

Idiom by Lon Yan

臭氣熏天

chou4 qi4 xun1 tian1

A Kansas City man warded off police questioning, not by asking for his one phone call, or raising human right objections, but by raising one side of his buttock and let loose a volley of intestinal gas, which sent the case officer scurrying out of the small interrogation room.

The questioning was thus ended prematurely. The detective who was at the time just asking for the suspect's place of abode wrote for the file: "Mr. Sykes leaned to one side of his chair and released a loud fart before answering with the address. Mr. Sykes continued to be flatulent (腸胃氣脹的) and I ended the interview."

It was, literally, a case of "臭氣熏天" (*chou4 qi4 xun1 tian1*).

"臭" (*chou4*) is "smelly," "stinking," "foul smells," "氣" (*qi4*) "gas," "air," "a smell." "臭氣"

(*chou4 qi4*) is "a stench," "an odor," "a stink." "熏" (*xun1*) "to encroach with smell," "to smoke," "to fumigate," "the rising of fire or smoke," "to be poisoned or suffocated by coal gas," and "天" (*tian1*) "the sky," "the heavens."

"臭氣熏天" (*chou4 qi4 xun1 tian1*), literally, is "foul smell rising up to the sky." It just means "an overwhelming stench," "stinks to high heaven."

If you throw a stink bomb at a police officer, you will certainly be punished. But the law probably can't deal with the ejection of bodily gas, and the suspect was released.

But to think that such obnoxious behavior would bring no consequence is naive. Two months later, Human Skunk was again arrested, and this time, charged with firearms and drug offences.

Terms containing the character "臭" (*chou4*) include:

臭名 (*chou4 ming2*) – notorious; foul reputation

臭罵 (*chou4 ma4*) – to scold angrily; a good dressing down

臭蟲 (*chou4 chong2*) – a bedbug

臭豆腐 (*chou4 dou4 fu3*) – stinky tofu