

Idiom by Lon Yan

依依不捨

yi1 yi1 bu4 she3

A white cat showed up uninvited at a funeral in Malaysia. It started to circle the grave before pawing and rolling around the burial mound. Mourners tried to drag it away but it refused to budge.

The grandson of the deceased said his grandfather loved cats, keeping as many as 10 at home. He also went to the mosque often to feed stray ones. The white cat was, however, not a pet of the family, so its presence was a mystery.

As to its bizarre behavior, a specialist quoted by the media said the cat has “obviously seen something being buried that it wants to get to” and that “cats can grieve the loss of a presence and show it in many ways.” A rather spooky assessment indeed.

Those who know Chinese idiom would probably say the cat was just “依依不捨” (*yi1*

bu4 she3).

“依依” (*yi1 yi1*) means “reluctant to part,” “to regret leaving,” “unwilling to part,” “broken-hearted at having to leave.” “不捨” (*bu4 she3*) means “reluctant to part with something or someone,” “unwilling to let go of.” So “依依不捨” (*yi1 yi1 bu4 she3*) means “to be reluctant to part,” “cannot bear to part.”

“依依不捨” (*yi1 yi1 bu4 she3*) or not, the puzzle was how the cat would have known the body in the ground was that of its benefactor. The spectacle must have intrigued and pique intense public interest – the video of the cat’s graveside acts has been watched by over seven millions people within 24 hours of its posting!

Terms containing the character “捨” (*she3*) include:

捨得 (*she3 de*) – to be willing to part with something

捨不得 (*she3 bu4 de2*) – reluctant to give up or let go

捨棄 (*she3 qi4*) – to give up; to abandon

捨身 (*she3 shen1*) – give one’s life; sacrifice oneself