

Gemma Farley was born and raised in Adelaide, South Australia. As a lover of books and with imaginings of other worlds, she began creating her own. Gemma's debut novel, *The Stolen God*, was released in 2016, with *The Stolen God – Powers Truth* the next instalment in the series. Gemma hopes that all who read her books are swept away by their own imagination.

Dedication

For my family and friends and the adventures we have shared,
the places we have explored and the journeys still to come.

Gemma Farley

THE STOLEN GOD —
POWERS TRUTH

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Chapter 1

The New World

Looking out the window from his principal's office at Paruna College, Alax Myron still didn't know how to react to the events of the last few weeks. As a good and faithful resident of Aruna, he had always believed in the gods as he had been taught to do so as a child, but to know that it was more than religious zealotry seemed unbelievable. Gods existed and to make it even more earth shattering, one existed amongst the mortals of Aruna living as one of them, despite his royal heritage.

Two weeks ago, the world had been on the brink of a Civil War that threatened to destroy more than just human life until Bart, an unclassed mediator in the Paruna army, had stunned the world and sacrificed himself to prevent the destruction of war taking place. In his act of selflessness, Bart's origins were revealed, as his birth parents came from the skies to reclaim their stolen son who had through his own actions proven himself worthy of his birth right as a god.

Bart's heritage was as much of a shock to himself as the rest of the world and, although it made sense to those who knew the man well, the revelation changed more than his life that day. Bart had created a barrier between the two opposing sides of the army that prevented any from crossing it that did not have peaceful intentions, forcing the world to discuss the issues between the two sides, and begin the process of healing the rifts and bring about peace in Aruna. Many people had thought the barrier would disappear within hours of its erection, but to this day, it still stood as strong as

ever only allowing those with peaceful intent to pass through.

Although peace was now present throughout Aruna, it was not stable, and the level of work still required to repair the years of disagreement and resentment was enormous. Alax's personal view was that the barrier would remain in place until peace was stabilised across Aruna. Alax had attempted to find out from Bart himself if he was correct in this view but had not received a clear answer. Bart had responded to his queries stating that the answer lay in the hands of the people of Aruna and it was their choice when the barrier should come down.

The biggest shock that came from the arrival of the gods and Bart's revelation was, that when King Tolus and Queen Lia of the gods had informed Bart that it was time for him to return to the gods, Bart had actually refused stating his place was on Aruna with Kristy, the love of his life. The response from the ruling gods had been explosive and Alax believed that had it not been for their desire to have their son become part of their lives once more, it would have turned ugly.

Alax had been present on that fateful day, and watched Bart refuse to return to the realm of the gods with his parents and then leave with Kristy. King Tolus and Queen Lia had followed after him fuming, and in front of both gathered armies told Bart that he had no choice in the matter and that he would return with them at once. Alax was not the only one surprised by Bart's response to his biological family which was a short and sweet 'no' before vanishing with a crack, Kristy right beside him throughout. Those gathered were silent and still, as the gods looking angry and stunned returned back to their own realm in a darkening cloud.

The couple had not been seen for the next two days, and probably wouldn't have returned when they did if it had not been for Kristy's position within the Council of Minds and their joint desire to see the world rebuilt anew. On their return, Kristy had plunged into the tasks required of the remaining Councillors and Bart had joined in wherever he

could be of best help, rounding up individuals still angling for war or destroying hidden caches of weapons.

Their return had stirred up a hornet's nest of gossip and intrigue which was made even more fascinating by their lack of willingness to discuss the matter. Bart had even gone so far as to say that he was grateful that his lineage had enabled him to help the people of Aruna but that he considered himself one of them and Aruna was where he was meant to be.

Despite the fact that the gods had not been seen since the day that peace began, the knowledge that they did in fact exist had seen a resurgence in the old religion. Temples that once stood in ruin now stood proud and tall, new temples were being erected in areas where none existed, and daily homage was paid to the gods for their wisdom, guidance and protection by the people of Aruna. Alax found this display to be quite disturbing as although he was stunned to discover they did exist, he wondered where they had been for all this time, and why they did not intervene and prevent the war, destruction, famine and atrocities that had swept the lands over the years. If gods were all powerful, why did they not help the world they were meant to rule?

Alax was wise enough to keep these thoughts to himself as he knew they were not shared by the bulk of the people of Aruna and those who thought the same as him, were also wise enough to keep it to themselves. Kristy's return had been a warm relief to Alax though, as the stability of her presence had helped to ensure that the discussions between the Powered and the Technicians had been able to continue making certain that peace had the best chance possible.

The former ruler of the Council of Minds, Chief Councillor Feiht, had vanished hours after the arrival of the gods along with many other key members of the Council and senior individuals amongst the elite of the Powered community which left a void for Kristy to fill. Although Kristy had been loath to take on the leadership of the Council, she had seen the wisdom in taking over it as an interim measure until a restructure of the Council had been

completed and a general election held to select the new leader.

Along with Kristy, Alax and the remaining Councillors, several key members of the Technicians including Representative Aldred, the former Technician leader, had joined them as part of a drive to incorporate key members from all regions in Aruna into the governing of the land. Initially, sparks had flared as each side had striven to take the lead in the discussions, and it was only Kristy's calm and level approach which seemed to bring all onto an even keel. Although she had not wished to take on the role, it was clear to everyone that she was a natural born leader and Alax suspected that through a general election, she would be selected as the chosen ruler of the new Council.

Alax was in awe of Kristy's abilities, most would have assumed that the events of the Civil War would have changed Bart the most, but to Alax this was not the case, the woman Alax now interacted with was so different to the one he had once taught and mentored. Kristy's experience of losing Bart only to have him once more at her side, but for how long was anybody's guess, had seen her experience grief and joy far beyond what her years should have seen, and the woman this brought forth was formidable. Kristy's time with Bart, interactions on the Council with Councillor Feiht amongst those of the war, gave her an understanding to reach people on both sides of the equation, in every facet of rule, making her the fairest leader Aruna could ever hope to see and this knowledge was not lost on the people.

A decision was yet to be reached on how the future of governing Aruna would look but Alax had absolute faith that this would be a positive outcome which saw a fair approach to all. Although he would have liked to stay and continue working with the Council on the next stages, it had been necessary for him to return to Paruna College, and see to the new school year preparations and the changes that would be required to accommodate this new era of Aruna.

During the last few days, it had become apparent that the Technicians still felt segregated from the Powered

community as there was no central school for Technicians, and that it may now be time to look at melding the two student populations. This identification had meant that Alax would need to begin the process of reviewing the school structure in conjunction with several Technician educators to work out a way to integrate the different requirements into a new learning stream for all.

Returning to his desk, Alax sighed and began to once more pore over the subjects that the Powered and Technician students learnt, thankfully, history, language, mathematics and sciences were consistent across the board but the rest were extremely varied. It would not be simple to ensure that all students left with a well-rounded education but also able to master their own abilities. About to give up for the day, Alax gave a start as he heard a knock on his door. Who would be at the school at this time of the day?

Walking to the door, Alax swung it open, and to his absolute surprise, Bart stood proud and tall with a smile to greet Alax, 'Do you mind if I speak to you, Principal Myron?'

Stammering a little in his response, 'Of course, Bart, it would be an honour to talk and please call me Alax, there is no need to stand on formality anymore.'

Smiling in response, Bart moved into the office and seated himself in the chair, and patiently waited for Alax to close the door behind them and return to his chair.

'Can I offer you something to drink, Bart?' Alax indicated the pot of tea he had just brewed, and with a nod of confirmation from Bart, he poured two cups and passed one over to Bart. The two sat in silence for a few moments as each took a sip of the warm drink and Alax could not help but wonder about the young gods' appearance in his doorway.

Having worked so closely with Bart the last year during his previous schooling, it was hard for Alax to imagine that the man that sat opposite him now was stronger and more powerful than Alax could even comprehend. When he had first met Bart, had first felt the power that he could produce,