



NEDOKYOTEN

NEDO SCRIPTURE

ある不眠者の二十夜

Twenty Nights of an Insomniac's Journey

By the time I finished counting the 341st sheep, I cried in earnest for the first time in my life.

To be precise, it wasn't so much that tears welled up as it was a hot mass behind my eyeballs forcing its way through parched membranes. 3:47 AM. The bedside digital clock blinks with a merciless, pale blue light, ticking away like a countdown to the total system collapse of my being.

Tomorrow—or rather, four hours from now—I have the final presentation for a new product that carries the weight of the entire company. I am a Product Manager at a tech firm. My job is to organize complex specifications, resolve conflicts between engineers and designers, and manage the critical path. Rationality and optimization are my faith; they are the only weapons I have to survive this world. But look at me now. I can't even trigger the "sleep mode" on my own brain, the most intimate and essential device I own.

"Please relax," whispers the narrator of a sleep app in my ear, her voice so perfectly reasonable that it borders on homicidal. "Your body is sinking into warm sand... listen to the sound of the waves."

Liar. My body is a bundle of nerves coated in freezing anxiety and the remnants of daytime caffeine. Sinking into sand? I feel more like I'm lying on a sheet of iron embedded with a thousand needles. The sound of waves? To me, that sounds like nothing but the alert chime of a server going down.

I writhe in bed. Even the slight friction of the sheets feels like a hostile stimulus against my oversensitive skin. Three years. It's been three years since this hell began. The trigger was the failure of a massive project that the company's future depended on. It wasn't even my design flaw. But the pressure of being the lead, followed by the summary cancellation of my promotion—since then, my brain has hardwired a circuit that says "Night = Post-Mortem Meeting for Unsolved Problems."

Melatonin, theanine supplements, weighted blankets, ASMR, mindfulness. I've tried every "sleep solution" on the market. The debugging should have been perfect. I fixed the bedroom temperature at 22 degrees Celsius, blocked every single lumen of external light with blackout curtains, and sealed my smartphone in a timed safe box two hours before bed. I optimized the hardware and the environment. Yet, my consciousness—the OS—refuses to shut down, stuck in a massive memory leak.

"If this continues, I will break."

Survival instinct eventually breaches the seawall of my rationality, forcing my hand toward my smartphone. I know the blue light will sear my retinas and wake my brain even further. But if I don't cling to something, the gravity of this darkness will crush me.

"Insomnia treatment final resort," I type into the search bar with trembling fingers. The results are the usual: ads for expensive clinics or dubious health blogs with zero scientific basis.

Then, on the third page of search results, I find a quiet link, untouched by ads or SEO optimization.

"NEDO – The Way of Sleep"

I click, and a deep indigo screen appears. The design has a texture reminiscent of rough washi paper. There, in a simple serif font, is a single line:

"Do not merely sleep. Walk the Way."

Under normal circumstances, I would have closed the tab instantly, mocking such pseudo-scientific mysticism. "Walk the Way? Don't be ridiculous. I just want REM sleep," I would have said. But seeing those words through my hazy consciousness, they felt like a single beam of light piercing through the deep sea, burning themselves into my retinas.

The next day's presentation was an unmitigated disaster.

The logical structure was supposedly perfect, but my words had no soul. My voice cracked, and when faced with sharp questions during the Q&A, my brain simply displayed a "Not Responding" dialog box and froze. My boss's disappointed—or perhaps pitying—stare. The tip-toeing concern of my colleagues. All of it was unbearable.

I fled the office and, following the address from the previous night, found myself standing in front of a nondescript multi-tenant building on the edge of the city. Amidst the smell of exhaust and the noise of the crowd, that place existed.

There was no sign. After riding an old elevator with manual doors, I was met by a serene wooden door that seemed to have forcibly cut away the city's time.

"Please, come in. The door is unlocked."

The voice came from inside just as I was about to knock.

Inside was a wide tatami-matted space. There was almost no furniture, and no scrolls reading "Insomnia" hanging on the walls. There was only the faint scent of agarwood and the damp woodiness characteristic of old houses.

A figure sat in the center of the room.

The person appeared to be in their late sixties. They wore a garment of deep indigo—something between a monk's samue and a high-quality nightgown, its boundary blurred. Their hair, a mix of silver and black, was trimmed short. Their skin was surprisingly lustrous and healthy. It was a person who seemed to transcend gender, possessing a strange softness and a bottomless sharpness simultaneously.

"Are you... the master of the NEDO way?"

"You may call me Yumemori," the figure said, smiling slightly. Their eyes seemed to see through everything, yet they didn't provoke discomfort. "You've brought quite a heavy load with you. You look like someone wandering an endless platform, clutching luggage that has no destination."

I began to speak, the words pouring out of me. The three years of suffering, the mistakes at work, every latest sleep technology I'd tested, and the despair of the previous night. I tried to remain rational, but I couldn't stop the self-deprecating humor from leaking into my speech.

"...In the end, I'm just a product with a fatal bug, unable to execute even the most basic human functions. Even with the latest PM methodologies, I can't resolve the bottleneck of my own biorhythms. It's pathetic, isn't it?"

Master Yumemori listened to the end without interrupting, without even nodding, then said quietly:

"You are trying too hard to sleep."

"What...? I came here because I *want* to sleep. I've put in the effort, optimized the environment, done everything possible—"

"That is where the error begins. Sleep is not a 'project' you can control."

Yumemori stood up and walked toward me slowly, silently.

"What do you think about when you get into bed?"

"Tomorrow's schedule, today's mistakes... and the simulation of the shortest path to sleep. Lowering the heart rate, adjusting body temperature, the steps to cease thought..."

"That is a war. Every night, you are fighting a battle on the field of your own brain. But listen: sleep is not a war. It is a surrender."

"A surrender...?"

"Exactly. Raising the white flag to the massive, irresistible force that is the night. Abandoning the ego that tries to dominate, and throwing yourself into the darkness. That is the entrance to the Way of Sleep."

I was stunned. "Surrender" was a word that didn't exist in my life plan. I had always believed that my value and professionalism lay in controlling the situation, eliminating uncertainty, and deriving the optimal solution.

"Very well. It is the first night. I shall teach you the most fundamental of the NEDO techniques:

'The Bow of Bed-Entry'."

"A bow? You're telling me I can sleep just by bowing? Forgive me, but that sounds incredibly unscientific..." I laughed sardonically. "Even if it's a ritualistic routine to activate the parasympathetic nervous system, surely there are more efficient ways, for instance—"

"Efficiency. That very thought is what keeps you locked in the cage of wakefulness," Yumemori chuckled, pointing to a simple futon in the corner.

"Before you get into bed, you haven't performed the ritual to end 'Today.' You check your work emails, brush your teeth, and collapse into bed. Your soul is still left at the office. Even if your body lies in bed, your consciousness is still swimming through an endless to-do list."

Yumemori stood before the futon and straightened their back.

"The bed is a sanctuary connecting the waking world and the world of dreams. Before you enter it, you must place a clear boundary on the day. It doesn't need to be gratitude, nor does it need to be reflection. You simply acknowledge the cold, hard fact that it is 'finished' through your body. That is the meaning of this bow."

The Master bowed—quietly, deeply. The movement was devoid of waste, possessing a flowing beauty that didn't resist gravity. Strangely, just watching that bow made the buzzing noise in my chest go quiet, like a night when the snow begins to fall.

"Try it. Seal your failures of today with this single bow."

I stood on the tatami, hesitating.

The memories of today's disastrous presentation—the ones I wanted to forget most—poked at the back of my brain. My boss's cold gaze, my colleagues' sighs. Instead of trying to forcibly shut them out, I tried to let them pass as things that simply "were," and bowed awkwardly toward the space meant to be a bed.

"...Is this correct?"

"The form is passing. But your heart is already thinking about 'next.' Even while bowing, you are seeking a result, asking, 'Will this make me sleep?' When you bow, you must conclude the story of today. You don't need an epilogue, a teaser for the next volume, or a resolution of subplots. Simply close the book firmly here."

I took a deep breath and bowed again.

This time, I consciously detached myself from the version of me that seeks results. I focused my awareness on the sensation of my feet gripping the tatami, the tension in my spine as I bent, and the narrow darkness as my vision filled with nothing but the weave of the mat.

"Today is finished."

I didn't say it to convince myself; I whispered it as if reporting a fact.

It was a strange sensation. During those few seconds of bowing, external information was cut off, and the only thing I could hear was the sound of my own heart in my ears. In that instant, I felt a sense of liberation—as if I were no longer the "brilliant PM" or the "incompetent insomniac," but just a "body" with mass.

"Not bad. It seems I can see a bit of the white flag," Yumemori nodded with satisfaction.

"Do this at home tonight. No matter how desperate the night, stand before your bed and bow deeply. Once you are in bed, you must never think of today again. Your duties ended there completely. Leave the rest to the massive system known as the night."

Leaving the dojo, the urban night wind brushed against my cheeks. The city was still overflowing with violent light and the sound of people rushing home. But in my heart, I felt a small but certain anchor had been lowered.

Back home, a powerful urge to check my smartphone hit me. Unread emails were beckoning me back to reality. But I dared to ignore them.

I stood before my bed.

Usually, this was a place I would dive into with the grim determination of a soldier entering a battlefield, eyes bloodshot as I tried to "hunt" for sleep.

I followed Master Yumemori's movements, slowly and carefully bending my waist.

"Today's journey ends here."

I said it out loud. A ridiculous ritual. No scientific evidence, no peer-reviewed papers. Yet, when my vision was cut off in that bow, I certainly heard the sound of a master switch in my brain clicking toward "OFF."

Once in bed, as expected, a corner of my brain began whispering about "measures for tomorrow's follow-up meeting." But in my heart, I pushed it away with an almost detached air: "That is something written in a book that is already closed. I cannot read it now."

I didn't look at the clock.

I didn't call the 342nd sheep.

I just watched the weight of the blanket and the temperature against my skin.

The next thing I knew, a gentle morning light—different from yesterday—was peeking through

the gap in the curtains.

Apprehensively, I looked at the clock. 7:15 AM.

...I had been asleep.

Without waking once. Four and a half hours.

It was only four and a half hours. A healthy person might complain that it was a "short sleep" and that their head felt heavy. But for me, it was a sleep earned through the deepest and clearest "surrender" I'd known in three years.

The dull pain that had dominated the back of my head had vanished like a lifting fog.

Lying in bed, I noticed my breathing was much deeper and quieter than yesterday.

It wasn't a total resolution. Tonight, the demon of desperate wakefulness might be waiting by my pillow again. But Master Yumemori's words, soft yet heavy, remained in my chest like an amulet.

"The bow is only the beginning. Next, you will learn gravity."

I sat up and looked at my messy blankets with a new found affection.

I would likely knock on the door of that suspicious yet salvific dojo again tonight.

I was only at the beginning of the Way. But I was surprised to find myself wanting to see what lay beyond this "surrender."