



PORTLAND FOR INSOMNIACS

BY SALLY NOBLE

My silly insomnia and I are sitting here in my home office, staring at the illuminated computer screen. We have hours to go before the sun will rise on Casco Bay. My kindly doctor has forbidden sleeping pills, and I have already exhausted most of his useful alternative suggestions: fiddling with puzzles, stretching exercises, and sitting around in my bathtub. Some website suggests that I wiggle my toes, but



instead I go out to my car, flick on the ignition, and tool around Portland in my car in search of a little adventure.

When I pull into Dunkin' Donuts on Washington Avenue at 1:33 a.m., another Sally is stacking fresh baked goods just off the truck from Lewiston. So many choices – she says the most popular doughnut request is for the Boston cream pie kind but wonders why the bakery rarely sends any. Then some guy named David breezes in for his nightly coffee, which Sally pours with great authority: medium, cream only – his usual. Back in my car, I wash my sticky, soft-glazed doughnut down with organic milk while blasting Jackson Browne's "Enough of the Night."

Driving to Freeport in a thick fog, almost alone on the highway, I can feel the collective sleep happening in Yarmouth. But the bright lights are welcoming at L.L. Bean – they don't even keep locks on their doors because they always expect company at 2:17 a.m. In fact, John informs me, John Travolta also likes to shop 'in the middle of dark'; when his helicopter lands at a nearby schoolyard, the store gladly sends out a car. Lately Garth Brooks has been stopping by – guess the ambience of all this privacy attracts celebrities.

Me, I'm intrigued by a postcard of a giant boot, and I write a few on a comfortable bench while enjoying a hot cup of free Lipton tea. Then a pleasant woman at checkout rings up \$1.75 for my charming bar of balsam soap. After perusing the aisles of soothing pastel flannel sheets, I really could just curl up and sleep awhile in the cushy upholstered armchair with the cabbage rose print. But I've heard I might meet some cool MECA artists at Kinko's on Con-

gress Street, so I drive down to Monument Square.

At 3:36 a.m. the sound of seagulls and the flashing street lights and the occasional police car swishing by are the only street action. At Kinko's Sandy makes me a little dizzy just talking about all the incredible things his copiers can do these days, like make invitations to art shows for the MECA students (who aren't here). I could have gone online for 20 cents a minute, or selected a thoughtful card for a friend, but frankly, by now I'm getting a little tired of all this amusement.

Thinking some scrambled eggs might be nice by almost 4 a.m., I swing over to Denny's. Way too much fluorescent light here, and two guys with an enormous cleaning hose are operating on the carpet. But by this hour, cheerful Becky's on Commercial Street always serves a much better breakfast, and when I arrive at 4:17 a.m., the guy with a Mohawk sitting at the counter invites me to join him for a couple pancakes.

Sorry, I say. I have to go home to bed now. But it's been fun.

And the sun is rising over Casco Bay.

Other Options for Insomniacs

Friday and Saturday nights, dance with the underage crowd until 3 a.m. at The Industry on Wharf Street, where Dominos (207) 774-1489 will deliver until the same time. After the music stops and you're still not tired, head over to the Portland Jetport, where the building is open 24 hours, but flights stop between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. However, you can charter a flight from the jetport 24 hours a day (800-355-JETS). When leaving the jetport you may pass an Oakhurst truck delivering to restaurants and grocery stores throughout the night. If you want to get some errands done, for \$10 a year you can get 24-hour access to Clean Quarters laundromat (878-2100). And if you just need someone to talk to before Becky's opens at 4 a.m., you can call a 24-hour crisis hotline like Ingraham (774-4357) or Pine State Plumbing (871-9700), which boasts 24-hour emergency service.

— *Ratharina Hogmann*