

# Idiom by Lon Yan

## 粉身碎骨

*fen3 shen1 sui4 gu3*

Some jobs are dangerous. But in peace time, few professions would cause one to be “粉身碎骨” (*fen3 shen1 sui4 gu3*).

“粉” (*fen3*) is “powder,” “身” (*shen1*) “the body,” “碎” (*sui4*) “shattered,” “to break into pieces,” and “骨” (*gu3*) “bone.” “粉碎” (*fen3 sui4*) means “to smash,” “to pulverize,” “to shatter,” “to crumble.” Literally, “粉身碎骨” (*fen3 shen1 sui4 gu3*) is “body pulverized, bones shattered,” “torn body and crushed bones.”

When a person is “粉身碎骨” (*fen3 shen1 sui4 gu3*), death is not only certain but also horrible. So “粉身碎骨” (*fen3 shen1 sui4 gu3*) means “die horribly.”

Jobs that involve the risk of “粉身碎骨” (*fen3 shen1 sui4 gu3*) include bomb disposal or walking on high-wire. Police work or firefighting are dangerous but generally would not lead to “粉身碎骨” (*fen3 shen1 sui4*

*gu3*). Television artistes could suffer injuries during shooting but should never have to risk “粉身碎骨” (*fen3 shen1 sui4 gu3*).

So jaws dropped when MC Grace Chan said during live broadcast of TVB’s anniversary gala that the station’s artistes would not mind “粉身碎骨” (*fen3 shen1 sui4 gu3*) when performing their duty.

The 2013 Miss Hong Kong winner had apparently uttered the wrong idiom. Fellow artiste Carol “Do Do” Cheng, a very experienced MC herself, subtly clarified that the proper idiom to use is “奮不顧身” (*fen4 bu2 gu4 shen1*) – to do something regardless of personal safety.

Chan grew up in Vancouver and probably didn’t have the benefit of much training in Chinese, so the mistake was understandable.

### Terms containing the character “碎” (*sui4*) include:

心碎 (*xin1 sui4*) – heart-broken

碎石 (*sui4 shi2*) – crushed stone; gravel

肉碎 (*rou4 sui4*) – minced meat

打碎 (*da3 sui4*) – to smash