

[Raindrop Sutra]. The principle behind it was that of the saying, 'dripping water can eventually tunnel through a rock'.

Its attacks were soft yet inexhaustible, seemingly as endless as the raindrops falling from the skies during a rainstorm, making the enemy find it difficult to even dodge. In turn, its defenses were utterly airtight... and at the same time, when tens of millions of raindrops converged on one point, it could form a terrifyingly explosive force. Even ordinary drops of water could eventually tunnel through a rock; the sword that had been transformed into 'raindrops' would naturally contain an unshakable, unyielding power.

"The [Raindrop Sutra] truly is profound and wondrous." Ning nodded as he read it, then picked up the second book, [Polaris Secret Manual].

The [Polaris Secret Manual] was part of the legendary [Polaris Sword Manual]. It was divided into seven different sword stances, known as Dubhe, Merak, Phecda, Megrez, Alioth, Mizar, and Alkaid. These seven major sword stances all contained the power of the stars. They could be as ferocious and savage as the Voracious Alkaid Wolf Sword, or the extremely soft and extremely sinister Melodious Megrez Sword...

The sword technique was unfathomably mysterious, and was very hard to defend against.

“What a good sword technique.” Ning sighed in amazement as he read, before picking up the other three books.

[Thunderflame Sword]. This was something which the ancestors of the Ji clan, when roving and training themselves elsewhere in the world, had been lucky enough to find. They had found a half-burned remnant of a book, and the words in it were not very clear. Only two words on the title could be seen: Thunderflame! In addition, they were only able to reclaim three complete sword stances from the book.

All of the stances were used to attack. When the stances were used, it was as though it contained the power of heavenly thunder and hellish flames. There was no question that in terms of attack power, it was the undisputed champion amongst the sword techniques of the Ji clan! For just three stances to allow it to be ranked amongst the Five Major Sword Techniques of the Ji clan, one could imagine how that unnamed complete sword technique... definitely outstripped the other four sword techniques vastly.

However, although its strengths were apparent, its weaknesses were also apparent. This was because these vicious stances... were only three in number. Thus, they didn't perfectly link to each other. In addition, all three

stances were purely offensive, without any defensive stances. How could experts, when engaged in battle, have no defensive stances? Thus, very few people would choose to train in this sword technique.

“I really want to see what the complete Thunderflame Sword looks like.” Ning couldn’t help but sigh.

“If we had a complete copy,” the nearby Yichuan said, “Then it would be, without question, the number one Immortal technique in Swallow Mountain.”

Ning nodded, then picked up the fourth book.

[Illusion Sutra]. Strictly speaking, this wasn’t a sword technique, because once one truly understood the meaning of the word ‘Illusion’, one could execute an ‘Illusion Saber’ technique, or an ‘Illusion Spear’ technique, or an ‘Illusion Staff’ technique... this was an insidious and powerful attacking technique that allowed one to hide one’s true abilities and actions. Opponents often would die before even knowing what happened.

This technique was sinister to the extreme.

“This isn’t suited to my temperament.” The first technique Ning discarded was the [Illusion Sutra]. Picking something suited to a person was very important. A technique that was opposite of one’s natural instincts, no matter how profound... would be incredibly difficult to train. Naturally, Ning immediately discarded it.

“Hrm, the last one was originally the greatest strength of the Ji clan.” Ning began to flip through the [Melody of Ten Thousand Swords].

The [Melody of Ten Thousand Swords] was praised as the most complicated of the five sword techniques, far more complicated than the [108 Swords of the Gods and Demons] which Ning had previously learned. But although it was complicated, once one truly mastered it, the [Melody of Ten Thousand Swords] could be simplified into three major stances. The ‘One Sword, Ten Thousand Shadows’ stance, the ‘Ten Thousand Swords Become One’, and the ‘Melody of Ten Thousand Swords’.

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Ning closed his eyes, pondering.

In terms of being the most awe-inspiring and most complicated, or perhaps even the simplest, it would be the [Melody of Ten Thousand Swords].

In terms of being the most insidious and difficult to guard against, it would be the [Illusion Sutra].

In terms of being the most orthodox, it would be the [Polaris Secret Manual].

In terms of having the greatest defense, it would be the [Raindrop Sutra].

In terms of the most powerful attack and the deepest, most profound principles, it would be the [Thunderflame Sword].

“First of all, the [Illusion Sutra] can be excluded. It doesn’t suit my temperament!” Ning pondered. “The [Polaris Secret Manual] is part of the [Polaris Sword Manual]. In terms of attack, it isn’t very strong. In defense, it isn’t either. It isn’t very exquisite either... it’s comparatively average, but it isn’t weak in any aspect either. When fighting against experts, one must have some sort of advantage! The [Polaris Secret Manual] can be excluded as well.”

“Only three left. The [Melody of Ten Thousand Swords], [Raindrop Sutra], and [Thunderflame Sword].”

“The [Raindrop Sutra] is a must!” Ning thought to himself.

The Raindrop Sutra was like a curtain of endless raindrops. It was the most defensive technique amongst the five major sword techniques.

In a battle, defensive abilities were even more important than attacking abilities!

In his past life, Ning had seen many martial arts competitions. All of the champions were experts at dodging and defense. Even in soccer and basketball, there was the saying that ‘defense is king’. Although attacks were pretty to look at... it was defense which truly gave the best chances at victory.

The venue was different, but the logic was the same!

In life and death battles, defense was also important. When encountering an expert more powerful than one’s self, one might reach the point of only being able to defend and not attack. If one’s defense was strong, then perhaps one might still live. But once those attack-focused people encountered those who were even stronger than them, once their attacks were not able to harm the opponent, they were finished.

“Defense is the same thing as preserving my life. First, I have to preserve my life; only then can I take the lives of others. In addition, this is the technique which my father used to become famous. With him personally instructing me, I will improve quickly. The [Raindrop Sutra] is a must.” Ning carefully continued to consider. “As for the [Thunderflame Sword] and the [Melody of Ten Thousand Swords]...”

“Alright, [Thunderflame Sword] it is!” Ning quickly made his decision.

If he was like an ordinary person who could only use a single sword technique, Ning probably would've made a choice between the [Raindrop Sutra] and the [Melody of Ten Thousand Swords].

However, since he used twin swords, he already had the [Raindrop Sutra] for defense. Thus, for the second one, he chose the most offensively powerful [Thunderflame Sword]. The [Thunderflame Sword] had, as its flaw, no defensive techniques, but as a twin-sword wielder, that wasn't a flaw at all. He had already chosen the [Raindrop Sutra] for his defense, and thus what he now truly needed was a powerful killing technique.

“The [Raindrop Sutra] and the [Thunderflame Sword].” Ning made up his mind. “The [Raindrop Sutra] is excellent at defense, while the [Thunderflame

Sword], despite only having three strokes, has three incomparably powerful killer moves.”

“In addition, once my [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] reaches the Xiantian level, my Divine Sun Tattoo and Divine Moon Tattoo will allow me to control fire and water. Water is very suited to the [Raindrop Sutra] while fire is very suited to the [Thunderflame Sword]. I trust they will be of great help to my swordplay.”

“In defending, my defense must be so tight that not even a drop of water can get through!”

“In attacking, my attacks must be as explosively powerful as a fiery volcano!”

“I have twin swords. One for defense, one for offense. Or perhaps I can use both for defense. Or both for attack. I’ll do as I please!” Ning rapidly began to evaluate his future possibilities in battle, and he saw the path with crystal clarity. He knew... only once one had a full understanding as to how one would develop and progress would one be able to avoid taking a wrong path. This would help one develop faster!

In warfare, strategies were of greater importance than tactics.



In a person's growth, there was a saying that planning counted for more than effort.

If one knew the right way one needed to advance forwards, even if one didn't make huge advances every day, after ten or twenty years, one would still reach a high level. But if one didn't have a clear objective, and just blindly worked hard, a person might just be running in-place without improving, or perhaps even going backwards!

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His careful examination of the books had taken two hours. That huge candle was already half used up. Yichuan and Snow just waited there quietly, occasionally exchanging a few words.

"Father, Mother," Ning suddenly spoke.

"Hrm?" Yichuan and Snow both turned to look at him. Yichuan spoke. "You've chosen?"

Ning nodded.

“Ning, son, what have you chosen? One or two?” Snow asked.

“I’ve chosen two.” Ning held out the two books. “One is the [Raindrop Sutra]. The other is the [Thunderflame Sword].”

“[Raindrop Sutra]? [Thunderflame Sword]?” Yichuan nodded slightly. As the number one expert of the Ji clan of the West Prefecture, despite not having gained any merits in battle after his son had been born, his reputation had only grown. This was because no one knew how powerful Yichuan had become... but no one could dispute that in even ten years, Yichuan had already become the number one expert of the West Prefecture.

His judgement was therefore exceptional.

“Fine.” Yichuan nodded.

“I’d like to hear your advice, Father,” Ning hurriedly said.

“No rush.” Yichuan shook his head. “I have some thoughts on the [Raindrop Sutra], but you’ve never trained in it before. Thus, even if I explained my thoughts to you, you wouldn’t be able to comprehend them. You have to first train hard, and even engage in life-and-death battles, before I can successfully guide you.”

“Tomorrow at dawn, I will give you the full copies of the [Raindrop Sutra] and the [Thunderflame Sword]. At that time, you will perform them in front of me once. As long as you can get the postures and movements right, that will be enough.” Yichuan nodded. “Three days later, you will begin to engage in real battles. Those sparring matches you usually do are too simple and soft. You need to fight in real life-and-death battles.”

Ning was puzzled.

“Father, haven’t I already engaged in life-and-death battles?” Ning couldn’t help but ask. “In the past, when you acknowledged that my skill had reached the first level in sword training, the basic level, didn’t you have me fight against and kill some prisoners who had been sentenced to death?”

He still remembered the first time he had killed someone. At that time, his entire body had been trembling, uncontrollably so. Although he rationally knew

that he shouldn't be afraid, he still couldn't help but shake. According to what his father had said... aside from a very few people who lived for slaughter, this was the normal reaction of most people the first time they killed someone.

After having killed dozens of people sentenced to death row, he had grown calmer.

"That wasn't a battle. That was just training your courage." Yichuan shook his head. "Fighting against convicts? All of them were weaker than you. How can that be called a life-and-death battle? Three days from now... I will arrange for you to engage in a true battle with monstrous beasts, powerful ones that have already reached mastery in the Houtian level."

"Monsters?" Ning's face changed.

"Those captured monsters will turn insane and ferocious for food and for the chance to live. In addition, they won't show you any mercy at all." Yichuan looked at his son. "In front of a massive cage, you will fight against the monstrous beasts, one on one. This is the battle which all important descendants of the Ji clan must go through; the 'Cage Battle'. Over half of these important descendants will die in that cage.

Half?

Ning was briefly shocked, but then grew calm again. This was because he knew that the women and the slaves in the various tribes were highly fertile, but the total population here had never changed. Why? Because the savage environment had caused the tribes to need to struggle against the heavens, against the earth, against the Diremonsters hidden within the mountains and valleys, and even against other tribes. Only a few would be able to survive! Even though he was born into the Ji clan, he still needed to face tough, relentless training. Only the elite would survive.

It was precisely because all the clan members of the Ji clan were so strong that the Ji clan was famous and had become a local hegemon!