



## Leather Maiden

*Joe R. Lansdale*

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A masterly new thriller from the Edgar Award-winning writer who has “a folklorist’s eye for telling detail and a front-porch raconteur’s sense of pace” (*The New York Times Book Review*).

After a scandalous affair costs him his job in Houston, Cason Statler—Gulf War veteran and Pulitzer Prize-nominated journalist—returns home to the small east Texas town of Camp Rapture. Cason is a wreck. He drinks too much, he’s stalking his ex-girlfriend, and he’s wallowing in envy of his successful older brother. To get back on his feet, he takes a job at the local paper, and when he stumbles across his predecessor’s notes on a cold case murder file, he thinks he’s found the thing that’ll keep him out of trouble. No such luck. The further he digs into the case, the more certain he is that the unsolved crime is connected to a series of eerie, inexplicable events that have recently occurred in town. And he knows his suspicions are right on when he finds himself dragged into a deadly game of blackmail and murder that clearly has evil as its only goal.

*Leather Maiden* is a brash amalgam of suspense, raw humor, and mystery that unfolds in the vividly rendered shadowy lowlands of eastern Texas. It’s country noir as only Joe Lansdale can do it.

## Leather Maiden Details

Date : Published August 5th 2008 by Knopf (first published 2008)

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Author : Joe R. Lansdale

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## From Reader Review Leather Maiden for online ebook

### Dan Schwent says

For me, a Joe Lansdale novel is like a visit from that foul-mouthed uncle your parents wish you wouldn't talk to when he comes to family gatherings. The stories he tells are outside your normal sphere and often make you uncomfortable.

Leather Maiden is about an Iraq war veteran who returns to his home town and starts a job writing for the local paper. He finds out about an unsolved missing person case that happened while he was gone and writes a story about it. Not long after, a mysterious envelope shows up, containing a dvd with his brother and the missing girl engaged in adult situations. Things spiral from there.

Leather Maiden is vintage Joe Lansdale: black humor, gore, interesting characters, and an intriguing story. What else do you need from a mystery novel?

Aside from the selling point of being a Joe Lansdale novel and all that entails, this story has another big thing going for it: I had no idea where things were going until they were 7/8s of the way there. I love that in a book.

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### J.K. Grice says

Another fantastic novel from Lansdale!

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### Michael says

Cason Statler hat den Tiefpunkt seines Lebens erreicht: traumatisiert von seinem Einsatz als Soldat im Golfkrieg kehrt er in sein Elternhaus zurück, ein von der Freundin verlassener Trinker, der durchaus seine Chance hatte; als Reporter war er für den Pulitzer Preis nominiert, doch dann ging er mit der Frau seines Chefs und dessen Tochter ins Bett und damit endete seine Karriere, bevor sie überhaupt begann. Cason findet sich als Reporter eines Kleinstadt-Käseblatts wieder und ist hier für den nicht besonders spannenden Tratsch und Klatsch zuständig. Das Leben hat den ehemaligen Starreporter genügsam gemacht, doch dann kommt er einer Story auf die Spur, die Potenzial hat: eine junge Frau ist spurlos verschwunden, und Cason nimmt die journalistischen Ermittlungen auf, unterstützt von seiner neuen Kollegin...

Nachdem ich zwei gelungene Romane von Lansdale gelesen hatte, die jeweils aus der Sicht eines jugendlichen Erzählers geschrieben waren (DIE WÄLDER AM FLUSS und EIN FEINER DUNKLER RISS), hat mich hier der trockene Humor und die oft drastische bildhafte Ausdrucksweise eines Gestrandeten von Anfang an sehr eingenommen. Lansdale ist ein gewiefter Erzähler, der unterhaltsam schreibt, ohne ins Triviale abzurutschen, und dessen sympathische Helden mir schnell ans Herz wachsen.

GLUTHITZE ist ein Roman, der im Laufe der Handlung immer mehr Fahrt aufnimmt, und auch wenn der Aufbau recht klassisch ist, steigert sich die Spannung zum Ende hin enorm und ich konnte das Buch nicht mehr aus der Hand legen.

Trotzdem hat mich GLUTZHITZE nicht so überzeugt wie die vorgenannten Romane, und das liegt vor allem daran, dass GLUTHITZE zum Ende hin äußerst brutal wird. Folterszenen und grausam zugerichtete Leichen sind Elemente, auf die ich verzichten kann; diese grausamen Schilderungen waren für meinen Geschmack unnötig und teilweise überzogen brutal und stellten einen Bruch zu den ersten 300 Seiten des Romans dar, der anfänglich seine Spannung aus der sehr gut erzählten Story alleine beziehen kann. Aber mir ist bewusst, dass „der Leser“ von Thrillern eine immer härtere Gangart erwartet und ich vermutlich zu einer verschwindend kleinen Minderheit zähle, die an der expliziten Schilderung von Grausamkeiten Anstoß nimmt, denn auf dem Buchmarkt wird nicht an den Interessen des Lesers vorbei geschrieben.

Schade ist aus meiner Sicht, dass ein Erzähler wie Lansdale diese Exzesse gar nicht nötig hat und damit leider auch qualitative Einbußen damit einhergehen. Die Motivation der Figuren war teilweise schlicht nicht mehr nachvollziehbar oder zu konstruiert. Dabei hätte ich bis Seite 300 noch fünf Sterne vergeben und das Buch bedenkenlos weiter empfohlen.

Wer gerne Krimis liest, die in Texas spielen, und sich an drastischen Szenen nicht stört, wird diesen Roman trotzdem mögen, denn Lansdale ist ein Erzähltalent, wie es nicht viele gibt.

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### **Dorie says**

Normally I enjoy Lansdale's books, but this one disappointed me. It was too gruesome in some places, and I'm afraid the psychotic "friend" who loves weapons and pops up just in time to help the protagonist has been done to death in crime fiction books. Also the author's excessive use of "down-home" similes was getting to me after a while. The story itself was fine, but I don't think the author developed the main characters enough. Good enough for a quick read if you like this type of story, but definitely not a keeper.

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### **Jeanette says**

Do not read this if your favorites are cozy mystery. This is probably closer to the exact opposite in the overall mystery genre. It's a man's story, a troubled Iraq vet comes home to Texas. And there are a few characters in this one that do not even think in a language that does not contain 5 bleeps a sentence. So it will certainly not be for anyone who cannot tolerate that for a good story.

And beyond that, the violence is also horrific. Closer to a Scandinavian or mob mess than to a shoot em up. But put into East Texas and sublimely belonging there. Great locale feel, very real authentic protagonist with his own special problems in Cosan. And one of the worse sociopath personalities I have come across is the perp in this one. Different, not a run of the mill bad guy wanderer.

The very ending (after the climax in which you THOUGHT was the ending) was contrived and beyond my suspension of believability. BUT, it was highly entertaining and had enough other superior realistic crossover qualities to be a 4 star. Especially within the descriptive writing of simile and metaphor! I've said it before- but Joe. R. Lansdale is just superlative in human, animal, natural description. With humor.

There is also a "good guy" bad guy in this one called Booger that is scary, scary, scary. I'm sure he will be returning in other Lansdale Cosan works.

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### **Helio says**

The book got interesting at about page 96 then went character bizarre a-la a Dan Brown novel by page 124. Tarzan shows up around the time the Zombie vampires put in an appearance. I think it would have worked better if Cheeta' had called Tarzan instead of him just showing up. It could have been a good mystery without the over-the-top freakish personages.

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### **Shemp DeYoung says**

Reading this book was a peculiar experience for me. It was a page-turner. There was a really clever mystery that was solved. But in the end, I felt more than a little less than satisfied. I'm not entirely sure why though.

I think I'm going to have to let my thoughts simmer a little bit and write more later.

\* OK, I took a shower (I do some of my best thinking in there) and I think that I have it. \*

\*\* Possible SPOILERS \*\*

When I finished this book, I felt hollow inside. I had witnessed a fast-paced and unique adventure, but I didn't feel very good about it. It wasn't that I needed a Hollywood ending; the ending wasn't even the problem. I had already pretty much figured that out anyway. What I didn't have was a sense that I had experienced anything. I didn't really care much about these people. When I got to the last page, my thought was "Well, there you go."

Perhaps this was intended to show what it feels like for a returning Vet (Cason, the main character/narrator served in Iraq) or what it can feel like to have a certain set of emotional issues. Maybe it was meant to show that there is very little difference between the races, or people of different social backgrounds. There are just good people and bad people. Sometimes good people do bad things and sometimes the good things some people do are to cover up bad things.

Maybe it's all just a game.

I suppose that there could be another issue at work here; it's a matter of personal taste. There was a time when I read a lot of comics. I was hosting a radio show on which I interviewed many comic creators and we reviewed and discussed as wide a variety as possible. So, as a matter of research, I read a lot of books I might not normally have picked up. Some of them I liked and continued to read. Others - not so much.

I love Batman; I'm not crazy about The Punisher. This book is more like the latter. Bruce Wayne's parents were murdered, but Batman doesn't kill; Frank Castle's family was killed and there is a major dad guy body count when The Punisher comes to town.

The Leather Maiden is also filled with colorfully vulgar language and gruesome details of crime scenes. I'm

not even close to being a prude, but seriously, how many times do we have to be reminded that a person will lose control of their bowels when they die?

But, that's just me.

Hmm... I just went back to proof what I had written and I had a couple more thoughts. First, that one of the best things about reading is that it makes you think. The optimistic part of my nature tells me at least this book made me think.

Finally, I was reminded of a passage in the book. A character remarks that the race-agitating minister is likely to "go home, pop in a DVD of the news coverage, and jerk himself off while he watches what he has stirred up." My cynical side thinks that, perhaps, this book's author could be doing the very same thing.

I'm pretty sure that I am wrong about that last part though.

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### **Anthony Vacca says**

After loving the badassitude of *Cold In July*, I figured I'd go straight to the movie's source and read a novel by Joe Lansdale. But *Leather Maiden* was not the brutally violent and slick redneck neo-noir that I was hankering for. Besides loving the book's cover, I found the rest of the reading experience like waiting for an undercooked meal to get better. There were a lot of promising ingredients piled into the proverbial crock pot—a haunted Iraq veteran returning to his small town hometown, his sociopathic war buddy, racial tensions involving white supremacists and a Jesse Jackson analog/douchebag, a mystery involving a missing girl, and a pair of sadistic freaks, and a possibly diabolical book written by an obscure hack writer—but it felt like the cook got tired of making my meal and decided to go ahead and serve it to me anyway. Or rather, it felt like Lansdale got 230 pages into writing this book and then said, "Damn I better go ahead and end this shit so it doesn't get longer than 300 pages." Plotwise, not a thing develops satisfactorily or even really makes a lick of sense. Add in unnecessary baggage like an obligatory romance, plus a hohummer of a climax, and what you get is an oversalted but still bland meal. At least the book was funny.

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### **Kemper says**

A brutal redneck crime story with memorable villians and plenty of dark humor. In other words, another Joe Lansdale book.

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### **Shelby \*trains flying monkeys\* says**

Cason Statler has come home to the small east Texas town of Camp Rapture. He saw military action in the Gulf War and was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize at a newspaper in Houston. He pissed his chance at the big time away when he was bonking his editor's wife and step-daughter (she was of age). So he applies for a job at the local newspaper and is hired on. Cason has a tad bit of a problem with being obsessed with an ex-girlfriend who live in town.

**"I'm obsessed. That I have problems from the war. That and a buck fifty might get me a ride on the**

**horsey out in front of the Wal-Mart."**

Once on the job Cason starts going through his predecessors old notes and finds notes on Butterfinger pies, types of bugs and a missing person case involving a beautiful young college student.

He starts poking his nose into the case and discovers it involves way more than he bargained for.

His "best" (and I used the term best loosely because Cason is kinda scared of him) friend from the war keeps checking in with Cason also. I want a BFF like Booger.

**He's the kind of guy who's not averse to scratching his privates in public or beating a smartass near to death with a car antenna, which he nearly did once. No one remembers the source of the disagreement that led to the beating, not even Booger, though he has a faint memory about an argument over a game of horseshoes.**

**"Hey man," Booger said. "hold your goddamn water till I get my pants on. Me and Mr. Lucky are going with you."**

**Mr. Lucky was Booger's .45. It was one of his small circle of friends.**

These characters are like-able. Cason is a sarcastic asshole and at times his humor wore thin, I think that the characters in the book even thought so. I still adored him.

This is my third Joe Lansdale book and I'm very impressed by his scope of writing. The other two books The Bottoms and A Fine Dark Line were both coming of age tales that differed enough to impress me. This one is dark, funny, thriller material. I can not wait to read more of his work.

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### **Daniel Sevitt says**

One of the reasons I like a series is that there is an understanding, for the most part, that the good guys will still be alive at the end of the book. When you read a standalone like this there is a sense of dread that anything can happen, anyone can die. At least with a first-person narrator there's one guy you feel sure will make it. It's still scary. I enjoyed this, sense of dread notwithstanding. Not quite as funny as other Lansdales, but just as disturbed.

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### **Robert says**

Joe writes up a pretty good mystery with The Leather Maiden. Stir that in with plenty of very dry and sometimes biting humor and this one comes out like a nice Frito pie. And just like Frito pie, Joe himself is a Texas specialty that may rub some folks in the wrong way. I happen to enjoy his writing style and really enjoyed the easy smooth pace of this tale. Some things may be a bit obvious and the ending may be a bit scripted but I am always happy to sit down to a nice big helping of Lansdale pie. Too bad he does not write a nice 1200 page novel so that I could spend more time with him. However this may be too much of a good thing. For mystery fans and Lansdale fans this one is a winner winner chicken fried steak Texas style dinner.

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## **Jonathan Janz says**

Joe R. Lansdale is one of the greatest writers alive. He's a genre all his own, and LEATHER MAIDEN is another excellent entry into his diverse canon of work. The protagonist (Cason Statler) is an emotionally-wounded, self-sabotaging Iraq war vet who's a good deal smarter and tougher than the reporters, professors, and lowlifes he encounters. Until, that is, he encounters a couple of villains so diabolical that you begin to fear for Cason and everyone he loves. There's hilarious dialogue, a truly memorable confederate, a little girl that'll break your heart, and a love story that makes you long for the two folks involved to be together.

Oh, and there's a twist near the very end that'll make you gasp for breath.

So check out LEATHER MAIDEN. It's not my favorite Lansdale, but then again, my favorite Lansdales would require a new 6-out-of-5 star rating system on Goodreads. So I'll settle for five stars for this one because any less would imply I didn't love it. Which I did. Every damned word.

Joe R. Lansdale is a national treasure. If you haven't read him yet, you need to. And if you, for whatever reason, decide you're not going to give his stuff a chance, you deserve a good kick in the nether regions.

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## **Rusty says**

The first Lansdale book I read was The Bottoms. That book doesn't contain much of the author's signature humor, so I was glad to see it in this book. Unfortunately it pretty much peters out after the first 50 pages or so. The story was good though, if a bit predictable at times. It's essentially the story of a mysterious murder that has ever-widening aftershocks for the townspeople of Camp Rapture, TX, and for the protagonist, in particular. Cason is an ex-writer, ex-soldier who has come home searching for some stability in his life. He lands a job at a local paper and comes across his predecessor's notes on a local disappearance. Thinking he can translate this story into attention in the journalistic world beyond his small town, Cason begins to investigate. And that's when it starts to hit the fan. There are some interesting characters in this book, chief among them (in my mind) is Booger. For me he's kind of a conglomerate character of a few different guys I know, at least one of whom I suspect is a sociopath, all of whom I avoid. I honestly don't know if this is a great introductory book to Joe Lansdale's work, but it is easier to find than many of his others.

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## **Nathan Flamank says**

This is Lansdale at his very best: gritty, barbaric, funny, shocking and compulsive. Lansdale is head and shoulders above his peers and in this novel he has created another dark slice of pure Texas mayhem. The characters are believable and the dialogue crackles along like a bush-fire with some of the funniest lines ever to be printed.

This is the perfect example of what Lansdale does best and is the perfect example of why, in my opinion, he's currently the best crime writer in the States.

Highly recommended.

