

Idiom by Lon Yan

奮不顧身

fen4 bu2 gu4 shen1

Four firemen jumped into a huge incinerator for burning paper offerings at the Yuen Yuen Institute Taoist temple in Tsuen Wan to rescue a woman, who was seen diving in earlier.

They pulled the woman out within minutes, and she suffered very serious injuries, which was expectable, as three of the firemen also suffered burnt even though they were wearing fire-proof suits and boots.

While their gears are made to withstand temperature as high as 1,000 degrees, the protection is effective only for eight seconds. So the firemen were actually risking their lives, as they always do when taking part in rescue operations.

Their acts, which are nothing short of heroic, can be described by the idiom “奮不顧身” (*fen4 bu2 gu4 shen1*).

“奮” (*fen4*) is “奮勇” (*fen4 yong3*), meaning

“to do something with one’s utmost courage,” “dauntless,” “to summon up courage and determination,” “不顧” (*bu2 gu4*) “to disregard,” “in spite of,” “without giving any thought to,” “regardless of,” and “身” (*shen1*) “body,” “life.”

“奮不顧身” (*fen4 bu2 gu4 shen1*) means, literally, “to dash on bravely with no thought of personal safety,” “to be dauntless without regard to one’s safety.” It means “to do something regardless of personal safety,” “undaunted by dangers.”

Rescuers are “奮不顧身” (*fen4 bu2 gu4 shen1*) as they are motivated by a strong sense of responsibility and selflessness. But love can also drive one to be “奮不顧身” (*fen4 bu2 gu4 shen1*), like the pet owner who jumped into the sea in Western trying to save his puppy on the same day.

Terms containing the character “奮” (*fen4*) include:

奮鬥 (*fen4 dou4*) – to strive; to work at one’s utmost

奮力 (*fen4 li4*) – to do one’s best; to spare no effort

興奮 (*xing1 fen4*) – to be excited; excitement

發奮 (*fa1 fen4*) – to make an effort