少林武學總譜

少林

THE COMPLETE ARTS OF SHAOLIN

The Abbot's Compendium

THE TEMPLE BENEATH THE PINES

A traveller once asked the Third Abbot what made Shaolin strong. He was given a broom and told to ask again in a year.

This is not a story about patience. It is the curriculum.

The arts recorded here were not invented in a hall. They were assembled over centuries out of ordinary motions — sweeping, drawing water, carrying firewood, barring a gate against weather — by men who had those motions available and nothing else. Every technique in this volume is a chore that learned to defend itself.

Three things are asked of the one who trains from these pages: that he rise before he is called, that he finish what is dull, and that he never strike first while a door remains open. Lacking any one, he may still become formidable. He will simply not be one of ours.

THE BODHI BREATH

The gate of all Temple arts

The body is a borrowed room. Learn first to sit in it.

Sit with the legs folded and the spine stacked like well-laid brick — each part resting on what is beneath it, nothing held up by effort. The hands rest in the lap, right over left, thumbs barely touching. The eyes are open, lowered, seeing the floor without inspecting it.

The Four Counts

1. Draw the breath in low and slow until it sits beneath the navel, where it is stored rather than spent.

2. Let it rest there, without holding it. Holding is effort; resting is not.

3. Release it thinner and longer than you drew it in. The exhale should outlast the inhale by half.

4. Remain in the emptiness one count before beginning again. Most men skip this count. It is the count that does the work.

Forty breaths at waking. Forty at dusk. When the mind wanders — and it will wander, this is not a failing but a fact of minds — return to the count without commentary. The returning is the practice. The staying was never the practice.

少林棍法

THE SHAOLIN STAFF

The signature art · Eighteen forms

Other schools are known by a blade. Shaolin is known by a stick, and this has always suited the Temple: a staff is a tool before it is a weapon, it is available to a poor man, it may be set down without ceremony, and it does not require killing anyone to be used correctly.

The eighteen forms below are trained in order and in the open courtyard, never indoors, because a monk who cannot strike without breaking a roof beam has not learned distance. They climb the Five Gates: six forms of stone unworked, six of the chisel, four of the shape, and two that are not taught but arrived at.

FORM 1 — SWEEPING THE COURTYARD

Stone Unworked

The first chore a novice is given, and the first technique he is given, are the same motion. This is not a joke the Temple plays on novices, though novices assume it is.

1. Stand square, staff held in both hands at hip height, hands a shoulder's width apart, forward hand palm down.

2. Step forward and sweep the staff low and level, from your rear side across to your forward side, ending at the height of the knee.

3. The sweep is driven by turning the waist, not by pulling the arms. The arms only keep the staff where the waist sends it.

4. Exhale through the sweep. Recover to centre without pause; an unrecovered staff is a gift.

Fault to avoid: lifting the staff to sweep. It travels flat. If it rises, you are chopping, and the man you are chopping is behind you by now.