

# The Hangover

You struggle to partial consciousness in total darkness, half-cold and naked, with a great softish, wet weight pressing down on you: pressing you flatter and flatter against a stone floor, which seems to be covered in some kind of sticky, lumpy slime. All you hear is the roar of your blood stream and the jackhammer pounding your temple. Your mouth and nose seem to be partially glued closed by some foul-smelling substance. In fact, the whole environment has the odor of a public latrine in the back streets of (insert your favorite hellhole: Kinshasa, Da Nang, Iquitos, New Orleans).

The pressure on your body prevents you from taking decent breaths. Which is just as well, as a deep breath would, once again, trigger the gag reflex, which has caused you to puke repeatedly on yourself. Your stomach is a knotted fiery lump, as though you have drunk a bottle of battery acid. Your arms and legs are cramped and do not have the strength to push the weight off your body. And the ammonia-scented, oxygen-deprived, wet atmosphere is beginning to induce more and more frequent blackouts...

You do not remember anything of your prior existence: your name, where you are, where you are supposed to be..... Vague flickerings of consciousness bring flashes of crowds of laughing fools pressing in towards you..... your whole universe, even in this enforced static position, seems to be swaying, rising and falling, while when you attempt to concentrate, you start spinning off into a vortex.....

In this primordial state, more a creature of the slime pits of the cretaceous period than a true human, comes the slight realization that survival may be an option. A "flight or fight" reaction momentarily pumps adrenalin through your body: you twitch, thrust, squirm..... The great soggy mass, which has pressed you down, seems to tilt slightly, allowing you to slither sideways and thrust yourself free....

Into a white light, which blasts through your quickly clenched eyelids to stab deep into your cortex, momentarily over-riding all other senses, like molten lava pored through the eyeballs.....

...causing you once again to scrunch up into a fetal position, where the visual stimulus gradually fades, being replaced once more by the onslaught of the jackhammers and the acid boiling in your throat and stomach.....

...But you slowly realize that you have been released from the great weight which had so recently entrapped you: your arms and legs begin to burn with pins and needles as circulation slowly returns to them.... Aghhhhhh: what is worst? Your previous imprisonment or this slow and painful return to some semblance of consciousness?

You steel yourself to open one eyelid and find yourself staring at a wall.... Vaguely familiar.... Plain cream paint, uniform, clean..... joining a marble floor..... but very unsteady, undulating in and out of focus. You close your eyes tight again, to suddenly start a vicious spinning descent into a blood red whirlpool..... The centrifugal forces seem to trap your body as your head pounds and, as you reach the bottom of this hallucinatory pit and the swirling slows, your stomach reacts once again and attempts to disgorge its contents through the remains of your throat.... a mere dribble of acid, accompanied by spasms which tear you limb from limb.....

Slowly, fragments of reality start to filter into your semi-comatose state.... the floor and wall are recognized as belonging to your bedroom. A bout of shivering causes you to realize that the air-conditioning is starting to induce an overall crisis in your body. You slowly lever you body around so your back is against the wall. You are able to start focusing on the object that previously imprisoned you: the mattress of your bed..... lying on the floor in a pool of vomit and soaked with your own urine.....

....and memories of awakening in some previous existence, falling through space in a horrific, ever-accelerating downwards spiral and grasping the already urine soaked mattress as the only thing likely to save you from the maelstrom. But the storm is too strong and you body, clutching the mattress is lifted and tossed over, landing with a pleasant splat onto the smooth cold marble surface, bringing temporary stability and coolness to your fever-wracked body... before lapsing into unconsciousness.....

Once more, the drive for survival fires off a few synapses: Water! Water! A desperate need for water..... first on the body... you slither through the door to the bathroom.... to the shower.... desperately reach for the tap.. at least three feet above you... impossible to reach.... maximum effort, pushing with the legs against one wall forces the body into a seated position and allows you to reach the tap...

A blast of cold water shocks your body into spasms, to quickly be replaced by a gentle warm rain, which starts to sooth your agonized frame. You lean back and allow the water to flow over your face. You open your mouth and allow your swollen tongue to soften as it is bathed.... you drink.... It tastes foul and coppery, but your body urges you on... you drink some more... you gag and puke the water and some more battery acid out. But you persist and take a little more; you flush your mouth. You drink some more.... A feeling of lassitude comes over you and again, you drift off into unconsciousness .....

..... To awake shivering in a freezing rainstorm..... no more hot water.....  
You crawl unsteadily to your feet, the world sways, you grasp in front of you.. The shower curtain! Which slowly gives way as you plunge forwards to land on the marble floor.

But your long lost athleticism causes you to twist as you fall, to prevent a full frontal contact. You take the fall on your left shoulder, which stresses the collarbone to fracture point...causing your brain to temporarily overload on the pain..... but instantaneously your momentum causes your head to snap sideways, striking the marble floor.. causing a bright scarlet, star flecked flash and, again..... Nothingness.....

...until a purple curtain is lifted from your eyes as your body is jostled amid a total blur of pain.... voices... a prick..... blackness once more.....

And gradual re-emergence to another reality..... supine in a clean white bed.. left shoulder and arm immobilized in a massive cast..... twin hoses in your nostrils... a needle in one arm connected to a drip..... electrodes stuck to your chest and head, with a beep...beep.....beep in the background....  
.... vaguely recognized faces peering at you..... They appear to be dressed in tuxedos.....

And one of them saying... "Sorry, Harry..... you missed the wedding....."