

WORLD MOTHER

A S C E N S I O N



AN
ASH BORN
NOVEL

KONN LAVERY

WORLD MOTHER

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ASH BORN
N O V E L

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THE
MACROCOSM
STORIES

AUTHOR MESSAGE: THY NATURE'S ROOTS

This book was complicated, which made it a fun challenge. I wrote the events of the World Mother's summoning in my horror novel *Seed Me* back in 2016, with an updated narrative in 2021 titled *Cultivate: Seed Me Relapse Edition*. The hellseeds also appeared in *Purity: Part 3 of Mental Damnation* as an easter egg.

Seed Me ended with an apocalyptic bang, which proved to be a major concern while building out the shared universe of *The Macrocosm*. I always intended to revisit this event and expand upon it with some fantasy hero saving the day, tying it into the Mental Damnation series. In the beginning, I intended for Scalebane, a character found in *Crystal Moth Conspiracy: Ash Born Book One*, to be the one who stops the World Mother. In the end, her agenda didn't fit the role.

While writing book one of *Ash Born*, I took a break and wrote the first draft of *World Mother Ascension*. Thus, Synarion was born. I respect nature and it appears in my writing on multiple occasions. Creating a Mother Nature defender was bound to happen.

This novel contains additional characters that lead into *Crystal Moth Conspiracy*. I'll let you discover those. Or, if you're new to the series and *The Macrocosm*, this is an excellent place to start. Welcome.

THANKS TO YOU

I'd like to thank you for grabbing this book. I hope you enjoy reading a key event within *The Macrocosm*.

Thanks to my mother, Brenda Lavery, for the love and support of my art from the beginning. You used to drive me around to grab the tools I needed as a kid, such as clay, paint, and paper to explore world building.

A big thanks to my partner Lindsey Molyneaux for putting up with my writing and blabbering for years and giving great pointers on flow and character. Thank you to my brother for always reading my work. Thanks to Kit, and those mentioned above for beta reading the book. Thank you to my father and sister for cheering me on.

Thank you to my editor, Cara Flannery for polishing this story along with *Cultivate: Seed Me Relapse Edition* to make these two books, covering the same events, work in harmony. Thanks to my friends Nastassja Brinker for the excellent photography work and to Nadia Dzyakava and Lee Nielsen for the crucial pointers regarding the cover illustration.

Thank you to friends, family, colleagues, and readers who keep diving into uncharted territories within *The Macrocosm*.

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PROLOGUE TENEBROUS

Do you remember when I first found you?

Yes.

Was it what you hoped for?

No.

Memories matter little, for history repeats in the present. Though we attempt to make ourselves better than the former, we need rules and expertise as guidance. This was why Synarion refused to let go of his past, despite the sea-kissed ashes smudged on his face and hands, reminding him he was the last.

Metallic flavour ran along his taste buds. It was his own blood, which complemented the sting from the relentless sun sizzling his back as it grazed the horizon. The waves splashed against his flesh, sliding into the sand and soaking his front. His eyes flickered and he questioned, *Why?*

No one would answer this. He could replay the events that led him to these mysterious shores, reminding himself that it was not his fault the balancers of the Grove didn't foresee the catastrophe. In the end, how would obsessive analysis aid his duty? It wouldn't.

He was weak; the shaking arms proved it as he attempted to push himself up. The beach could belong to any continent. The air tasted staler. Unlike the vibrant green forests and broad mountains he knew, the rocks further inland, past the first sand dune, were saturated pink and tan. This place was new, and that didn't mean he could let go what he was. A balancer.

A being on a camel trotted over the hill forty paces from him under the purple and red sky. Synarion stood, wobbling in the process. A small trunk rested by his side. The documents survived. Some proof of his past would live on. He pushed his jaw-length champagne blond hair from his face, tucking it behind his long, pointed ears. Next was brushing the sand from his torn clothes, awaiting the arrival of the hooded figure.

Though a desert creature, the camel was armoured. The plating shielded its eyes, forehead, neck, and upper thighs from the sun. Drapes of blood red and emerald-rich silk fabric ran to its knees, complementing the dual-coloured sash of its rider under the pearl cloak. This stranger belonged to some legion beyond Synarion's knowledge. He felt inapt within Mother

Nature's world. He served her, protected her, and thought he understood what she was. The loss of his home and this strange new land proved her mysterious nature had far more to offer than he could have imagined.

The rider brought the camel to a stop ten paces away. The face was difficult to see due to the scarf and metal goggles on their face. Small slits let the newcomer gaze into Synarion's violet eyes. They had wrapped layers of tan and white clothing tightly around their entire form, covering them from head to toe. The intriguing characteristic was the dusted pendant attached to a chain around their neck. Its circular form contained a naked woman with flaming eyes. Vines draped from her scalp, like hair, and over her breasts. Her bark-covered hands and feet pressed against the rim, covered in leaves. The mini sculpture's body stood in front of a pentagram made of holes cut into the round petals of a flower.

"The sun is dangerous," they said with a voice coated in honey and ice, two features Synarion wouldn't relate to here.

"Where am I?" Synarion asked, throat coarse.

"Nowhere near your collapsed Zingalg, nymph." Their gaze moved to the ocean, examining the rocks and the sand. "The shore is moving inward."

"Where are we?"

The stranger didn't answer. They stared. It wasn't a usual look, even while being faceless. The newcomer sucked Synarion's vision in. The darkening world around blurred, homing in on whoever this was. Inside the metal slits was a glimmer of jade eyes. They looked past his own and pierced his psyche, pushing into his memories of stone temples crumbling

due to the cracking earth. The waters flooded into elevated forests at the base of mountains. They, too, tumbled to the violent tides, sending mass avalanches towards the countless screaming souls begging for a saviour. Their cries failed to be answered. The sentient and the beasts alike failed to escape. Death . . . so much death for one soul to bear.

Further, the hypnotic eyes moved past the recent terrors, beyond his balancer duties and into who he was. Synarion, the nymph: born and raised to protect Mother Nature. Simple. Why would there be a need for anything else? Their host was the most important thing, and his humble sacrifice was what mattered.

This psychic connection was a two-way channel. He could glimpse into the stranger. She. Hers wasn't as clear. Not an Earth-giving being, not at all. Foreign. The energy radiating from her was far darker, containing a power he hadn't encountered. It had the depth of a thousand lives intertwined with endless youth. Despite the magnetizing grab, it made his gut want to dig itself into the ground.

The sun slipped past the horizon, and she lowered her scarf, exposing the milk skin. Peeking past the lush apple lips were hints of canine fangs far too long to be human or nymph. His trance ended with the commanding word, "Come." The stranger pulled the leather rope attached to the camel's head, turning east.

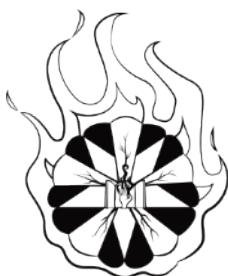
He grabbed the trunk containing his past with both hands and followed, dragging his bare feet in the scorching sand.

PROLOGUE: TENEBROUS

Was it what you wished for?

No.

I wish it were.



CHAPTER 1

MORE THAN BLOOD

Day one, Thursday.

The living in Mother Nature's garden isn't different from the thousands of bacteria required on and in one's body. The difference is that Earth's most intelligent bacteria attempt to destroy its host. If more souls understood her wrath as Synarion did, they wouldn't need balancers.

Maintaining order took him to the darkest depths of the world. For example: he held a left arm, severed at the elbow, covered in puncture holes forming rings running along the arm to the palm. He was no fool and wore a rubber glove, knowing how practical human forensics were.

The limb was one piece of a hacked body that belonged to a man whose head lay sideways, wet in blood. It, too, had puncture hole rings covering its form. The formations were on an angle, with one piercing through the eyeball. Rings wrapped around the legs, torso, and right arm, causing blood to drizzle from each new pit in the flesh.

Synarion dropped the arm in the tub and stood, taking the rubber glove off and stuffing it into his pocket. *What a mess*, he thought while walking across the creaking hardwood floor and into the kitchen. A balancer must stomach the most grotesque Mother Nature had to offer to be rewarded with the most beautiful. He hadn't seen the latter in centuries.

Balancing, on occasion, also meant launching silver throwing stars into a hand, keeping it pinned to an old, warped desk. Synarion did that on arrival, making the tenant wheeze in this filth-and-dust-covered studio apartment's kitchen. It is not the scenario you would imagine an ancient protector of the world to be in. Life's nonlinear path is ever-winding.

The balding man in front of him grunted and spat curses, for the pain overwhelmed his nervous system. His fingers twitched with blood seeping from where the throwing star shredded through the surface of his pretendinous bands, keeping him married to the table, inches away from his Glock.

"You cauliflower-eared piece of shit!" the man hissed.

Rule one: look like you belong.

Synarion kicked a glass pipe on the tiled ground, walked to the man and snagged the Glock. He examined the weapon, fascinated by the weight and craftsmanship. Guns were not for

him, though he was forever curious of man's evolving empire. "These are so barbaric, aren't they?" he said.

"Says the psycho using throwing stars." The man groaned. He'd use his other hand to pull the star free if Synarion hadn't beaten it to a purple, red, swollen mess minutes ago. It lay lifeless to his side.

"They're cleaner," Synarion said, tucking the Glock under his belt. "Less waste, and if you're capable of aiming, they're silent and don't leave a trace. Unlike your dismemberment methods. So brutal."

The man bit his lip, face scrunching into a prune.

Synarion examined the room, seeing the small unit had little to offer. The cracked ceiling had brown water stains around the openings. A hole-covered mattress rested in one corner. The lamp by the window flickered in inconsistent pulses. Living this type of life illustrated that the man wasn't interested in finer details, unlike Synarion.

For example, the throwing star, speckled in scarlet human fluid, had the balancers' once symbolic icon of a gate covered in vines engraved into it. Above were four finger holes, engineered for a second function of close combat.

The human, on the other hand, had a lime-green fridge coated in mysterious brown splatters, matching the dirty stove. To the right of them was a crumb-infested counter with a bag of black and red seeds. The plant embryos looked familiar. They flooded Synarion with a sinking feeling he hadn't had in a long time. The texture had a cosmic depth and the red burst with vibrant flame of another world.

"What are those?" Synarion asked, pointing to them.

“Quit pussyfooting around,” the man said.

“Pussyfooting?” asked the other. “I haven’t heard that in quite some time. A person a good century old used to say that.”

“Get to the point. You got me.”

“Yes, I have. A familiar blessed with elongated life at the promise of immortality. In exchange, you perform services for your master. Like whatever you did to that poor man in your tub.”

“An unusual request.”

“Like those seeds? A lot of unusual in this space.”

Synarion placed one black boot on the empty chair beside the man, mastering the classic power stance, and leaned into the human’s coffee irises. “What did you do to that man?”

“Cut him to pieces.”

“The puncture hole rings?”

“A weird kink.”

“Uh-huh. What are those seeds?”

“You’re one weird fuck, aren’t you?” the man said. His eyes moved side to side, analyzing his victor. They move past his eyes, unfazed by the brown contact lenses, to the scarred ears.

“These?” Synarion asked, pointing at the bump-covered cartilage. “Not one of my preferred choices I’ve had to make. Yet, I had no other options since you humans have done a fine job of managing the planet.”

“What the fuck you sayin’ man?” The man grunted as he experienced another wave of pain.

“What’s your name?” Synarion asked.

“Does it matter?”

“You’re not into answering any of my questions.”

“Yeah, well, you got me dead,” he said.

“I’m not the killing type. I will if I must. That there is where I differ from the cat.”

“Metaphors? Fuck.” The man rolled his eyes.

“Okay. No more *pussyfooting*. We’ll get to it.”

“End it.”

Synarion shook his head. “Not my style.”

“You prefer to cripple them, eh?”

“This country has healthcare, doesn’t it? Quite progressive.”

“Fuck you.” The man spat a thick slime of saliva at him. Most of it landed into his tattered beard, glistening in the blinking light.

“Oh, I almost forgot,” Synarion said. “You don’t want to go anywhere near public service.” Synarion leaned over the table and tapped the throwing star, causing the man to grind his teeth. “Not with your history. Do you want to keep roleplaying as a baboon and me the playful feline, or are you going to tell me who your master is?”

The man’s face dropped, skin turning ice. His gaze narrowed in, brows slanting as if he weren’t in pain. No more bullshit as he requested. He lived in a polluted pig’s den and participated in recreational drugs based on that pipe on the ground. He was sober due to Synarion’s words.

“Don’t know nothin’ about what you’re saying,” he said.

“I’m sure you don’t. That’s why you were so keen on going for that Glock of yours, moments ago?”

“You came from the fuckin’ window, what’d you expect?”

“A little more decency. I thought you were inviting people in with that open window. Canadians are supposed to be polite. Now, who is your master?”

“I am.”

Synarion revealed another throwing star, slipping his fingers into the holes to form a small blade. He brought the fine metal to the man’s brown shirt and down, peeling through the fabric. The edge poked against the human’s sweat glazed torso and the shirt’s fabric flapped open, revealing a golden pendant of a naked woman with fire for eyes. She stood in front of a flower-pentagram. Yes, that same iconic flowergram that Synarion first laid eyes on that fateful day on those sandy shores.

Synarion leaned away, taking the weapon away from the man’s skin. His squinted face said more than words could. The balancer was expecting a pendant of loyalty to their master. Each familiar had one. This pendant, though, was not supposed to be here. It made him question his balancer profession. Had he become so incompetent in his own skills?

“Where’d you get this?” Synarion asked, staring at the golden woman’s vines for hair.

The man glanced around, eyes shifting, breath rate increased. Beads of sweat grew on his scalp, drizzling on his face.

“Answer me,” Synarion sneered. He lunged the blade to the man’s throat, poking into the flesh. The hostile nature was not in his character. All it took was one symbol to knock him off equilibrium. He took a deep breath and retreated into his mind, retracing the steps that brought him here.

Yes, he caught wind of a bloodsucker in southern British Columbia. Yes, he went to investigate. They had a habit of

forgetting their place in nature, which required a balancer's fine touch to keep them in line. Bloodsucker origins were for more gothic, following their classic mythos. Yes, bloodsuckers was slang for vampires, not to be mixed with vampyres with a *y*, which were your fallen angels. Yes, it was rare to find one so bold and in the open, leeching off people's life force, and being deemed a localized serial killer on the Canadian All Media Broadcasting channel. Yes, Synarion had to enforce balance.

His balancing process was simple and direct. Bloodsuckers, like most old world beings, must hide or follow rule one: look like you belong. It maintained order.

The investigation of the bloodsucker led Synarion here because most bloodsucker mythology holds true. They like to keep a human familiar around to do their dirty work. They promise these poor saps they'll be converted into a vampire if they complete *x*, *y*, and *z*. Their quests include luring people into a den, like this place, to be murdered. Unlike the usual bloodsucker scenario, this man didn't have his master's sigil resting on his chest. Instead, a pendant from his long-forgotten past.

His balancing process was clear. He hadn't seen a bloodsucker and their familiar step out of line from their cliché. This man should have his master's emblem.

"Answer me," Synarion said, lifting the throwing star under the rope necklace. With a single pull, the blade cut through it, and he snatched the pendant.

"You're too late," the other whispered. "In four days, the World Moth—"

"World what?"

The man looked to the window, eyes glimmering, and swallowed a lump of saliva. “You’re invited in!”

Shit, Synarion thought.

A loud bang erupted from behind them. The man’s head throttled with brain matter and skull fragments splattering the wall.

Synarion pocketed the pendant and raised his throwing star to see a man in black across the room leap from the window frame. Even with Synarion’s keen vision, he was too fast. It was not over yet, and the balancer bolted from the chair. He placed the throwing star in his mouth and hopped through the window, descending the fire escape, and into the alley where the assassin ran ten meters ahead. He moved too fast, indicating one thing: this was the bloodsucker.

The balancer took his throwing star and flung it at his target, pulling a second from his belt. The first blade spun at lightning speed, plummeting into the vampire’s trench coat. A hiss bounced off the brick walls. The bloodsucker spun around, walking in reverse, and raised a handgun. It spoke once, and twice!

One bullet missed. Another clipped Synarion’s shoulder, ripping the trucker leather jacket. He launched another star. It pierced into the bloodsucker’s gun-wielding hand. He dropped the weapon with a yelp, stopping under a streetlight, and boomed the roar of a tiger. The jaw elongated further than any human’s, showcasing the protruding canine teeth and black gums. The slicked-back hair shone from the lamp post light. A strike of jealousy hit Synarion, for this bloodsucker kept his

pointed ears on the side of his blanched face. A bold move, like the sudden sprint forward. Synarion skidded to a stop.

He reached into his jacket's inner pocket and revealed two hand-crafted silver spiked knuckles as the bloodsucker rushed at him with sharp claws. The bloodsucker leaped into the air, spinning at high speeds, turning his body into a cyclone of blades.

Synarion dashed to the side, avoiding the landing death twister. The assassin clawed with both hands. Synarion dodged. He lunged his left fist, slamming it into the foe's gut. His second fist landed in the forearm.

The bloodsucker swung, slicing Synarion's cheek. Too close. The bloodsucker continued, pushing Synarion with one arm. His wounded one reached for his coat's pocket. He lifted a burner phone, pressing some buttons, and Synarion lunged a knee into his face, pushing him away. The phone slid into the pocket. An opportunity opened: Synarion took a throwing star and hacked into the open hand, slicing the fingers clean off. His opponent yelped, hunched over and hobbled from danger.

"These fights get old, bloodsucker," Synarion said, stepping forward. He couldn't pause. Vampires were opportunistic.

"A balancer, eh?" the bloodsucker sneered.

"You say eh? Please. You're too old to be Canadian." Synarion launched a fist, missing the first, and threw an uppercut, jabbing his forearm. The bloodsucker took a wide swipe with their good hand, a kick, pushing Synarion enough to give him a running start.

Coward. Synarion thought.

The assassin gained distance and extended their arms upward, remaining fingers pointed to the night sky. They leaped into the air. The skin shriveled with their body shrinking. The black hair shrunk into peach fuzz. The legs shrunk faster than the arms which became too long for an anthropomorphic form. The bloodsucker slipped from the collar of their black shirt. The clothes fell to the floor as the fingers and skin expanded into wings. Their skull stretched into a muzzle. The ears ended on a point, finalizing the transformation into a bat.

Synarion threw another star at the flapping creature. The blade sliced through the wing and the bloodsucker headed for the skies, screeching. Blood dripped from its new wound.

“Bastard,” Synarion said. He stopped by the abandoned clothes. Either this bloodsucker had some cunning moves or Synarion was getting deficient with balance enforcing. He wouldn’t have let a careless throw like that happen on an escaping target. Either way, the fact was that the bloodsucker got away.

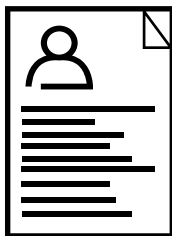
He kicked the pile of fabric to move the coat, the pants, and shirt to see if there was anything of value. The prick was traveling light. He must have known he would have to flee. Not many people have a fighting chance against balancers.

Those decapitated fingers on the concrete floor didn’t matter. Food for the rats. Bloodsuckers healed; unless you used a wooden stake, or the right prayer, you wouldn’t damage them. As if prayers mattered anymore.

Synarion had memorized the checklist on how to rid a bloodsucker disrupting balance. Under his jacket he kept his small stake. He didn’t want to kill this one. He needed

information. A bloodsucker doesn't kill their familiar unless it is of grave importance. The foolish man trusted his master and gave him permission to come into his home, a requirement for vampires to enter a space.

The bloodsucker's leftovers didn't offer much except for the burner phone. It was unusual for them to reach for the cell during combat. How it related to the forgotten ghosts of Synarion's past is a new mystery that could not remain unresolved. The balancing offense deepened.



BALANCER PROFILE SUMMARY

Name: Unknown

Species: Vampire (Bloodsucker)

Location: Surrey, British Columbia, Canada

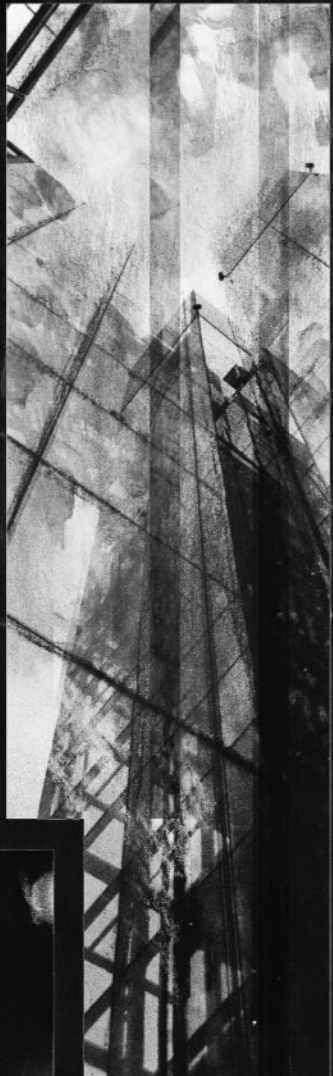
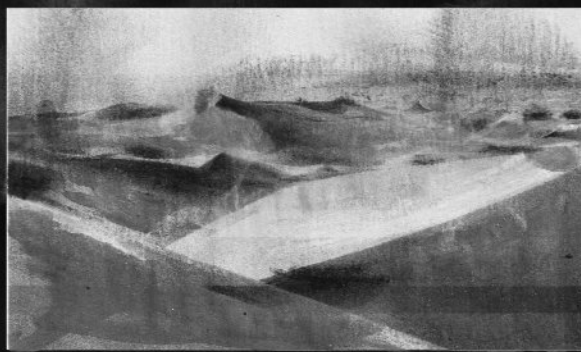
Description: Five foot eight, pale white. Harsh mutation. Pointed ears, flat and wide nose, black eyes, and irregular fangs. Sharp claws. Black hair.

Balancing Offence: Gluttonous. Kills too many humans for their blood and has police looking for a serial killer. It draws far too much attention, jeopardizing what remains of the old world.

Notes: Travels light. Decent in hand-to-hand combat. They covered their last victim in bite marks forming rings. I haven't seen this before. He killed his own familiar. The vampire wanted to hide a secret involving a golden pendant of a woman, which must have a more profound balancing offence. It's a symbol from my past. It should remain there.



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