Monday morning, I get up at 4 AM to get on my plane. As if my week wasn't starting out crappy enough, when I get to my connection city, I have that all-too-familiar feeling come over me: I am sick. Fantastic.

Sickness hits me in the same way opening the Ark of the Covenant hits Nazi leaders. My entire face starts to melt, I overheat, and I turn into a puddle of worthless protoplasm. This is an especially convenient effect when I have another flight ahead of me, followed by a full day of meetings, followed by one of the most important meetings of my life (this week version) the next day followed by another full day of work and more travel. Somehow I need to figure out a way to make it happen.

There are two things that fortify me in times of illness: coffee and sleep. Cold medicine to me is like pissing on a tire fire. But magical caffeine, ah, that always gives me super powers like a yellow sun does to Superman. You put three to twelve cups of coffee into me and suddenly I'm Frank the Tank taking down James Carville in a debate in *Old School*. I'm Randy Quaid defeating the Aliens in *Independence Day*. I'm Rocky freakin Balboa, the chump without a chance, unleashing a torrent of left hooks against the Apollo Creed that the world is. Caffeine is awesome.

So pounding caffeine, I forge onward. When you're sick, society dictates that you tell everyone of such when you enter a room, so nobody makes the mistake of shaking your hand. Which

brings to question: why do we shake hands in the first place? Think about it for a second. You extend your right hand to greet a perfect stranger. Your right hand is used to care for most of your unpleasant bodily functions, so the last logical thing you should want to do is get a fistful of whatever your new acquaintance has been doing with his hand. And since your right hand touches your food, eyes, and, well, everything else on your body, it is in your best interest to keep it as clean and safe as possible. So why do we extend it to get soiled? The answer is obvious: because you have to do something when you meet a person. Imagine walking into a room. “Pat, this is Lars, Lars, Pat”. What now? The Japanese bow and nod – that’s pretty smart. The French kiss, that’s weird and icky. But you need to do something to transition from introduction to business. And I guess the exchange of palm filth is a good enough way of doing that, and a little illness and disease is worth the risk vs. certain social awkwardness.

Introducing your illness gives you a lot of advantages. People underestimate you, and they excuse your lack of energy and crispness. So either you exceed expectations and they laud you as some sort of superhuman like Kelly Holcomb beating the 49ers with a broken leg, or they excuse your performance because of your illness. Either way you win. Plus, have you ever tried to get nervous when you’re sick? You’re looking death in the teeth, what is that room full of people going to do to me? Nothing. I’m invincible, or I’m dying tonight. Either way, fuck it, let’s get it on.

The other distinct advantage you have is that nobody wants to meet long with the sick guy. They’re all thinking you’re the *Outbreak* monkey in the room GET HIM OUT OF HERE BEFORE I DIE! Look, I’ve never been in a meeting that couldn’t have been cut in half if everyone would just shutup, do the business at hand, and get out. With typhoid Lars in the room, that dream is a reality.

So hopped up on caffeine, underestimated, excused, nerve-free, and in shortened meetings, I had a pretty awesome week, professionally, even if I was physically and emotionally exhausted. Sometimes, a little illness is just what the doctor ordered…

“Losing is a disease. As contagious as polio.

 Losing is a disease. As contagious as syphilis.

 Losing is a disease. As contagious as bubonic plague.

 Attacking one. But infecting all.

 But curable."

This quote from *The Natural* rings true of our hometown sports teams. Phil Dawson, who has seen his share of losing, said a couple of weeks ago that the Browns weren't the "same old Browns" and this team was different. And the next weekend the team took a 14 point early lead and turned it into a 21-point deficit faster than you could contract all three of those diseases in a Haitian whorehouse, collapsing like only the same ol' Browns can.

This disease of losing manifests itself deeper with every loss. You think as a fan it wears on you? Imagine having the polio of being a Cleveland Brown on the field. Another game, another embarrassing loss, more curious coaching, more collapses, etc. The syphilis of continued losses has to degenerate their brains, and has to make them think the bubonic plague of a fatal disease manifests their team. Losing breeds losing.

Pundits often argue that teams take the ill Browns lightly, which gives us a chance to steal a win. Regardless, the illness of losing gives us an excuse for sucking on a particular day, allowing for a healing process. But where are we going to get the caffeine that gives us the fortitude to win, or find something that cures this disease? I'm banking on the new ownership injecting penicillin into the Shurmur years to kill them once and for all. Until then Browns fans, get your tissues out on Sunday and try to sleep it off as best you can.

Anyway, off to the questions.

Why in the Hell do school buses not have seat belts? –Pod

Driving a car is like giving birth: it's an awesome responsibility yet any idiot can do it. Sure, you

have to pass the easiest written test in the history of man, and navigate a basic set of driving skills that any five-year-old could master, but once we've weeded out the lightest .001% of society, we allow the other 99.999% to wreak havoc on the roads. And boy do they ever.

Driving would be completely safe if it wasn't for the categorically stupid. It isn't hard to operate your motor vehicle without hitting other cars, pedestrians, or inanimate objects. Yet somehow people manage to turn billions of dollars of fine Detroit steel into piles of scrap every year because of their ineptitude in the basic skill of paying attention to what they are doing while callously taking the lives of their fellow motorists for granted. But being that is an impossibly high bar for society, we need seat belts and airbags and HANS devices in our cars to allow us to fight another day.

School busses are a different thing entirely. They have a mass advantage of like 50:1 against your everyday Smart car, meaning the laws of physics prescribe that even the dumbest of the dumb auto drivers can't really do too much to damage one. And then you have the drivers, who have specific safety regulations which cause the operation of the bus to be idiot-proof, and who have training and certifications that prove they are not your usual idiot behind the wheel. You put regulations around how you need to drive around a bus, and paint it bright yellow, and essentially you've got the impenetrable rolling fortress from the last scene of *the Gauntlet*.

Besides, kids won't wear them anyway, so why bother.

I have a daughter who is in an apartment for the first time. 3 roommates. They are all great kids. They grill a lot, and do a lot of salads I guess. Anyway, we recently brought them the fixins for a big batch of each of the following, for them to make and have for leftovers: chili, chicken tortilla soup, beef and noodles, chicken and noodles, ham/black beans and rice. To say this was a big hit is an understatement. Frankly, it's awesome to have the kind of appreciation that we'd last seen in the early teen years. Almost like she's already kind of 'coming back to us'.

My question is: what are some other dishes that we can suggest for them? Would need to be easy enough to make; appeal to a broad spectrum of tastes; big enough batches that would keep for leftovers for a few days. Think: college kids. –googleeph2

Clearly Bolognese style meat sauce is a staple dish the girls need to make. Meatless red sauce doesn't have the requisite protein in it, but a good meat-based sauce is healthy and can last a

number of meals. There are lots of ways to make it, but the cheapest, and probably the best, would be just to brown meat, add onion and canned tomatoes to the meat, a little tomato paste, and maybe some milk for creaminess. Whole wheat pasta is a must btw – much more nutritionally complete and a better way of avoiding the freshman 15.

What about stir fry? That's easy too. Chicken or shrimp tossed in a wok, browned, and then throw in…. whatever you want. Cashews, diced peppers, bean sprouts, green onions. All of the above. For sauce, you could make your own out of soy, ginger, maybe some orange juice, and honey, thickened with some corn starch, or get lazy and buy some hoisin sauce from the store. Serve with brown rice to extend it nicely. You can even mix up the stir fry a little by turning it into lettuce wraps – just get some iceberg lettuce and put the stir fry in that instead of on rice.

Tacos are always a hit. Don't get the crunchy oil-fried shells though, fresh tortillas are good enough for soft tacos. You can put anything inside a taco – fish, chicken, beef, steak, shrimp, or veggies. Taco seasoning is essentially chili powder, so just toss that on whatever you're frying, with a little water and tomato paste, potentially, to sauce it up. Cheese and lettuce as toppers, couldn't be easier, and everyone loves taco night.

And how about you expand their horizons with some pho? So easy. Just take some diced ginger, garlic, meat, and veggies, add chicken stock (or veggie stock), rice vinegar, soy sauce, and maybe some coconut milk if you're frisky. Fresh herbs – thai basil, or regular basil, plus cilantro, sprouts, jalapenos and udon (easy to find and dirt cheap, substitute sphagetti if you can't find). Cook the noodles in the soup and serve with fresh cut lime. It sounds exotic but it really couldn't be easier.

Is there a better Chinese restaurant in America than" Wo Hops" in Chinatown, NY, NY? -Pods Uncle

What is it with restaurants with the name "HOP" in them and the drunk 4th-meal crowd?

Wo Hops is as basic and boring of a Chinese restaurant as you can find anywhere. Which makes it awesome, and even more awesome at about 3 AM after "just one more" at 8:30 PM turned into flaming 151 shots at 1:30 AM. There is nothing fancy or pretentious about it, just well-executed traditional American Chinese food. We all know the menu even though most of us

have never been there, and what we order will be fabulous, because you will be drunk. It's just the way it works.

True story: I ate at Mr. Chow in New York once, which is like Wo Hops except more pretentious and expensive. Anyway, when we were done, they had to go inside and get Busta Rhymes to move his car so we could get ours out, since he blocked us in double parked. He had a nice car. There's no point to that story other than I've got a Busta Rhymes story.

In terms of drunk meals, here's my top 10:

1.Street meat. Namely Sausage and peppers. You walk out of the bar, that smell hits you and you can't resist. So good. Plus it is great hangover prevention.

2.Burritos. In this case, more specifically, it is the burrito as big as your head. Only at 2 AM does a burrito as big as your head sound anything other than revolting, but 2 AM onward, man, it's bomb diggity.

3.Pancakes. Are you early for breakfast or just having 4th meal? Who knows, but I do know they soak up a lot of booze and give you a fighting chance the next day.

4.Burgers. Burgers are pretty much always the fourth best thing you could eat at a given moment, which means I eat them about a quarter of every meal I have.

5.Panini. Meat, fries, and slaw. All in one. Everything you need to rebuild yourself after an evening of tearing yourself down.

6.Chinese. General Tso is invading your gut, and ordering a code red on your hangover.

7.Taco Bell. Different family from the burrito as big as your head. If you don't know the difference, you probably aren't reading this column weekly anyway.

8.Pizza. In this case it has to be thin New York style. Chicago or Sicilian style is just wrong at 3 AM – too bready chewy and pretentious. Fold a giant slice with pools of pepperoni grease on it as you're walking to the next den of sin on which your night of carnal debauchery .

9.Grilled cheese. Add bacon.

10.Anything containing potatoes. Fries, skins, chips. You need carbs.

Please email questions to lars.hancock@yahoo.com , tweet them @ReasonsImADrunk, or DM them to me in the forae to LarsHancock. And remember, vote Lars for President in 2012.