

# 視死如歸

*shi4 si3 ru2 gui1*

A group of Russian young men caught wide attention by scaling tall buildings around the world and posting their selfies on YouTube.

Buildings they climbed included the 650-meter Shanghai Tower and the 660m Ping An International Finance Centre in Shenzhen. They were back in Shenzhen during the Lunar New Year holidays, and scaled the 383m Shun Hing Square.

They did not use safety gear. Just watching their dangerous acts could cause vertigo (暈眩). Those with acrophobia (畏高症) should probably not watch.

Media reports called them “daredevils,” and they certainly are “視死如歸” (*shi4 si3 ru2 gui1*). “視” (*shi4*) “to look at,” “to regard as,” “死” (*si3*) “to die,” “death,” “如” (*ru2*) “like,” “similar to,” “as if,” and “歸” (*gui1*) “to go back to.” In this idiom “歸” (*gui1*) is “going back home.”

“視死如歸” means “take death calmly, like go-

## Idiom by Lon Yan

ing home,” “to look death calmly in the face,” “to face death without fear.” The idiom is originally used to describe those who are not afraid to give their lives for a just cause, like soldiers who give their lives for their country.

There is, of course, nothing heroic about climbing tall buildings, and the climbers will be trespassers if they do not obtain permission to enter the buildings.

Fearless or not, death is a certainty if they fall. People actually die pulling such stunts, like the 17-year-old Russian teenager who fell from the roof of a building while taking a selfie late last year when his rope snapped.

### Terms containing the character “歸” (*gui1*) include:

歸還 (*gui1 huan2*) – to give back to, to return

歸咎於 (*gui1 jiu4 yu2*) – where the fault lies

歸途 (*gui1 tu2*) – one’s way home

歸西 (*gui1 xi1*) – to pass away