

Idiom by Lon Yan

毛骨悚然

mao2 gu3 song3 ran2

Thinking about *The Shining* might still send chills down the spine of those who have watched it, even if the movie was released 37 years ago. Based on horror master Stephen King's book of the same name, the work has been rated one of the scariest movies of all time.

And one of its scariest parts, many agreed, was the "come play with us" scene. In it, dead twin sisters "Grady daughters" terrified little Danny Torrance by chanting "Come and play with us, Danny, forever, and ever, and ever..." at the end of a long corridor in a haunted hotel.

Recently, CNN ran an interview of the twin sisters, Lisa and Louise Burns in real life, who are now 48. Lisa is a lawyer and Louise is a published scientist. They are, of course, no longer scary, but the replay of the "come play

with us scene" is still as "毛骨悚然" (*mao2 gu3 song3 ran2*) as ever.

"毛" (*mao2*) is "hair," "feather," "wool," "骨" (*gu3*) "bone," "悚然" (*song3 ran2*) is "terrified," "horrified," "frightened." Literally, "毛骨悚然" (*mao2 gu3 song3 ran2*) is "hair and bone terrified."

Extreme fright causes physiological reactions like hairs standing on end and trembling. So "毛骨悚然" (*mao2 gu3 song3 ran2*) means "thrilling," "blood-curdling," "to give one the creeps."

It has a similar meaning as the English expressions "with one's hair standing on end," "to have one's blood turn cold," which also describe bodily reaction and feelings when one is frightened.

When you say something makes you "毛骨悚然" (*mao2 gu3 song3 ran2*), you mean it's terrifying.

Terms containing the character "毛" (*mao2*) include:

毛髮 (*mao2 fa4*) – hair

毛筆 (*mao2 bi3*) – a writing brush

毛病 (*mao2 bing4*) – a defect; a trouble; a breakdown

毛巾 (*mao2 jin1*) – a towel; a face-cloth