Relationships –**
20 **Against All Defendants)**

21 41. Heard incorporates by this reference Paragraphs 1 through 40 of this Complaint as
22 though fully set forth herein.

23 42. Heard, as a working actress, has prospective economic relationships with a number
24 of individuals and entities in the entertainment industry, the fashion industries, and many other
25 industries who may seek to use her services.

26 43. Defendants, at all relevant times, were aware of Heard's status as an actress and her
27 prospective economic relationships within the industry.

28 ///

1 44. Defendants published the Defamatory Article with the intent to interfere with
2 Heard's actual and prospective economic relationships and to cost her valuable work in the
3 industry, to add pressure to Heard to resolve the pending divorce case on favorable terms, and also
4 in retaliation for Heard's decision to end her marriage with Depp and protect her safety by seeking
5 a restraining order against Depp. In the alternative, Defendants' actions were negligent in that
6 they disregarded the risk that by publishing the Defamatory Article, they would harm Heard's
7 prospective economic relationships.

8 45. As a result of Defendants' actions, Heard has suffered actual damages in an amount
9 to be proven at trial.

10 46. Defendants intended to injure Heard, were motivated by spite or ill will, acted to
11 serve their own interests, having reason to know and consciously disregarding a substantial risk
12 that their conduct might significantly injure Heard, and consciously pursued a course of conduct
13 knowing that it created a substantial risk of significant harm to Heard.

14 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

15 WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays for relief as follows:

- 16 a. For actual damages according to proof;
17 b. For punitive damages;
18 c. For costs of suit; and
19 d. For such other and further relief as may be just and proper.

20 All proceeds from this lawsuit will be donated to a battered women's shelter in Arizona.

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22 **DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL**

23 Plaintiff hereby demands a trial by jury.
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Dated: June 3, 2016

THE RUSSELL'S LAW FIRM, PLC

By: *Robert Hicken for Chris Russell*
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-and-

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(a pro hac vice application pursuant to Rule 39(c),
ARIZ. R. S. CT. shall be filed forthwith)

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