

# Idiom by Lon Yan

## 誤入歧途

wu4 ru4 qi2 tu2

Toronto police found a car stuck in a downtown tunnel reserved for streetcars. The driver, they said, was nowhere to be found. The car was quickly towed as it was straddling the tracks, paralyzing that section of the electric-powered light rail service.

Officials said they did not know what has happened, or why the driver was gone. But it was actually quite easy to see: the driver has “誤入歧途” (wu4 ru4 qi2 tu2). And if your car happens to have gotten stuck on a railway track, you would have scatted too.

“誤” (wu4) is “an error,” “by mistake,” “入” (ru4) “to enter,” “to go into,” “歧” (qi2) “a fork,” “a branch,” “divergent” and “途” (tu2) “a road,” “a way,” “a journey.” “歧途” (qi2 tu2) is “a

wrong road,” “a fork in a road,” “a road of evil.”

Literally, “誤入歧途” (wu4 ru4 qi2 tu2) is entering the wrong road by mistake, “to go on the wrong track”, which was exactly what has happened to the car-in-tunnel.

But the idiom is more often used for its figurative meaning, which is “to lose or miss one’s way,” “to go astray.” It is used to describe people who have taken a wrong turn in life.

A young person who joined the triad is “誤入歧途” (wu4 ru4 qi2 tu2), so is someone who take drugs, or go to prison. The job of social workers and rehabilitation officers is to guide those who have “誤入歧途” (wu4 ru4 qi2 tu2) back to “正路” (zheng4 lu4) – the right way.

### Terms containing the character “歧” (qi2) include:

歧視 (qi2 shi4) – to discriminate against; prejudice

分歧 (fen1 qi2) – differences; a chasm between

歧見 (qi2 jian4) – different opinion or interpretation; disagreement

歧異 (qi2 yi4) – discrepancy