

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS
EASTERN DIVISION**

WUMEI LIN,

Plaintiff,

v.

THE INDIVIDUALS, CORPORATIONS,
LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANIES,
PARTNERSHIPS AND UNINCORPORATED
ASSOCIATIONS IDENTIFIED IN
SCHEDULE "A" HERETO,

Defendants.

Case No. 1:26-cv-01823-MSS-AB

**FIRST AMENDED COMPLAINT FOR
COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT**

JURY TRIAL DEMANDED

FIRST AMENDED COMPLAINT

Plaintiff, Wumei Lin ("Plaintiff"), hereby files this Complaint for damages and injunctive relief for copyright infringement against the Individuals, Corporations, Limited Liability Companies, Partnerships, and Unincorporated Associations identified on Schedule "A" attached hereto as **Exhibit 2** (collectively, the "Defendants"), and alleges as follows:

NATURE OF THE ACTION

1. Plaintiff is the exclusive licensee of certain federally registered photographic works at issue in this action (the "Copyrighted Photographs"), including United States Copyright Registration Nos.: VA0002405791, VA0002420078, VA0002421806, and VA0002365588 ("Copyrighted Photographs"). *See* Copyright Registrations Attached as **Exhibit 1**.

2. The owner and author of the Copyrighted Photographs is Daning Zhou, who granted Plaintiff an exclusive license in the Copyrighted Photographs, which license includes the right to sublicense the works for commercial use and the right to enforce the copyrights against infringers.

3. The Defendants are online storefronts (“Online Stores”) operating on Amazon.com (the “Amazon Platform” or the “Platform”) that use and have used the Copyrighted Photographs without authorization to promote and sell products in competition with Plaintiff.

4. Plaintiff and Daning Zhou have never licensed the Copyrighted Photographs to Defendants for any use, nor are these Defendants otherwise authorized to display the protected photographs and images.

5. Defendants’ unauthorized and unlawful use of the Copyrighted Photographs on the Amazon Platform deprives Plaintiff of sublicensing revenue, undermines their ability to issue sublicenses, and causes irreparable harm to their livelihood and reputation.

6. These Defendants, acting in concert, cause mass harm because Plaintiff, an individual, loses a sublicensing source of income and control over its rights in the Copyrighted Photographs.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

7. This Court has original subject matter jurisdiction over the claims in this action pursuant to the provisions of the Federal Copyright Act, 17 U.S.C. § 101, et seq., 28 U.S.C. § 1338(a)–(b) and 28 U.S.C. § 1331.

8. This Court may exercise personal jurisdiction over each of these Defendants because each Defendant directly targets business activities towards consumers in Illinois, through their Online Stores on the Amazon Platform, identified in Schedule “A” attached hereto as **Exhibit 2**.

9. Defendants target and have targeted sales to the United States by operating Online Stores that are directed and cater to United States consumers, offer shipping to the United States,

including Illinois, accept payment in U.S. dollars, and sell their products using Plaintiff's Copyrighted Photographs.

10. Specifically, these Defendants copy and display the Copyrighted Photographs without license or authorization to residents of Illinois through the Amazon Platform.

11. Each Defendant is subject to personal jurisdiction in Illinois because they are foreign entities with sufficient contacts here and they have systematically and continuously used the Copyrighted Photographs for commercial purposes in this judicial district. This systematic exploitation in the United States, and here specifically, Illinois, of the Copyrighted Photographs for commercial purposes makes it reasonably foreseeable that these Defendants would be subject to the jurisdiction of a court in Illinois. The exercise of jurisdiction in this Court complies with due process.

12. Venue is proper in this district under 28 U.S.C. § 1391 because these Defendants are subject to this Court's personal jurisdiction and none of these Defendants, based on a pre-suit investigation, are residents of the United States. Each of these Defendants are engaging in infringing activities and causing harm within the Northern District of Illinois by displaying the Copyrighted Photographs for commercial purposes within the district, and advertising, offering to sell, selling, and/or shipping products to consumers in this district. See Exhibit 4.

THE PARTIES

Plaintiff

13. Plaintiff is an individual and the exclusive licensee of the Copyrighted Photographs at issue in this action.

14. The Copyrighted Photographs are original photographic works authored and owned by Daning Zhou, as reflected in the Copyright Registrations attached as **Exhibit 1**.

15. Pursuant to a written agreement, Daning Zhou granted Plaintiff the exclusive rights described therein, including the exclusive right to commercially exploit, license, and sublicense the Copyrighted Photographs.

16. Daning Zhou further granted Plaintiff the right to enforce the copyrights in the Copyrighted Photographs against unauthorized third parties, including through litigation.

17. Plaintiff has exercised those exclusive rights by sublicensing the Copyrighted Photographs to clothing suppliers and fashion-related businesses for commercial use in marketing and advertising.

18. Plaintiff derives revenue and commercial value from the use and sublicensing of the Copyrighted Photographs.

19. Unauthorized use of the Copyrighted Photographs by Defendants interferes with Plaintiff's exclusive licensing rights, destroys the value of exclusivity, and diminishes Plaintiff's ability to sublicense.

20. Plaintiff has never licensed or otherwise authorized Defendants to use the Copyrighted Photographs.

21. Loss of exclusivity and control over the authorized use of the Copyrighted Photographs creates serious harm to Plaintiff, who relies on limiting the availability of the Copyrighted Photographs to sustain their value.

22. Unauthorized use by these Defendants destroys exclusivity, devalues the Copyrighted Photographs, and diminishes future sublicensing opportunities.

23. Continued unauthorized use of the Copyrighted Photographs by Defendants devalues Plaintiff's exclusive license rights because it:

- a. prevents the Copyrighted Photographs from being used by Plaintiff's sublicensees to distinguish their products in the marketplace; and,
- b. it signals to current and future licensees that an exclusive license to the Copyrighted Photographs does not provide meaningful exclusivity.

24. Plaintiff's livelihood and business interests depend on its ability to control and enforce the exclusive licensing and sublicensing of the Copyrighted Photographs.

25. The damage caused by Defendants' continued infringement to Plaintiff's exclusive rights in the Copyrighted Photographs is imminent, irreparable, and not fully compensable by money damages alone.

Defendants

26. Defendants are individuals and business entities of unknown corporate organization and/or structure, who own and/or operate one or more of the Online Stores on the Platform as identified on Schedule "A". See **Exhibit 2**.

27. It is believed that Defendants reside and/or operate in foreign jurisdictions outside the United States.

28. Defendants conduct business across the United States, including in this judicial district of Illinois, through the operation of their Online Stores listed in Schedule "A". See **Exhibit 2**. Defendants have offered to sell and have sold products using illicit copies of the Copyrighted Photographs without permission. See **Exhibit 3** for links to infringing uses of the Copyrighted Photographs on each of Defendants' Online Stores and comparison of the Copyrighted Photographs.

29. Most third-party online marketplace platforms, like the Platform in this case, do not verify new sellers or confirm their identities. This allows infringers to use fake or inaccurate

names, business details, and addresses when creating an online store. These platforms also typically do not require sellers to reveal their actual business entities, enabling infringers to set up multiple profiles and stores that seem unrelated but that are actually controlled by the same individuals.

DEFENDANTS' UNLAWFUL CONDUCT

30. The quality and commercial value of the Copyrighted Photographs, and the brands to which Plaintiff sublicenses them, have attracted numerous infringers who copy and display the Copyrighted Photographs to sell cheap competing versions of the clothing depicted in their works.

31. Upon information and belief, all Defendants are a connected group of infringers working together to knowingly and willfully use the Copyrighted Photographs around the same timeframe, without permission, to manufacture, import, distribute, offer for sale, and sell the clothing depicted within.

32. Upon information and belief, Defendants had knowledge of Daning Zhou's ownership and authorship of the Copyrighted Photographs, and of Plaintiff's exclusive rights therein.

33. Plaintiff has identified numerous stores on the Amazon Platform, including Defendants' online stores, which display the Copyrighted Photographs around the same timeframe.

34. Plaintiff seeks to shut down Defendants' Online Stores, through which Defendants display and exploit unauthorized copies of the Copyrighted Photographs.

35. Fraudulent seller alias registration patterns are among the common tactics used by Internet store operators, such as these Defendants, to conceal their identities and the full extent of their illicit activities, and to avoid shutdown. The Amazon Platform specifically does not display

detailed seller contact information or physical addresses and the seller aliases used are typically only names inside of the Amazon Platform and not registered as businesses outside of the Platform.

36. Defendants operate under various seller aliases creating the impression that they are multiple and separate entities when listed on a Schedule “A” enforcement action.

37. By making these seller aliases appear as unrelated entities, Defendants recognize they may cause a joinder issue in any multi-defendant enforcement case, thereby further avoiding liability.

38. Defendants’ intentional tactic of hiding behind multiple seller aliases to obstruct enforcement is aimed at sustaining illicit infringement activities.

39. Without joinder of each Defendant, the Defendants’ illicit strategy to dodge liability will succeed because individual lawsuits are costly, time consuming, and burdensome for the courts.

40. Each Defendant is properly joined in this case because it is highly probable that they are collaborating or are not separate entities, and they are listed separately only to continue their illegal activities without liability. Each of the reproduced photographs are from the same publishing year, each infringe the subject matter, and each are identical copies of Plaintiff’s Copyrighted Photographs. *See Exhibit 3.*

41. This conclusion is enhanced by the fact that each Defendant uses the Copyrighted Photographs in the same manner to sell the same clothing items, which they must produce on a larger scale to try and make a profit. It is unlikely that any single Defendant alone could sustain manufacturing on such a large scale.

42. Due to the large number of infringers Plaintiff faces, individual infringers can get lost in the swarm, especially since these Defendants can easily disappear and open new stores, making enforcement against individual infringers impracticable.

43. Infringers, like Defendants, operate multiple credit card merchant accounts and third-party accounts that are hidden behind layers of payment gateways, enabling them to continue their operations despite enforcement efforts.

44. Based on information and belief, these Defendants maintain offshore bank accounts and regularly transfer funds from their Platform accounts to offshore banks outside this Court's jurisdiction, especially since it is believed that these Defendants are located outside the United States.

45. Defendants' Online Stores bear similarities with each other that further indicates their interrelatedness.

46. Notable features standard to Defendants' Online Stores includes a lack of contact information, the same or similar products for sale, identically or similarly priced items, sales discounts, shared hosting service, identical name servers, and their common infringement of the Copyrighted Photographs.

47. Defendants' use of Plaintiff's intellectual property devalues the same by eliminating and/or diluting the exclusiveness of the sublicenses Plaintiff has issued.

48. Unless restrained temporarily, preliminarily, and permanently by this Court, Defendants' infringing conduct will continue to cause irreparable harm to Plaintiff.

49. Upon information and belief, Defendants will continue to infringe Plaintiff's rights in the Copyrighted Photographs for commercial purposes unless preliminarily and permanently enjoined.

COUNT I
COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT (17 U.S.C. § 101, et seq.)

50. Plaintiff repeats, realleges, and incorporates by reference herein the allegations contained in Paragraphs 1 through 49 as though fully set forth herein.

51. The Copyrighted Photographs have substantial value and were produced and created at significant expense.

52. Plaintiff is the exclusive licensee of the Copyrighted Photographs, including the exclusive rights to sublicense and enforce the Copyrighted Photographs against unauthorized use.

53. Plaintiff is entitled to bring this action pursuant to 17 U.S.C. § 501(b) as the beneficial owner of one or more exclusive rights under the copyrights at issue.

54. Defendants continue to use without authorization the Copyrighted Photographs to sell their goods in this and other judicial districts.

55. Defendants' unauthorized reproduction, display, and commercial use of the Copyrighted Photographs on their Online Stores infringes the exclusive rights associated with the Copyrighted Photographs and violates the rights exclusively licensed to Plaintiff.

56. On information and belief, Defendants' infringing acts are willful, deliberate, and done with prior notice and knowledge of the Copyrighted Photographs.

57. Each Defendant either knew, or should have reasonably known, that the Copyrighted Photographs were registered with the United States Copyright Office, as they did not create them and should have, at a minimum, checked before displaying them.

58. As a direct and proximate result of their unauthorized and infringing conduct, Defendants have obtained and continue to realize direct and indirect profits and other benefits

rightfully belonging to Plaintiff by virtue of its exclusive rights, and/or the copyright owner, which these Defendants would not otherwise have realized but for their infringement.

59. The acts of infringement described above constitute a collective enterprise involving shared, conspiratorial, and overlapping actions done in coordination. These acts were willful, intentional, and performed with disregard for and indifference to the rights of the Plaintiff. Therefore, Defendants, and each of them, should be held jointly and severally liable.

60. Accordingly, Plaintiff seeks an award of damages under 17 U.S.C. § 504.

61. In addition to actual damages, Plaintiff is entitled to receive the profits made by Defendants from their wrongful acts, under 17 U.S.C. § 504(b). Each Defendant should be required to account for all gains, profits, and advantages derived by each Defendant from their acts of infringement.

62. In the alternative, Plaintiff is entitled to and may elect to choose statutory damages under 17 U.S.C. § 504(c), which should be enhanced by 17 U.S.C. § 504(c)(2) because of Defendants' willful infringement.

63. Plaintiff is entitled to and may elect to choose injunctive relief under 17 U.S.C. § 502, enjoining any use or exploitation of the Copyrighted Photographs by Defendants.

64. Plaintiff is also entitled to recover reasonable attorneys' fees and costs of suit under 17 U.S.C. § 505.

65. Plaintiff has no adequate remedy at law, and, if Defendants' actions are not enjoined, Plaintiff will continue to suffer irreparable harm to Plaintiff's business, goodwill, and reputation in the marketplace. Reputational damage and devaluation of one's future works cannot be remedied by monetary damages. Instead, they are irreparable injuries lacking adequate remedies at law, without an injunction.

66. Under 17 U.S.C. §§502 and 503, Plaintiff is entitled to injunctive relief prohibiting each Defendant from further reproducing, displaying, distributing, or otherwise using the Copyrighted Photographs. Plaintiff further seeks an order requiring each Defendant to destroy all unauthorized copies of the Copyrighted Photographs, and the impoundment and forfeiture of all infringing copies, as well as any materials in Defendants' possession from which such copies may be reproduced, in accordance with 17 U.S.C §503.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays for judgment against Defendants and each of them as follows:

1. That Defendants, their affiliates, officers, agents, servants, employees, attorneys, confederates, and all persons acting for, with, by, through, under, or in active concert with them be temporarily, preliminarily, and permanently enjoined and restrained from:

a. using the Copyrighted Photographs or any reproductions or substantially similar copies thereof in any manner in connection with the distribution, marketing, advertising, offering for sale, or sale of any product that is not authorized by Plaintiff in connection with the Copyrighted Photographs;

b. further infringing the Copyrighted Photographs and damaging Plaintiff's reputation and goodwill;

c. using, linking to, transferring, selling, exercising control over, or otherwise owning these Defendants' stores on the Defendants' Online Stores or the Amazon Platform, or any other domain name or online marketplace account that is being used to sell or is the means by which the Defendants could continue to conduct commercial activity using the Copyrighted Photographs; and

d. operating and/or hosting websites on Defendants' Online stores and any other domain names registered or operated by Defendants that are involved with the distribution, marketing, advertising, offering for sale, or sale of any product through the unauthorized use of the Copyrighted Photographs.

2. That Defendants, within fourteen (14) days after service of judgment with notice of entry thereof upon them, be required to file with the Court and serve upon Plaintiff a written report under oath setting forth in detail the manner and form in which Defendants have complied with paragraph 1 above.

3. Entry of an Order that, upon Plaintiff's request, those in privity with these Defendants and those with notice of the injunction, including but not limited to Amazon Platform, as well as Amazon, AliExpress, Walmart, TikTok, DHgate, eBay, Temu, and Wish, social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn, X, Internet search engines such as Google, Bing and Yahoo, and web hosts for Defendants' Online Stores, and domain name registrars ("Third Party Providers"), shall:

a. disable and cease providing services for any accounts that Defendants use the Copyrighted Photographs, including any accounts associated with Defendants listed on Schedule "A";

b. disable and cease displaying any advertisements used by or associated with Defendants that display the Copyrighted Photographs; and

c. take all necessary steps to prevent links to Defendants' Online Stores identified on Schedule "A" from displaying in search results, including, but not limited to, removing links to Defendants' domain names from any search index.

4. That Defendants account for and pay to Plaintiff all profits realized by them through the unauthorized use of the Copyrighted Photographs.

5. In the alternative, Plaintiff be awarded statutory damages of not less than \$750 and not more than \$30,000 for every infringement of the Copyrights under 17 U.S.C. § 504(c), which should be enhanced to a sum of not more than \$150,000 by 17 U.S.C. § 504(c)(2) because of these Defendants' willful copyright infringement.

6. Plaintiff be awarded its reasonable attorneys' fees and costs.

7. Award any and all other relief that this Court deems just and proper.

DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

Plaintiff also demands a trial by jury of all issues so triable pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 38.

Dated: April 9, 2026

Respectfully submitted,

By: /s/ Joseph W. Droter
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Exhibit 1
FILED
UNDER SEAL

Exhibit 2
FILED
UNDER SEAL

Exhibit 3
FILED
UNDER SEAL

Exhibit 4
FILED
UNDER SEAL