

Children of Hathor Series, Books I & II by Jim Mastro

Review by Ardis Francoeur

On the outside, Jason Hunter was an ordinary kid with ordinary problems- his parents had just moved him from sunny California, where he used to surf every day, to dreary New Hampshire, where he was stuck as far away from waves as was humanly possible. He had one or two friends, he had a normal house, and normal-looking parents. But that's where normality ended for Jason. Because while things looked fine on the surface, they certainly weren't once you looked more closely; for instance, what mother made her child eat cereal with blue cheese dressing instead of milk for breakfast? And how many kids were being staked out by the mysterious neighbors next door? And how many small towns had numerous sightings of UFOs?

We're not left to wonder for long, as *The Talisman of Elam* gets off to a rollicking start when Jason and his friends Kevin and Amelia accidentally hijack a flying saucer. We're soon introduced to Shalan and Londra, aliens who explain that Jason is the hope that will unite the universe. Its up to him to retrieve a relic that will save the Earth from destruction- oh, and rescue his parents who have been kidnapped, and replaced with clones, of course, because really, what mother would serve her child cereal with salad dressing?

Book 2 of the of the series, *The Hand of Osiris*, gets off to an even faster start, this time with Jason and his friends being kidnapped in daylight, in a park, in full view of everyone. This time Kevin and Amelia have an even bigger role in saving the day as the team hops from world to world trying to evade the bad guy and find more relics.

These middle grade books are great fun, full of constant action and good characters. Jason, Kevin, and Amelia are a good team, but also realistic kids who are smart, sassy, and brave and I think they'll appeal to readers.

These books, however, are not meant for reluctant readers: they are thick and the vocabulary is not for the faint-hearted. Even some adults would quail at a few of the words used, especially in the second book. And the names of people, races, and planets (while clearly based on ancient earthly civilizations) in typical sci-fi fashion are unpronounceable.

We leave Jason and his friends in a cliffhanger of course, because there is a book 3 on its way, *The Treasure of Hathor*, and I'm looking forward to reading it.