

捕風捉影

bu3 feng1 zhuo1 ying3

A protagonist in the Causeway Bay bookstore saga reappeared after going missing for months and called a press conference.

Lam Wing-kee told of how he was kidnapped and detained by mainland authorities, saying he was escorted back to Hong Kong by agents of a special task force, who have since put him under surveillance, trying to control him by telling him not to talk to anyone and to report to them on the contents of his conversations with others.

Lam continued to speak to the media afterward, giving further information. But some found his story less and less credible as he talked more and more.

One commentator said according to Lam's information, the "agents" who were "controlling" him were ineffective to the point of being comical, and it made one wonder whether they were really from a government agency, let alone a "high-powered" one as portrayed.

When people tell "facts" that do not ring true, there are many possible reasons: lying, exaggerating, misinter-

Idiom by Lon Yan

pretation of the facts, being paranoid or delusional. Whatever is the case, the idiom “捕風捉影” (*bu3 feng1 zhuo1 ying3*) is often used to describe such behavior.

“捕” (*bu3*) is “to catch,” “to seize,” “風” (*feng1*) “the wind,” “捉” (*zhuo1*) is “to grab,” “to clutch,” and “影” (*ying3*) “shadow.” Literally, “捕風捉影” (*bu3 feng1 zhuo1 ying3*) is “catch wind, grab shadow”, “chasing the wind and clutching at shadows”, “relying on rumors or speculations.”

The idiom means “groundless accusations,” “to act on hearsay evidence.” People who use unverified information to further their cause are also “捕風捉影” (*bu3 feng1 zhuo1 ying3*) and might find their “assets” turning out to be liabilities.

Terms containing the character “風” (*feng1*) include:

風景 (*feng1 jing3*) – scenery

風險 (*feng1 xian3*) – risk

風氣 (*feng1 qi4*) – general mood

風水 (*feng1 shui3*) – fengshui