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Judge Dismisses Blake Lively's Harassment & Defamation Claims Against Justin Baldoni, But May Trial Looms on Key Counts

A federal judge has thrown out Blake Lively's sexual harassment and defamation claims against Justin Baldoni, narrowing the scope of their explosive legal battle.

Lively's retaliation and breach of contract accusations are the only claims permitted to advance toward a May trial date.

The ruling cites Lively's status as an independent contractor and insufficient ties to California law, weakening her central harassment allegations.

In a major setback for Blake Lively, a federal judge on Thursday dismissed most of her high-profile claims against actor and director Justin Baldoni, significantly reshaping the legal showdown that erupted alongside the release of their 2024 romantic drama "It Ends With Us." The 152-page decision from U.S. District Judge Lewis Liman, a Trump appointee in the Southern District of New York, strips away ten of Lively's allegations, including sexual harassment, defamation, and civil conspiracy while leaving just three claims standing for a potential May 18 trial.

The only remaining accusations from Lively that jurors may now consider are retaliation, aiding and abetting retaliation, and breach of contract. Her original lawsuit, filed in late 2024, painted a blistering picture of misconduct on the film's set, claiming Baldoni improvised unwanted kisses and made lewd comments about sex and her appearance.

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Baldoni, who also produced and directed the movie, fired back with a \$400 million extortion countersuit against Lively and her husband Ryan Reynolds—a legal offensive that was dismissed last summer.

Judge Liman's ruling turned largely on technical but fatal flaws in Lively's legal approach. He determined she lacked standing under federal law because she worked as an independent contractor, not an employee, and that her reliance on California harassment law was misplaced given that most alleged misconduct occurred in New Jersey. "Lively's allegations center largely around conduct which occurred on the set of the film during the first phase of production in New Jersey," Liman wrote. "This on-set conduct occurred outside California and cannot support applying the statutes extraterritorially." He also noted that "none of the statements suggests conduct more serious than suggested in the Wayfarer Parties' In-court responses to Lively's allegations."

Still, the decision was not a clean victory for Baldoni. Jurors may still hear evidence of his on-set behavior as part of Lively's surviving retaliation claim. While the judge acknowledged that discussing personal experiences, including sex, could be part of a legitimate creative process, he singled out one alleged comment as crossing a line. "Baldoni's on-set comment to crew members regarding whether Lively watched pornography bore no apparent connection to the creative process and singled Lively out in front of others in a way that could be interpreted as relating to sex and based on gender," Liman ruled. That finding ensures the upcoming trial will still put a spotlight on behind-the-scenes tensions from the film's production.

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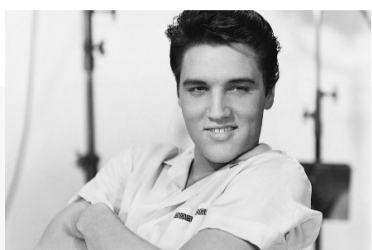
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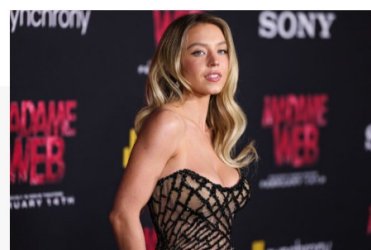
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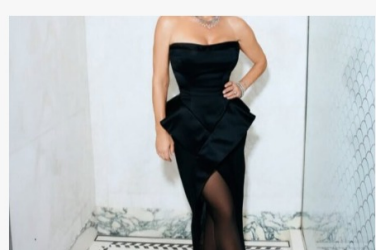
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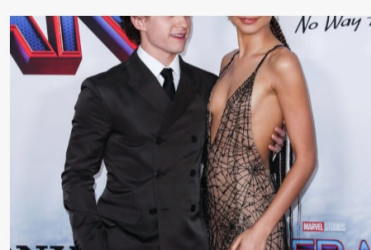
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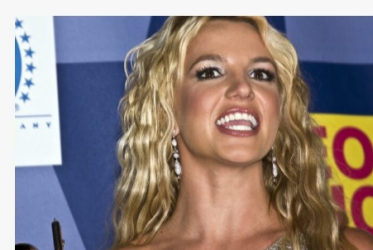
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