EXHIBIT A

Dear Judge McMahon,

I would like to take this opportunity to apologize for my offense. Over the past year, I have given a lot of thought as to how I got myself into this situation.

I have always loved books. I grew up in a small Italian town and, to me, reading a book has always been like meeting new people and get into worlds and cultures which I could not reach otherwise. I remember that when I started reading as a child, it was a way to create my own world, have my own space and even make new friends. I read books because I am interested in what other people think or experience. As a teenager, the warmth and excitement I felt when opening a new book was euphoric. As my love for books was so strong, I usually get excited when a new book release is announced or when I see a new book in a bookstore. I would buy four books a week, even though I am still ploughing through the ones I bought the previous week. I would source them in any different ways: buying them, borrowing them from friends, from the library, getting the eBook, it doesn't matter. I feel like I could not get enough of it.
I have always cherished books and greatly admired and respected the authors. The last thing I ever wanted to do was to upset them or cause them anxiety and sorrow – I realise I did this to some of my favourite authors and I am really sorry. I have always appreciated the arts and, other than literature, I have been passionate about movies and music. I have never liked or condoned piracy and this was never my intention.

In 2012, before I even conceived a career in publishing, I discovered that there were websites (NetGalley.com and Edelweiss.plus) where publishing houses sent out advance reader's copies (galleys) for free to professional readers in exchange for a review. I signed up to this website where I would receive weekly an uncorrected proof before the book was published in exchange of a review on their website. Right after graduating with my bachelor's degree, I was left with a dilemma: what should I do with my life and the only answer I could come up with was, indeed, publishing. At the time, I felt like I had no other interests apart from books so I decided to move to London and study for a postgraduate degree in publishing at UCL. After this, I interned at a literary agency just to get the foot through the door. I really enjoyed my time there so much that I probably believed the people working there liked me as much as I liked them. Ironically, while I could easily interpret meaning and nuances in the written form, despite a linguistics degree I struggle to interpret people's tone orally, often misunderstanding people's intent and requests. This had a negative effect on my relationship with some of the agents. Despite of this, I learned a lot during those four months and I will always be grateful to them for what they taught me.

When I saw a full-time vacancy advertised for the same agency, I applied wanting to continue to immerse myself in that organisation. However, I was rejected without any explanation. I decided not to let that affect me and I put it behind, hoping that I would have other opportunities in publishing. I kept applying for other jobs or even internships in the industry with no success. I could not find a job in the industry but I really missed that professional environment. I still wanted to believe I was part the industry, even though the industry did not

seem to want me. Only after the arrest did I read in an article that the literary agency I interned at hadn't recommended me for jobs. The publishing industry is so small and everyone knows everyone. While employed, I saw manuscripts being shared between editors, agents, and literary scouts or even with individuals outside the industry. So, I wondered: why can I not also get to read these manuscripts?
One day, I created a spoof email address for someone I knew of in the publishing industry, and I sent an email to someone else that I knew of asking for a pre-publication manuscript. I wrote in the style and using the language that my former colleagues had used. When that request was successful, from that moment on, this behaviour became an obsession, a compulsive behaviour. Writing this now, I feel my fingers shaking as I type this at the thought of how egregious, stupid and wrong my actions were. I had a burning desire to feel like I was still one of these publishing professionals and read these new books. A part of me wanted to believe that I was still one of them and I started cosplaying what people in publishing were doing as editors or literary agents.

I have had a lot of time to think about my crime. At first it started as a challenge; I never believed that it would snowball into me performing these crimes as prolifically as I did, I got carried away. Every time an author sent me the manuscript I would feel like I was still part of the industry. At the time, I did not think about the harm I was causing.
I never wanted to and I never leaked these manuscripts. I wanted to keep them closely to my chest and be one of the fewest to cherish them before anyone else, before they ended up in bookshops. There were times where I read the manuscripts and I felt a special and unique connection with the author, almost like I was the editor of that book. I have to admit that I am sometimes a slow reader and I do not like when everyone in the world is reading the same book at the same time. There is a quote from Haruki Murakami's *Norwegian Wood* – which resonated a lot with me when I was sixteen and I first read it – saying: "If you read what everyone is reading, you'll think what everyone thinks". I relate a bit with this sentence as I wanted to enjoy the books in my own space, with my own reading pace, without my thoughts being influenced by what other people around me think about them.

I am truly sorry and I understand it was wrong and illegal. If I were an author and someone got hold of my intellectual property, without knowing where my work would end up and without knowing whether someone might publish it under someone else's name, I would feel anxious and angry. I know that I will not do it again and I have learned my lesson.

Upon reading an article on *The New Yorker* written by one of the authors that I defrauded, I read about the harm I caused him and I was mortified as the last thing I wanted to do was to cause any harm to them. Over the last 14 months, I have felt so ashamed and disgusted with myself to the extent that I sunk into a [redacted]. The level of media attention along with my situation has been a major source of anxiety for me which I struggled to control every day. The enquiries, investigations and reporting by media outlets have been extremely intrusive, printing extensive information and misinformation about me and my family. My family, my friends and I have also had a barrage of emails, handwritten and/or hand-delivered notes and messages on social media from people looking for information, interviews or

comments. Reporters even turned up at my apartment in London, they knocked on my neighbours' houses and they showed up at my dad's practice in Italy. I feel sick thinking that their safety could be jeopardized because of my illegal actions.
Words cannot adequately articulate how sorry I am for impersonating publishing professionals. I understand how the impacted individuals must have felt by seeing their own lives and privacy invaded and have their written works stolen. I now understand that obtaining unpublished manuscripts was as bad as stealing their credit card numbers or their financial assets.

As a result of my arrest for my criminal acts, I have spent a year away from my beloved dog, had a limited amount of time with my life partner, could not see my family, my elderly grandparents, my friends, my hometown and my adopted home city - London. I have been instead living in a city where I know one person, have no legal right to work and have no health insurance. I have been suffering greatly from [redacted] which has had significant physical manifestations, on several occasions I thought that [redacted] but I did not know whom to call or whether I could afford medical treatment. There have been times when I have gone weeks on end without any physical human interaction and this has been debilitating.

My crimes and the associated fallout have also greatly harmed my loved ones and I have subjected them to major upheavals that they did not deserve. My partner has sacrificed a lot to support me during this time and I would not have made it through this process if it hadn't been for him who has been travelling back and forth to New York and ensured his physical appearance at every court appearance. He has been my rock and he wanted to ensure my health and welfare, especially my mental health. My father also submitted the cash for my bond to release Ben from having a lien on our home. I will always be grateful to my partner's cousins for looking after our puppy when he was away and for the support they gave me from afar.

Soon after my release on bail, as I do not have the legal right to work in the USA (being on a tourist visa), I started volunteering at a food bank in Brooklyn twice a week, within my curfew times. I decided to do it because I wanted to give something back. At the end of every shift, I felt good as I knew that I was helping people.
I accept that my criminal actions will preclude me from working in publishing and I know that I have to work outside of the publishing industry in order to completely detoxify myself from what became an obsession, and I am relieved to have completed over a year of this disassociation so far. When I plan to go back home to London, the first thing I want to do is look after my mental health to prevent any similar incident from happening again. I have already started having counselling sessions remotely with a UK-based counsellor but I look forward to having some [redacted] sessions once I am back home. From a career prospective, I will seek a role in a more inclusive industry where they understand my [redacted] better and it can be seen as an opportunity. My plan is to start working within the food industry, potentially to open a health café in London where I can serve healthy, organic, meat-free dishes, including specific cakes for people who have food allergies and

intolerances that can help them to maintain a healthy diet. Additionally, I would also consider teaching English to the Chinese community within my neighbourhood in London. I would also like to continue to do volunteer work. Ever since I was diagnosed with [redacted] I have also been very interested in my [redacted] and have tried to read as much as possible about it and I hope that my story will spread awareness about [redacted] in general which may help more people to get diagnosed and thus potentially increase their quality of life.

My name will always be associated with this crime. It is my scarlet letter and I will carry it for the rest of my life. After the arrest, it took me several months before I could pick up another book which I purchased from an independent bookstore in Brooklyn. The cruel irony is that every time I open a book, it reminds me of my wrongdoings and what they led me to.
I know that my journey is not over once I am back to the UK. Although I will steer clear of the public spotlight as I have done so far hoping to slip into oblivion, I know that people will still talk about me and my case in the years to come. This is something that I will have to live until my dying days.

I would like to thank you, Your Honour, for reading my words and for handling my case. I hope that this letter and the other material that you received will help you understand me a little bit more. In any eventuality, I respect you, your office, your profession and the punishment you see fit to impose upon me.

Yours Sincerely,

Filippo Bernardini