gu1 zhu4 yi2 zhi4

When people encounter a bear in the wild, they usually run to avoid ending up as its meal. But Chase Dellwo fed the bear his arm instead. The 26-year-old Montana man was hunting for elk (赤鹿) when he surprised a 180-kilogram male grizzly, which started to attack. He crammed his arm crosswise (横向地) into the back of the grizzly’s jaws to induce “a pronounced gag (作嘔) response” like he read in an article. The trick worked and the bear scuttled away.

The hunter would probably not have taken this dramatic course of action had he thought he had other options. So he must have believed that arm-in-jaw was his only move left.

We can call that “孤注一擲” (gu1 zhu4 yi2 zhi4).

“孤” (gu1) means “lone,” “注” (zhu4) is “stake in gambling” “一” (yi2) is “one,” “single” and “擲” (zhi4) is “to cast,” “to throw.” Literally, “孤注一擲” (gu1 zhu4 yi2 zhi4) is “lone stake one throw,” “to stake everything on a single throw.”

What is being thrown is a dice. The idiom describes a gambler who has been losing and is putting whatever money he’s got left on one last bet. If he loses, he will lose everything.

So “孤注一擲” (gu1 zhu4 yi2 zhi4) means “to risk everything on a single venture,” “to stake everything on it.” Figuratively, it means “making a last-ditch stand against the opponent with all one has,” “a last ditch effort or attempt to prevent total disaster.”

It is a make-or-break move, one that results either in great success or utter failure, or death in Dellwo’s case.

Terms containing the character “孤” (gu1) include:

孤兒 (gu1 er2) – an orphan
孤兒院 (gu1 er2 yuan4) – an orphanage
孤單 (gu1 dan1) – alone
孤獨 (gu1 du2) – solitary