



After practicing archery for an hour, the Sun had already begun to rise.

“Ning, child, I shall be the one to teach you footwork.” Yuchi Snow, clad in white furs, smiled as she looked at her son.

“Yes,” Ning said.

Although he had exercised to the point where his waist and his back were bitterly sore, because he had trained in the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens], his body’s regenerative speed was astonishingly high. Right now, his mind was clear, fresh, and full of energy.

“In close combat, footwork is every bit as important as sword techniques!” Yuchi Snow said solemnly. “When two people engage in a battle, the one with better footwork and agility can make it hard for the opponent to injure them, while they are able to easily injure the opponent.”

Ning nodded.

He understood this logic.

Close combat didn't just mean standing there like an idiot, waving swords and sabers at each other. It was constantly changing positions like an unpredictable shadow. In his past life, he had seen taekwondo and karate experts. Those most elite competitors all valued footwork highly, and their footwork was exquisite, capable of causing ten enemy punches in a row to miss, or at least have their power reduced greatly.

The importance of footwork was arguably even higher than that of attacking techniques! Because he had been tormented by illness in his past life, Ning truly and ardently enjoyed watching those competitions, which made him understand the importance of footwork in those taekwondo and karate competitions.

In this world where spirits and monsters abounded, the basics were still the same.

Footwork was one of the most important things.

“I will teach you a footwork technique known as the [Shadewind Steps],” Snow said. “Don’t be fooled by its ordinary name. This is a very amazing set of footwork techniques. I am the only one who knows it in our Ji clan, and even amongst all five Prefectures, it is considered the highest type of footwork technique. Once you begin learning this footwork technique, you will understand how to dodge and move about in tight areas, while also learning how to easily flee.”

“First, carefully read the six basic movements.” With a flip of her hand, Snow made a thick yellow book appear out of nowhere.

Ning accepted it and began to read it carefully.

This book described the [Shadewind Steps] and its six basic movements. All six of the movements were exquisite and profound in their movements and usage of force and energy.

“Don’t just stare at it.” Snow pointed at a distant area. “Look over there.”

Ning turned his head and saw wooden pillars. There must have been thousands of wooden pillars there, and they were all of different height and at different distances from each other. Above these wooden stakes was a number of beast capes, thousands of them which dotted the area like ropes.

“That is known as the Thousand Star Array,” Snow said. “Through the usage of the Thousand Star Array, within ten years, you should be able to reach the ‘Ruwei’ stage of the Shadewind Steps. If it wasn’t for the Thousand Star Array... you probably would have to spend a hundred times the amount of time.”

“The [Shadewind Steps] technique has three stages.”

“First, the basic stage.”

“Second, the advanced stage.”

“Third, one with the world.”

Snow looked at Ning. “Actually, all techniques, be it footwork, sword, saber, spear, or anything else, can be divided into these three stages. For example, the ‘advanced stage’ of sword technique is often described as ‘one with the sword’.”

“Have you memorized the mysteries of the six basic movements?” Snow asked.

“Yes.” Ning nodded.

Snow then walked towards the Thousand Star Array, then pointed at one of the very short pillars. “Go stand on top of this pillar.”

“Yes.” Ning easily jumped onto the wooden pillar.

He instantly felt wobbly. The pillar wasn't very thick, and there was only enough space for a single foot. Fortunately, after having trained in the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens], he had an extremely good sense of balance. This was the only reason why he was able to stand stably.

“Listen to my orders. Whichever one of the six basic movements I ask you to use, that's what you use,” Snow said. “The ‘advancing’ move!”

Ning immediately tried to charge forward and step atop another pillar in front of him, but when he brushed against a beast skin rope and, with a swish, he fell down to the ground.

“Remember, whenever you are moving in the Thousand Star Array, you must not step onto any of the beast skins. Once you do so, you’ll have to start over again,” Snow said.

Ning ground his teeth.

He refused to believe it would happen again.

He once again hopped onto the short pillar, and then, using the ‘advancing’ move, he dodged past the beast skin and moved onto the next wooden pillar. However, he had used too much force. His body swayed for a long while before he was able to steady himself on that one foot again.

“Remember, your movements must be like nails, driving a nail down with each step. When you land on the pillar, you must be nailed to it!” Snow said. “Each step cannot be too small or too large. It cannot be too light or too heavy. Just now, you swayed wildly. If this was a life or death fight, you would’ve been stabbed to death by an enemy who would’ve discovered a flaw in your attacks. Continue. The ‘advancing’ move!”

“The ‘advancing’ step!”

“The ‘sidestep’ step!”

“The ‘leaping’ step!”

“The ‘backwards’ step!”

“The ‘withdrawing’ step!”

“The ‘turning’ step!”

Snow snapped one order after another.

Actually, all footwork techniques relied on these basic movements. But the differences between different techniques were like night and day in terms of skill. Some would make you move as fast as a bolt of lightning, while others would make you as agile and graceful as the wind, or perhaps as unpredictable as a spirit.

Each footwork technique had its own mysteries, and naturally would have different effects in battle.

“Oof!” He hadn’t leapt high enough, and his back had brushed against the beast skin ropes, causing him to be unable to land onto the wooden pillar. He fell down.

Not saying a word, Ning climbed back onto the pillar.

“Oof!” His knee hadn’t been bent enough.

“Oof!” He had used too much force.

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On those thousands of wooden pillars, Ning was moving like a flash, wildly training in these six basic steps. Because of the obstruction of the beast skins, Ning’s body also had to undergo various contortions to dodge them. But no matter what postures he used, the most important thing was that his center of gravity had to be stable, and his feet had to be stable!

“Mother, how long will I train like this for?” Ning had fallen so many times.

“Ning, son, start from the shortest pillar and move through all 1008 wooden pillars, then jump down from the tallest one! You are not to touch any of the beast skins on the way!”

“If you are able to complete this within the time it takes for one to take ten breaths, then you will have mastered the ‘basic’ level of this footwork.” Yuchi Snow laughed.

Ning was stunned when he heard this. “What? In ten breaths? Such a short period of time... even in running on the flat ground, I wouldn’t be able to do that in ten breaths.” 1008 wooden pillars, all of which had to be traversed. That was a distance of a thousand or so meters. It would take him a while to travel that distance at a full run.

“Later, Ning, when you have finished mastering the first level of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens], you would be able to travel a thousand meters on the ground in ten breaths.” Snow laughed.

“But...” Ning was speechless.

“Moving in the Thousand Star Array as though you were on the ground... only then would you have mastered the ‘basic’ stage.”

“Then what about the second, ‘advanced’ stage?” Ning couldn’t help but ask.

Snow pushed one of the nearby beast skin ropes, which began to collide with the other beast skins. Soon, the thousand plus beast skins were all swaying against and hitting each other in a totally wild, chaotic manner.

“The second stage, the ‘advanced’ stage, requires you to once again start from the lowest pillar and move through all 1008 pillars, then jump down from the tallest one, in the span of ten breaths, without touching any of the beast skin ropes. However... for the ‘advanced’ stage, all of the beast skins will be striking each other.” Snow looked at Ning. “Once you can do that, you will have mastered the ‘advanced’ stage.”

“But but but... how is that possible? If all the beast skins are swaying about, how will I dodge them? There would probably only be a split second for me to dodge the beast skins and also jump onto the wooden pillars. And in such a short time frame...” Ning felt that this was simply too hard, impossibly hard.

“That is why I said that with the help of the Thousand Star Array, you should need ten years to reach the ‘advanced’ stage of the [Shadewind Steps],” Snow said. “From now until lunch time, you will continuously practice here at the Thousand Star Array.”

“Then what about the third stage, ‘one with the world’?” Ning couldn’t help but ask.

Snow looked at Ning and laughed. “That’s on an entirely different level. Once you reach it, you’ll understand.”

“How powerful is it? You can at least explain it,” Ning asked.

“Alright. If I have to describe it... even ten thousand arrows raining down on me at the same time wouldn’t be able to injure me at all.” Snow looked at her son.

“Ten thousand arrows at the same time?” Ning instantly imagined a thick cluster of countless arrows raining down, but none of them able to touch him. This was inconceivable. A human’s body occupied a certain amount of space, after all. If those countless arrows filled the skies, logically speaking, there should be no way to dodge them.”

Snow smiled. “Don’t be discouraged. Most of the peak Houtian experts of the various tribes are only able to reach the first, ‘basic’ stage.”

“Xiantian lifeforms are usually able to reach the second, ‘advanced’ stage.”

“Most Zifu Disciples are able to reach the third stage of ‘one with the world’. But of course, some extremely talented Xiantian lifeforms are able to reach the level of ‘one with the world’... such as your father!” Snow said.

“Father?” Ning was surprised and delighted.

“Your father’s footwork has reached the level of ‘one with the world’. And even in swordplay, which is harder to train in than footwork, your father has reached the ‘one with the world’ level.” Snow laughed. “That is why your father is the undisputed number one expert of the Ji clan’s West Prefecture. That’s why his prestige awes all of the countless tribes.”

Ning’s heart immediately swelled with a heroic feeling. Whatever his father could do, he himself could definitely do, especially since he had the [Nuwa Painting] and the wisdom from his past life!

“Continue!”

“The ‘advancing’ step!”

“The ‘turning’ step!”

“The ‘leaping’ step!”

Ning’s small, young frame carefully flashed about the Thousand Star Array, occasionally falling down.

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After lunch.

After having eaten to his fill and rested for a while, Ning was pulled to the training yards once more by his father. The afternoon spring Sun was dazzlingly beautiful, and its rays were very comfortable.

“Father.” Ning looked at his glacier-like father, clad in a blood-red beast fur. His heart was filled with awe. His father had killed even Diremonsters such as Dragonsnakes. In terms of strength and skill, his father had already reached an extremely high level. Even some Xiantian lifeforms had come to ask to be taken as his father’s disciple and learn his sword techniques.

His father had nine primary disciples, three of which were Xiantian lifeforms. But his father only taught the nine disciples once every month.

But Ning? He would be taught every day!

“From today onwards, I will teach you how to use the sword.” Yichuan looked at his son and said in a cold voice, “The sword is not the bow, nor is it like footwork.”

“Archery training only requires one to become familiar with it. Once one’s strength increases and one’s vision improves, naturally, one will be able to fire more powerful arrows!”

“Although footwork is important, it is still supplemental... to kill an opponent, you still have to use your sword in the end!”

“Swords are considered short weapons! They are light and agile, with two edges. Their usage is more precise and profound than that of sabers; whether by slashing, by stabbing, by chopping, by scraping, or by tapping, one can easily kill the opponent. Sometimes, a person who is training incorrectly can even hurt himself. It is the truest weapon of war.” Yichuan looked at his son.

Ning could feel his blood boiling, and he was extremely eager. His eyes were shining. “Father, what sort of sword technique will I learn?”

“Sword technique? Wait a few more years!” Yichuan said coldly.

“Wait a few more years?” Ning was confused.

Yichuan said coldly, “The movements of the sword are birthed by your body! If you wish to use the sword well, then first, you must control your body well. First, you must train in boxing. After your body and your arms are extremely agile and you can fully control your strength, then your body will be ready to learn sword techniques!”

“But preparing your body isn’t enough.”

“You must also prepare your ‘mind’ for learning the sword!”