

Idiom by Lon Yan

真相大白

zhen1 xiang4 da4 bai2

A young university student from Shenzhen was reported to have gone missing after travelling to Hong Kong alone recently. Her disappearance created a scare, and was reported widely in the mainland after she wasn't heard from for three days.

The woman, surnamed Luo, was in contact with a friend after arriving in Hong Kong, but her phone was turned off some hours later. Her friend then reported that Luo was missing to police in Shenzhen, and Luo's parents arrived in Shenzhen from Guizhou to look for their only daughter.

It turned out that as everyone was worrying about her, the 20-year-old student was in a Hong Kong jail, serving a 14-day sentence for shoplifting \$2,400 worth of merchandise from a Tuen Mun store.

When what really happened to the young

woman became clear, we can use the idiom “真相大白” (*zhen1 xiang4 da4 bai2*).

“真相” (*zhen1 xiang4*) means “a real situation,” “a truth,” an actual state of affairs,” “the truth about something.” “大白” (*da4 bai2*) means “to become all clear,” “to be revealed entirely.” Literally, “真相大白” (*zhen1 xiang4 da4 bai2*) is “the truth is all revealed,” “the real situation has become known.”

The idiom means “everything is clear now,” “the cat is out of the bag,” “the truth about the matter has come to light,” “the whole truth has (at last) been revealed.” When a mystery or a misunderstanding is cleared up, we can say: “真相大白” (*zhen1 xiang4 da4 bai2*), at last!

A related idiom is “水落石出” (*shui3 luo4 shi2 chu1*), meaning “the truth comes to light,” “when facts are known, doubts dissipate.”

Terms containing the character “白” (*bai2*) include:

明白 (*ming2 bai2*) – clear; obvious; to know; to understand

坦白 (*tan3 bai2*) – candid; frank; to confess; to admit

白天 (*bai2 tian1*) – daytime

白宫 (*bai2 gong1*) – the White House