

Meeting Superior Force

V2 · 壹 · 螳臂擋車 — the mantis and the chariot

TLDR / 80-20

The idiom is the spirit. The sidestep is the method.

Praying mantis does not teach meeting the chariot head-on. It teaches letting the chariot's own momentum deliver it into range.

The Keys

1. The verb is an action, not a posture.

螳臂擋車 — 擋 means *to block, to ward off*. It is what the mantis does, not how it stands. 于海 uses it plainly: 「車比他強大多少，他也敢去擋」 — the chariot is so much stronger, and it still dares to block. The commonly written 當 (*to face, to withstand*) turns an action into an attitude, and the attitude is not what is trained.

2. The tactical answer, stated outright.

Against a longer fighter who opens with kicks to close distance: *"the mantis stylist would simply sidestep the attack and allow his opponent's own movement to bring him into range."* Then the motto — **"within three steps contact, control and strike the enemy until he is red."**

3. The arm is three hands, and the second one does the work.

"The mantis arm is composed of three hands: shoulder to elbow, elbow to wrist, wrist to fingertips. A good mantis will use his second hand for control by pressing the forearm in." Stomping with the feet, hooking and deflecting with the forearms, striking vital points with knuckles and fingertips — 擋 described mechanically.

4. Two countable drills.

Gau Choi — two people face each other and send hammer-fist blows to the other's open palm. It builds firmness for hitting, not callus, and comes with its own injury protocol (dit da jow if bruising). **Rolling Bamboo** — both wrists palm-up on bamboo, push forward rolling to the elbow while rotating palms face-down, return the same way. **About 25 times.**

AI's Take

The branch structure is worth knowing: Seven Star, Plum Flower, Shiny Board, Long Fist and **Fan Che** — **Chariot style**, which carries Big and Little Chariot forms. Whether that name descends from the chariot idiom is a lead, not a settled fact.

One convergence across unrelated lineages: Southern Mantis conditions the forearms by *rolling* them on bamboo; Xing Yi conditions by *striking* with a bamboo beater. Same material, same body part, opposite verbs, and neither tradition mentions the other.

None of this has been trained by a body. Sequencing the four elements above is not part of the source and is not claimed here.