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## **The Bartender**

By Thomas Hunt

I once knew a man who worked behind a bar. He was a slimebag, a skuzball and a downright dirty drunkard. He was also the best bartender I have ever known.

Every morning he would wipe down the bar with a special mixture he had concocted. It would leave the bar looking shiney and new, ready for a full days work. I know he did it everyday because I was there. Once I bet him fifty dollars to drink his concoction. He unscrewed the spray top and drank it down. He said it tasted like lemonade. I tried some, it tasted like pine sol mixed with drano. He had an iron stomach and a lead pipe leading to it. I lost many a bet in drinking contests to that man. But he always let me have a free drink or two after, to make sure there were no hard feelings, and there never were.

He knew the mixture for every drink, no man alive could stump him, nor woman neither. From the fuzzy navel to the orgazm, he was never confused, and always exact. Even when people came back from a vacation in the tropics,

looking for the recipe for that "special drink" they had fallen in love with, he always answered them right off the bat. He knew the french liberation and the jamaican hat dance. He knew 'em all.

For an ugly man, he had a lot of women. They used to flock to him in droves, so much that he would occasionally hand some off to me. I was also an ugly man and I drank too much so I was always in the market for a girl looking to have a good time, no strings attached of course. He knew of my predilections and sometimes a girl named Candy, Brandy or Jody would come to my room and I would receive a pleasant surprise. Sometimes the surprise would be less pleasant and they would drink all my booze and leave me with the hard-on still in my shorts, but I won more than I lost and I always thanked him for his efforts.

One day I came to the bar and he wasn't there. There was some punk kid standing behind the bar. I asked the kid for a Cuba Libre. He asked me what's in a Cuba Libre. I wanted to sock him in the face. I asked him where the regular guy was. The kid looked at his shoes and then looked back at me with this fucking puppy dog look on his face, he told me that the regular bartender had a heart attack the night before and passed away this morning. I told the kid that a Cuba Libre was Rum, Coke and a lime

twist. He fumbled with the bottles and set the drink down on the bar. The bar was dusty and showed it's age. But the drink, it wasn't half bad.