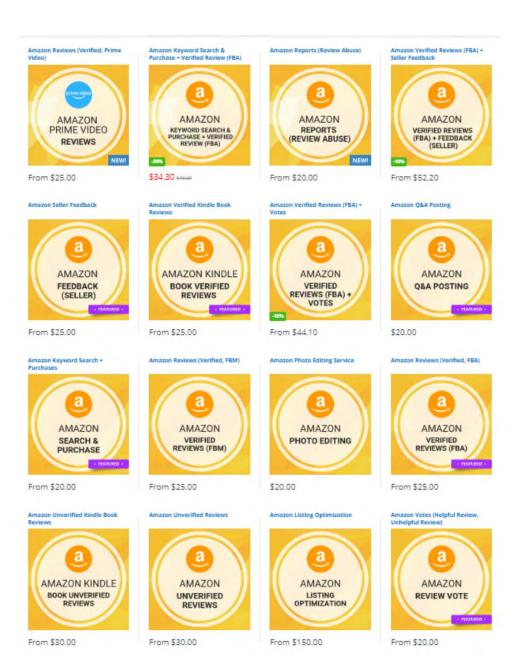
1 ŒŒĠŔØŎÓŔĠĠŔ€J K€€ŔŒT SOÞ ŐÁÔU WÞVŸ 2 ÙWÚÒÜŒJÜÁÔUWÜVÁÔŠÒÜS ÒËZ(ŠÒÖ 3 ÔOTÙÒÁN KACH CHÉGÍÌÏ É ÁÙÒCE 4 5 6 7 SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON KING COUNTY 8 9 AMAZON.COM, INC., a Delaware corporation; and AMAZON.COM SERVICES LLC, a 10 Delaware limited liability company, No. 11 Plaintiffs, COMPLAINT FOR DAMAGES AND INJUNCTIVE RELIEF 12 v. 13 RESONET, YU QI OOI, and JOHN DOES 1–5 14 d/b/a/ "AppSally.com", 15 Defendants. 16 17 **INTRODUCTION** Plaintiffs, Amazon.com, Inc. and Amazon.com Services LLC (collectively, "Amazon"), 18 bring this action against Defendants Resonet, Yu Qi Ooi, and John Does 1–5 ("Defendants"), 19 20 who are responsible for the website AppSally.com ("AppSally"), for injunctive relief and damages as follows: 21 22 I. **SUMMARY** 1. Every day, millions of consumers who shop in Amazon's store use customer 23 product reviews to assist with purchasing decisions. Customer trust and fair competition in 24 Amazon's store depend, in part, on the authenticity of those reviews. The bad actors who pay for 25 product reviews erode that customer trust, compete unfairly with the millions of honest 26 entrepreneurs who sell in Amazon's store, and tarnish Amazon's brand. 27

- 2. Amazon devotes extensive efforts to combatting product reviews that are false, inauthentic, or incentivized ("fake reviews"). Incentivized reviews that are not identified as such are inherently false and misleading because they are motivated by compensation, withhold that key information from consumers, and therefore are likely to mislead consumers into believing that the reviews are from unbiased and independent customers. In 2020, Amazon intercepted more than 200 million suspected fake reviews, leveraging machine learning models and teams of customer-obsessed employees dedicated to keeping Amazon's stores free of fake reviews.

 Amazon's proactive detection drives more than 99% of fake reviews enforcement in Amazon's stores.
- 3. Despite Amazon's efforts, fake reviews persist because schemes like "free product in exchange for five-star review" are organized and orchestrated largely on third-party websites such as AppSally, or in dedicated groups on social media sites, as opposed to within Amazon's stores where the fake reviews are ultimately posted.
- 4. Amazon is bringing this action against the operators of the website AppSally, which sells fake reviews, in order to shut down the site and seek disgorgement of Defendant's ill-gotten gains from selling fake reviews.
- 5. Defendants in this action operate the AppSally business and website as a commercial venture to help Amazon sellers obtain false, misleading, and inauthentic customer reviews for their products. For a fee, Defendants provide Amazon sellers with positive reviews in Amazon's stores. AppSally claims that these transactions typically result in a five-star review of the product with glowing testimony, affecting both the product's collection of reviews as well as its aggregated star rating.
- 6. AppSally's website claims that the company is "The Perfect Growth Weapon For Your Business" that will provide "services to help you outrank your competitors from your bedroom." In reality, the company operates a deceptive and unfair service by which a user can pay to obtain fake reviews. AppSally provides at least 16 different packages by which Amazon sellers can obtain reviews and other services to help fraudulently manipulate their evaluations.

As shown on the following excerpt from its website, AppSally offers verified reviews, seller feedback, votes, and postings for product Q&As.

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7. Upon information and belief, AppSally is fully aware of the fact that it provides services that are unfair to legitimate Amazon selling partners, to consumers, and to Amazon itself. AppSally's entire business model is based on allowing sellers to obtain fake reviews and

8. Indeed, AppSally's website notes the time and effort required to sell quality products and get favorable customer reviews, and offers services to allow dishonest sellers to "get a quick head start" on their competition by buying reviews "to instantly boost the credibility and sales of products you sell on Amazon."



- 9. Defendants are actively deceiving Amazon's customers and tarnishing Amazon's brand for their own profit, as well as for the profit of AppSally user bad actors who are selling in Amazon's store. Amazon is bringing this action to protect its customers and selling partners from this misconduct by stopping Defendants and uprooting the fake review schemes in which they participate.
- In this action, Amazon brings claims for violations of the Washington Consumer
 Protection Act (RCW Ch. 19.86) and Washington common law.

II. JURISDICTION AND VENUE

11. This Court has personal jurisdiction over Defendants, who have conducted business activities in and directed to Washington and are primary participants in tortious acts in and directed to Washington. Defendants affirmatively undertook to manipulate reviews, ratings,

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and rankings of products sold in stores operated by Amazon, a corporation with its principal place of business in Washington. Defendants' acts deceived consumers who purchased products in Amazon's stores and harmed Amazon. Defendants knowingly committed or facilitated the commission of tortious acts in Washington and have wrongfully caused Amazon substantial injury in Washington.

12. Venue is proper in this Court pursuant to RCW §§ 4.12.010–.025 in that a substantial part of the events or omissions giving rise to the claims pled herein occurred in King County, Amazon seeks damages for personal injury or damage to personal property in King County, and Amazon's causes of action arose in King County.

III. THE PARTIES

- 13. Amazon is a Delaware company with its principal place of business in Seattle, Washington. Amazon owns and operates the Amazon.com store and website and equivalent international stores and websites. Amazon has over three hundred million active customers.
 - 14. Upon information and belief, AppSally operates in Penang, Malaysia.
- 15. Upon information and belief, AppSally is owned by a company in Malaysia, Defendant Resonet: https://www.reso.net.my/.
- 16. Upon information and belief, Resonet is owned or managed by an individual, Defendant Yu Qi "Patricia" Ooi. 1
- 17. Upon information and belief, AppSally may be connected to the following address: 1-16-3, Suntech Penang Cybercity, Lintang Mayang Pasir 3, Bayan Baru, 11950, Penang, Malaysia.
- 18. Upon information and belief, AppSally may be connected to the following address: 65 (1st Floor) Room B, Irving Road, 10400 Georgetown, Penang, Malaysia.
- 19. Defendants are the registrants of the domain name AppSally.com and the owners and operators of the online business at that website.

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¹ Ms. Ooi's LinkedIn appears here: https://e27.co/user/yuqi/ (accessed September 20, 2021).

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20. Amazon is unaware of the true names and capacities of Defendants sued herein as John Does 1–5 and therefore sues these Defendants by such fictitious names. Amazon will amend this complaint to allege their true names and capacities when ascertained. Amazon is informed and believes and therefore alleges that each of the fictitiously named Defendants, along with the named Defendants (collectively "Defendants"), is responsible in some manner for the occurrences herein alleged, and that Amazon's injuries as herein alleged were proximately caused by such Defendants.

IV. AMAZON'S PRODUCT REVIEW SYSTEM

- 21. Amazon pioneered online customer reviews 25 years ago, and Amazon.com is now home to billions of unique reviews. Reviews provide a forum for customers to share authentic feedback about products positive or negative. As long as Amazon's customers abide by Amazon's Community Guidelines,² which prohibit illegal, obscene, infringing, and other abusive reviews, customers may review and rate any product available in Amazon's stores. Amazon does not remove reviews because they are critical; Amazon believes all helpful information relevant to a product can inform its customers' buying decisions. Honest and unbiased reviews allow customers to trust that they can shop with confidence in Amazon's store, and reviews also help fulfill Amazon's mission to be Earth's most customer-centric company. In short, Amazon takes the integrity and authenticity of its customer reviews very seriously.
- 22. Amazon encourages its customers to review products available in its stores. Amazon displays these reviews on the detail pages for the products. Consumers rely on this customer feedback to make informed purchasing decisions. Customers trust that these reviews will be honest, authentic, and unbiased.
- 23. Each product review is comprised of a "star rating" that ranges from one star to five stars and can also include textual comments and product images or video. Amazon compiles these product reviews, summarizes the compiled star ratings, and displays those results alongside

² "Amazon Community Guidelines,"

https://www.amazon.com/gp/help/customer/display.html?nodeId=GLHXEX85MENUE4XF (accessed July 21, 2021).

the listed product for shoppers to see while they are shopping. An example of product reviews for the Amazon Echo follows: 2 3 All-new Echo (4th Gen) | With premium sound, 4 smart home hub, and Alexa | Charcoal 5 Brand: Amazon **** 37,955 ratings | 816 answered questions 6 Amazon's Choice for "alexa" 7 Climate Pledge Friendly 8 9 List Price: \$99.99 Price: \$79.99 **/prime** 10 or 5 monthly payments of \$16.00 11 You Save: \$20.00 (20%) 12 May be available at a lower price from other sellers, potentially without free Prime shipping. 13 In Stock. 14 15 Sean M ★★★★★ The sound quality is impressive 16 Reviewed in the United States on February 25, 2021 Color: Charcoal Configuration: Echo Verified Purchase While I wouldn't replace our home theater system with this, the sound quality is REALLY good. For us that was a side benefit. Our smart home controller had been down 17 for some days (the company's viability is in question now) and through some research I learned that this level of Echo had some of the capability to fill that void. Win/win for us as we have at least one of the Alexa products in every room of the house. 18 Helpful Report abuse 19 Reginald A. Tucker *** * Great! Personal assistant 20 Reviewed in the United States on February 24, 2021 Color: Charcoal | Configuration: Echo | Verified Purchase 21 Helpful Report abuse 22 Korey mahanay ★★★★★ Gooooooooood sound 23 Reviewed in the United States on February 24, 2021 Color: Twilight Blue | Configuration: Echo | Verified Purchase 24 Absoloutly amazing sound quality Helpful Report abuse 25

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- 24. Reviews can impact product sales in multiple ways. Most immediately, positive reviews can encourage customers to purchase a product. In addition, reviews can influence a product's sales ranking: Amazon records and publishes "rankings" of products sold in its stores, which is based on sales. Amazon uses product sales data to create its Best Seller Rank ("BSR") and also provides best seller lists for categories and subcategories of products. This information is updated hourly to reflect recent and historical sales of nearly every product sold. This information helps consumers understand which products are popular and how their sales are trending, which may help influence shopping decisions. As such, reviews can indirectly increase a product's sales rank.
- 25. Additionally, where a customer decides to sort results of a search by average customer rating, reviews and star ratings of a product directly impact the order in which that customer sees products, with the product containing the highest average star rating appearing at the top of the list.

V. BUYER AND SELLER POLICIES AGAINST FAKE REVIEWS

- 26. In order to review a product, an individual must have an Amazon account. As a result, each reviewer of a product has agreed to and is bound by the Conditions of Use of Amazon's stores.
- 27. By agreeing to the Conditions of Use, each product reviewer enters into a contractual relationship with Amazon.
- 28. Similarly, each seller who lists a product for sale in Amazon's store has agreed to and is bound by the Amazon Services Business Solutions Agreement.
- 29. By agreeing to the Amazon Services Business Solutions Agreement, each seller enters into a contractual relationship with Amazon.
- 30. Amazon prohibits fake reviews, as clearly provided in its Community Guidelines³ which are part of its Conditions of Use and Business Solutions Agreement, which prohibit:
 - Creating, modifying, or posting content in exchange for compensation of

³ See fn. 2.

any kind (including free or discounted products, refunds, or

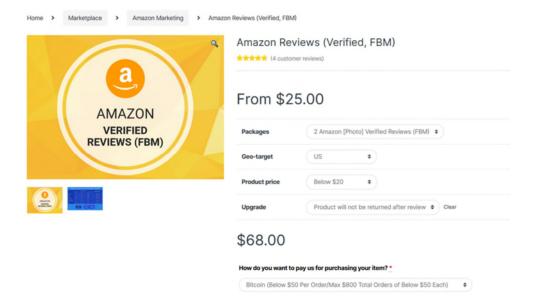
its efforts to ensure the authenticity of reviews, Amazon has developed sophisticated technologies and protocols to detect and remove such reviews from its stores. Amazon analyzes every review that is submitted and continues to scour its stores for fake reviews if they are published, stops or removes fake reviews when it finds them, and takes enforcement actions against the sellers who post and/or purchase fake reviews. Amazon is constantly innovating to improve its ability to identify and remove fake reviews, but when that abuse takes place away from Amazon's websites, bad actors are emboldened to act in direct contravention of Amazon's policies and the law.

VI. AMAZON'S PAID REVIEWS PREVENTION EFFORTS

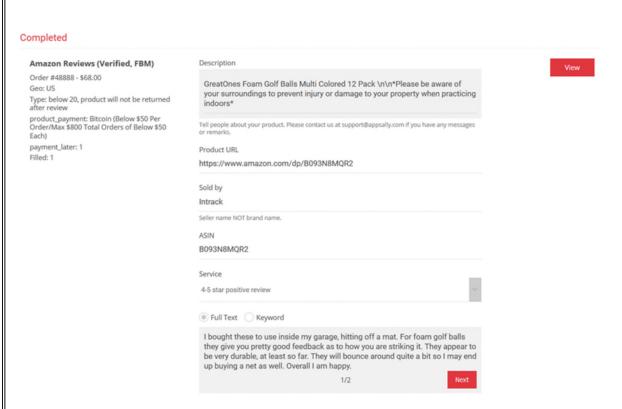
- 35. Unfortunately, at times unscrupulous sellers try to gain unfair competitive advantages for their products in Amazon's stores by paying for false, misleading, and inauthentic customer reviews. These reviews can significantly undermine the trust that consumers, sellers, and manufacturers place in Amazon, which in turn tarnishes Amazon's brand.
- 36. Fake reviews can also harm consumers by providing misleading information about the quality, authenticity, and nature of products, and harms other sellers who play by the rules and earn positive reviews by offering high-quality products and excellent customer service. By influencing sales volumes, fake reviews can also artificially inflate the rankings of reviewed products.
- 37. Amazon strictly prohibits any attempt to manipulate customer reviews and expressly prohibits compensated reviews. Amazon's goal is to detect and remove abusive reviews before a customer ever sees them, and thus Amazon invests significant financial and personnel resources to protect its stores from abuse. When it detects a potentially abusive or otherwise objectionable review, Amazon takes steps to protect customers through a variety of enforcement actions, such as preventing further reviews from that customer, removing reviews, and enforcing against associated selling and customer accounts.

VII. DEFENDANTS' DECEITFUL ACTS

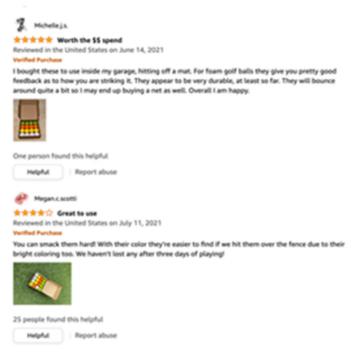
- 38. Beginning at a time unknown to Amazon but no later than November 2018, Defendants obtained the domain name AppSally.com, a website through which they operate their illicit business of selling fake reviews.
- 39. Through the AppSally website, Amazon sellers pay Defendants for a set number of reviews and other services to manipulate their rankings.
- 40. Upon information and belief, AppSally itself sells packages (containing reviews). A seller may purchase verified reviews directly from AppSally:



41. After payment, AppSally requires that a seller provide the specific product URL, ASIN, and drafts of the purchased fake reviews.



42. Sellers are instructed to ship empty boxes and to provide photos that they would like to have uploaded with the reviews. As promised, the purchased fake reviews, along with the transmitted photos, appear on the Amazon product page in short order.



- 43. Upon information and belief, this abuse is happening on a much larger scale. AppSally's homepage boasts "10,592 customers," "563 marketers," and "365 services."
- 44. Upon information and belief, Defendants knew that Amazon maintains contractual relationships with sellers and with product reviewers.
- 45. At all times, Defendants knew that Amazon has contractual prohibitions against fake reviews and thus, would be incentivizing sellers to violate their contracts with Amazon. Defendants further knew and intended that their business of selling fake reviews would improperly manipulate the published ratings and ranking of products listed for sale in Amazon's stores, resulting in the deception of Amazon's customers and the erosion of customer trust in Amazon's stores.

⁵ "Fake Reviews and Inflated Ratings Are Still a Problem for Amazon," Wall Street Journal, https://www.wsj.com/articles/fake-reviews-and-inflated-ratings-are-still-a-problem-for-amazon-11623587313 (accessed September 20, 2021).

VIII. REPUTATIONAL HARM TO AMAZON

- 46. Fake reviews threaten Amazon's reputation and erode trust with consumers. Product reviews are an important part of a customer's shopping experience, and customers rely on the accuracy and authenticity of reviews to inform their shopping decisions. When reviews are false, inaccurate, or misleading, customers' expectations for product quality and performance are not fulfilled. When reviews are not trustworthy, consumers lose confidence in the quality and performance of products and associated ratings in Amazon's stores and are less likely to purchase products.
- 47. Similarly, fake reviews threaten to undermine the trust of honest sellers who attempt to sell products in Amazon's stores. When dishonest sellers use fake reviews to gain a competitive advantage, they harm honest sellers who, in turn, lose faith in the integrity of the Amazon marketplace.
- 48. As a result of review abuse perpetuated in Amazon's stores by bad actors, there has been widespread media attention to fake reviews in Amazon's stores.
- 49. The Wall Street Journal published a story regarding fake reviews in Amazon's stores on June 13, 2021, titled, "Fake Reviews and Inflated Ratings Are Still a Problem for Amazon." The article focuses on sellers and third parties who encourage reviews abuse against Amazon policies.
- 50. Two days later, Amazon received its first inquiry from Congress, by Senator Roger Wicker, Ranking Member of the Senate Commerce Committee, regarding the work Amazon does to ensure reviews are authentic and inquiring whether reviews abuse in Amazon's stores detailed in the Wall Street Journal article is widespread.
- 51. Buyers who become aware of these articles and investigations, as well as those solicited by incentives to leave a review, could lose trust in Amazon as a resource for unbiased product reviews.

- 52. Sellers in Amazon's stores also complain that reviews abusers create an unfair environment for competition and steal sales from well-intentioned businesses.
- 53. Multiple sellers have complained to Amazon about fake reviews with comments like, "It is very disadvantageous to compete with sellers who manipulate the reviews in this way."
- 54. Accordingly, as a result of bad actors' perpetuation of reviews abuse, Amazon has suffered substantial reputational harm.

FIRST CLAIM FOR RELIEF Consumer Protection Act (RCW Ch. 19.86)

- 55. Amazon incorporates by reference the allegations of each and every one of the preceding paragraphs as though fully set forth herein.
- 56. Defendants have engaged in unfair and deceptive acts and practices occurring in trade or commerce in violation of the Washington Consumer Protection Act, RCW Ch. 19.86.
- 57. Defendants' actions were injurious to the public interest. The acts were committed in the course of Defendants' business and caused the public dissemination of false consumer reviews designed to trick consumers. Defendants' acts had the capacity to and did, indeed, harm consumers.
- 58. Defendants' unfair and deceptive business practices have unjustly harmed Amazon and are causing Amazon to suffer damages.
- 59. Amazon is entitled to treble damages and attorneys' fees, pursuant to RCW 19.86.090.
- 60. As a result of such unfair and deceptive acts and practices, Amazon has also suffered irreparable injury and, unless Defendants are enjoined from such unfair competition, will continue to suffer irreparable injury, whereby Amazon has no adequate remedy at law.

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SECOND CLAIM FOR RELIEF Intentional Interference with Contractual Relations

- 61. Amazon incorporates by reference the allegations of each and every one of the preceding paragraphs as though fully set forth herein.
- 62. Amazon maintains contracts with each seller of goods in Amazon's stores, as each such seller agreed to the Amazon Services Business Solutions Agreement.
- 63. Amazon maintains contracts with each reviewer of goods in Amazon's stores, as each such user agreed to the Amazon Conditions of Use.
- 64. Defendants have knowledge of these contracts and the contractual prohibitions against paid reviews.
- 65. Defendants intended to disrupt and with malice and through unfair means did interfere with the performance of these contracts.
 - 66. As a result of Defendants' actions, Amazon has been harmed.

THIRD CLAIM FOR RELIEF Unjust Enrichment/Restitution

- 67. Amazon incorporates by reference the allegations of each and every one of the preceding paragraphs as though fully set forth herein.
- 68. Defendants unjustly received benefits in the form of payments from Amazon sellers in exchange for fake reviews, at Amazon's expense through their wrongful conduct, including their interference with Amazon's business relationships and other unfair business practices. Defendants continue to unjustly retain these benefits at Amazon's expense. It would be unjust for Defendants to retain any value they obtained as a result of their wrongful conduct.
- 69. Amazon is entitled to the establishment of a constructive trust consisting of the benefit conferred upon Defendants by the revenues derived from their wrongful conduct at Amazon's expense and all profits derived from that wrongful conduct. Amazon is further entitled to full restitution of all amounts in which Defendants have been unjustly enriched at Amazon's expense.

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1	DATED this 22nd day of February, 2022.
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