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### Insomniac's diary

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I am writing this at a time when most of you, I hope, are sleeping. (Or in the case of our younger readers, sneaking back into the house after a night of wild partying.) You see, I am an insomniac. Right now, sleep eludes me.

My insomnia comes in waves as one of the side effects of a chronic pain ailment I suffer. I know that I have to make the best of it, which isn't really my style. Even my prescription sleep medicine has no effect. And, unfortunately, it's not the kind of energetic, youthful insomnia that you pass by chain smoking and gleefully painting entire rooms of the house in shades you'd normally never have chosen.

What I'm talking about is the adult kind of insomnia, where your body and your mind are exhausted, yet holding you cruel hostage in this semi-alert stage.

I've tried all of the old-fashioned remedies. A glass full of warm milk just makes me feel, well, awake and full of warm milk. Which, if you're not a big milk drinker, isn't a particularly comfortable feeling.

I have mastered the art of the relaxing bath, researching aromatherapy, mixing up potions of lavender and clary sage essential oils and dripping them into a tub of steaming water. You know that cute little bear on the Sleepytime Tea box? The one dozing off in his nightshirt? The reason he's sleeping so well is because he's got a luxury retirement condo paid for thanks to the amount of his tea I've sipped.

I've even tried combining the two, taking my chamomile tea with me into the tub, until I feared I was going to pass out from the combination internal/external sauna effect — reaching a far more permanent sleep than I'm generally shooting for.

I read. The past couple of nights I've stuck to a little light reading: a serial killer biography. I'm not the type to be kept awake by the subject matter; in fact, I've had rather high hopes that the tedious writing style would bore me to sleep. No such luck, so I switch to something else. People Magazine. (Uh... what it's doing in my house, I have no idea, of course...) Now I'm wide awake, and worried about whether or not the other **Julia's** marriage is going to work out.

Like I needed that.

I use my yogic breathing to try to calm my mind, but it's an uphill battle. My brain is addled and not with anything of significance, I assure you. I inhale slowly through the nostrils, focusing on my breath (and wondering whether or not I'll pay off my debt before I die). I remember to relax at the top of the breath (until I start thinking about the new planter I got on sale and what's going to go in it), exhale slowly (is it too late in the season to plant some basil?), through the nostrils (do I really like whole wheat pasta as much as the "normal" stuff, or am I just saying that to try and convince myself?) and relaaaaaaxxxxxx. To which my mind goes... what is the name of the actor who plays Billy on "Six Feet Under?"

I concoct a little game, my version of counting sheep. It will no doubt bring me relief from my insomnia and the answer to my question. I'm sure that if I just heard the first name of the guy who plays Billy, it would jog my memory.

So I start going through the alphabet, naming all the men's names I can think of for each letter. Surely, when I hit it, I'll know. A light bulb will go off and the luminescence of my sheer brilliance will plummet me into deep REM sleep with stellar dreams. I get through the alphabet twice — for first and last names — to no avail.

When sleep comes, I can't say. I remember seeing the clock through all the hours up until 3 a.m.

The phone rings at 9:30 a.m. It's a client of mine, and even though I'm thick and groggy, I've mastered the art of answering the phone and sounding as though I've been up for a good nine or ten minutes rather than seconds. Wouldn't want to seem unprofessional. Somehow, I have the presence of mind to answer whatever it is she asks, even though I know I'll walk through the rest of the day like I'm trapped in a deep fog or the slow-mo section of a cheesy movie.

And speaking of answers, the minute I put the phone back in its cradle and force myself into a locked and upright position, two words pop into my head: Jeremy Sisto.

Finally. Now, if it weren't for the day ahead of me, I could sleep.

*Remember, Julia Smillie Carey also appears on these hallowed pages every Tuesday for "Ask Julia." If there are deep, dark burning questions keeping you up at night, send them her way at [askjulia@stftoday.com](mailto:askjulia@stftoday.com). If you have no burning questions, check out the [STLVoices Archives](#) instead, or comment on this story in the [STLExclusives Forum](#).*

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