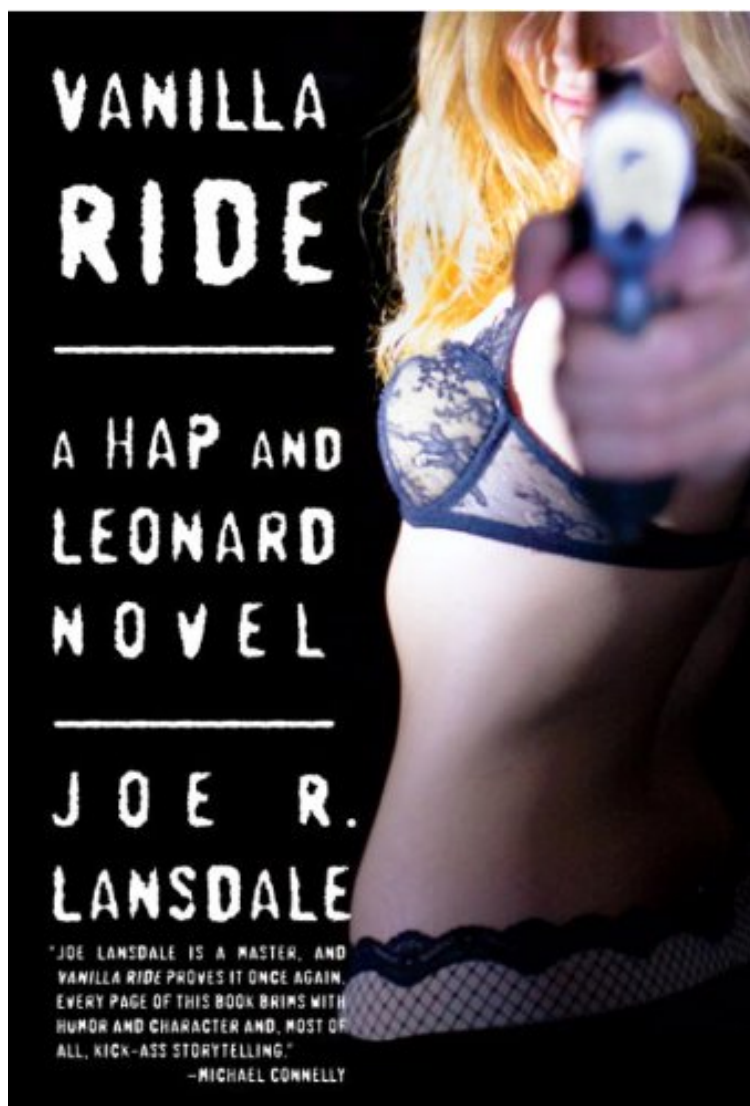


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Vanilla Ride



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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurHap and Leonardis now a Sundance TV series starring James Purefoy and Michael Kenneth Williams.Hap Collins and Leonard Pine, the kings of East Texas mischief and mayhem, return in this full-throttle thriller to face off with the Dixie Mafia.When Leonard is asked to rescue a teenage girl from a lowly drug dealer, he gladly agrees and invites Hap along for the ride. Everything goes according to plan, until they find out the dealer is a member of the Dixie mafia. A wild gun fight ensues, after which Hap and Leonard are arrested. Turns out, however, that the law needs a favor and if Hap and Leonard can do the deed theyll be free roam. Theres one problem the Dixie Mafias new hired gunthe legendary assassin Vanilla Ride. Filled with breakneck action, gut-busting laughs, and one gigantic crocodile, this hilarious novel is as hot as a habanero pepper.ExtraitII hadn't been shot at in a while, and no one had hit me in the head for a whole

month or two. It was kind of a record, and I was starting to feel special. Brett and I were upstairs in our little rented house, lying in bed, breathing hard, having just arrived at the finish line of a slow, sweet race that at times can seem like a competitive sport, but when played right, even when you're the last to arrive, can make you feel like a winner. In that moment, life was good. Brett sat up and fluffed her pillow behind her back and pushed her long bloodred hair to the side with one hand, shoved her chest forward in a way that made me feel mighty lucky, said, "I haven't had that much fun since I pistol-whipped a redheaded midget." "You don't know how romantic that makes me feel," I said. "I think Little Hap just went looking for a place to hide." "I thought he just came out of hiding," she said, and winked at me. Thing was, she actually had pistol-whipped a midget. I was there. She was trying to find her daughter and save her life, but still, it was ugly, and I was a party to it. I will say this, however, in favor of the midget: he took his beating with stoic pride and refused to take it while wearing his cowboy hat, an expensive Stetson. He wanted it right on the skull and that's where he got it. "You know, I think they prefer being called dwarf instead of midget, or Little People," I said. "No kidding. I don't know about the rest of them, but the one I worked over, I just call him Pistol-Whipped." "Do you ever feel bad about it?" "Nope." "He died, you know." "Not from the pistol whipping." This was also true.

He ended up dead another way, but, man, that had been some pistol whipping. She had also set her ex-husband's head on fire and put it out with a shovel, which is a far cry from a water hose. My sweet baby, at times, could make a man nervous. She said, "Speaking of little guys," and took hold of my crotch. "Little guys?" I said. "That's supposed to fire me up?" "No. I'll fire you up." She chuckled and slid over close and I took her in my arms and we snuggled. Things were looking operational when there was a knock on the door. Typical. I looked at the clock on the nightstand. Eleven p.m. The knock came again, louder. I got up and pulled on my robe and bunny slippers, and cursed. "Keep that thought. I'm going down to kill a late-night Bible salesman." "Will you bring me back his head, please?" "On a platter." 2 Downstairs, I went to the window, eased back the curtain and took a peek. Two big black guys, one supported on a stick, were standing on the steps. My best friend, Leonard Pine, and an ex-cop buddy, Marvin Hanson. I opened the door. "Sure isn't good to see you," I said to Leonard. Leonard pushed on in. He was decked out in cowboy boots, jeans, a faded snap-pocket shirt that was a little stretched across his broad shoulders, and a shit-eating grin. "Now that's no way to be," he said. "Your timing as usual is impeccable, brother," I said. "Thank you." "Leave your horse and hat at the corral?" "The horse is wearing the hat," Leonard said. "After the fun me and him had, I thought he deserved a little token of my appreciation. You can bet he'll call tomorrow." "You're funnier earlier in the day," I said. Marvin came in more slowly, using the cane. "Like them foot rabbits," he said, nodding at my shoes. "Yeah, me and them are buds," I said. "You're getting around good." "You should have seen me before we went dancing. Those hip-hop steps have a way of making you weak." "We went for tacos," Leonard said. "This guy, you can't get him to do nothing fun. His idea of a good time is chewing gum with a fruity flavor." "Where's the love of your life?" I asked Leonard. "John?" "No. Winston Churchill." "He's mad at me." "Imagine that." "It's nothing much. I think we called each other bitches and then I got mad enough to take a dump in the middle of the bed, and did." "Overshare," I said. "We both forget what started it, and we're both holding out for an apology. I will, of course, cave, and then we'll be back to normal. You got anything to eat?" "I thought you ate tacos?" "Two, maybe three hours ago." "I'm not feeling all that friendly right now," I said. "Why would I want to feed you?" "Interrupt something?" Leonard said, sliding into the kitchen to open the refrigerator. "Yeah, me and Brett were just setting up the checkerboard. Marvin, why do you hang with this riffraff?" Marvin found a soft chair and was sitting there, stretching out his leg, rubbing his knee. "I hang with him because I pity him." "So why let him bother me?" "Leonard said you love late-night company." "He's a lying sonofabitch." "Hey, boys," Brett said. I turned and saw her coming down the stairs. She had on a white shorty robe and her hair was bed fluffed and her legs were long enough to make a giraffe drown himself. Her eyes were half closed and she was beautiful. Leonard came back into the living room, empty-handed. Brett finished off the stairs, said, "Hi, Leonard." "Hi, Brett. You got anything to eat?" "John lets you out to play this late?" she said. "I'll make it up to him tomorrow," Leonard said. "I've got some moves, honey. If you like, I could show Hap some of my tricks, though it would be purely theoretical, of course." "Your biology sucks," I said. "John. Brett. Different plumbing. Wouldn't work." "Hi, Marvin," she said. Marvin smiled, gave her a little wave. "I'm having milk and cookies," she said. "Anyone else?" "Me. Me," Leonard said. "Are the cookies by any chance... vanilla?" "They are," Brett said. "Hap keeps them just for you, baby. There's also your favorite. Dr Peppers. These are from the only plant where the original formula is used. We drove over there special to get them." "We were passing by the plant," I said, "so I thought, why not." Leonard looked at me and batted his

eyes. "You are the sweetest bastard ever squatted to crap over a pair of shoes." "Cookies aren't just for you," I said. "I like them too. And Dr Pepper." "He's a liar," Brett said. "He keeps them for you. He drinks that diet crap. Go sit down. Milk or Dr Pepper with your cookies?" "Need you ask?" Leonard said. "Marvin?" Brett said. "How about you?" "Milk and cookies sounds fine." "Great," she said. "Hap, get your ass in there and get the cookies. Some for me too. Chop-chop." I started toward the kitchen. As I passed her, she grabbed my arm. "Just kidding," she said. "I'll get them. I was just evaluating your training. You get an A. Later I'll give you a treat, and it won't be a dog biscuit." She leaned forward and kissed me on the lips. As I started back into the living room area Leonard said, "Good dog. Next you'll be off the newspapers and using the yard." "That's my goal." I sat down on the couch, the far end from Leonard, who had kicked off his shoes and was stretching his legs out. "I can't see what Brett sees in you, Hap," Leonard said. "It's the parts you don't see," I said. "Nor do I want to." "I'm thinking, maybe," I said, "you didn't really come over here to interrupt my sex life and have milk and cookies." "I'm having Dr Pepper," Leonard said. "Dr Pepper that you got special just for me." "Go to hell, Leonard." "You're right, Hap," Marvin said. "We didn't come over to have milk and cookies. It's a little more complicated than that." We finished up our milk and cookies, Leonard his Dr Pepper and cookies, then Brett went upstairs to bed. The treat she offered me would have to be held in abeyance. I considered the delay Leonard's fault, and gave him a black mark on my mental chalkboard. No star for you, asshole. Next time I'd get RC instead of Dr Pepper, see how that pulled his chain, maybe get some of those nasty coconut cookies he hated. I hated them too, but the punishment was worth consideration. We went out in the yard to talk so Brett wouldn't be bothered by our big mouths. She had bought some metal lawn chairs and put them out there, and I kept expecting to come out some morning and find they'd been chair-napped, as our part of the neighborhood was getting bad. Used to, you could leave your wallet on the porch swing and no one would bother it. These days, you left a cheese grater out, someone would steal the holes. It was a nice night and there weren't too many lights on our street, and the sky was clear so you could look up through the limbs of the elm tree at the edge of the yard and see stars. It was too cool for crickets and there wasn't any traffic on the road out front. The air smelled fresh and a little sweet, like a baby's breath, and in that moment I was glad we lived there in that house with that yard and that big elm, in what the old books about the South used to call genteel poverty. After seating ourselves in the lawn chairs, I crossed my legs and dangled a bunny shoe. Leonard said, "Man, you could have at least put on pants. That robe is a little too peekaboo." "My motto," I said, "is if you've got it, flaunt it." "What you're flauntin' is enough to make a man turn a gun on himself," Leonard said. Marvin said, "I got a job proposition to discuss." "You're gonna love this, Hap," Leonard said. I looked at Marvin. "Am I?" "I don't think you're going to throw a parade, but here it is," Marvin said. "My daughter's daughter, her boyfriend, he's been beating on her." This fit in with the theme Brett and I had been discussing. Maybe I should just send her over there with a shovel. If there was a dwarf, I could send her with a pistol. I said, "Boyfriend? Your granddaughter? What is she, like twelve?" "Eighteen." "Get out," I said. "They grow fast," he said. "And she's a cutie," Leonard said. "You should see her. A dirty old hetero man like you, you'd love her." "You've seen her?" "Photograph," Leonard said. I turned to Marvin. "So what exactly is the deal?" "Well, he whipped up on her and I went over and caught him pulling into his place and he got out and I beat him a little bit with my cane. It wore me out and it didn't do my cane any good and I scuffed up a good pair of shoes. I had to get a new cane and have the shoes shined. That ain't a quarter no more. White boys are doing it now, by the way. They like at least five dollars." "Inflation," Leonard said. "How old is the boyfriend?" I asked. "Twenty-five or so," Marvin said. "I don't know exactly. Old enough to be a better person than he is. Old enough for me to kill him and drop his body in a hole somewhere." "So you beat him with your cane, and now you want... what?" I said. "Sounds like to me you took care of the problem, gave him an attitude adjustment. Did you leave the old cane up his ass and you want us to fetch it?" "Deal is," Marvin said, "he didn't like it much, that beating, and he has friends he can go to. And my leg, it's just getting good, but it's not that good. I can whip one ass easy enough, but multiple asses, not so sure. And I'm only up for one ass at a time, maybe once a week during certain hours after lunch and well before sunset when the stars are aligned just right... I was lucky I caught him alone, without his posse." "Call me foolish," I said, "but since you used to be a cop, did it occur to you that you might want to call the law and maybe have them go over there and do the domestic violence thing?" "Therein lays the Shakespearean rub," Marvin said. "That sounds like something I'd like on my middle leg," Leonard said. "You see, my granddaughter, Julia, we call her Gadget, this guy she's with, he's kind of a drug dealer." "Kind of?" I asked. "Okay," Marvin said. "Absolutely he is. And if the law gets involved, well, she could get involved." "I'm not loving this at all, Leonard." "I was being facetious." I turned

to Marvin. Fearing I already knew the answer, I asked, "Why would she get involved if the law got involved?" "Because she is selling grass out of their trailer, and they, as I said, are drug dealers. As for the law, they are in the drug dealer's pocket, in there with the lint and the pocket change. So it could really turn out bad." "I probably should know this already," I said, "but what about Gadget's father? Maybe he can do something." Marvin shook his head. "No reason you should know. I don't make a point of talking about him much. He ran off when she was a fetus, and now her mother is at her wits' end." "So what you need from us is...?" I asked. "I need someone to do some serious ass whipping, and bring her home. If you can get by without the ass whipping and just bring her home, that'll do. But I'd like to think there will be an ass whipping. Not meaning her ass, of course." "What if she doesn't want to come home?" "I think she will. I think she would have the other day, but at the last minute she didn't. I'm not up to snuff. I burned myself out and didn't have any energy left, so I had to let her go. There wasn't anything I could do. I bluffed my way out to the car and got out of there. But you two, you can do it. You can bring her home." I studied on this a moment, looked at Leonard. He gave me a small nod. I said, "We'll do it, but she doesn't want to come home, I don't know what to tell you. That's the case, we bring her back, she'll just run off again." From the Hardcover edition. *Revue de presse* "Anything but ordinary crime writing by one of the best in the business." -- Los Angeles Times "Joe Lansdale may be Texas' bloody answer to Mark Twain." -- Austin Chronicle "The best crime novel I've read in years." -- John Weisman, The Washington Times "[Joe Lansdale] is one of the greatest yarn spinners of his generation: fearless, earthy, original, manic and dreadfully funny." -- Dallas Morning News Every page of this book brims with humor and character and most of all, kick ass story telling. -- Michael Connelly "There's no bullshit in a Joe Lansdale book. There's everything a good story needs, and nothing it doesn't." -- Christopher Moore, author of *A Dirty Job* and *Fool* "Hilariously funny, to the point that your heart almost stops while you are laughing. Bookreporter The Hap and Leonard books explore questions of race, sexuality and religion in modern red-state America. Hap is a white heterosexual good old boy. Leonard is a black homosexual Vietnam vet. . . . Laughter is the common bond. Texas Observer