

Idiom by Lon Yan

蛇蠍心腸

she2 xie1 xin1 chang2

The Japan “Black Widow,” the elderly woman who tricked lovers into drinking cyanide for millions in insurance payouts and inheritance, has been sentenced to death.

Chisako Kakehi, 70, was condemned to the gallows for the murder of three men, one of them her husband, and the attempted murder of a fourth.

The judge noted: “The cases were well prepared in advance. They were cunning and malicious.” He is basically calling the woman “蛇蠍心腸” (*she2 xie1 xin1 chang2*), a fact that was again confirmed by her reaction to the death sentence – showing no emotion.

“蛇” (*she2*) “a snake,” “蠍” (*xie2*) “a scorpion,” “心” (*xin1*) “the heart,” and “腸” (*chang2*) “intestines.” Translated directly, “蛇蠍心腸” (*she2 xie1 xin1 chang2*) is “snake, scorpion heart and intestines.” “心腸” (*xin1 chang2*), as a term, means, metaphorically, “intention,”

“state of mind,” “mood,” “conscience,” “heart.”

“蛇蠍心腸” (*she2 xie1 xin1 chang2*), therefore, means “a heart as venomous as snakes and scorpions;” “to have a very vicious nature.”

The idiom is for describing perpetrators of hideous crimes, those who carry out sophisticated plans that cause serious injury or death to others insidiously (暗中為害的; 陰險的), like the actions of the Black Widow, or giving false testimony to send an innocent person to jail.

An idiom that has a similar meaning is “人面獸心” (*ren2 mian4 shou4 xin1*), literally “human face, heart of a beast.” It means “gentle in appearance but cruel at heart,” “malicious and duplicitous (騙人的),” It is the equivalent of the expression “a wolf in sheep’s clothing.”

Terms containing the character “腸” (*chang2*) include:

腸胃 (*chang2 wei4*) – intestines and stomach; gastrointestinal

腸胃炎 (*chang2 wei4 yan2*) - gastroenteritis

小腸 (*xiao3 chang2*) – small intestines

香腸 (*xiang1 chang2*) – sausage