

# Idiom by Lon Yan

## 自投羅網

*zi4 tou2 luo2 wang3*

The picture of a cute little car online drew much interest – at the place where the license plate should be, there was an A4-size paper bearing the scribbled message: “Mr Policeman, I have no license. Please stop me.”

Some lambasted the car owner for thumbing his (or her) nose (表示輕蔑) at the police. Others believed it was more likely a prank done on the car owner.

In any event, not to have a license and invite police attention like that can certainly be called “自投羅網” (*zi4 tou2 luo2 wang3*).

“自” (*zi4*) is self, “投” (*tou2*) “to put in,” “to throw oneself into,” and “羅網” (*luo2 wang3*) “a net,” “a trap,” “a snare.” Literally, “自投羅網” (*zi4 tou2 luo2 wang3*) is “self throws into trap.” The idiom means “to walk right into the trap,” “to

put one’s neck into the noose.”

You would think that hardened criminal are the least likely to “自投羅網” (*zi4 tou2 luo2 wang3*), but, in fact, offer them a “prize,” and many would walk into the arms of the police of their own volition.

Free Xbox 360s were found to be most effective on car thieves, beer a universal favorite, helping Derbyshire police to round up 19 wanted men, and “free TV sets” lured in 100 fugitives for Cook Country lawmen.

We laugh at people who “自投羅網” (*zi4 tou2 luo2 wang3*), but we all have a tendency to do so – why else would intelligent and perfectly sane people try so hard to contest for the thankless job as Hong Kong’s chief executive?

### Terms containing the character “網” (*wang3*) include:

蜘蛛網 (*zhi1 zhu1 wang3*) – a spider web

魚網 (*yu2 wang3*) – a fishing net

互聯網 (*hu4 lian2 wang3*) – the internet

上網 (*shang4 wang3*) – to be on the internet