

# The Demon Rum

*by* Larry Strattnr

It took him a long time to figure out the Coke made his butt leak blood. Coke also kept him awake nights thinking evil thoughts. Few of his problems had to do with the rum. In fact, even after he figured out it was the Coke, it was hard to stop. Rum and Coke are a natural pair; one of the best drinks ever with a little lime or lemon on top.

Eventually he weaned himself off the Coke and drank straight rum on the rocks. Go straight and the quality of the primary ingredient becomes an issue. Once he got straight he quit drinking any of the clear crap, skipped by the Anejos and landed in the Barbancourts. The bleeding stopped. He still couldn't sleep through the night but found himself in occasional babe-related escapades where staying awake was an advantage.

“Christ,” he said to Big Al, the bartender over the rim of a glass of Barabncourt. “I wish Walt was still alive to taste this.

You couldn't get stuff like this when Walt was around. Matter of fact, we didn't even know there *was* stuff like this. I kind of miss Walt once in a while you know what I mean?”

“You even miss Lenny Marquart when you drink that shit,” said Big Al.

Lenny had put him away for grand theft auto. “Christ. I only borrowed it to go down to the store,” he had said to Lenny after rolling down the Corvette's window. Just call my cousin Leon.”

“Leon's given name Gloria?” Lenny asked him, leaning down to talk into the open window, his cop glasses impenetrable. “Says Gloria on the registration here. We'll just give Gloria a call.”

“Fuck.” A year and a half with good behavior. After he got out he just cooked a little meth and sold lock pick kits. Got by. Kept his head down. Did love the sauce though. Ron Zacapa 23 was his latest. Like a primo Latino babe. Smooth and full. Easy to love. Uptown from Barbancourt. Al got it from some highway bandit. Personal favor. None of the other mugs in Al's bar would know it from Sterno. He showed restraint. Kept a buzz on but no slobbering.

He had a bottle of Mount Gay Extra Old and a Doorly's lined up. Turns out Rum was like Scotch. Lots to try. Might never find a hands down favorite.

His rum fetish amused Big Al; Al being a vodka guy. With vodka the taste target was no taste. Chopin was Big Al's pick. Chopin; one of the few actually made from potatoes. Most vodkas were wheat or other crap grain distillates. Al had laid a Chopin on him, ice cold, in a frozen glass. Taking a taste he had instantly exclaimed, “Aquafina!”

“Very fucking funny,” Al said. “The difference is Chopin won't kill you and you get what you're paying for.” Al was not a fan of bottled water. Sensitive about his vodka too, it seemed.

He sat back and sipped his Ron Zacapa. Only a few things made life worth living. He wished Walt was still around. He bet even wise-ass Al wished it too. What with all the chemicals these days nobody knew much about real drinking anymore.

