

Idiom by Lon Yan

人有錯手

ren2 you3 cuo4 shou3

Dogs are man's best friend. And friends are, of course, for ill-treating, exploiting, and blaming when something goes wrong.

That was what happened when an odd-looking parcel arrived at the local Disney's administration building. An X-ray scan revealed electrical wires and a battery.

A bomb was suspected, and sniffer dogs Happy and Daniel were brought in. They barked, which was taken to be a confirmation of the presence of explosives, so anti-terrorist police, bomb disposal guys and a firetruck were called in, 500 staff members were moved out.

It turned out the "bomb" was a broken Buzz Lightyear, sent in by an angry customer who found the toy wasn't working. Much ado for nothing, so Happy and Daniel were reprimanded.

"But we sniffed it," protested the two. "Then you sniffed wrong!" came the retort. The dogs started to whimper, and their handler did not hear them muttered "人有錯手" (*ren2 you3 cuo4 shou3*).

"人" (*ren2*) is "human," "people," "有" (*you3*) "have," "錯" (*cuo4*) "mistake," "faults," "wrong" and "手" (*shou3*) "a hand." Literally, "人有錯手" (*ren2 you3 cuo4 shou3*) is "human have wrong hand." "錯手" (*cuo4 shou3*) or "失手" (*shi1 shou3*) means "drop the ball," "a slip," "miscalculation," "making a mistake."

The idiom actual means it is human to make mistakes, like the English expression "to err is human." When a mistake has been made, saying "人有錯手" (*ren2 you3 cuo4 shou3*) is to urge people not be too harsh on the person who made the mistake because everyone makes mistakes.

Terms containing the character "錯" (*cuo4*) include:

錯誤 (*cuo4 wu4*) – wrong, an error, a fault

錯覺 (*cuo4 jue2*) – an illusion; a delusion; a hallucination

錯過 (*cuo4 guo4*) – to miss (train, opportunity etc)

不錯 (*bu2 cuo4*) – correct; not bad