

## Hollywood Atty's Client Must Arbitrate 'Sex Slave' Claims

By **Daniel Siegal**

*Law360, Los Angeles (July 17, 2015, 5:32 PM ET)* -- A California judge on Friday sent to arbitration an actress' suit accusing a name partner at a Beverly Hills entertainment boutique of forcing her to be his “virtual sex slave” in exchange for representation, ruling the actress agreed to arbitrate all claims arising from the attorney-client relationship.

The plaintiff, referred to in the complaint as Jane Doe, had accused Stone Meyer Genow Semlkinson & Binder LLP partner and entertainment attorney Neil Ettin Meyer of forcing her to perform a variety of sexual acts over four years while threatening to use his influence to sabotage her career if she did not submit to his demands. The suit also claims the law firm knew or should have known about Meyer's conduct.

Before Friday's hearing, Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Marc Marmaro issued a written tentative ruling granting the firm's bid to send the case to arbitration, writing that the arbitration agreement the plaintiff entered into as part of her engagement letter with the firm applies because the complaint does claim Meyers misconduct arose from his abuse of the attorney-client relationship.

At the hearing, however, Jeffrey Lipow of Lipow & Harris, representing the plaintiff, argued that per the 1989 California Court of Appeals ruling in *Lawrence v. Walzer & Gabrielson*, the arbitration agreement must be read narrowly, and “civil rights violations, sexual misconduct are things that no one can say were contemplated by the parties.”

Judge Marmaro disagreed, and said he would be making his tentative ruling his final ruling.

“That's not the test,” he said. “Your complaint very clearly says the essence of your case is based on the attorney-client relationship.”

According to the complaint filed in April, the plaintiff's relationship with Meyer began around 2002, about five years after the former teen beauty queen moved to California to pursue an acting career. She retained Meyer as counsel on the advice and recommendation of her then-manager, who suggested she hire an attorney after landing her first role in a feature film.

Over the next 13 years, Meyer — who represented himself to the plaintiff as an attorney for “several A-list entertainers” — continued to act as her attorney, according to the complaint. For the first four years of that relationship, the plaintiff maintained an active career, appearing in various film and television projects.

But in 2007, the plaintiff paused her career to care for her ailing father, who had suffered a stroke. She tried to return from her hiatus in 2009, but her former managers were unwilling to again represent her because of the length of time she had been away from acting.

The only member of her former team still willing to help restart her career was Meyer, according to the complaint.

After Meyer and the firm agreed to continue its representation of the plaintiff to help procure work for her, the complaint says, Meyer told her she had to follow his advice and do as he instructed or she would never work in Hollywood again.

Meyer told the actress stories of clients who had defied his instructions and how he ruined their careers as a result, the plaintiff claims.

Meyer then began sending her racy emails and text messages, which included statements of his desire to have sex with her as well as nude pictures of himself, the complaint alleged

The behavior then escalated, the complaint says. During a meeting in Meyer's office in January 2010, the plaintiff claims, she was sexually assaulted. On another occasion, Meyer forced her to perform oral sex. And in March 2010 the plaintiff was forced to have sex with Meyer in the law firm's room at New York's St. Regis Hotel, according to the complaint.

From late 2009 until December 2013, Meyer compelled the plaintiff numerous times to have sex with him, including demands that she express pleasure during those acts, the complaint said.

“Meyer preyed upon plaintiff's vulnerability and made her his virtual sex slave,” the complaint said.

The suit brings claims for emotional distress, breach of fiduciary duty and sexual harassment and seeks unspecified damages and attorneys' fees, prejudgment interest and court costs.

On Friday, Judge Marmaro also granted Meyer's individual joinder to the motion to compel arbitration, and ruled that the defendants would bear the costs of the arbitration.

The plaintiff is represented by Jeffrey A. Lipow of Lipow & Harris and Kevin Salute of Salute Law.

The firm is represented by Stanton Larry Stein and Ashley R. Yeargan of Liner LLP. Meyer is represented by Mark D. Baute and Laura E. Robbins of Baute Crochetiere & Gilford LLP.

The case is Jane Doe v. Neil Ettin Meyer et al., case number BC578370, in the Superior Court of the State of California, County of Los Angeles.

— Additional reporting by Vin Gurrieri.

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