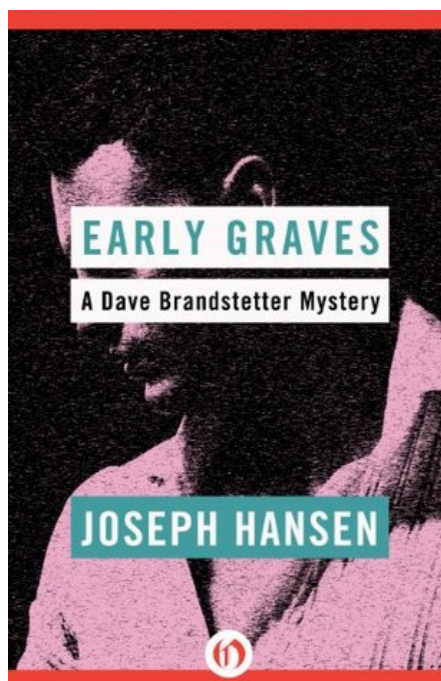




Early Graves

Joseph Hansen

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Hansen presents the ninth thrilling mystery featuring homosexual insurance investigator Dave Brandstetter. This time, Dave tracks down a serial killer whose last victim was left on his doorstep. "Well plotted and well written".--New York Times Book Review.

Early Graves Details

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From Reader Review Early Graves for online ebook

Brad says

Another fantastic book in the Dave Brandstetter series. In Early Graves, we find Dave attempting to solve the mysterious deaths of AIDS victims. As always, Hansen provides ample twists and turns in the plot to keep you guessing the entire time. I am so happy to have stumbled upon to this series. One of my very favorite detective series.

Kaje Harper says

Released in 1987, this book marks the point where AIDS enters Dave Brandstetter's world and his cases. The mystery here is more small-scale and personal in scope, and Dave's own personal life is also hitting snags. Although he is still the laconic figure he has always been, this book felt like it went a bit deeper into the man, and is probably my favorite to date.

Tex Reader says

3.5 of 5 stars – Still Good, But Not One of Hansen's Better Ones.

I love gay mysteries and romances, and this has been one of the best series combining both, and in the process rightfully became for Joseph Hansen a classic in gay literature. Even though it wasn't as good as the earlier high-quality ones, this ninth in the series was still good and continued to build the story.

I liked this for the same reasons I liked each in the series. First off, for those interested, it worked well as a standalone, with its own self-contained mystery, while also further developing the character and life of the MC, his boyfriend and other supporting characters, and smoothly providing any explanations needed to bring a first-time reader up on previous happenings.

Also, it was a nice, short, easy read, with a good, well-paced plot and character development. I enjoyed the walk back in time to my earlier years, with moments of what was then current situations and culture vividly described by Hansen in a way that helped me remember those times. And I liked that the main focus was on the mystery, with the gay aspect and any romance as a major subplot. The mystery itself was engaging and suspenseful, with the investigation having realistic twists and turns. It had a refreshing approach of not featuring your typical detective or PI but an insurance investigator pursuing the clues. I appreciated where this one took us back into the gay world of LA, where for the first time in Hansen's stories (early for the 80's) the issue of AIDS played a prominent part. This made the title have a poignant double meaning to me, referring not only to the serial killings, but to the devastation of AIDS. Still, some of the story was predictable, maybe even stereotypical, not as unique as previous mysteries (maybe as seen by my latter-day eyes), and a couple things a little too convenient. Even so, I got a feel for what the AIDS hysteria was like at that time, from someone writing about it at the time it was happening.

Hansen also developed nicely the whole set of characters. Of course there was more on the MC, with Hansen really getting into the life and mindset of a hard-boiled, matter-of-fact, honorable, self-accepting, sometimes melancholy gay man who I grew to like for all his skills, heart and humanness. As for the supporting cast, I also got a good feel for who they were, with some new ones to keep things fresh. For those who read the

previous books, it was nice that some characters returned; but don't worry first-time readers, they were introduced and described just as if it's a standalone. A nice bonus has been the MC's gay life and relationships, and I was pleased to see his relationship continued with his boyfriend. They had to deal with some rough spots that can be realistically expected; but the motivation for these wasn't quite believable to me, and I felt a little distant this time. Another nice, realistic developing element was that also for the first time, the MC's aging started to be mentioned as more of an issue, which put his putting himself in danger in a new perspective.

I continue to be impressed with the level of quality that Hansen maintains in this series, and I look forward to the next one.

Steve says

Early Graves is one of the better volumes in Hansen's Dave Brandstetter series. The twists and turns in Brandstetter's investigation into a series of murders of AIDS victims kept me guessing till the end. As usual, Hansen introduces a number of memorable characters and revisits characters from previous volumes in this book. And his evocation of southern California is spot on, as usual. Brandstetter's relationship with his boyfriend, Cecil, has hit a hard patch because Cecil went more than a little overboard by marrying a girl he thought he could help no other way. This problem was apparently resolved in a *deus ex machina* authorial move at the end of the book (the primary reason why I could not give this book 5 stars). For me, however, what sets this volume apart from the other Brandstetter mysteries is Hansen's laconic and directly to the point evocation of the panic, dread and resultant compounding of the human tragedy of the AIDS epidemic in the mid eighties, which Hansen wrote in 1987 - not with the advantage of hindsight. Joseph, if you can read this, kudos !!!

Deanna Against Censorship says

Took me back to the 80s new awareness of AIDS. I flashbacked to our many friends and customers (we had a store) who were taken away by AIDS. It was a sad time and a scary one. This book written during that time was more effective than one looking back from the present day. One feels the unknown, the questions, the terror and the despair. Woven through this epidemic was a serial killer who is killing those who are ill. Dave finds a body in his yard. Is this another victim of the serial killer or not? Dave has no insurance case but feels he has to find answers since he found the body. Dave is lonely. Cecil is married and Dave will not have relations with a married man. Neither Cecil nor Dave are happy. Will Dave go into his later years alone? I hope not.

Joseph Hansen always wrote in a terse way, never wordy. Yet Hansen's prose is beautifully descriptive. The reader is drawn into Dave's world and it is always a good journey.

Bill Kerwin says

First published in 1987, this mystery features a serial killer who murders gay men with AIDS.

Hansen's LA atmosphere, his insights into the gay community, and his admirable hero, insurance investigator

David Brandstetter, make this a worthwhile entry in the series.

Paola says

Another excellent book in this series. Dave's persistence, steadfastness and determination to seek justice for a series of crimes linked, at least apparently, to the discovery of an unknown murdered man on his property, is as always one of his most prominent qualities - despite his awareness he's getting older and should probably think about retiring. The murder mystery here takes a more intense and at the same time intimate quality, as Dave has to go thru the investigation and face a very dangerous criminal mostly without Cecil's or Amanda's help this time, and unwillingly puts the lives of policemen and one of his best friends at risk.

The book also contains some memorable passages revealing Dave's deep affection for Cecil, and a moral integrity and compassion for the human condition that elevate these books to a whole new level in the mystery literary genre.

And Hansen's accurate and often lyrical evocation of the southern Californian landscape, both natural and human, is also masterly integrated in the story-telling and in the setting of mood and atmosphere.

Sofia says

In the Brandstetter series Hansen had barely touched AIDS before this book. In this one he gives us a big dose of whole unvarnished truths about it. Squalid, sad, honest and yes loving. You have to see the monster (AIDS) as it is to be able to fight. Unfortunately AIDS also brought out the bigger monsters in us, most of them fuelled by fear but still monstrous.

The parallel between the crime story and Dave's personal life which makes the risk, the danger closer.

One of my favorites in the series - gulped down in a couple of days.

Sleuthing with Rosa

Neet says

This is the 9th book in the Dave Brandstetter mysteries and one of the best in the series. In this mystery we find Dave being picked up by his ex from the airport after an out of town investigation. The ex in this case is Ceril, who in a unselfish but foolish gesture, married the young blind woman in the last mystery to save her from her selfish, alcoholic and greedy mother from getting control of her life and trust fund. Dave is unhappy with Ceril and refuses to have a relationship with a married man. The two continue the argument until they reach their home, where they discover the body of a young man outside of Dave's house. Having been out of town for a while, Dave is unaware that this young man may be the latest victim of a serial killer who has struck young men with AIDS. Having found the young man, Drew Dodger outside his home with his business card on the ground, Dave feels compelled to investigate. Drew Dodger was many to many people,

married with young children, a devoted hard working business man who was building a new mall. Drew also had a hidden life, a young man who he was seeing who had AIDS (as Drew did) but died at the hands of this serial killer. This is one of my favorite mysteries and the twist and turns keep you on edge. Also, we get caught up with one of the characters who Dave helped out in his investigation, Tom Owens. I like Tom and I'm so glad to read what happen in his life, but I won't say here. At any rate, I highly recommend this book in the series, it is indeed a good read.

Antonella says

[the happy ending of Dave's personal story gives a kind of balance to all that sadness (hide spoiler)]

Kathy L. Brown says

Dave is older and no wiser. Fixed on an investigation with personal stakes. A number of characters from past stories cameo, which is a fun stroll down memory lane. Apart from a huge continuity issue around page 67--- a big deal for me---writing is crisp and tight. As befits a villian, killer confesses out loud to the roaring seas for stealthy Dave to overhear. Forced and a bit cheesy.

Rosa, really says

This one's a little different. Up until this one, every book has started with Dave knocking on the door of some dead person's next of kin, who invariably lies to him (everyone does), as the California sun beats down mercilessly.

This one started with Dave at the end of a case, where I'm sure everyone lied to him, in the California rain. Also, Dave is going through some shit and as a result it's like he has no patience for other people's bullshit. I LOVE THAT.

What's not different in this book? Dave still thinks he's fuckin' Superman. You are at least 65 years old, dude! Ease up a little.

Of course, Dave has survived 9 killers at this point, so really, why shouldn't he think he's Geezer Superman?

James Thane says

This is another very good book in Joseph Hansen's Dave Brandstetter series. The series has now moved into the mid-1980s, and the AIDS epidemic is gathering momentum, a matter of obvious concern to Dave who is gay.

Dave returns home from a business trip to find a man who has been knifed to death in his courtyard. Dave's business card is lying at the man's feet, but Dave does not recognize him. The man appears to be the latest

victim of a killer who has been targeting young gay men who are dying of AIDS.

This particular victim turns out to be a developer named Drew Dodge. Since Dodge died at his doorstep, Dave feels a responsibility to investigate the crime. Dave's personal life is also in turmoil, given that his lover, Cecil, is now involved with someone else. Dave is feeling adrift and tired and is thinking it's about time to hang up his license.

The investigation takes Dave across the larger Los Angeles metropolitan area, into neighborhoods good and bad. It quickly becomes apparent that someone, most likely the killer, does not want Dave pursuing the investigation, and Dave soon finds himself at risk. That will not deter him, of course, and he will doggedly pursue the case, no matter the personal cost.

Hansen never disappoints and certainly does not do so here. He's excellent at plotting a story, setting a scene and developing in the reader a real sense of the humanity of all the characters. This is a particularly gripping book because of the fact that the scourge of AIDS has now been introduced into American life and into the lives of Dave and his friends. As if life wasn't hard enough for gay people like Dave, it's about to get even more difficult and emotionally devastating. In a book that's allegedly about a series of horrific crimes, Hansen captures this situation expertly and with deep feeling.

Linda ~ chock full of hoot, just a little bit of nanny ~ says

[There was some relationship troubles that made me very upset because Dave/Cecil is my OT

Janet Marriott says

This is the fifth in the series. It deals with the homophobia the was rampant before aids became a chronic disease.

This is a well written mystery and a walk back into the not distant past when fear and homophobia killed. as surely as aids.
