



## Rum Punch

By Elmore Leonard

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### Rum Punch By Elmore Leonard

"Unputdownable! Beneath it's fast moving surface, *Rum Punch* is a novel about growing old, about the way that time changes us, about the old dream of starting over again and its cost."--*The Washington Post Book World*.

Pretty working-girl Jackie Burke is in a tight spot. She's just been picked up at Palm Beach International with fifty grand and some blow stashed in her flight bag. Lucky for her, the Feds want something Jackie's got: the inside track to Ordell Robbie, the notoriously slick arms dealer. And they're ready to deal-- Ordell in exchange for her freedom. But Jackie's got another ace up her sleeve. . Enter Max Cherry, bail bondsman. Big, tough, basically decent Max is on the verge of divorce and tired of the same old grind. That's where Jackie comes in. The fifty big ones are peanuts compared to what Ordell's got locked away in Freeport. But when a blowsy blond blowhead and a none-too-bright ex con try to muscle in on the action, it's time to pull and old bait and switch--where the good guys are played off against the bad guys--and where Jackie and Max hope to walk off into the Florida sunset with a hot half million in cold cash.

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## **Rum Punch** By Elmore Leonard Bibliography

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

Readers who come to *Rum Punch* after having seen Quentin Tarantino's 1997 film adaptation, *Jackie Brown*, are in for a few surprises. Mainly, Jackie Burke is a 44-year-old white woman (but just as hard-boiled as Pam Grier), bail bondsman Max Cherry has a much more prominent role in the proceedings, and the novel takes place in Miami--not Los Angeles. The core of the story, however, remains the same: when the cops try to use Jackie to get at Ordell Robbie, the gunrunner she's been bringing cash into the country for, she hatches a plan--with help from Max--to keep the money for herself. It all comes together in the traditional Elmore Leonard style, where the conversations are as crisply written and suspenseful as the action scenes. --*Ron Hogan*

#### From Publishers Weekly

Like a pulled punch, the author's latest evocation of lives on the periphery has a somewhat restrained quality, although the characters here, especially the women, are vintage Leonard ( *Get Shorty* ), and the dialogue is as authentic as conversations overheard in a mall restaurant. A combination of coincidence and choice connects the fates of Jackie Burke, a 44-year-old, thrice-married stewardess, bail bondsman Max Cherry, overweight and in his 50s, and brash young gun dealer Ordell Robbie, in Miami. When Jackie is caught bringing cash into the U.S. from the Bahamas for Ordell, she agrees to cooperate with federal and state agents to catch him in a sting operation. Max, who has posted Jackie's bond and is drawn to her, becomes her sounding board as she contemplates a sting of her own. The appealing and utterly amoral Ordell involves an unreliable ex-con pal, a crew of jackboys and his three women--sweet young Sheronda; amply endowed, untrustworthy Melanie; older "aunty" Simone, whose appetites are unabated--in his last-ditch effort to make a killing. Chances offered, taken and passed up are the leitmotif in this bittersweet slice of south Florida life. BOMC featured alternate; QPB selection; author tour.

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#### From Kirkus Reviews

Leonard's 30th novel--a thicket of sting and countersting- -finds him in fine fettle, his piquant characters aging along with him but losing none of their edge as they look for that one big score before death shuts them down. Here, it's \$500,000 in illegal arms-dealing profits that has everyone running in circles. The trouble is, it's stuck in the Bahamas, and slick, middle-aged gun-runner Robbie Ordell can't figure out how to get it back to Miami, even with the help of his old ex-con pal Louis Gara. Robbie had been using stewardess Jackie Burke, 44, to bring in the cash at \$10,000 a flight, but now Jackie's been nabbed by two cops who are trying to lever her against him. And Jackie has designs of her own on the money, designs that depend on the aid of Bogart-like bail-bondsman Max Cherry, an ex-cop who's finding that, at age 57, "writing paper" on sleazy cons just doesn't kick like it used to--especially after the mob has muscled in on his business, and after Robbie has blown away a punk he'd had Max bail out of jail. An attempted theft by Robbie, his blowzy moll, and Louis of the arms cache of a local neo-Nazi offers a cathartically bloody interlude, but the story surfs primarily on a tide of tension arising from Jackie's tricky plan to work both sides of the law to get the cash--persuading both Robbie and the cops to let her bring in the money in one last run, while claiming loyalty to both. Meanwhile, Max falls hard for Jackie; but as her sting--a complicated shuffling of money-laden and empty bags--nears, will he decide to toss away a lifetime of law-enforcement, even for a prize as rich as the sexy-cool stewardess and her promised loot? Leonard's control of this complex scenario and its brilliantly realized actors is breathtaking. Like the title says, it's a heady brew. -- *Copyright ©1992, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

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