

Assigned for all purposes to: Spring Street Courthouse, Judicial Officer: Kristin Escalante

1 DEBORAH S. MALLGRAVE, State Bar No. 198603
DMallgrave@GGTrialLaw.com
2 CLAIRE-LISE Y. KUTLAY, State Bar No. 307080
CKutlay@GGTrialLaw.com
3 **GREENBERG GROSS LLP**
601 S. Figueroa Street, 30th Floor
4 Los Angeles, California 90017
Telephone: (213) 334-7000
5 Facsimile: (213) 334-7001

6 MICHAEL RECK, State Bar No. 209895
MReck@AndersonAdvocates.com
7 MICHAEL G. FINNEGAN, State Bar No. 241091
Mike@AndersonAdvocates.com
8 JENNIFER E. STEIN, State Bar No. 300775
Jennifer@AndersonAdvocates.com
9 **JEFF ANDERSON & ASSOCIATES**
11812 San Vicente Boulevard, #503
10 Los Angeles, California, 90049
Telephone: (310) 357-2425
11 Facsimile: (651) 297-6543

12 Attorneys for Plaintiff *Alexandra Zarini*

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14 **SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA**
15 **COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, CENTRAL DISTRICT**

16

17 ALEXANDRA ZARINI,
18 Plaintiff,
19 v.
20 PATRICIA GUCCI, BRUNA PALOMBO,
JOSEPH RUFFALO, and DOES 1-10,
21 Defendants.

Case No. **20STCV34041**

COMPLAINT FOR DAMAGES for:

- 1) **Negligence**
- 2) **Sexual Battery (Civ. Code, § 1798.5)**
- 3) **Intentional Infliction of Emotional Distress**
- 4) **Gender Violence (Civ. Code, § 52.4)**

Filed Pursuant to Code of Civil Procedure
Section 340.1, as Amended by Assembly
Bill 218

[Jury Trial Demanded]

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1 Plaintiff Alexandra Zarini (“Plaintiff”) brings this action against Defendants Patricia Gucci
2 (“Gucci”), Bruna Palombo (“Palombo”), Joseph Ruffalo (“Ruffalo”), and Does 1 through 10
3 (together, “Defendants”), and based on information and belief alleges as follows:

4 **INTRODUCTION**

5 1. Plaintiff is the victim of sexual battery, assault, molestation, abuse, and harassment
6 at the hands of Defendants, beginning when she was approximately 6 years old. Defendant
7 Ruffalo used his position as a trusted adult in Plaintiff’s life, later becoming her stepfather, to gain
8 access to and sexually assault Plaintiff.

9 2. Defendants Gucci and Palombo, as Plaintiff’s mother and grandmother,
10 respectively, not only failed to protect Plaintiff from Ruffalo’s assaults, but fostered the
11 environment and impunity Defendant Ruffalo needed to sexually assault Plaintiff. Defendant
12 Gucci compounded Plaintiff’s suffering by inappropriately sexualizing Plaintiff for Defendant
13 Ruffalo’s benefit, and physically, mentally, and emotionally abusing Plaintiff. As a result,
14 Plaintiff has suffered humiliation, shame, and horror and will continue to suffer for the rest of her
15 life.

16 3. Throughout Plaintiff’s childhood and adolescence, Defendants Gucci and Palombo
17 protected Ruffalo and themselves, and tried to avoid, at all costs, what they perceived would be a
18 scandal that could tarnish the Gucci name and potentially cost them millions. In trying to avoid a
19 hit to the Gucci legacy, Defendants Gucci and Palombo, failed to protect that which should have
20 been more precious than a name or money, and instead, actively sought to cover up Defendant
21 Ruffalo’s sexual assaults and allow them to continue unabated.

22 4. Even as Plaintiff entered into adulthood and attempted to find her own sense of
23 peace and justice, Defendants Gucci and Palombo continued to coerce Plaintiff into keeping
24 Defendant Ruffalo’s sexual assaults a secret. To keep Plaintiff under their control, Defendants
25 Gucci and Palombo repeatedly threatened to financially cut-off Plaintiff and disinherit her if she
26 went against their wishes. Now, as a mother herself and with her own family to protect, Plaintiff
27 seeks to do that which should have been done long ago—protect children. In so doing, Plaintiff
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1 wishes not to blight her family name, but make it synonymous with the protection of children and
2 not the perpetrators that assault them.

3 **PARTIES**

4 5. Plaintiff is an adult female currently residing in Germany. Plaintiff was born in
5 1985 in New York, and is a U.S. citizen. At all times relevant to this Complaint, Plaintiff was
6 residing in Los Angeles County, California, and was a minor throughout the period of child sexual
7 assault alleged herein. Plaintiff brings this Complaint pursuant to Code of Civil Procedure section
8 340.1, as amended by Assembly Bill 218, for the sexual assault she suffered at the hands of
9 Defendants. Thus, Plaintiff's claims for damages suffered as a result of childhood sexual assault
10 are timely filed, as this Complaint is filed within three years of January 1, 2020.

11 6. Defendant Patricia Gucci is an adult female, who Plaintiff is informed and believes
12 currently resides in Geneva, Switzerland. At all relevant times during the period of child sexual
13 assault alleged herein, Defendant Gucci resided in Los Angeles County, within the State of
14 California, unless otherwise identified. Defendant Gucci is Plaintiff's mother.

15 7. Defendant Bruna Palombo is an adult female, who Plaintiff is informed and
16 believes currently resides in Rome, Italy. Defendant Palombo is Plaintiff's grandmother.

17 8. Defendant Joseph Ruffalo is an adult male, who Plaintiff is informed and believes
18 currently resides in Los Angeles County, California. At all relevant times during the period of
19 child sexual assault alleged herein, Defendant Ruffalo resided in Los Angeles County, within the
20 State of California. During the period of child sexual assault alleged herein, Defendant Ruffalo
21 became Plaintiff's stepfather.

22 9. The true names and capacities, whether individual, corporate, associate, or
23 otherwise of Defendants named herein as Does 1 through 10, inclusive, are currently unknown to
24 Plaintiff, who therefore sues said Defendants Does 1 through 10 by such fictitious names.
25 Plaintiff is informed and believes that Does 1 through 10 are legally responsible in some manner
26 for the events, happenings, and/or tortious and unlawful conduct that caused the injuries and
27 damages alleged in this Complaint. Plaintiff will amend this Complaint to show the true names
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1 and capacities of the Defendants designated herein as Does 1 through 10 when they have been
2 ascertained.

3 10. Each of the Defendants aided and abetted each other Defendant. Each Defendant
4 knowingly gave substantial assistance to each other Defendant who performed the wrongful
5 conduct alleged herein. Accordingly, each Defendant is jointly and severally liable for the
6 damages proximately caused by each other Defendant's wrongful conduct.

7 11. Whenever reference is made to "Defendants" in this Complaint, such allegation
8 shall be deemed to mean the acts of Defendants acting individually, jointly, and/or severally.

9 12. Except as hereinafter specifically described, Defendants, and each of them, are and
10 were the agents of the other Defendants, and in acting as described herein were acting within the
11 scope of their authority as agents thereof, and with the permission and consent of the other
12 Defendants.

13 **GENERAL FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS**

14 13. Defendant Palombo and Defendant Gucci's father, Aldo Gucci, were never
15 married, but Defendant Palombo was Aldo Gucci's long-time paramour. When Defendant
16 Palombo became pregnant, to avoid a public scandal, Aldo Gucci sent her from Italy to live in
17 England to have their baby, Defendant Gucci. Eventually, as Defendant Gucci grew up, and other
18 disputes and scandals plagued the family, Defendant Gucci came out of the shadows to join her
19 father and work in the family business until it was sold. As Defendant Gucci herself has said, she
20 was "well accustomed to the truth being disguised."

21 14. Plaintiff herself was born into the Gucci family in 1985. Her parents met in 1983
22 when Defendant Gucci was approximately 20 years old, and married roughly a year and a half
23 later, after Defendant Gucci discovered she was pregnant.

24 15. After Plaintiff's birth, Plaintiff and her parents moved to England and, when
25 Plaintiff was four and a half years old, had a second child, Plaintiff's sister. Shortly thereafter,
26 Defendant Gucci's marriage to Plaintiff's father ended, and when Plaintiff was approximately six-
27 years old, Defendant Gucci moved with her two minor children to Los Angeles, California, to live
28 with her then-boyfriend, Defendant Ruffalo.

1 16. As Plaintiff’s mother, Defendant Gucci stood in a unique position of trust,
2 authority, respect, and power over Plaintiff. Defendant Gucci’s unique position with Plaintiff, as
3 her mother, gives rise to a special relationship between Defendant Gucci and Plaintiff, and
4 bestows upon Defendant Gucci the duty of care and duty to protect Plaintiff, including serving her
5 child’s emotional and physical needs and protecting her child from assault from another parental
6 figure or household member. In dereliction of such duties, throughout the course of Plaintiff’s
7 youth and young adult life, Defendant Gucci displayed a callous disregard for the emotional and
8 physical well-being of her daughter. Defendants Ruffalo and Palombo also owed Plaintiff a duty
9 of care as her de facto caregivers, and they both breached this duty of care by flagrantly
10 disregarding Plaintiff’s emotional and physical safety. Defendants failed to protect Plaintiff, a
11 minor child, but rather created and fostered an unstable and distressing home environment
12 stemming from Defendant Ruffalo’s sexual assaults of Plaintiff that was emotionally traumatic for
13 Plaintiff during the formative years of her youth.

14 17. Additionally, at all times that Plaintiff was a minor child under Defendant Gucci’s
15 care, Defendant Gucci did not protect Plaintiff, but rather created a volatile and traumatic home
16 environment stemming from her verbal and physical abuse of Plaintiff, and enabled and
17 encouraged Defendant Ruffalo’s sexual assault of Plaintiff. Defendants Gucci and Palombo also
18 took active steps to cover up Defendant Ruffalo’s pervasive assaults of Plaintiff.

19 **I. Defendant Ruffalo Sexually Assaults Plaintiff.**

20 18. Plaintiff’s first memory of Defendant Ruffalo sexually assaulting her is when she
21 was six years old. On a night, after bedtime, when Plaintiff was scared and sought out Defendant
22 Gucci, Defendant Gucci encouraged Plaintiff to join her in bed with Defendant Ruffalo, who, as
23 Defendant Gucci knew, was naked. Plaintiff joined them in bed and fell back asleep. Plaintiff
24 then awoke in the middle of the night with her hand wrapped around Defendant Ruffalo’s penis,
25 and felt his bare skin. Plaintiff was scared and confused. She quickly removed her hand and tried
26 to go back to sleep.

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1 19. Approximately two years after Plaintiff’s first memory of Defendant Ruffalo’s
2 sexual assaults, Defendant Gucci and Defendant Ruffalo married (when Defendant Gucci
3 discovered that she was pregnant again).

4 20. As Plaintiff’s step-father, Defendant Ruffalo continued and escalated his sexual
5 assaults, and began seeking Plaintiff out in her own bedroom. Late at night, Defendant Ruffalo,
6 who was almost always inebriated, would stumble down the hallway to Plaintiff’s bedroom
7 wearing a loosely-tied bathrobe with nothing underneath. He would carry a glass of whiskey or
8 scotch on ice while he made his way towards Plaintiff’s room, shaking it loudly as he walked
9 down the hall. Plaintiff became haunted by the sound of Defendant Ruffalo’s ice clinking in his
10 glass as he walked toward her room, naked underneath his robe, a warning that he would soon
11 sexually assault her.

12 21. Defendant Ruffalo would remove his bathrobe, so he was completely naked, and
13 climb into bed with Plaintiff. Plaintiff would lie stiffly in her bed as Defendant Ruffalo reached
14 underneath Plaintiff’s clothes to touch Plaintiff’s nipples. Because Defendant Ruffalo was
15 Plaintiff’s stepfather and in a position of authority over her, Plaintiff felt powerless to stop his
16 sexual assaults.

17 22. Eventually, Defendant Ruffalo’s assault escalated to him rubbing his penis along
18 Plaintiff’s body, including her buttocks, massaging Plaintiff’s vulva with his fingers, and
19 attempting to digitally penetrate Plaintiff’s vagina. Plaintiff asked Defendant Ruffalo to stop his
20 horrific assaults, but he continued to assault Plaintiff repeatedly and on a somewhat regular basis
21 throughout her childhood and as she became a young adult.

22 **II. Defendant Gucci’s Own Conduct Facilitates Defendant Ruffalo’s Sexual Assaults.**

23 23. Defendant Gucci herself inappropriately sexualized Plaintiff for Defendant
24 Ruffalo’s benefit. When Plaintiff was approximately six or seven years old, Defendant Gucci
25 forced her to pose naked for a large portrait Defendant Gucci kept in the bedroom she shared with
26 Defendant Ruffalo. When Plaintiff was approximately nine years old, Defendant Gucci allowed
27 Defendant Ruffalo to watch and videotape Plaintiff when she was naked in the bathtub.

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1 24. Defendant Gucci also forced Plaintiff to make her and Defendant Ruffalo breakfast
2 in bed, despite knowing that when Plaintiff delivered the food, Defendant Ruffalo would pull the
3 sheets back and flash his genitalia to Plaintiff. Defendant Gucci not only failed to reprimand
4 Defendant Ruffalo for such conduct, but unabashedly continued the breakfast in bed tradition.

5 25. As Plaintiff began puberty, on more than one occasion, Defendant Gucci lifted up
6 Plaintiff's shirt to expose her bare, developing chest to Defendant Ruffalo and commented on her
7 body.

8 26. Throughout Plaintiff's youth, Defendant Gucci also physically abused Plaintiff. On
9 multiple occasions, some while Plaintiff was still young in age, Defendant Gucci would engage in
10 screaming arguments with Plaintiff. Often, this verbal abuse would escalate, and Defendant Gucci
11 would pull Plaintiff by her hair and throw her to the ground. Numerous times, Defendant Gucci
12 would strike Plaintiff on her face and body, and would strangle her by placing her hands around
13 Plaintiff's neck.

14 27. Not only did Plaintiff suffer horrific acts of physical abuse from her own mother,
15 but these altercations set the stage for Defendant Ruffalo to "rescue" Plaintiff from Defendant
16 Gucci. Defendant Ruffalo would intervene and attempt to stop Defendant Gucci's acts of physical
17 violence, often by isolating Plaintiff. Once Plaintiff was isolated, Defendant Ruffalo sexually
18 assaulted Plaintiff.

19 28. As one example, when Plaintiff shaved her legs without Defendant Gucci's
20 permission, Plaintiff nicked herself and had to put a bandage on the cut. Later, Plaintiff was
21 wearing shorts and her mother noticed the bandage and became instantly enraged when she found
22 out Plaintiff had shaved her legs. Defendant Gucci screamed and ran after Plaintiff. Plaintiff ran
23 to her room, but Defendant Gucci caught up with her daughter before Plaintiff was able to close
24 and lock the door. Defendant Gucci charged into Plaintiff's room and began violently hitting
25 Plaintiff and pulling her hair. When Defendant Gucci was finished beating and yelling at Plaintiff,
26 she left the room. As was the routine after Defendant Gucci's physical assaults, Defendant
27 Ruffalo went into Plaintiff's room and, after initially calming her down, sexually assaulted her in
28 his usual fashion.

1 **III. Defendants Minimized and Often Ignored Plaintiff's Cries for Help, and Instead**
2 **Concealed Defendant Ruffalo's Sexually Assaultive Conduct.**

3 29. As a result of the ongoing sexual assaults, Plaintiff developed an obsession with
4 showering and bathing her body. After Defendant Ruffalo's assaults and at other times throughout
5 the day, Plaintiff would repeatedly bathe herself in an attempt to try and cleanse herself of the
6 shame and horror she felt. When she bathed herself, Plaintiff would spend an inordinate amount
7 of time vigorously scrubbing her body in the shower, sometimes until the point where her skin
8 became raw and reddened.

9 30. Plaintiff also developed a compulsive hair pulling disorder, and would often pull
10 hairs from her head in order to alleviate her feelings of stress or anxiety. This hair pulling
11 behavior led to the development of a visible bald spot on Plaintiff's scalp.

12 31. Rather than attempt to address the cause of her odd behaviors, Defendant Gucci
13 either ignored or teased Plaintiff about her obsessive compulsive behaviors. This teasing further
14 intensified Plaintiff's feelings of hopelessness.

15 32. Plaintiff's behaviors eventually became apparent to people outside of her family
16 circle. At least one school teacher took note of Plaintiff's odd behavior. When Plaintiff was in
17 approximately fourth grade, Plaintiff's school teacher noticed that Plaintiff's writing contained too
18 much sadness for someone her age. Plaintiff's school teacher asked Plaintiff herself if there were
19 issues at home and displayed a genuine concern for Plaintiff's mental and emotional health, and
20 held a parent-teacher conference with Defendants Gucci and Ruffalo.

21 33. Shortly thereafter, Defendant Gucci transferred Plaintiff to a different school and
22 away from the teacher who tried to intervene. Indeed, Plaintiff was sent away from her home
23 altogether, and sent to live with Defendant Ruffalo's mother in the Palm Desert area and attend
24 school there.

25 34. While Plaintiff was in middle school, Defendant Gucci then moved with her two
26 daughters and the third daughter she had had with Defendant Ruffalo to England, while Defendant
27 Ruffalo continued to reside in California. While Plaintiff's contact with Defendant Ruffalo was
28 less frequent during this period, Defendant Ruffalo maintained contact with the family and often

1 flew to England to be with the family. While in England, Defendant Ruffalo's sexual assaults
2 continued.

3 35. Plaintiff experienced mental health issues from years of relentless assaults she
4 suffered at the hands of her mother and stepfather. When Plaintiff was in high school, feeling she
5 was left with no alternative to escape the relentless sexual assaults, Plaintiff attempted suicide by
6 swallowing all the painkillers she could find. Hours later, Defendant Ruffalo found Plaintiff in her
7 room, still alive, and Plaintiff was able to tell Defendant Ruffalo that she had swallowed some
8 pills, though she could not remember how many. Defendant Ruffalo called a therapist who
9 suggested Plaintiff have her stomach pumped. Defendant Ruffalo, however, did not take Plaintiff
10 to the doctor or otherwise seek out medical care. Defendant Gucci did not intervene in Defendant
11 Ruffalo's care of Plaintiff or even check on Plaintiff during her recovery at home. Nor did
12 Defendant Gucci make any effort to discuss the suicide attempt with her daughter or deal with the
13 cause of Plaintiff's pain and suffering.

14 36. Defendant Gucci's years of ongoing mental and physical abuse of Plaintiff, coupled
15 with her manipulative behavior, rendered Plaintiff more vulnerable to Defendant Ruffalo's sexual
16 assaults. Playing on the emotional, psychological, and physical vulnerabilities Plaintiff possessed
17 as a minor, Defendant Gucci and Defendant Ruffalo's actions combined to ensure that Plaintiff
18 would keep quiet about the family's secrets.

19 **IV. Defendant Palombo Admits Her Knowledge of Defendant Ruffalo's Sexual Assaults.**

20 37. Plaintiff's grandmother, Defendant Palombo was a steadfast part of Plaintiff's life
21 and frequently around the family. While Defendant Gucci, Defendant Ruffalo, and Plaintiff
22 resided in Los Angeles, Defendant Palombo maintained frequent contact and communications
23 with Defendant Gucci and Plaintiff, and made regular trips to see the family in California.
24 Plaintiff often looked up to her grandmother as a second motherly figure in her life, and trusted her
25 grandmother's guidance.

26 38. When Plaintiff was approximately sixteen years old, after many years of observing
27 Defendant Gucci and Defendant Ruffalo's abusive interactions with Plaintiff on a semi-regular
28 basis, Defendant Palombo approached Plaintiff and asked to speak with her. At the time of this

1 conversation, Plaintiff's sister and Defendant Gucci were nearby, although only Plaintiff's sister
2 was within earshot.

3 39. After her years of silent observation, Defendant Palombo apparently felt
4 sufficiently confident that Defendant Ruffalo was sexually assaulting Plaintiff to ask her about it.
5 She asked Plaintiff directly if Defendant Ruffalo had touched her inappropriately or had done
6 something wrong. Plaintiff confirmed to Defendant Palombo that Defendant Ruffalo was sexually
7 assaulting her.

8 40. At this confirmation, Defendant Palombo stiffened and became obviously
9 uncomfortable. Rather than act in an effort to protect Plaintiff, Defendant Palombo instructed
10 Plaintiff to keep Defendant Ruffalo's assaults a secret and not tell anyone about the assaults.
11 Plaintiff was overwhelmingly sad and could not believe that her grandmother knew about the
12 sexual assaults and chose to instruct Plaintiff to keep quiet and cover them up.

13 41. Defendant Palombo did not take any action, either before or after this conversation,
14 to protect Plaintiff or stop the assaults. With no one protecting Plaintiff or attempting to stop
15 Defendant Ruffalo's assaults, Defendant Ruffalo continued to sexually assault Plaintiff.

16 **V. Defendant Gucci Forces Plaintiff to Endure Additional Trauma and Live with**
17 **Defendant Ruffalo.**

18 42. When Plaintiff was approximately twenty years old, Defendant Gucci forced
19 Plaintiff to move back to California and live with Defendant Ruffalo. Any time Plaintiff objected
20 to living with Defendant Ruffalo, Defendant Gucci threatened to cut Plaintiff off financially. As
21 Plaintiff was not in a position to support herself, Plaintiff reluctantly lived with Defendant
22 Ruffalo.

23 43. Under the same roof with Defendant Ruffalo again, Plaintiff continued to be
24 subjected to Defendant Ruffalo's sexual assaults, harassment, and fetishes. Further, as Defendant
25 Ruffalo frequently used cocaine and encouraged Plaintiff to use drugs, Plaintiff used drugs to cope
26 with the stress of living with Defendant Ruffalo and in an attempt to dull the ever-present pain of
27 her childhood trauma.

28

1 **VI. Defendants' Continued Attempts to Cover Up Defendant Ruffalo's Sexual Assaults.**

2 44. When Plaintiff was approximately twenty-two years old, Defendant Ruffalo went
3 to Plaintiff's workplace and caused a public scene as he pursued Plaintiff around the store as she
4 tried to get away from him. The scene was so unusual and suspicious that Plaintiff's co-workers
5 went so far as to contact Plaintiff's father, and urged him to assist with some form of intervention.
6 Upon information and belief, upon hearing the account of Plaintiff's co-workers, Plaintiff's father
7 contacted Defendant Gucci in England and conveyed what he had learned from Plaintiff's co-
8 workers. Upon information and belief, when Plaintiff's father mentioned he wanted to report the
9 incident to the police and get Plaintiff out of Defendant Ruffalo's house, Defendant Gucci
10 instantly became irate and insisted that Plaintiff's father not go to the police, told him to stay out
11 of it, and that she would handle it.

12 45. On or about the same day, Defendant Ruffalo had a physical altercation with
13 Plaintiff that left her with a broken toe and on crutches. Knowing she needed to get out of the
14 house, permanently, Plaintiff called Defendant Gucci and pleaded for a conversation about the
15 matter. Defendant Gucci agreed, but forced Plaintiff to fly from California to England, while on
16 crutches, to discuss the matter. In England, Plaintiff gathered the courage to speak openly with
17 Defendant Gucci about Defendant Ruffalo's sexual assaults, and wanted to go back to California
18 to report the sexual assaults to the police.

19 46. Using her typical threats and manipulative tactics, Defendant Gucci told Plaintiff
20 she could not go to the police, that she did not have any evidence, and no one would believe her.
21 Instead of concern for her daughter's trauma, Defendant Gucci was more concerned that the
22 publicity from the story would cause her to "lose millions"—including money she put into
23 Defendant Ruffalo's company—and cause a "huge mess" and a "scandal." Defendant Gucci
24 instructed Plaintiff to just keep quiet.

25 47. Later that evening, Plaintiff overheard Defendant Gucci on the telephone with
26 Defendant Ruffalo. The conversation was cryptic, but rather than anger, Plaintiff heard only
27 Defendant Gucci talking in a calm and neutral tone.
28

1 48. When Plaintiff tried again to seek support from Defendant Palombo, and told
2 Defendant Palombo she intended to report the assaults to the police, she was met with a similar
3 response. Defendant Palombo told Plaintiff it was a bad idea and would be the “ultimate betrayal”
4 of Defendant Gucci. Defendant Palombo reminded Plaintiff that if she crossed her mother,
5 Defendant Gucci would cut Plaintiff out of the family forever, both monetarily and emotionally.
6 Again, Plaintiff was threatened and coerced into keeping the family secret.

7 49. Although Defendant Gucci eventually divorced Defendant Ruffalo for her own
8 reasons, Defendants Gucci and Palombo have continued to threaten and coerce Plaintiff into
9 keeping silent and stop her from reporting Defendant Ruffalo’s sexual assault to the police.

10 50. On information and belief, in 2009, Defendant Ruffalo acknowledged his sexual
11 assaults, stating he had an illness.

12 51. The sexual acts perpetrated upon Plaintiff constitute child sexual assault as defined
13 by California Code of Civil Procedure Section 340.1, as modified by Assembly Bill 218, and were
14 a violation of the California Penal Code, including but not limited to Penal Code Sections 266j,
15 288, 311.4, and 647.6. In around May 2019, Plaintiff reported the sexual assaults to the police.

16 52. Defendants’ conduct constitutes a cover up as statutorily defined by Code of Civil
17 Procedure section 340.1(b).

18 53. As a direct and proximate result of Defendant Ruffalo’s sexual assaults of Plaintiff,
19 and Defendants Gucci and Palombo’s egregious display of both intentional and negligent acts in
20 connection with Defendant Ruffalo’s sexual assaults, Plaintiff has suffered economic injury, all to
21 Plaintiff’s general, special, and consequential damage in an amount to be proven at trial, but in no
22 event less than the minimum jurisdictional amount of this Court.

23 54. As Plaintiff’s mother and grandmother, Defendants Gucci and Palombo should
24 have taken steps to protect Plaintiff. Instead, Defendants Gucci and Palombo acted in callous
25 disregard for Plaintiff’s well-being, and, in disgraceful acts of self-interest, told Plaintiff to simply
26 suffer in silence and acted to cover-up Defendant Ruffalo’s sexual assault of Plaintiff. As
27 Defendant Gucci’s memoir aptly states, “the worst part of betrayal is when it comes from those
28 you thought you were closest to.”

1 62. Defendants Gucci and Palombo knew or should have known of Defendant
2 Ruffalo's sexually abusive and exploitative propensities, and/or that he was an unfit to exercise
3 reasonable care, supervision, and protection of Plaintiff. It was foreseeable that if Defendants
4 Gucci and Palombo did not adequately exercise or provide the duty of care owed to Plaintiff, that
5 Plaintiff would be vulnerable to Defendant Ruffalo's manipulation, grooming, and sexual assault.

6 63. Defendants Gucci and Palombo, through their actions and inactions, breached
7 their duties of care to Plaintiff by failing to provide adequate supervision and ensuring that such
8 supervision was sufficient to ensure the safety of Plaintiff; allowing Defendant Ruffalo to come
9 into contact with Plaintiff as a child without appropriate supervision; ignoring or otherwise
10 failing to properly act on their knowledge of the sexual assaults Plaintiff suffered; failing to
11 inform or concealing from law enforcement officials that Defendant Ruffalo sexually assaulted
12 Plaintiff; and failing to protect Plaintiff from criminal sexual assault at the hands of Defendant
13 Ruffalo.

14 64. Defendant Gucci and Palombo's actions, in permitting and, in fact, compelling
15 Plaintiff to remain in an environment where she was subjected to continual, cruel, and inordinate
16 sexual assaults, amounted to a wanton or reckless disregard for Plaintiff's emotional and physical
17 well-being. Defendant Ruffalo's actions were so outrageous as to put any reasonable person on
18 guard that Plaintiff's bodily safety was in real and imminent peril. Defendants should, and could,
19 have removed Plaintiff from Defendant Ruffalo's continued sexual assaults. Instead of doing so,
20 Defendants relegated Plaintiff to a life of suffering in silence. Defendants refused to take action to
21 protect Plaintiff from the assaults she was experiencing and actively obstructed her attempts to
22 stop the sexual assaults.

23 65. Defendant Ruffalo breached his duty of care that he owed to Plaintiff as her
24 stepfather and de facto caregiver by pervasively and repeatedly engaging in the wrongful acts of
25 sexual assault, battery, and abuse of Plaintiff.

26 66. Defendant Ruffalo owed Plaintiff a duty of care to protect Plaintiff and keep her
27 free and safe from bodily harm. Instead, in a direct breach of this duty, Defendant Ruffalo
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1 violated Plaintiff's body by subjecting her to cruel, horrific, and criminal sexual acts, beginning
2 when Plaintiff was just six-years old.

3 67. Defendant Ruffalo knew or should have known that as a result of his sexually
4 abusive and exploitative propensities, he was unfit to exercise reasonable care, supervision, and
5 protection of Plaintiff. It was foreseeable that if Defendant Ruffalo did not adequately exercise or
6 provide the duty of care owed to Plaintiff, that Plaintiff would be vulnerable to Defendant
7 Ruffalo's manipulation, grooming, and sexual assault.

8 68. As a direct and proximate result of Defendants' multiple and continuous breaches,
9 Plaintiff has suffered economic injury, all to Plaintiff's general, special, and consequential
10 damage in an amount to be proven at trial, but in no event less than the minimum jurisdictional
11 amount of this Court.

12 69. As a result of the above-described conduct, Plaintiff has suffered and continues to
13 suffer serious emotional distress, including great pain of mind and body, shock, emotional distress,
14 physical manifestations of emotional distress, severe anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts,
15 feelings of self-blame, hypervigilance, a lost sense of trust, a sense of being tainted, and
16 relationship and intimacy issues, and was prevented and will continue to be prevented from
17 performing daily activities and obtaining the full enjoyment of life.

18 70. In subjecting Plaintiff to the wrongful treatment alleged herein, Defendants acted
19 willfully and maliciously with the intent to harm Plaintiff and in conscious disregard for Plaintiff's
20 rights so as to constitute malice and oppression under Civil Code section 3294. Plaintiff is
21 therefore entitled to the recovery of punitive damages in a sum to be shown according to proof at
22 trial.

23 **SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION**

24 **SEXUAL BATTERY**

25 **(Against All Defendants)**

26 73. Plaintiff repeats, re-alleges and incorporates herein by reference all consistent
27 paragraphs of this Complaint as if fully set forth herein.

28

1 74. While Plaintiff was a minor and under Defendants' care and control, Defendant
2 Ruffalo intentionally, recklessly, and wantonly made sexual advances, solicitations, requests, and
3 demands for sexual compliance of a hostile nature based on Plaintiff's gender that were
4 unwelcome, pervasive, and severe. The sexual harassment and assault included but was not
5 limited to Defendant massaging, manipulating, and fondling Plaintiff's body, including Plaintiff's
6 genitals.

7 75. Defendant Ruffalo did the aforementioned acts with the intent to cause a harmful or
8 offensive contact with an intimate part of Plaintiff's person and would offend a reasonable sense of
9 personal dignity. Further, said acts did cause a harmful or offensive contact with an intimate part
10 of Plaintiff's person that would offend a reasonable sense of personal dignity. Defendants Gucci
11 and Palombo knew or had reason to know that Defendant Ruffalo was committing these acts
12 against Plaintiff.

13 76. Because of Defendant Ruffalo's position of authority over Plaintiff, Plaintiff's
14 mental and emotional state, and Plaintiff's young age, Plaintiff was unable to and did not give
15 consent to such acts.

16 77. Defendants Gucci and Palombo ratified and authorized Defendant Ruffalo's sexual
17 assault of Plaintiff by failing to properly act on their knowledge of the sexual assaults Plaintiff
18 suffered and protect Plaintiff from continued criminal sexual assaults at the hands of Defendant
19 Ruffalo; failing to inform or concealing from law enforcement officials that Defendant Ruffalo
20 sexually assaulted Plaintiff; and actively shielding Defendant Ruffalo from responsibility for his
21 sexual harassment and assault of Plaintiff.

22 78. As a result of the above-described conduct, Plaintiff has suffered economic injury,
23 all to Plaintiff's general, special, and consequential damage in an amount to be proven at trial, but
24 in no event less than the minimum jurisdictional amount of this Court.

25 79. As a result of the above-described conduct, Plaintiff has suffered and continues to
26 suffer great pain of mind and body, shock, emotional distress, physical manifestations of
27 emotional distress, severe anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, feelings of self-blame,
28 hypervigilance, a lost sense of trust, a sense of being tainted, and relationship and intimacy issues,

1 and was prevented and will continue to be prevented from performing daily activities and
2 obtaining the full enjoyment of life.

3 80. In subjecting Plaintiff to the wrongful treatment alleged herein, Defendants acted
4 willfully and maliciously with the intent to harm Plaintiff and in conscious disregard for Plaintiff's
5 rights so as to constitute malice and oppression under Civil Code section 3294. Plaintiff is
6 therefore entitled to the recovery of punitive damages in a sum to be shown according to proof at
7 trial.

8 **THIRD CAUSE OF ACTION**

9 **INTENTIONAL INFLICTION OF EMOTIONAL DISTRESS**

10 **(Against All Defendants)**

11 81. Plaintiff repeats, re-alleges and incorporates herein by reference all consistent
12 paragraphs of this Complaint as if fully set forth herein.

13 82. Defendants' conduct as alleged throughout this complaint was outrageous and
14 exceeded all bounds of decency and is odious and utterly intolerable in a civilized society.

15 83. Defendants intended to cause Plaintiff emotional distress and/or acted with reckless
16 disregard of the probability that Plaintiff would suffer emotional distress, knowing that Plaintiff
17 was sexually assaulted for years, beginning when she was approximately six years old.

18 84. Defendants' conduct caused emotional distress in the minor Plaintiff and this
19 emotional distress was and continues to be severe.

20 85. As a result of the above-described conduct, Plaintiff has suffered economic injury,
21 all to Plaintiff's general, special, and consequential damage in an amount to be proven at trial, but
22 in no event less than the minimum jurisdictional amount of this Court.

23 86. As a result of the above-described conduct, Plaintiff has suffered and continues to
24 suffer great pain of mind and body, shock, emotional distress, physical manifestations of emotional
25 distress, severe anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, feelings of self-blame, hypervigilance, a lost
26 sense of trust, a sense of being tainted, and relationship and intimacy issues, and was prevented
27 and will continue to be prevented from performing daily activities and obtaining the full enjoyment
28 of life.

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- 5. For cost of suit;
- 6. For interest as allowed by law;
- 7. For any appropriate punitive or exemplary damages as to Defendants;
- 8. For attorney's fees pursuant to Civil Code section 52.4, or otherwise as allowable by law; and
- 9. For such other and further relief as the court may deem proper.

DATED: September 8, 2020

GREENBERG GROSS LLP

By: _____
Deborah S. Mallgrave
Claire-Lise Y. Kutlay

JEFF ANDERSON & ASSOCIATES

Michael Reck
Michael G. Finnegan
Jennifer E. Stein

Attorneys for Plaintiff *Alexandra Zarini*

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DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

Plaintiff Alexandra Zarini hereby demands a trial by jury in this matter.

DATED: September 8, 2020

GREENBERG GROSS LLP

By:

Deborah S. Mallgrave
Claire-Lise Y. Kutlay

JEFF ANDERSON & ASSOCIATES

Michael Reck
Michael G. Finnegan
Jennifer E. Stein

Attorneys for Plaintiff *Alexandra Zarini*