

# Idiom by Lon Yan

## 否極泰來

*pi3 ji2 tai4 lai2*

The female pig that was rescued after having been buried under rubbles for a month in the 2008 Sichuan earthquake is in the news again. The animal, known in Harry Potter parlance as “the sow who lived,” or “zhu1 jian1 qiang2” (豬堅強) – Pig Sturdy – to locals, was reported to have died.

Her miraculous survival has been an inspiration for many, so heartbroken fans from near and far came to pay tribute, just to find the 10-year-old still alive, though not exactly kicking, as it has developed a limp due to old age.

For the past eight years, Sturdy has been living like a king (or queen, if you may) at a “luxury” home complete with a living room and a bedroom. Her daily diet consists of gourmet food. She takes walks outside two

times a day, and gets regular body checks.

The pig’s dramatic change of fortune is called “否極泰來” (*pi3 ji2 tai4 lai2*).

“否” (*pi3*) is “evil,” “bad,” “negate,” “極” (*ji2*) “the utmost,” “to reach the final point,” “extremely,” “泰” (*tai4*) “safe and tranquil,” “peaceful,” and “來” (*lai2*) “to take place,” “to be at,” “to come to,” “to come.” Literally, “否極泰來” (*pi3 ji2 tai4 lai2*) “when a bad situation hits its extreme, good comes.”

“否極泰來” (*pi3 ji2 tai4 lai2*) means “out of the depth of misfortune comes bliss,” “when misfortune reaches the limit, good fortune is at hand,” “after extreme bad luck, comes good luck.”

“否極泰來” (*pi3 ji2 tai4 lai2*) is a comforting thought for those going through a rough patch in life.

### Terms containing the character “極” (*ji2*) include:

極好 (*ji2 hao3*) – excellent; superb

極力 (*ji2 li4*) – giving every effort

極限 (*ji2 xian4*) – the limit; the ultimate

極刑 (*ji2 xing2*) – death penalty