

Idiom by Lon Yan

聲東擊西

sheng1 dong1 ji1 xi1

The police in Canada are hunting for two thieves who have stolen diamonds from a string of jewelry stores across the country.

The pair posed as a couple who had just arrived on a cruise ship, asked to see diamonds, and then started to argue about how many carats to buy to create a distraction. They would then swap the real stones with fake ones. Their tactic, which was clearly quite effective, is called “聲東擊西” (*sheng1 dong1 ji1 xi1*).

“聲” (*sheng1*) is “a sound,” “a noise,” “make a noise,” “東” (*dong1*) “east,” “擊” (*ji1*) “to strike,” “to attack” and “西” (*xi1*) “west.” Literally, “聲東擊西” (*sheng1 dong1 ji1 xi1*) is “make a noise in the east and strike in the west,” “to make a feint (虛擊; 假動作) in the east

and attack in the west. It means “to make a diversion.” “聲東擊西” (*sheng1 dong1 ji1 xi1*) is quite often used in war, competitive sports and elections.

The police finally got hold of a security tape from the jewelry shop that showed the pair in action and their faces clearly. The woman was nondescript, but the man was a dead ringer (外貌上很像某人) for the bearded professional thief played by Sean Connery in *Entrapment*.

With their faces exposed, it looks like there wouldn't be anywhere for the pair to hide. But then could it be so easy, or was the “slip” of being caught on camera just another move by the thieves “聲東擊西” (*sheng1 dong1 ji1 xi1*)?

Terms containing the character “擊” (*ji1*) include:

擊中 (*zhong1*) – to make a hit

襲擊 (*xi2 ji1*) – to make a surprise attack; a raid

擊倒 (*ji1 dao4*) – to knock down

擊傷 (*ji1 shang1*) – to wound; to injure