

Idiom by Lon Yan

假仁假義

jia3 ren2 jia3 yi4

A polar bear patted a sled dog lovingly on the head. This heart-warming scene in Manitoba, Canada, was captured on video by a tour guide and the clip went viral.

But an animal expert quoted by the media was not totally convinced about the intention of the bear and observed that such inter-species friendship was highly unusual.

Sure enough, follow-up reports revealed that conservation officers had to remove three polar bears from the same spot where the bear-pats-dog scene took place after a sled dog was snatched and eaten by bears just a few days ago.

We see what we want to see. Patting a dog is, of course, a gesture of affection from the human perspective. But the bear-eats-dog report makes you wonder if the dog-patting bear was not showing just as much affection for the dog as a gourmand massaging a fine

piece of steak to tenderize it for the oven.

If so, the dog-patting bear was just showing “假仁假義” (*jia3 ren2 jia3 yi4*).

“假” (*jia3*) is “fake,” “false,” “仁” (*ren2*) “benevolence,” “kindness,” “假” (*jia3*), again “fake,” “false” and “義” (*yi4*) “righteousness,” “justice.” Literally, “假仁假義” (*jia3 ren2 jia3 yi4*) is “fake kindness and fake righteousness,” “pretended benevolence and righteousness.”

The idiom means “to be a wolf in sheep’s clothing,” “to shed crocodile tears,” “hypocrisy.”

If a co-worker who stabbed you in the back comes over to say how sorry he is that you’ve gotten fired, you can tell him you won’t be fooled by such “假仁假義” (*jia3 ren2 jia3 yi4*).

Terms containing the character “假” (*jia3*) include:

假設 (*jia3 she4*) – to presume; to suppose

假裝 (*jia3 zhuang1*) – to pretend; to feint

假髮 (*jia3 fa4*) – a wig

作假 (*zuo4 jia3*) – to falsify; to cheat