

# 螳臂擋車

*tang2 bi4 dang3 che1*

A Route 106 bus pulled out of a stop in To Kwa Wan and was halting in front of a red traffic light when a man ran out, held up his arm and demanded to board.

Allowing a passenger to board in the middle of the road is, of course, a violation of traffic law. So the driver refused to open the door, but the man stayed put, clearly sending the message “either run me over or let me in.”

After a five-minute standoff, the driver had to back down so as not to make the situation even more dangerous than it already was. The media described the man’s action as “螳臂擋車” (*tang2 bi4 dang3 che1*).

“螳” (*tang2*) is “螳螂” (*tang2 lang2*), a “praying mantis,” “臂” (*bi4*) “arm,” “擋” (*dang3*) “to block,” “to stop,” and “車” (*che1*) “a cart,” “a car,” “a vehicle.” Literally, “螳臂擋車” (*tang2 bi4*

## Idiom by Lon Yan

*dang3 che1*) is “praying mantis arm block cart,” “mantis trying to stop a cart.”

The idiom concerns an angry praying mantis that runs into the middle of the road, and raises its “arms” in a combat stance to challenge the cart. The next scene should have seen people shaking their heads as they scraped the insect off the road. However, in the original story, its life is spared as the rider of the cart admires the insect’s “courage.”

“螳臂擋車” (*tang2 bi4 dang3 che1*) means “overestimating one’s own strength,” being foolhardy (有勇無謀；愚勇的).

**Terms containing the character “車” (*che1*) include:**

車輛 (*che1 liang4*) – a vehicle

電車 (*dian4 che1*) – a tram

火車 (*huo3 che1*) – a train

車禍 (*che1 huo4*) – a traffic accident