

# Idiom by Lon Yan

## 甕中捉鱉

weng4 zhong1 zhuo1 bie1

The robbery was well-planned. The Hong Kong mastermind recruited gang members locally and from the mainland, then provided them with details of the target shop, getaway vehicle and tools of the trade, namely, face masks, knives and Taser guns.

The gang could have pulled the heist off, except they didn't count on being snitched on. So outside the Tsim Sha Tsui watch shop they were about to rob, they found themselves surrounded by policemen who were laying an ambush.

Six suspects were arrested and weapons were seized. *Headline Daily* used the idiom “甕中捉鱉” (*weng4 zhong1 zhuo1 bie1*) to describe the police operation.

“甕” (*weng4*) is “an earthen jar,” “an urn,” “a jug,” “a pot,” “中” (*zhong1*) “in,” “inside,” “捉”

(*zhuo1*) “to catch,” “to seize,” “to grab,” and “鱉” (*bie1*) “a soft-shelled freshwater turtle.” “甕中捉鱉” (*weng4 zhong1 zhuo1 bie1*), literally, is “to catch the turtle inside a jar.”

When a turtle is trapped inside a jar, there is no way for it to escape. Catching it is, of course, very easy. So “甕中捉鱉” (*weng4 zhong1 zhuo1 bie1*) means “to catch something that has no way of escape,” “an easy target.”

It has a similar meaning as “turkey shoot” – “an opportunity for an individual or a party to very easily take advantage of a situation.”

“甕中捉鱉” (*weng4 zhong1 zhuo1 bie1*) is sometimes used together with the idiom “手到擒來” (*shou3 dao4 qin2 lai2*) – stretch a hand and grab it – meaning an easy catch.

### Terms containing the character “捉” (*zhuo1*) include:

捉拿 (*zhuo1 na2*) – to arrest; to catch a criminal

捉住 (*zhuo1 zhu4*) – to grab; to hold onto; to catch

捉弄 (*zhuo1 nong4*) – to tease; to play a joke on

捉迷藏 (*zhuo1 mi2 cang2*) – hide-and-seek