

1 John Harding & May Chu Harding
2 9505 N. 49th Place
3 Paradise Valley, AZ 85253
4 480-607-1830

5 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
6 DISTRICT OF ARIZONA

7 John Harding & May Chu Harding
8 9505 N. 49th Place
9 Paradise Valley, AZ 85253

10 *Pro Se*

11 Plaintiffs,

12 -vs-

13 Yeo Cheng Hoong, aka Helen Yeo
14 80 Raffles Place
15 #33-01 UOB Plaza 1
16 Singapore 048624

17 Defendant.

18 COMPLAINT

19 **Jurisdiction and Venue**

- 20 1. Jurisdiction is proper under 28 U.S.C. § 1332 as diversity of citizenship
21 exists and the amount in controversy exceeds \$75,000, exclusive of
22 interest and costs.
23 2. Venue is proper under 28 U.S.C. § 1391.

24 **Complaint**

25 Plaintiffs John Harding and May Chu Harding hereby sue Defendant, Yeo
26 Cheng Hoong aka Helen Yeo and allege as follows:

27 **Introduction**

28 **This is an action for tortious interference with business opportunities,
defamation, and two counts of fraudulent misrepresentation.**

1 **Parties**

2 3. The Hardings are residents of the State of Arizona, and are husband and
3 wife, residing at 9505 N. 49th Place, Paradise Valley, Arizona 85253.

4 Plaintiff John Harding is a realtor licensed to practice in the State of
5 Arizona.

6 4. Defendant, Yeo Cheng Hoong, aka Helen Yeo (Helen Yeo) is a citizen
7 and resident of Singapore, and the wife of influential Singapore Cabinet
8 Minister Yeo Cheow Tong. Helen Yeo is the principal of the law firm of
9 Helen Yeo & Partners with offices in Singapore, Shanghai, Ho Chih
10 Minh City, and Yangon, Burma and with associated offices in the United
11 States, including San Francisco, California. Helen Yeo is also the
12 principal of Orrick Helen Yeo Pte Ltd, a Singapore corporation and joint
13 venture with the law firm of Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP with its
14 headquarters in San Francisco, California.

15 **Summary**

16 The Hardings are the authors of the book *Escape from Paradise, From Third*
17 *World to First*, (ISBN: 0971092907), which was published by IDKPress in
18 October 2001. IDKPress is the d/b/a of Pacific Consulting Services, Inc., an
19 Arizona corporation which is owned by the Hardings.

20 *Escape from Paradise, From Third World to First (Escape from Paradise)* is a
21 non-fiction book, taking place mainly in Singapore, and with the additional
22 venues of Brunei, Australia, Hong Kong, London, California, and Illinois.

23 *Escape from Paradise* is a true woman's story covering the life of its co-
24 author, May Chu Harding. On a deeper level, *Escape from Paradise* is a
25 commentary on people and places, with much of its focus on Singapore.

26 *Escape from Paradise* has been accepted for distribution by the leading book
27 distributors including The Ingram Group, Baker & Taylor, Bertrams (in the
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1 United Kingdom), Bowker Books in Print, and Bowker Global Books in Print.
2 *Escape from Paradise* is not published by a major publisher, and has no
3 advertising budget. These facts make it extremely difficult to attract bookstores
4 to carry the book.

5 In February 2002, the Hardings big break came when Kinokuniya Company
6 Ltd. (Kinokuniya) decided to carry *Escape from Paradise* in their Singapore
7 stores.

8 Kinokuniya, a Japanese company, founded in 1927 is a major bookseller with
9 annual sales of \$1.039 billion (as of August 2001), with a chain of 142 stores
10 in Japan, and 21 stores Taiwan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Australia, and
11 three stores in Singapore. In the United States, Kinokuniya has stores in New
12 York City, Edgewater, New Jersey, and San Francisco, California. Kinokuniya
13 also distributes books and has published more than 1,000 titles.

14 In addition to being carried by Kinokuniya, approximately 25 copies of *Escape*
15 *from Paradise* were purchased by Singapore's National Library, and placed on
16 loan to the general public in Singapore. *Escape from Paradise* did so well in
17 Singapore's National Library, that copies had to be put on reserve to be
18 obtained.

19 On March 22, 2002, the Hardings received an email [Exhibit 1.]¹ from a friend
20 in Singapore, a lawyer, who wrote, "Hi May Chu, Heard from a friend who
21 purchased your book that when his friends went to Kinokuniya to buy the book
22 yesterday they were told that the book has been banned pending legal action. Is
23 this true, what's the comment from your side?"

24 At the time, the Hardings had no knowledge of who had approached

25
26 ¹ In certain emails, in the Exhibits, the name of the Singapore party has
27 been blacked out. This is to protect the person on the Singapore side from
28 reprisals or other actions either from Helen Yeo, or from the Singapore
authorities.

1 Kinokuniya or why they had been approached.

2 The Hardings contacted Kinokuniya by telephone numerous times, but were
3 unable to find out anymore than the fact that *Escape from Paradise* had been
4 removed from the bookstore.

5 In June 2002, *Escape from Paradise* was picked up by a second Singapore
6 bookstore, Select Books Pte Ltd (Select Books), which sold out its initial order
7 of 10 copies, and had ordered 40 additional copies.

8 On June 14, 2002, John Harding was able to contact Douglas Quek of
9 Kinokuniya in Singapore by telephone. Douglas Quek told John Harding that
10 he had received a letter from Helen Yeo's office asserting that *Escape from*
11 *Paradise* was inaccurate and defamatory. In the words of Douglas Quek,

12 "the lawyer from Helen Yeo spoke to us and . . . there were some ah
13 like you say .. undertone of threat in the letter and we thought that ah
14 (inaudible) ah being a Japanese company, we don't want to hurt anybody
15 ..."

16 It had taken the Hardings three months from the time they first heard of the
17 removal of their book from Kinokuniya that the cause of the removal came
18 from Helen Yeo.

19 Helen Yeo had made no contact with the Hardings regarding her objections to
20 their book, choosing to hide from the Hardings what she had done. The
21 Kinokuniya employees were afraid or unwilling to inform the Hardings of
22 Helen Yeo's letter.

23 Although no legal action had been taken against *Escape from Paradise*,
24 Kinokuniya followed Helen Yeo's wishes. This is the state of fear under which
25 most Singaporeans live. The fact that Helen Yeo's husband, Yeo Cheow Tong
26 is a Singapore Cabinet Minister gives her great influence in Singapore. It is
27 doubtful that had an "ordinary" citizen of Singapore approached Kinokuniya to
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1 remove *Escape from Paradise* from sale, that Kinokuniya would have
2 complied.

3 On June 12, 2002, John Harding was able to contact Douglas Quek,
4 Kinokuniya's manager by telephone.

5 Douglas Quek said he had read the book and liked it. He also said that
6 Kinokuniya still wanted to stock *Escape from Paradise*, and, if we could find a
7 local Singapore distributor to handle the book, Kinokuniya might consider re-
8 stocking the book. Unfortunately, the Hardings were unable to find a
9 Singapore distributor.

10 Helen Yeo, aside from being a lawyer, is the wife of Singapore Cabinet
11 Minister Yeo Cheow Tong. As such, in the repressive political atmosphere of
12 Singapore, she is feared. In Singapore, a country which bans satellite dishes,
13 sues its opposition politicians into bankruptcy, and has the power to imprison
14 people for an unlimited time without charging them under its Internal Security
15 Act, Helen Yeo, the wife of Singapore Cabinet Minister Yeo Cheow Tong is
16 feared for good reason.

17 In July 2002, Select Books discontinued their sale of *Escape from Paradise*.
18 *Escape from Paradise* does not mention any act on the part of Helen Yeo, or of
19 her firm, and is not defamatory to Helen Yeo, or to any other party mentioned
20 in the book. It does mention that two junior lawyers of Helen Yeo's firm were
21 the original shareholders of Goldplus Investments Pte Ltd (Goldplus), the
22 Singapore corporation which purchased the attached houses at 69 and 67
23 Holland Road (the Holland Road properties), from May Chu Harding's father,
24 Lee Teng Jin, and his brother Lee Teng Lay, respectively.

25 The sale of the Holland Road properties took place in 1995.

26 May Chu Harding has not seen nor heard of or from her father since 1993
27 despite extensive efforts to locate him. In 1996 a missing persons report was
28

1 filed with the Singapore police [Exhibit 2.] in an attempt to locate May Chu's
2 father, but to no avail.

3 At the time of writing the book, the Hardings did not know nor did they say
4 that Goldplus had been incorporated by Helen Yeo's law firm, only that the
5 original shareholders of Goldplus were Helen Yeo's employees, Janet Tan and
6 Alvin Chia, junior lawyers at the time.

7 In a letter sent to the Hardings on July 8, 2002 [Exhibit 3.], Helen Yeo
8 admitted that her firm incorporated Goldplus. If the Hardings stumbled upon
9 the scene of dubious activity on Helen Yeo's part, they did not know it at the
10 time, nor did they mention it in their book.

11 Helen Yeo, in her letter to the Hardings, threatening to sue the Hardings for
12 defamation, stating,

13 "My husband, Yeo Cheow Tong and I are very blessed to enjoy
14 extremely good reputations in our respective areas. The damages that
15 our firm and I will get on a defamation action in Singapore will be
16 substantial. This is sufficient reason for any book-seller not to sell your
17 book as they are then also liable for damages for distributing the
18 defamation originated by you."

19 Helen Yeo also threatened to take legal action against the Hardings in the
20 United States, stating, "We will also now explore what action we should take
21 in USA, where you are residing."

22 Helen Yeo's letter contains false statements made knowingly and intentionally
23 to deceive the Hardings, and against which the Hardings have irrefutable
24 documentary proof on official Singapore government paper, copies of which
25 are included in the exhibits of this complaint.

26 On July 8, 2002, John Harding answered Helen Yeo's letter, stating,

27 "Whether or not you knew it or consented to it, the fact that your firm
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1 incorporated Goldplus, plus the fact that your lawyers were the original
2 shareholders of Goldplus attaches to Goldplus the prestige of your firm's
3 reputation. This is all that was said in the book. We do not know, nor do
4 we claim that you were involved in this matter.”

5 In a conciliatory manner, while not agreeing with Helen Yeo's charges or
6 many demands, John Harding offered to remove certain items from the book's
7 website (<http://www.escapefromparadise.com>) provided that Helen Yeo
8 withdraw the defamatory remarks made by her, or on her behalf to Kinokuniya,
9 in such manner that *Escape from Paradise* could again be sold by Kinokuniya
10 and Select Books. A copy of John Harding's letter of July 8, 2002 to Helen
11 Yeo is contained in Exhibit 4.

12 Helen Yeo has never answered John Harding's letter.

13

14 **Background and Merits of *Escape from Paradise***

15 *Escape from Paradise* has received excellent reviews and comments from a
16 wide range of distinguished and qualified readers, including C. V. Devan Nair,
17 the former President of Singapore, Francis T. Seow, the former Solicitor
18 General of Singapore, and well-known literary figures including Jonathan
19 Burnham, President of Talk Miramax Books, and Alice Mayhew of Simon and
20 Schuster.

21 The Hardings have been contacted by regarding film and television rights for
22 their book by Mark Gordon, whose recent credits include *Saving Private Ryan*,
23 directed by Steven Spielberg, starring Tom Hanks, and *Wonderboys*, starring
24 Michael Douglas. [Exhibit 5.]

25 Sonia Land, the chief executive of Sheil Land Associated Limited, a literary
26 agency located in London, personally represented the Harding's book to
27 Singapore's leading publisher, Times Publishing, Ltd. Sonia Land represents

1 such notable authors as Seve Ballesteros, Alan Drury, and HRH The Prince of
2 Wales. Sonia Land's letter to the Hardings is included as Exhibit 6.

3 During the period from October 2002 to the present time, the Hardings
4 received numerous requests from other literary agents, foreign literary scouts,
5 and film/television agents regarding seeking to represent *Escape from*
6 *Paradise*. A sampling of these requests, which demonstrate the commercial
7 appeal and viability of *Escape from Paradise* are bundled in Exhibit 7.

8 The foregoing facts represent only a small part of the evidence that
9 demonstrates *Escape from Paradise* is a serious book of literary merit. It also
10 demonstrates the fact that responsible people, including the lawyers who vetted
11 the book, saw nothing in it of a defamatory nature.

12 With the sole exception of Helen Yeo, to the Harding's knowledge, not one
13 single person has termed the book as being defamatory. This includes
14 Singapore's Chief Justice Yong Pung How, who ordered the book directly
15 from IDKPress on January 17, 2002. Had Singapore's Chief Justice seen the
16 book as being defamatory, he certainly would have taken action by this time,
17 and the book would not have been purchased by Singapore's National Library.

18 19 **Facts and Chronology**

20 The writing of *Escape from Paradise*, a factual work, took a great deal of effort
21 by the Hardings. The book is 442 pages long. Aside from the accumulation of
22 documents and other factual material to produce the book by May Chu Harding
23 over the period of her 15 year marriage, it took the authors another four years
24 to produce the book. This includes the organization of nearly 20 file boxes of
25 documents and recordings, as well as the actual writing of the book. Except for
26 In order to devote time to this effort, John Harding resigned from Citibank,
27 Singapore where, for six years, he held a senior position in Information

1 Technology. For the three years prior to that, John Harding was in charge of
2 the computer operations of Singapore's tax authority, the Inland Revenue
3 Department, and held a senior position in Singapore's Civil Service.

4 May Chu Harding was born in Singapore and is a citizen of Singapore, and a
5 Permanent Resident of the United States.

6 On August 8, 2001, the Hardings received an email from the former Solicitor
7 General of Singapore, Francis T. Seow, who, in 1988, was imprisoned without
8 charges for 72 days under Singapore's Internal Security Act for associating
9 with American diplomats. Subsequently, Mr. Seow moved to the United States
10 where he wrote about his imprisonment in the book entitled *To Catch a Tartar*,
11 published by Yale University. Mr. Seow was also made a Fellow of Harvard
12 University.

13 Mr. Seow recommended to the Hardings that they commence their marketing
14 efforts in Singapore, complimenting their book by stating,

15 "No one, however, has written so well of the other side of paradise. Your
16 observations on the Singaporean ethos, the educational system, among
17 others, are insightful emanating as they do from the perspective of an
18 ordinary Singaporean and a mother. Your hands-on experience with the
19 legal and judicial system is revealing and represents the tip of a nasty
20 iceberg."

21 Mr. Seow's full review of *Escape from Paradise* is given in Exhibit 8.

22 On January 17, 2002, the Hardings received an email from Singapore's
23 Supreme Court ordering a copy of *Escape from Paradise* for Singapore's Chief
24 Justice Yong Pung How [Exhibit 9].

25 On February 18, 2002, Kinokuniya Bookstores of Singapore Pte Ltd contacted
26 the Hardings [Exhibit 10.] expressing their interest in carrying two of the
27 Harding's titles, *Escape from Paradise*, and a second book, *Dowager Empress*

1 *2000: The Most Powerful Woman in Asia*. (This second book was a biography
2 of the wife of Singapore's Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew. The Hardings have
3 suspended work on this book due to their difficulties with Helen Yeo.)

4 Kinokuniya ordered and received 10 copies of *Escape from Paradise*.

5 On March 22, 2002, the Hardings received the aforementioned email
6 [Exhibit 1.] from their Singapore lawyer friend with the news that *Escape from*
7 *Paradise* may have been banned. From March 22, 2002, through March 27,
8 The Hardings made numerous telephone calls to Kinokuniya at +65 6737 5021
9 [Exhibit 11.], but the Kinokuniya staff was unwilling or unable to give any
10 information on why the book had been removed from the store.

11 On May 1, 2002, C. V. Devan Nair, former President of Singapore, sent an
12 email [Exhibit 12.] to May Chu Harding, writing,

13 "Dear May Chu,

14 A cowed population in a closed society is the dubious legacy of LKY's
15 PAP. An enfeebling legacy that bodes ill for the survival of Singapore in
16 a volatile milieu. Only a free people will deserve to survive in a world
17 where we don't know even the step in front.

18 I have finished reading your book. A moving memoir that only a
19 woman could have written, it is a unique contribution to the appreciation
20 of a life in Singapore.

21 Thank you for having written it.

22 Do keep in touch.

23 Devan N"

24 In his very kind email, Singapore's former President made no indication that
25 *Escape from Paradise* was defamatory in any way.

26 On May 1, 2002, Wai Keng Low, Librarian of the Singapore National Library
27 sent an email [Exhibit 13.] to John Harding, requesting his year of birth for the

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1 proper cataloging of *Escape from Paradise* in Singapore's National Library.
2 In his email, Wai Keng Low gave no indication that *Escape from Paradise* was
3 defamatory in any way. The very fact that Wai Keng Low was in
4 communication with John Harding attests to the fact that *Escape from Paradise*
5 was acceptable to the Singapore government, and was not defamatory.

6 On June 5, 2002, Ivy Tan of Select Books in Singapore sent an email [Exhibit
7 14.] to the Hardings expressing an interest in purchasing 10 copies of *Escape*
8 *from Paradise*. The books were shipped to Singapore and put on sale at Select
9 Books.

10 After making numerous attempts to find out from Kinokuniya who had caused
11 the Hardings' book to be removed from sale, on June 12, 2002, John Harding
12 was finally able to contact Douglas Quek, the manager of Kinokuniya,
13 Singapore. [Exhibit 15. contains a copy of the telephone charge for the call.]
14 John Harding opened the conversation by telling Douglas Quek that *Escape*
15 *from Paradise* now had a distributor for Asia, the well-known firm of Baker
16 and Taylor. Douglas Quek responded that he had read *Escape from Paradise*
17 and like the book, but wished the people in Singapore were more open.

18 Douglas Quek then revealed that Helen Yeo had been the cause of removing
19 *Escape from Paradise* from sale,

20 John Harding asked Douglas Quek two more times to identify the lawyer who
21 was objecting, and both times Douglas Quek repeated that it was Helen Yeo,
22 and that she was not representing anybody, but was attacking the book as
23 being,

24 "not correct or not true . . . so they they request us to remove this book
25 off the shelf ... Like I say, from our angle we wish not to have any
26 problems, so that's why we took it off the shelf. But legally, like I say,
27 we would like to put it up there."

1 Douglas Quek understood that this was not done by the Singapore government,
2 but was a personal matter on Helen Yeo's part and commented on her actions
3 saying,

4 "Yeah it has nothing to with the Singapore Sedition Act or Internal
5 Security Act."

6 Helen Yeo, wife of Cabinet Minister Yeo Cheow Tong, had used her
7 considerable personal influence, aided and abetted by her position as wife of
8 Singapore Cabinet Minister Yeo Cheow Tong, to have *Escape from Paradise*
9 removed from Kinokuniya's Singapore bookstores, thereby damaging the
10 Hardings' commercially reasonable expectation of having their book sold, not
11 only in Singapore but throughout Kinokuniya's bookstores worldwide, which
12 would lead to their book's acceptance by other leading retailers.

13 Helen Yeo's tortious interference with the sale of *Escape from Paradise*, her
14 defamation of the Hardings and her fraudulent misrepresentation damage the
15 Hardings throughout Asia, and especially and particularly in the United States.
16 On June 14, 2002, John Harding, unable to contact Helen Yeo via email, wrote
17 a letter [Exhibit 16.] to Helen Yeo's American joint venture partner, Ralph J.
18 Baxter Jr, Chairman & CEO of Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe in San
19 Francisco, California to make him aware of the extra-legal and damaging
20 action that Helen Yeo had taken against *Escape from Paradise* book in
21 Singapore, and to inform Mr. Baxter that,

22 "Our goal is to have our book freely marketed and read. Helen Yeo
23 through her action against us should understand that she risks bringing
24 damaging publicity on herself, Singapore, and on her associates."

25 The Hardings hoped that Mr. Baxter could prevail upon Helen Yeo to drop her
26 objections to their book. A copy of this letter was also sent to Singapore's
27 Chief Justice Yong Pung How.

1 On June 23, 2002, Glen Goei sent an email to May Chu Harding [Exhibit 17.],
2 writing,

3 “Bought the book from Select this weekend and can't put it down! It's a
4 great read! And so nostalgic for me -- the good old days!”

5 Glen Goei is the writer and director of the Miramax film *That's the Way I Like*
6 *It* and played the title role opposite Anthony Hopkins in the London production
7 of *M. Butterfly*. Glen Goei's email confirmed to the Hardings that *Escape from*
8 *Paradise* was still on sale at Select Books. Glen Goei is a successful
9 personality in the entertainment industry, and his email provided another
10 positive validation of the quality of *Escape from Paradise*, and a possible
11 opportunity for the Hardings to promote their book to the film industry. Glen
12 Goei gave no indication that he saw anything defamatory in the Hardings'
13 book.

14 On June 25, 2002, the Hardings received another confirmation that the book
15 was on sale and a success at Select Books in an email [Exhibit 18.], from
16 Singapore author, Jacob George who wrote,

17 “In case you didn't know, Select bookstores here in s'pore brought in
18 about 40 copies of your book and i heard its selling well. I bought a copy
19 too and now i'm at the chapter entitled Disinheritance 101. Very
20 interesting and mostly I feel sad for what you had to go through.”

21 This email was very encouraging to the Hardings, as it indicated that, in
22 addition to the original ten copies they had sent, Select Books had ordered
23 another 40 copies of their book.

24 Shortly after the good news that *Escape from Paradise* was doing well at
25 Select Books, the Hardings received a telephone call from Singapore that their
26 book was no longer available at that bookstore.

27 To the Hardings' knowledge, their book was no longer commercially available
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1 anywhere in Singapore. The Hardings do not know if Select Books had been
2 contacted directly by Helen Yeo or her associates.

3 As former residents of Singapore, the Hardings did know that once the word
4 got out that Helen Yeo objected to their book, other bookstores, outlets, and
5 distributors would fall into the party line.

6 Singapore is a one-party state. In the last election, the ruling party, the Peoples
7 Action Party (PAP) won 82 of the 84 seats in the Singapore Parliament. The
8 PAP has been in power since 1959. Helen Yeo's husband, Cabinet Minister
9 Yeo Cheow Tong, a member of the PAP, was first elected to Singapore's
10 Parliament as an unopposed candidate in 1981, and has held various
11 Ministerial positions in the Singapore Government since 1985.

12 Singapore's political opposition candidates are often sued for defamation by
13 the ruling party, usually for some statement made during elections. Defamation
14 is a favorite tool used by the rulers of Singapore to destroy their opposition.

15 Singapore's Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, and other ruling party members
16 sued opposition candidate Tang Lian Hong for damages in the Singapore High
17 Court and were awarded S\$8.08 million (US\$4.6 million) in damages.

18 Opposition leader Benjamin Jeyaretnam was driven to bankruptcy after losing
19 more than S\$900,000 in defamation suits to ruling party members. Even the
20 International Herald Tribune was sued and lost S\$650,000 to Singapore's
21 rulers. Time Magazine's circulation was severely restricted by Singapore in
22 1997, until they printed what amounted to an apology for an article
23 sympathetic to the plight of Benjamin Jeyaretnam. The Dow Jones publication,
24 the Asian Wall Street Journal, and the Economist have also suffered partial
25 bans by Singapore for articles not to Singapore's liking. Banning and suing for
26 defamation are often used tactics in Singapore, where trial by jury has been
27 abolished to be replaced by trial by government appointed Judges.

28

1 The Hardings attempted to send a letter by email directly to Helen Yeo, but
2 their emails were rejected, apparently by Helen Yeo's email server. Whether
3 this blockage was intentional or not, the Hardings do not know. The Hardings
4 also attempted to contact Helen Yeo by fax, but received no confirmation that
5 their fax had been received by Helen Yeo.

6 Consequently, on July 3, 2002, John Harding sent an open letter to Helen Yeo
7 in the form of an email [Exhibit 19.] sent to members of law firms in
8 Singapore.

9 In this open letter, John Harding pointed out Helen Yeo's privileged position
10 as the wife of Singapore Cabinet Minister Yeo Cheow Tong, and pointed out
11 her outrageous behavior, writing,

12 "If our book is OK with the Singapore Government, why are you so
13 afraid of it? You are barely mentioned in our book, but your behavior is
14 making you look guilty."

15 On July 5, 2002, the Hardings received an email from a Singaporean with
16 whom they were not acquainted [Exhibit 20. - sender's name is blacked out].

17 This email confirmed that *Escape from Paradise* was no longer on sale at
18 Select Books. The sender wrote,

19 "I have been trying to get my sticky little mits on a copy and even went
20 to Kinokuniya Books, but I seem to be a step behind the boorish Mrs.
21 Yeo."

22 The sender then went to Select Books where he was told that they were no
23 longer selling *Escape from Paradise*, nor would they accept the sender's order
24 for a the book.

25 On July 8, 2002, Helen Yeo sent a demanding and arrogant letter to the
26 Hardings by email [Exhibit 3.]. Although accusing the Hardings of
27 "defamation," Helen Yeo failed to cite any facts to support her charge.

1 Helen Yeo charged that, in their book, the Hardings defamed her and members
2 of her firm in an affair relating to a firm known as Goldplus Investments Pte
3 Ltd (Goldplus).

4 We will show not only that the Hardings did not defame Helen Yeo or her
5 partners in their book, but that the Hardings took pains to withhold from
6 publication facts that are extremely damaging to Helen Yeo. Helen Yeo,
7 herself, plays no part in the Hardings' book, and is barely mentioned in on
8 several pages of one chapter [Exhibit 21.] .

9 Our following exposure of the misleading and false statements has in Helen
10 Yeo's letter to the Hardings has little to do with the subject matter of *Escape*
11 *from Paradise*, as the facts relating to these statements are not mentioned in the
12 book.

13 However, Helen Yeo's misleading and false statements clearly establish the
14 motive for her actions against the Hardings. Helen Yeo has something to hide
15 which is her reason for taking the opportunity of attacking the Hardings' book.
16 Helen Yeo's misleading and false statements demonstrate also that, even being
17 a lawyer, she has no regard for the truth in this matter.

18 In Helen Yeo's letter of July 8, 2002, to the Hardings she writes,

19 "Your book and web-site are defamatory of our firm, HelenYeo &
20 Partners, Alvin Chia (a partner), Janet Tan (formerly one of our lawyers)
21 and me, for the reasons given below.

22 My partners and I have known for some time that you have been selling
23 your book in Singapore and advertising the book on your web-site. We
24 also have known for some time that your web-site highlighted that the
25 book was being sold at Select Books in Singapore and that 18 copies
26 were on loan at our National Library. The web-site has been revised in
27 the last few days to say that there are now 25 copies on loan in the

1 National Library.

2 The defamatory letter dated 14 June 2002 that you wrote to Mr Ralph
3 Baxter, Chairman of Orrick Herrington & Sutcliffe, with whom our firm
4 has a joint law venture called Orrick Helen Yeo, was also given to me a
5 few weeks ago by Orrick. The letter to Baxter showed that you had even
6 copied that letter to the Chief Justice of Singapore. This letter is highly
7 defamatory and calculated by you to embarrass our firm and me and
8 cause economic loss to us.

9 Despite all of the above, we had deliberately not taken action against
10 you, since to do so would give your book the publicity that you are
11 trying to generate at our expense and detriment."

12 Although Helen Yeo claims, in her letter, that the Hardings' book and website
13 are defamatory "for the reasons given below," Helen Yeo fails to state a single
14 "reason" or fact to demonstrate that there is anything defamatory in the
15 Hardings' book or website. Nowhere, in Helen Yeo's letter is any evidence
16 given of defamation on the Hardings' part.

17 The reason Helen Yeo fails to be specific regarding the Hardings' supposed
18 defamation is clear—the Hardings have not defamed Helen Yeo or her partners
19 in any way.

20 Helen Yeo's defamatory charges against the Hardings and fraudulent
21 misrepresentations made to the Hardings are intended only to intimidate and
22 mislead the Hardings in the same way as she intimidated and misled
23 Kinokuniya.

24 Helen Yeo states in her letter,

25 "It came to our attention on 3 July 2002 that you had sent an email with
26 the title 'An Open Letter to Helen Yeo, Singapore Lawyer' to many law
27 firms. That email is highly defamatory of our firm and me. The email is
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1 also a shameful invasion of privacy, and a vicious attack on my daughter
2 for no rhyme or reason."

3 The Hardings did not make any attack on Helen Yeo's daughter. In their open
4 letter to Helen Yeo, they pointed out that Helen Yeo, her husband Cabinet
5 Minister Yeo Cheow Tong, and her daughter Wenxian Yeo led a life of
6 privilege. The Hardings cited certain facts to support their contention of the
7 Yeo's life of privilege including the fact that Wenxian Yeo lived in a luxury
8 Manhattan apartment and worked for J. P. Morgan on Park Avenue, and is a
9 director of six of Helen Yeo's corporations. Wenxian Yeo is only 23 years old.
10 Although Wenxian Yeo is depriving an American worker of a job, the
11 Hardings pointed out that they were not complaining about this fact, while, in
12 contrast, Helen Yeo has had the Hardings book "taken off the shelf." These
13 statements by the Hardings may be embarrassing to Helen Yeo, but they are
14 factual and not defamatory.

15 Helen Yeo states, in her letter,

16 "It is about time that you stop the defamation and the harassment of my
17 family, the law firm of HelenYeo & Partners and me. As a result of your
18 recent vicious actions, we have no choice but to take action in Singapore
19 to stop the sale and distribution of your book on the ground that it is
20 defamatory of HelenYeo & Partners, Alvin Chia, Janet Tan and me,
21 even though you are not resident here. We will also now explore what
22 action we should take in USA, where you are residing

23 In view of your recent offensive actions, we will take action against all
24 persons in Singapore who continue to publish or distribute the
25 defamation originating from you . . . My husband, Yeo Cheow Tong and
26 I are very blessed to enjoy extremely good reputations in our respective
27 areas. The damages that our firm and I will get on a defamation action in
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1 Singapore will be substantial. This is sufficient reason for any book-
2 seller not to sell your book as they are then also liable for damages for
3 distributing the defamation originated by you."

4 Suing for defamation is the standard practice used by autocrats of Singapore to
5 silence and to bring financial ruin on their opposition. The Hardings realize
6 that Helen Yeo could unfairly win a defamation suit against them in
7 Singapore's compliant courts, in the same manner that such lawsuits have been
8 won against Tang Lian Hong, Benjamin Jeyaretnam, and the International
9 Herald Tribune.

10 In her letter, Helen Yeo instructs the Hardings to

11 "Please do the following . . . re-publish your book without the
12 defamation against Helen Yeo & Partners, Alvin Chia, Janet Tan, and me
13 . . . amend your website . . . Send an email and fax to each of the law
14 firms and the persons you have emailed or faxed the offensive email to,
15 attaching a copy of this letter and also an apology from you in form
16 acceptable to us . . . Publish an apology on your web-site and such other
17 media identified by us, in form acceptable to us."

18 In her letter, Helen Yeo addresses the facts relating to the purchase by
19 Goldplus of the Holland Road properties from Lee Teng Jin and Lee Teng Lay,

20 "Here are the facts relating to Goldplus for you to have your lawyers
21 verify:

22 "The book entitled "Escape from Paradise" by John and May Chu
23 Harding is defamatory of Helen Yeo, Alvin Chia, Janet Tan and our
24 firm. The offending chapter is entitled "The Scam of 69 Holland Road".

25 (Unbeknownst to Helen Yeo, the Hardings' lawyers in Singapore, Kang
26 Associates, had already verified the facts relating to the Goldplus purchase of
27 the Holland Road properties [Exhibit 22.], as it was necessary for the Hardings

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1 to include factually correct information in their book.)

2 The title of the “offending chapter,” *The Scam of 69 Holland Road* refers, not
3 to any scam by Helen Yeo, but a to scam by Lee Teng Jin, the father of the
4 book's co-author, May Chu Harding. Briefly, Lee Teng Jin had been sued by
5 his wife for divorce. In order to avoid paying a court-ordered financial
6 settlement awarded to his wife, Lee Teng Jin and his brother (their houses were
7 connected) quickly sold the Holland Road properties to Goldplus. Lee Teng Jin
8 disappeared with his part of the proceeds. Normally, during a divorce in
9 Singapore, which prides itself on its legal system, it is virtually impossible for
10 either party to the divorce to transfer or to hide assets during the divorce.

11 The recorded sales price of the Holland Road properties S\$9,820,000 (US\$5.6
12 million), with S\$4,800,000 being Lee Teng Jin’s share. It is not easy to sell
13 such an expensive property quickly, especially when one is being sued for
14 divorce. In spite of these difficulties, Lee Teng Jin succeeded.

15 Helen Yeo's letter continues with the misleading statements,

16 "There is no truth whatsoever to the allegations in the book against our
17 lawyers and our firm. We had no involvement at all, whether on behalf
18 of Lee Teng Jin or otherwise, in the sale or transfer of Nos. 67 and 69
19 Holland Road. Lee Teng Jin is not a client of our firm."

20 The Hardings made no allegations against the lawyers in Helen Yeo’s firm The
21 Hardings have known since January 1999 from Kang Associates that Helen
22 Yeo’s lawyers did not do the transfer work for the Holland Road properties.
23 The Hardings know that the lawyer for the transferee is Albert Yeo, and the
24 lawyer for the transferor is Eunice Chee Ai Lin, and have not made
25 representations otherwise.

26 The Hardings’ book makes no allegations against Helen Yeo's lawyers or her
27 firm. It does state the true fact that two of her junior lawyers were the owners

1 of Goldplus, which corporation was used to purchase the properties of Lee
2 Teng Jin and his brother. True facts do not constitute defamation.

3 Helen Yeo's letter continues,

4 "Our firm incorporated the company Goldplus Investment Pte Ltd
5 ("Goldplus") on 7 July 1994."

6 Until receiving Helen Yeo's letter, the Hardings had no knowledge of the fact
7 that Helen Yeo's firm had incorporated Goldplus. Given this new revelation,
8 how can Helen Yeo claim, "We had no involvement at all . . .?"

9 Helen Yeo continues with a statement so misleading as to constitute an outright
10 falsehood, writing,

11 "Our lawyers resigned as directors on 28 July 1994. Our lawyers
12 transferred the two subscriber shares to two shareholders who were
13 connected with Habitat Properties Private Limited, an established well
14 known property developer in Singapore."

15 It is critical to note that, although Helen Yeo gives a date on which her lawyers
16 resigned as directors, no date is given when they transferred their subscriber
17 shares. Helen Yeo would have the reader believe that her lawyers, Alvin Chia
18 and Janet Tan (who are named in the book), who she claims, "resigned as
19 directors on 28 July 1994" also transferred their shares at the same time they
20 resigned as directors. This is not the case.

21 The Singapore Registry of Companies and Business (RCB) the official site for
22 all Singapore company records shows that as of August 30, 1995, that Alvin
23 Chia and Janet Tan were still shareholders of Goldplus. The Hardings possess
24 the official RCB document, printed on Singapore government paper, a copy of
25 which appears as Exhibit 23.

26 Helen Yeo goes on to state one irrelevant fact and one intentional falsehood
27 constituting fraudulent misrepresentation,

1 "A search of the records in the government registries by any member of
2 the public will easily establish that:

- 3 1. none of our solicitors were named in the transfer of the property;
4 and
- 5 2. at the relevant date of the contract for the sale of the property and
6 the subsequent date of transfer, none of our lawyers were shareholders or
7 directors of Goldplus."

8 Statement 1., above is irrelevant. The fact that a lawyer from another firm did
9 the conveyance and transfer of the Holland Road properties to Goldplus does
10 not mean that Helen Yeo, or her lawyers, were not involved.

11 Statement 2., above is an intentional falsehood and fraudulent
12 misrepresentation on the part of Helen Yeo.

13 That Helen Yeo's statement is false is proven by the letter of January 20, 1999
14 from the Singapore law firm of Kang Associates to the Hardings [Exhibit 22.],
15 which shows that the relevant date of the contract of the sale of the Holland
16 Road properties is March 11, 1995, and the date of transfer is December 26,
17 1995. The RCB records [Exhibit 23] show that both Janet Tan and Alvin Chia
18 were shareholders as of August 30, 1995 as shown in the official the RCB
19 report.

20 Helen Yeo's letter goes on state,

21 "Copies of the transfer of the property and the corporate documents filed
22 at the public registries will be given to you on request. These documents
23 which are easily accessible to the public show:

- 24 1. the date of the contract (for the sale of the property) was 11 March
25 1995;
- 26 2. the date of the transfer of the property was 26 December 1995;
- 27 3. our lawyers resigned as the directors of Goldplus on 28 July 1994;

1 4. Habitat was allotted 999,998 shares on 8 June 1995, making a
2 total issued capital of 1,000,000 shares, all of which were owned by
3 Habitat. A search of the public records of Habitat will show that none of
4 our lawyers own shares in Habitat and neither are they directors."
5 Statements 1. and 2., above, are correct, and are corroborated by the letter from
6 Kang Associates to the Hardings.
7 Statement 3. is misleading, as Helen Yeo's lawyers were still shareholders of
8 Goldplus, as shown in the RCB records as of August 30, 1995. The Hardings
9 have the original printout of the RCB records on official Singapore
10 government paper.
11 Statement 4. contains the second false statement in Helen Yeo's letter, which is
12 apparent even in the mathematics. If Habitat was allotted 999,998 of the issued
13 capital of 1,000,000 shares, someone else must own the remaining two shares.
14 The RCB records, as of August 30, 1995 show those remaining two shares as
15 being owned by Janet Tan and Alvin Chua, Helen Yeo's lawyers.
16 Helen Yeo then makes a third intentionally false statement in her letter,
17 "In addition, if the authors had made a search of the share register of
18 Goldplus at its registered office (which any member of the public is
19 entitled to do), they would have established easily that the two
20 subscriber shares for the incorporation of Goldplus were transferred by
21 our lawyers to the directors of Habitat in 1994."
22 For the third time in her letter, Helen Yeo makes a false statement by writing,
23 "that that the two subscriber shares for the incorporation of Goldplus
24 were transferred by our lawyers to the directors of Habitat in 1994."
25 This is not in accordance with the RCB record of July 30, 1995, which shows
26 that Helen Yeo's lawyers were still shareholders of Goldplus.
27 Helen Yeo concludes by writing,

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1 "These public documents show very clearly that the allegations in the
2 book against our lawyers and our firm are totally unfounded."

3 This is a very misleading statement on the part of Helen Yeo. We repeat that
4 these details were not covered in the Hardings book. The Hardings were not
5 writing a book about Helen Yeo. What Helen Yeo refers to as "public
6 documents" are from "the share register of Goldplus at its registered office."
7 Rather than rely on "public documents" at the office of Goldplus as Helen Yeo
8 suggests, the Hardings prefer to rely on Singapore's public documents as
9 recorded by the RCB.

10 What the "public documents," the RCB reports do show is that the Hardings'
11 book may have stumbled upon the tip of Helen Yeo's iceberg, perhaps leading
12 to the discovery of fraudulent activities. This was not the Hardings intention,
13 nor is there any allusion to any such dealings on the part of Helen Yeo or
14 members of her firm in *Escape from Paradise*.

15 There is one additional fact regarding Goldplus, which, although not appearing
16 in the Hardings' book, deserves mention. The Inland Revenue Authority of
17 Singapore (IRAS) maintains records showing the ownership of properties in
18 Singapore. The Hardings have the original IRAS printout on official Singapore
19 government paper dated June 13, 1995 showing the recorded ownership of the
20 Holland Road properties. Copies of these IRAS documents are given in Exhibit
21 24.

22 The IRAS document of June 13, 1995 shows Goldplus as the owner of Lee
23 Teng Jin's property at 69 Holland Road, even though the transfer date for the
24 property is at the future date of December 26, 1995!

25 The IRAS document of that same date, June 13, 1995 does not show Goldplus
26 to be the owner of 67 Holland Road. Since both Holland Road properties were
27 transferred to Goldplus with the same transfer dates and set of contracts, how

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1 can this difference in recorded ownership at IRAS be explained?
2 This “irregularity” in IRAS records would be advantageous to Lee Teng Jin.
3 On November 2, 1995, Singapore Judge Chao Hick Tin awarded Lee Teng
4 Jin's wife a settlement of S\$1,445,456.30 (approximately US\$820,000) against
5 Lee Teng Jin. This was in advance to the date of transfer for Lee Teng Jin’s
6 property, but after the IRAS record showed the property as belonging to
7 Goldplus.
8 Were Lee Teng Jin's wife to check the IRAS property rolls, she would believe,
9 incorrectly, that 69 Holland Road, to which she had a claim, had already been
10 transferred to Goldplus, which was not the case.
11 The recording of what appears to be a false record of property ownership with
12 IRAS raises a serious question about the Goldplus affair. Large amounts of
13 money were involved. Lee Teng Jin’s proceeds from the sale of 69 Holland
14 Road were recorded as being S\$4,800,000 (approximately US\$2.7 million).
15 If the IRAS record for Lee Teng Jin’s property at 69 Holland Road was
16 falsified to state that the owner was Goldplus was done purposefully, and the
17 Hardings assert no knowledge of the specific facts involved, nor do they allege
18 that this is the case, it would appear to require influence at the highest levels of
19 the Singapore government.
20 On July 8, 2002, John Harding wrote a letter [Exhibit 4.] to Helen Yeo in
21 answer to her letter of that same date. John Harding's letter pointed out to
22 Helen Yeo that her threat to Kinokuniya was made with no court order as there
23 was no legal basis for her action.
24 Helen Yeo had been able to ban *Escape from Paradise* by virtue of the position
25 she and her husband, Cabinet Minister Yeo Cheow Tong hold in Singapore
26 society, and that “Had an ‘average’ Singaporean made the same threat to
27 Kinokuniya Books, it would have carried no weight, and our book would still
28

1 be on sale in Singapore.”

2 John Harding denied to Helen Yeo that his letter to Ralph Baxter, Chairman of
3 Orrick Herrington & Sutcliffe, was defamatory, and asserted that his copying
4 of the letter to Singapore's Chief Justice was to inform him of Helen Yeo's
5 unwarranted and extra-legal behavior. Helen Yeo is a lawyer and an officer of
6 the court.

7 John Harding explained that he had taken action to defend himself and to earn
8 a living, and that Helen Yeo must learn to bear the consequences of her
9 actions.

10 John Harding pointed out that although certain facts make the conveyance of
11 the Holland Road properties suspect, none of this was attributed to Helen Yeo
12 or her firm in the book. John Harding explained at length that the book
13 defamed no one, but offered to remove certain items from his website provided
14 that Helen Yeo see to it that *Escape from Paradise* was again available in
15 bookstores in Singapore.

16 John Harding closed his letter on a conciliatory note stating, “As our book does
17 not defame you, you would appear to be overacting to what we have written.
18 This does not put you or your associates in a good light.

19 I am sending this letter only to you, and hold, in confidence, your letter to me
20 in the hopes that we can come to an amicable agreement.”

21 Helen Yeo has never answered John Harding’s letter.

22 Conclusion

23 Helen Yeo, a Singapore lawyer, wife of Singapore Cabinet Minister Yeo
24 Cheow Tong, and joint venture partner of the respected San Francisco law firm
25 of Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe has lied three times in her letter to the
26 Hardings. This constitutes intentional fraudulent misrepresentation attests to
27 Helen Yeo’s lack of regard for the truth. Similarly, Helen Yeo’s

1 misrepresentation of the contents of *Escape from Paradise* to Kinokuniya
2 constitutes a second act of intentional fraudulent misrepresentation against the
3 Hardings, as well as defamation and tortious interference with the Harding's
4 business opportunities.

5 Helen Yeo, who considers herself and her husband to be "blessed," has clearly
6 demonstrated that she has no regard for the truth, and no respect for the law.
7 Her abuse of power her privileged position in Singapore and her fraudulent
8 misrepresentations to Kinokuniya and to the Hardings show that Helen Yeo
9 considers herself to be above the law.

10
11 **WHEREFORE, Plaintiffs demand:**

- 12 1. Monetary damages in the amount of \$1,000,000 amounting to the
13 equivalent of four (4) years salary and benefits to John Harding, which
14 he gave up in order to write *Escape from Paradise*.
- 15 2. Monetary damages to May Chu Harding of \$2,000,000 maliciously
16 casting doubt on credibility of the valuable information that May Chu
17 Harding spent fifteen years collecting in the course of an unhappy
18 marriage, and a traumatic divorce in Singapore.
- 19 3. Monetary damages in the amount of \$5,000,000 for Helen Yeo's tortious
20 interference with the Harding's business opportunities.
- 21 4. Monetary damages in the amount of \$1,000,000 for the defamation of
22 the Hardings, and consequent damage to their reputations as authors.
- 23 5. Monetary damages in the amount of \$250,000 for Helen Yeo's
24 fraudulent misrepresentation of the contents of *Escape from Paradise*, to
25 Kinokuniya and equivalent amounts for Helen Yeo's fraudulent
26 misrepresentation of the contents of *Escape from Paradise* to others yet
27 to be determined.

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- 6. Monetary damages in the amount of \$50,000 for Helen Yeo’s fraudulent misrepresentations in her letter of July 8, 2002 to the Hardings.
- 7. Punitive damages
- 8. Costs
- 9. Any further relief which the court may deem appropriate.

Plaintiffs demand trial by jury on all issues so triable.

Respectfully submitted,

John Harding
9505 N. 49th Place
Paradise Valley, AZ 85253
480-607-1830

May Chu Harding
9505 N. 49th Place
Paradise Valley, AZ 85253
480-607-1830

Date _____