This week I had the opportunity to travel for work to a huge trade show in Las Vegas, all by myself.

Now Vegas for me is like kryptonite to Superman. I have a little of what is known as a “gambling problem,” so if you put me around the flashing neon lights without any sort of adult supervision, things have a tendency to get ugly. At the height of my sickness, I would be betting on Swedish hockey games during the day, because, well, nothing else was on during work hours, and, Swedish hockey! Modo was always my go-to team, but AIK and HV 71 were good bets too. And Friday nights were Ivy League basketball, which was always the most predictable betting night of the week and therefore my crack. You survive the week to thrive on Ivy Friday. I hit my only Heinz on Ivy night (which was a six-team group of parlays that involved 57 different betting combinations of teams parlayed together). I’d bet on anything that moved, and my financial outcome for the year was a predictable disaster. Bad decisions.

Anyway, on the plane out to Vegas, I order a rum and Coke Zero. I haven’t had a rum and coke since college, and the taste was exactly that of bad decisions. Now most people think tequila tastes like bad decisions, and the cheap stuff like Pepe Lopez does indeed taste like that. I’d be lying to you if I denied ever having been drug naked from a bathtub after too much tequila in an attempt to save my life, on more than one occasion, but that’s not relevant to the story. No, white rum to me is the definitive taste of bad decisions, because it reminds me of my college years where I basically fucked up every decision I made. The first thing I did when I got to college was get a giant bottle of rum, and I went through orientation with a can of half-Fanta grape and half-rum. Rum is the gateway drug to alcoholism, because you can mix it with all the over-sweet crap you loved as a kid. It tastes like Coke, but it delivers the happy! So many memories of bad decisions past pulsed through my blood on the way out there, my week is definitely off to an ominous start.

I land and find my way to a blackjack table at the hotel where I am to meet the rest of my team. The other victim at my table is a guy who is every bit of the Boston “Masshole” that I’ve grown to despise over my years, and that is obvious from the third word emitted from his mouth. I don’t know how much exposure you’ve had to Bostonians, but they are the worst people on this planet, making even New Yorkers look like clones of the Dalai Lama. Their accent is grating, they are uneducated loudmouth homers, and they are classless jerks. So the two of us are there, teaming against the dealer, and I suddenly know what it is like to play under Pat Shurmur. You’re embarrassed for your team, but you still give it your all because your livelihood is on the line.

Despite my teammate’s shortcomings, I’m killing the table. I’m up $400 quickly, and I almost feel bad for my neighbor as he is losing money while watching me rake it in. Almost. I give a little back, and use the cooling table as an excuse to rid myself of my new friend and head to the crap table. Craps is the casino equivalent of a psychotic girlfriend. It can pour happiness like a broken water main produces water, and it can pour misery like a hurricane, and you never know when it is going to turn on you. There was one time I was down $1000 in the casino when my wife was with me, and between the time I put her in a cab and when she got to the airport, I was back in positive territory again from craps. Note that my wife is a huge jinx. Last three professional sporting events she went to? Cavs blow 16 point lead to Memphis in the 4th, the helmet throw game, and the Bartman game. But all that aside, I’m pretty sure Joan Jett was singing
I Hate Myself for Loving You
to the game of craps. As such, I get drawn in, and, poof, my winnings disappear before you can say Beetlejuice three times. Bad decision.

Here’s the difference between 40-something Lars and the 20-something Lars of old. 40-something Lars knows when to say when, and goes back to his hotel to get a good night sleep so he can produce at the convention. 20-something Lars is ashamed of what a pussy 40-something Lars is and NEEDS TO KILL THE CASINO. Drink all the booze, rape them of their money. You’ve had a run of bad luck, so what – you’ve got cash in your pocket, an ATM card, and credit cards you can take a cash advance off of. 40-something Lars has learned from those bad decisions and runs away, living to fight another day.

All in all my entire trip adheres to this pattern. I’m an evil 5 appearing on the dealer’s 16 against my doubled-down pressed hand from leaving with some serious money, but I’m happy to leave with $10 of the casino’s money, and all of my dignity intact. I’ve resisted all of the other vices of Vegas, haven’t bankrupted my family, and was alert and professional during the day as a result. Sure, Billy Joel, I would rather laugh with the sinners than cry with the saints, but you know what, sometimes the key to life is avoiding bad decisions, no matter how tempting they are.

Speaking of bad decisions, the Cavs are now 1-0 and most of Cleveland is deluded into feeling really good about the team. Most of us saw how Dion Waiters helped Kyrie Irving keep the Cavs afloat and pull away, but let's also keep in mind we did that against an injury-depleted, and terrible when not depleted, Washington Wizards team. The NBA season is like a giant game of craps, where you'll have runs that make you want to come back and lead you to believe the odds are tilted in your favor. But in the end when your GM makes bad decisions like drafting Tristan Thompson and Dion Waiters #4 overall, the house will win in the end. I hope I'm wrong here, but my chips are on the "Don't Pass" line until the Cavs get some competent management.

Anyway, off to the questions.

Battle Royale: Superman, Hulk, Thing, Iron Man, Thor in a 2mile squared circle as high as the "shoe". No kryptonite and those that fly or leap can't just stay aloft, but can go up to the height of the top of the shoe but must engage. No burrowing either. Must be thrown out of the stadium. Last man/superhero in wins. Thor gets his hammer and Ironman can use his weapons. Please give the order of ejection and ultimate winner.-pod

First, let's look at the strengths and weaknesses of each of the competitors.

Superman has incredible strength, is bullet proof, has x-ray vision, and has that super cold force breath thing. Since you can't use kryptonite, his weaknesses are limited, but he's basically a hominoid with better muscle structure and density meaning you could likely wear him down. That's your only real option here. The Hulk is stronger than Superman, but more vulnerable as well. He's out of control, unpredictable, and largely unintelligent. Thing is very similar to the Hulk, but he's slightly less strong than the Hulk, and less vulnerable too, as well and slightly smarter. Iron Man is weak as a person, relying on the powers of his suit to propel him as his heart doesn't even work. And Thor, well, he's a "god" and can do that whole Warrior Madness thing where he can absolutely go ape shit on everything around him, while also controlling the weather. The only weakness is you can break his hammer and make him mortal.

Strategically, the logical thing to do would be to team up against Hulk and get rid of him. If you're ever in a bad neighborhood, and need to emerge safely, act crazy, because nobody wants to mess with crazy. This is tried and true urban survival, and when confronted with crazy,

you either avoid it (preferred, but not available here), or you have to get rid of it as soon as possible (like certain bad decision ex-girlfriends of mine). Hulk is crazy, and everyone can scheme to gang up on him and get rid of him, so he's out first.

I think people would want to go after Thor next as he would certainly be the most dangerous. Thing has the best chance of getting the hammer while Superman and Iron Man distract Thor. Like the Germans in World War II, fighting on multiple fronts is a disaster and unwinnable, and Thor would soon be dispatched.

That leaves Superman, Iron Man, and Thing. Once rid of Thor, they have to decide what next immediately, and they won't be able to form clear alliances against a clear foe. This is where classic truel game theory comes into play. Let's go to the final scene of The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly to evaluate this situation.

Blondie is clearly the best gunfighter. Angel Eyes is definitely second, and Tuco is clearly the dog. Ignoring the fact that Tuco's gun doesn't have bullets, look at the logical decisionmaking of the fighters. Blondie clearly will go after the second best fighter, Angel Eyes will go after Blondie, and Tuco will go after Blondie too. Blondie will kill Angel Eyes, because he's a better fighter, but Tuco will kill Blondie, because nobody is shooting at Tuco. Tuco lives, the others die, which is why if you ever get in a truel, make sure nobody respects you.

So what would the pecking order be? I'd think that all combatants would know that all you have to do to beat Iron Man is to smash his little chest unit power thing that also keeps him alive. How easy is that? Superman would go after Thing, and being quicker he would likely be able to toss Thing out of the stadium. But Iron Man would know this and go after Superman, and while Superman is getting rid of Thing, Iron Man tosses him out. The weakest survives the truel, and the whole contest for that matter.

If only the AFC North worked like that.

There's about a 95% chance my company will allow me to take on a consulting type position in Shanghai sometime in 2013. The assignment would be anywhere from 8 months to 2 years, perhaps longer but I would have to commute to our new rolling mill in Zhenjiang City which is about 3hr using public transit. What advice would you give a

young imperialist like myself in terms of preparing for life abroad (both in China and in general) as well as whether I should demand over and above more pay for this type of career change? I thought about it all weekend and I can't find a reason not to do this. I don't want to get my MBA (it's a diluted product and I trust my business sense more than 99% of the people my age who do have them) so having experience outside of the USA seems like a pretty damn good alternative. I've always wanted to travel and this is more than likely the best opportunity I will ever get to explore all of Asia –RickNashEquilibrium

Assuming you don't have a family, you pretty much have to do this. The business world is a global marketplace today, and having experience overseas is a trump card you need to put into your hand as soon as you can. Learning the nuances of dealing with a different culture, plus making contacts there, is experience you can't get in the states, especially not in a book or classroom. You're getting the opportunity to draft Jonas Valanciunas, do you really want to pass him up for Tristan Thompson? Safety, security, and comfort are bad decisions in the business world – you have to take this chance.

As for compensation, mattvan gave you a good list of asks, and if they give them to you, great. If not, take the job anyway, because your value in the free market will have been significantly increased by doing the gig. Reward disloyalty with disloyalty, and get a better higher-paying job with your new internationally-fueled resume.

Personally, take every opportunity to see the world when you're young, because the next time you'll be able to do it will be when you're extremely old. If you have a family, expose them to different cultures early because that will help the kids to be more broad-minded and tolerant, something in short supply in this world. And if you don't, even better, because you will have the freedom to make bad decisions in a foreign country!

Next year you find yourself as a high level advisor to the State Dept. You are three months away from Sept. 10. What recommendations would you make for the safety of our people stationed overseas? -seal

First thing I do is ensure there is an adequate support and response network in place globally to ensure the safety and security of Americans on official business overseas. Professional bodyguards only can go so far, you need frogmen in helicopters on 24x7 alert like the paramedics who are on standby in the states to take drunks making bad decisions in barfights to the hospital at a moment's notice.

Second, the world will know we're not afraid to use our frogmen and helicopters. American lives are even slightly endangered, the punks doing it receive a stinger missile colostomy in minutes. Oh, I came across your border? My bad. Next time you control your own people so I don't have to do it. So sorry you're burning my picture in effigy. That hurts. Really, it does. Don't expect me to apologize.

Third, I'd cut off ties with the crazy nations to begin with. All their diplomats do is lie to us, why waste our time and resources, and jeopardize our lives, to play tonsil hockey with terrorists? We've got better things to do than mollycoddle Iran. I don't need to negotiate with my children, I tell them what to do, and if they disobey, they go to timeout. Libya, Iran, North Korea, Syria… you're in that boat. Don't make me put your country in time out, or whoop your ass if you still don't listen.

Children, negotiation adversaries, and hostile nations are all the same. You take a consistent no-nonsense approach, and they respect you. You can be friends through the respect, but make no bones about it, respect is not optional.

You do strike it rich, or at least rich enough where your wife says you can have a 2nd fun car just for the both of you. But it has to be American built, from the 50's, 60's or 70's. What do you choose? And no worries about gasoline mileage, you are rich. –Sabre

They say people like cars that look like them, and I guess I resemble that remark. I like big clumsy land yachts, with useless trimmings like fins that adorn them, and big shiny grills. This means I'm getting a '59.

Of the notable '59 cars, I'd have to select between the Bel Air , Caddy , Fairlane , Impala , or the rare
Custom Royal
. The BelAir has a nice overbite and exceptional lines, but lacks some of the cabin room a big animal like me craves. The Caddy has the dual tail lights and a Jetsons type of look to it, but is maybe too rounded for my taste. The Fairlane is solid – industrial, chromed, toothy, boxy, lumbering. The Impala is all that and sleek and low. And the Dodge is the very definition of a cruiser, a boxy pontoon boat in a lake of Sea Rays.

For my money, it's the '59 Fairlane. That's me on wheels, and if I'm going to blow money on a vanity car, it is going to be true to my personality. Built for comfort, not for speed, a lover not a fighter, and an old-school classic that makes no apologies for what it is, the good, the bad, and the ugly.

Why not cut ALL foreign aid by 50%? Cut overseas military presence by 50%, bases manpower etc. Get meaner and leaner. Beef up Special Ops, Drones, top secret technology, etc. Fortify the border. Use the money to reduce the debt, lower gas prices, subsidize higher education more, entice overseas companies to come back home with incentives, AND rebuild our infrastructure. Legalize medical marijuana across the board and use the tax money for treatment. Take non-violent offenders and put them in a National Work Corps to help build the infrastructure while being monitored. -pods uncle

Okay, let's address this one piece at a time.

1. Foreign aid: The top US aid recipient is Israel, and if people don't continue to support them, the nation will cease to exist. But we must ask: is this really necessary? We give an incredibly prosperous nation $3B a year in aid, which seems silly as we borrow our grandchildren into oblivion. I'm fine with providing the resources, but they should pay for them. Second on the list is Egypt, which is absurd considering that they hate us. It's like giving your angry bastard son who is a "musician" (aka "waiter") tens of thousands of dollars a month so he can make bad decisions with his life, drugs, and women. Fuck them. Going down the list, yeah, we give a lot of money to places like Haiti and Kenya who desperately need it to survive, but 50% is an easy number that you could do in year 1 and not blip the security of the world.
2. Military presence: As I mentioned above, we need frogmen on call 24x7 to protect our resources globally, as no other nation seems to have any vested interest in doing such. Besides, having military bases in places like Japan, Germany, and Cuba reminds them of who the bitch is, and who is the master. You imagine a German military base in the US? No way. Because they're OUR bitch. I'd actually leave this number intact, but look at it cautiously.
3. Special technology: I think our special military assets are fine, but the cyber assets are woeful. The next major war will be – scratch that, *is being* – fought via our electronic assets, and the US is terribly behind the world. We don't need more drones or ships or bayonets, we need more cyber resources to protect this nation. When the US, er, some mystery nation unleashed Stuxnet on Iran, it set their nuclear program back years, and did more damage than a precision tomahawk would or could have, without the collateral damage and talking points a missile would have generated.

4. Use of money: Let's be honest here. The government can do almost nothing to control gas prices. The only useful thing it can do is to get out of the way to allow supplies to be

increased to match demands, which lowers prices. Higher education subsidies are a good concept, but the problem is the cost there is getting out of line with the value, and we can't dump public funds into private coffers just because they raise their prices usuriously every year. Viable public education alternatives are the only choice in order to reduce the free market costs. And public funds in infrastructure is a joke. What's yellow and sleeps 6? An ODOT truck. Put the infrastructure in the hands of the free market and see a much more effective use of funds, because private companies know how to manage budgets, cut costs, and drive efficiency. The government? Not so much…

5. Legalize medical marijuana: why stop there? I've beat this one to death – weed prohibition is stupid on every level. Just plain stupid, and you can't intelligently argue otherwise. Period.

6. National works: There isn't enough work for the good honest people trying to get a job, so why do we need to use criminal labor? That would actually hurt the economy. I'd rather see us grind the criminals into Soylent Green for pigs. Allow the free market to hire people to do the work, and drive people to work by removing the welfare state non-incentives to work.

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.