



HANGOVER HELPER

BY ANDREW GRAHAM

THE HOLIDAYS ARE UPON US. WHAT WILL YOU DO WHEN YOU WAKE UP ON THE WRONG SIDE OF THE BOTTLE?

Ever have Night Train? It smells like paint thinner mixed with Kool-Aid, and feels just as smooth going down. The last time I had it was at my friend Sean's place. The aftereffects were nightmarish, mainly due to the fact that once I polished off the Night Train, all those little bottles of candy-flavored Jack Daniel's sorority-girl whiskey on the coffee table started to look really good. I don't think I have to tell you what happened next. At least I hope I don't, because I can't remember. All I can remember about that night is the next morning, and the pain.

I experienced another grand mal hangover a couple of years ago, and gin was to blame for that one. You know how after a few gin and tonics, they just get easier and easier to make and drink? Until eventually you're just skipping the tonic part altogether? Yeah, that's the sweet part. The slightly more bitter part was waking up the next day at 12:45 and miserably scampering to meet my girlfriend. When I got there a half-hour late, she said I literally looked green. Then I turned and sprinted to a nearby restroom and, bending only slightly at the waist, orally emitted a powerful burst of used gin and some faint traces of tonic.

Good times, good times. But the question we're addressing today is how to avoid experiences like those during the holiday season. The obvious answer is total abstinence—no drinks, no problems! But who among us is willing to take that drastic step onto the wagon? As long as there are football games, company holiday parties and opening bands, there will be drinks and drunks. So is there a way to avoid the consequences? Dr. Beers of Brigham and Women's Hospital and Dr. Sober of Mass. General both declined to participate in this story, so instead we turned to trusted sources like gut instinct and urban legend. Shall we?

Bloody Mary morning: Good for a lightweight hangover—the vodka helps numb your pain while the Tabasco snaps your other senses back to consciousness. Best used in combination with greasy food, if possible. Top drinking scientists have discovered there's a direct correlation between the amount of grease in a breakfast of homefries, bacon and a western omelette, and the speed at which a hangover slides out of your system. There's no documentary evidence of this phenomenon, but that's just because no one's gone through the scientists' pockets to find the crumpled-up cocktail napkins they took their notes on.



The breakfast cure, part two: If you're too hung over to cook or even leave the house, I've found V8 or Gatorade to work OK, but not miraculously. I've also heard friends recommend Froot Loops with beer, but if you think I'm even going near a bowl of that, hangover or stone sober, you're drunker than I am. But I'm skeptical of morning-after cures. As a rule, I've found that cleanup doesn't cut it; you have to lay the groundwork in advance.

Hair of the dog: I remember waking up foggy and wasted in a strange Indiana house two years ago to the sight of my friend Cam filling a cup from the keg. I looked at him with tears in my eyes. "Please be gentle with me, Cam, I'm on my beered," I said. "No breakfast till you finish this," he replied, handing me the cup. It was a pretty good weekend. I kept drinking the rest of that day and the next, and eventually felt healthy again about a week later. So it must have worked. What did we have for breakfast? Search me.

Top shelf beats rail: If you're healthily wealthy, you stand a better chance of avoiding a hangover. Pricier liquors are generally more meticulously distilled than the rotgut rest of us proles drink. Also, they contain fewer

of the congeners (that's a fancy drinking-scientist term meaning "poison") that contribute to the morning-after monster. Similarly, lighter colored liquors (say, vodka) have fewer congeners than darker ones (like whiskey). So remember: Clear is cool, dark is dangerous.

Try being a man instead of a woman: Researchers at the University of Missouri recently discovered that women's hangovers are statistically more harsh than men's. So if you're a girl, you might try some testosterone injections. Now that'll put hair on your chest!

Mystery pills: Are you a Russian spy? If so, you'll be familiar with RU-21. No, it's not a fake-ID pill (pause, wait for laugh). It's a drug that was developed to allow KGB agents to drink without getting drunk. So while the target got sozzled, Agent X could match him drink for drink and still be lucid enough to photograph the secret files and disarm the bomb under the hood of his symobile before driving off (safely!) into the dark Soviet night. Anyway, that was the theory. In practice, it turned out that the agents and their targets both got sozzled at the same rate, but, the KGB boys felt a whole lot better the next morning. What's the Russian word for "eureka"? And then there's Sob'r-K, which comes to you from the wonderful world of the Internet. The trick with Sob'r-K is that you take two before you start drinking, two while you're drinking and then two when you're done. I guess the premise is, you'll be totally hung up on remembering to take your pills, and you won't want to get too drunk and forget. Anyway, I wish you the best of luck with Internet pharmaceuticals; me, I'm choosing life.

Good old H₂O: This one is boring, but possibly the most effective. Not to get all scientechnical on you, but a huge contributor to every hangover is dehydration. The simplest way of using water to avoid the alcoholocaust is to drink a large glass before retiring for the evening (or a couple of glasses if you've really been swingin'). A more dedicated method involves drinking a glass of water for every alcoholic drink you consume. It's sort of a double-edged sword, though; drinking all that water slows your buzz down, so you have to drink more. But then, well, you're drinking more. So eventually, with patience, determination, and a little bit of old-fashioned elbow grease, you'll be as drunk as you wanna be. (Note: Please do not try to drink elbow grease.)

I hope this has been an informative and entertaining read. I did it all for you, you know. You're my best friend, really. You know that? I really, really love you. Hey, pal, what are you looking at? You got something to say? Do you want a piece of this? Huh? Do you? ■

