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Man seeks refund after romance fails

Woman says jewellery and other items, costing nearly \$400k, were gifts

By K. C. VIJAYAN
LAW CORRESPONDENT

A HIGH Court suit is set to be a test case for whether gifts in cash and kind are returnable after a romantic relationship hits the rocks.

The suit in question involves gifts ranging from sparkly baubles and tech toys to condominium deposit payments and even investments in the production of music videos.

Widower Chan Kok Sang, an accountant in his 60s, reckons he must have spent about \$400,000 on divorcee Caroline Tong during their courtship, in the belief that she would marry him.

Now that she is not going to do so, he considers what he gave her to be "friendly loans" which are to be repaid.

Ms Tong, a real estate agent in her 40s, denies the claims. Her argument is that the items were unconditional presents given during their relationship.

On her part, she is making a counter-claim for half the proceeds from the sale of a \$1.24 million condominium unit in Keppel Bay, a property registered in both their names.

The couple acknowledge that they were in a relationship from 2007 until last year.

During that time, they entered into a string of joint investment ventures and he bought her several expensive gifts – the jewellery alone came to about \$90,000.

Now, all these expenditures will be up



Amount he spent on her

TOTAL: \$397,182.42

WIDOWER Chan Kok Sang, an accountant in his 60s, courted real estate agent Caroline Tong (left) in style.

Now the couple have split up, he is suing her for a sum reflecting the value of the gifts and other expenditures. The following were the items he bought her, and their cost:

- Property purchase deposits: \$74,095.56

- Cost of producing her VCDs: \$79,200

- Dental charges: \$3,000

- Money transfers: \$11,638.35

- Loan for purchase of Mercedes: \$21,324.67

- Beds and cupboards: \$8,367.40

- Watches: \$34,003.70

- Spa treatments: \$4,911.80

- Notebook, iPad and similar items: \$6,686

- Louis Vuitton, Burberry and Gucci goods: \$21,430.25

- Jewellery: \$90,688

- Miscellaneous items, including clothes from boutiques and facials: \$41,836.69

PHOTO: FACEBOOK

for scrutiny before the courts to settle the intentions behind them.

Mr Chan contends in court documents that marriage was on the cards, and that Ms Tong had breached a promise to wed him.

They had gone as far as to have made-to-measure wedding rings ordered, allegedly at her request.

She also allegedly asked for the *ser tiang ching*, the pieces of gold traditionally given to Chinese brides, as a signal of his intent to marry her.

Ms Tong is making a counter-claim for half the proceeds from the sale of a \$1.24 million condominium unit in Keppel Bay, a property registered in both their names.

Ms Tong says in defence documents that she returned the wedding proposal items, but it is unclear whether she did so only after the relationship foundered.

Mr Chan, represented by lawyer Antho-

ny Tan, points out that if items like jewellery pieces are returned, it shows they were not meant to be gifts; other items still held by her should thus be similarly treated and returned.

These include watches, bags and branded accessories like a notebook and iPad.

Mr Chan also claims he lent Ms Tong \$48,000 to buy a flat in St Michael's Road, but she says the sum was given to her to accompany him on a trip to Hong Kong in July last year.

Mr Chan claims to have also advanced her \$79,000 to help launch two VCDs of her songs in Hokkien and Mandarin, but she says he made the investment with her in a venture to produce music video albums for sale in Singapore and overseas.

She says in defence papers filed by her lawyer K. Ramalingam that the first VCD has generated about \$6,000 so far, a sum due to him for his part in the investment.

Through her lawyer, Ms Tong is asking that Mr Chan account for the rental income received from their condominium apartment in Keppel Bay.

She claims it was she who sourced the flat and that they had agreed it was to be a joint investment, with each of them having a half-share of the property.

Mr Chan bought the unit with his money, registered it in their names and obtained a mortgage under her name since he was past 60 and ineligible for a long-term loan.

He paid a part of the purchase price, and the rental was supposed to have gone into servicing the mortgage. He is seeking a court declaration to sever the joint ownership and have the property reverted to just his name.

Ms Tong, who graduated with a master's in international business from the University of Technology in Sydney, is also a professional singer who has performed for charity organisations and theatres in recent years, going by her Facebook page.

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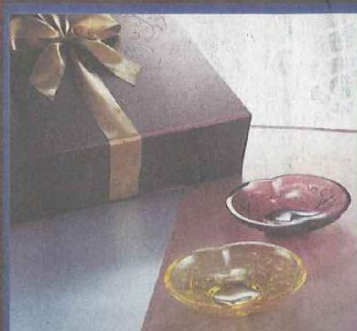
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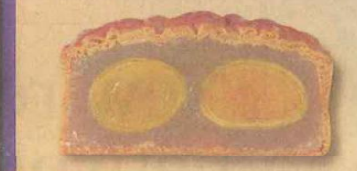
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