

H.A.L.F. The Makers

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Conflicts with alien races are given enormous depth in this engrossingly written science fiction novel.

This second installment in the thrilling young adult science fiction series *H.A.L.F.* finds teens Erika, Jack, and Tex embroiled in life-threatening situations as a result of their contact with alien life and a military conspiracy on Earth. New threats pile on from extraterrestrials and humans alike, increasing the intensity. Occasionally overlapping viewpoints of multiple main characters traveling through space and time, battling alien invasions or equally threatening human conspiracies, add depth to this rollicking and appealing tale.

H.A.L.F.: The Makers begins dramatically, with Erika screaming as “fear wound itself into every fold of her grey matter.” She has been overwhelmed by the Greys, Roswell-like aliens that are connected to the human-alien hybrids Tex and Alecto, who are much sought-after by both humans and aliens. The nature of the connection is somewhat unclear from reading this novel alone, and the absence of such helpful additional background information makes for a challenge.

Despite the missing background details, the book is a page-turner. The plot is narrated through five different characters’ points of view, with the occasional overlapping of events. This adds depth to the storytelling and makes the human characters more well-rounded and likable. Third-person narration and featured characters’ names as chapter headings keep these parallel plots from getting confusing.

Chilling new villains are introduced, including the human Makers, an Illuminati-like organization of wealthy, powerful people with their own agenda, and the M’Uktah, a race of hunters poised to invade Earth. Their story lines add further intrigue to the already tangled politics surrounding the conflict between humanity and the Greys. Related plotlines ramp up toward the novel’s end. These new threads—along with the big themes of the ethics of contact with alien races, the rights of artificial intelligence, and the importance of loyalty and friendship—have great appeal for teen readers.

Intelligent prose and a sprinkling of cliffhanger chapter endings help craft an enjoyable and compelling reading experience. Attention to details and the inclusion of the concerns of the age group are reflected in teen-friendly imagery, as when Erika’s anger toward her mother “melted away like ice in a Big Gulp on a summer day in Arizona.” Being called “my boy” is “like lemon juice on an open cut” to Tex. Such tangible images make for engrossing reading.

H.A.L.F.: The Makers is a compelling addition to a science fiction series sure to appeal to young adults, and its exciting progression will keep readers wanting more.

CAROLYN BAILEY (June 9, 2016)

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