

Idiom by Lon Yan

狗仗人勢

gou3 zhang4 ren2 shi4

Dogs usually got locked up or even put down when they bite people. And depending on the seriousness of the injury or how angry the victim is, the owner often got sued.

An 18-year-old young woman recently got bitten by a dog. The injury was bad – a bleeding half-inch gash under the eye. She was apparently angry too, using the “F” word in her Facebook posting. However, the dog owner probably won’t get sued because he is a very powerful man – Barack Obama.

The incident took place at the White House, during the last days of Obama’s presidency. The offending dog was Sunny, and the victim is a friend of Obama’s eldest daughter Malia. The “attack” was apparently unprovoked, as reports said the young woman was just bending over to stroke Sunny.

Sunny apparently got away scot-free, even if, according to the First Family, it was not his first offence. This is typical “狗仗人勢” (*gou3 zhang4 ren2 shi4*).

“狗” (*gou3*) is “a dog,” “仗” (*zhang4*) “to rely on,” “to depend on,” “人” (*ren2*) “human,” “people,” and “勢” (*shi4*) “power,” “strength.” “狗仗人勢” (*gou3 zhang4 ren2 shi4*) is, literally, “dog relying on human power,” “a dog threatens based on master’s power.”

The idiom means “to bully others because of one’s master’s power and position,” “to use one’s position to bully others.”

Dogs often bark loudest when they are by the side of their master, and turn back into wimps when they are alone. Some people who have powerful bosses also have the despicable habit of “狗仗人勢” (*gou3 zhang4 ren2 shi4*).

Terms containing the character “勢” (*shi4*) include:

勢力 (*shi4 li4*) – powers; influence

趨勢 (*qu1 shi4*) – a trend; a tendency

強勢 (*qiang2 shi4*) – mighty

弱勢 (*ruo4 shi4*) – vulnerable; weak