殺身之禍
sha1 shen1 zhi1 huo4

Being a top racing car driver may earn you the right to spray people with champagne on the podium. You may spray a pretty Shanghai girl and get away with it, but you don’t spray the Russian president.

You do that, you die. That was, at least, the consensus of netizens after Formula One driver Lewis Hamilton sprayed Russian President Vladimir Putin (俄羅斯總統普京) with champagne after his Sochi Grand Prix win.

People simply couldn’t miss the chance to poke fun at Hamilton. One wrote: “Putin responds by giving his political opposition kill-squad (暗殺小隊) Lewis Hamilton’s home address. Nice knowing you, Lewis.” Another said the driver would soon be found dead in his bathtub. What they are suggesting is that Hamilton has brought himself “殺身之禍” (sha1 shen1 zhi1 huo4).

“殺” (sha1) is “to kill,” “身” (shen1) is “body,” “life,” “之” (zhi1) is “of,” and “禍” (huo4) is “a disaster.” “殺身” (sha1 shen1) is “getting killed.” Literally, “殺身之禍” (sha1 shen1 zhi1 huo4) is “the disaster of being killed.” That is what the idiom means.

“Nice knowing you” is a final goodbye. It is what you say to someone who is about to do something of great risk, as a joke. But “殺身之禍” (sha1 shen1 zhi1 huo4) is no joke. The idiom is usually used when someone has done something that really would get him or her killed.

Putin would, of course, not send assassins after Hamilton. But the driver could, at least, offer to pay for dry cleaning.

Terms containing the character “殺” (sha1) include:

殺手 (sha1 shou3) – a killer
暗殺 (an4 sha1) – to assassinate, an assassination
殺人犯 (sha1 ren2 fan4) – a murderer
殺價 (sha1 jia4) – to cut the price