



## Strange Gods

**Alison Kimble**

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In Alison Kimble's fantasy novel *Strange Gods*, an apathetic teenager travels to worlds beyond Earth, finding allies and enemies among gods, even as she struggles to make friends her own age.

Spooky tries to keep her head down to survive her time at a summer camp for delinquent teenagers. But then a vine behind the camp's dumpster kidnaps her to another reality, where Spooky comes face to face with the god of that world—a large, grotesque orange figure whose name translates best as Carcass. Hungry for the type of creative storytelling that only humans seem to have mastered, Carcass captures Spooky. In time, she helps him set up a computer so that he can consume stories on the internet.

But Spooky's plan to resume life on Earth and maintain a low profile is disrupted when Carcass reveals that, with the god of Earth absent, gods from other dimensions are planning to conquer the planet. Accompanied by two other reluctant teens, Elliott and Bree, Spooky goes to yet more fantastic worlds in a desperate bid to save her home.

Spooky only wants to save herself at first, but her contact with other worlds, and her burgeoning friendships with her peers, help her grow into a caring person who's willing to make enormous sacrifices to save her planet. Reflections on belonging and bullying coexist with complaints about cafeteria food; Spooky's wry, sardonic voice infuses the story with humor, while the bizarre creatures she encounters make her appreciate her imperfect home more than ever. Though Spooky worries that she is selfish, she ultimately finds redemption in her choices.

Toggling between the real world and mythical landscapes, *Strange Gods* is a supernatural coming-of-age story in which deities and teenagers cooperate to save humanity.

JEANA JORGENSEN (July / August 2021)

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