

Idiom by Lon Yan

神乎其技

shen2 hu1 qi2 ji4

Rescue workers called to a construction site in downtown Toronto at 4 am found a young woman dangling from the hook of a crane some 30 meters in the air. It took more than two hours to save her.

Firemen were amazed at how the 23-year-old woman could have climbed up the crane, slid down thin steel cables to get to where she was found, especially as she was in thin clothing, wore no gloves and in shoes with 2-inch heels.

Rob Wonfor, her rescuer, was impressed, even if he is an acting captain and 22-year veteran of the Toronto Fire Service.

He said, "She has to tell me how she did it, because she has to be our new training officer for high-angle [rescue], because it's impressive. It was hard enough for me to go up with ropes and harnesses and she free-climbed that."

If the fireman knows Chinese idiom, he would probably have said "神乎其技" (*shen2 hu1 qi2 ji4*). "神" (*shen2*) is "a deity," "God," "unusual," "magical," "乎" (*hu1*) "at," "in." The character is also used as an exclamative particle. "其" (*qi2*) "that," "that person's," "that one's," "his," "her" and "技" (*ji4*) "skill," "ability."

Literally, "神乎其技" (*shen2 hu1 qi2 ji4*) is "the person's skills are god-like," "the person's abilities are magical." The idiom means "brilliant," "extremely skillful." The idiom can be used to describe any kind of skill.

It wasn't immediately known why the woman pulled the stunt, but "神乎其技" (*shen2 hu1 qi2 ji4*) or not, the police were clearly not impressed. They charged her with six counts of mischief relating to interfering with property.

Terms containing the character "技" (*ji4*) include:

科技 (*ke1 ji4*) – science and technology

技術 (*ji4 shu4*) – technique; technology

技能 (*ji4 neng2*) – a skill; an ability

技窮 (*ji4 qiong2*) – at the end of one's tether