

Idiom by Lon Yan

令人費解

ling4 ren2 fei4 jie3

A couple started to quarrel and exchange blows when they were presented with the bill at a teppanyaki restaurant. They made such a big fracas that the police had to be called. So what should have been an enjoyable evening ended in a police station.

The bill was big for a meal for two – HK\$2,135. It is, therefore, understandable if neither party wanted to pay. And if a dispute ensued, it was just to be expected.

What was not understandable was that the two were fighting not to avoid paying, but to pay. The man was reported to have flown into a rage when his female companion handed him money, which he ripped to pieces. Such behavior really “令人費解” (*ling4 ren2 fei4 jie3*).

“令” (*ling4*) is “to cause or make;” “人” (*ren2*)

“person;” “people;” “令人” (*ling4 ren2*) is “to make one (feeling something),” “費” (*fei4*) “to waste;” “wasteful;” “解” (*jie3*) “to understand;” “to solve or explain.” “費解” (*fei4 jie3*) means “difficult to understand;” “unintelligible.”

“令人費解” (*ling4 ren2 fei4 jie3*), literally, is “make people hard to understand”. The idiom means “to elude understanding;” “perplexing.”

This wasn't the first time people at restaurants fighting, literally, to get to pay the bill. Is not being able to spend money so frustrating that it would drive some people to violence, or is it a matter of face? This is not something normal people can figure out.

In any event, when people do weird things, you can remark: “令人費解” (*ling4 ren2 fei4 jie3*)!

Terms containing the character “解” (*jie3*) include:

解決 (*jie3 jue2*) – to settle; to resolve

解釋 (*jie3 shi4*) – to explain; explanation; to interpret

解答 (*jie3 da2*) – to answer; a solution

解手 (*jie3 shou3*) – to go to the toilet