

人 贓 並 獲

ren2 zang1 bing4 huo4

A noodle shop in Tai Po was targeted by burglars. Security cameras showed the two burglars going straight to the office and taking HK\$200,000 in cash without touching the cash machine at the front of the shop.

Police believed one of the burglars was a waiter who quit after working at the shop for just a few days. The former employee was caught at his Sheung Shui home where police also found the stolen cash.

In cases like this, the media often use the idiom “人贓並獲” (*ren2 zang1 bing4 huo4*).

“人” (*ren2*) is “person,” “贓” (*zang1*) “stolen goods,” “booty,” “spoils,” “並” (*bing4*) “and,” “also,” “at the same time,” and “獲” (*huo4*) “to catch,” “to obtain,” “to win.” Literally, “人贓並獲” (*ren2 zang1 bing4 huo4*) is “person and booty caught at the same time.”

In the idiom, “人” (*ren2*) refers to a person who has committed a crime, usually the kind that in-

Idiom by Lon Yan

volves stealing. The idiom means “to be caught with the property one has stolen,” “to be caught with evidence there for all to see.”

English expressions with similar meaning include “caught with one’s hand in the cookie jar” and “being caught red-handed,” both of which mean being caught as one is committing an illegal act.

When a thief is caught in the act, or a murderer caught with blood still on his or her hands, it is unlikely that they will get away. Similarly if a burglar is caught with the booty, it will be hard for him or her to come up with an explanation of their innocence.

Terms containing the character “獲” (*huo4*) include:

獲利 (*huo4 li4*) – to make a profit

獲悉 (*huo4 xi1*) – to learn about; to be informed

獲獎 (*huo4 jiang3*) – to win a prize; to receive an award

獲勝 (*huo4 sheng4*) – to win victory