

Birth of the Anima: Ancient Language of the Earth: Book 1

Kelsey K. Sather

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In Kelsey K. Sather's powerful epic fantasy novel *Birth of the Anima*, generations of women fight to restore the planet to her natural balance.

More than two thousand years ago, Avni, the fifth Anima, helped to save her people from dire servitude. She was followed centuries later by Bazi, who stopped a renewed incursion of occupiers. Bazi was followed by Oili, a princess whose destiny was greater than being someone else's bride; and Oili was followed by Erie, who married above her station and had to flee her home.

Across millennia, these women assume the redemptive role of the Anima, an elemental feminine force with the power to defeat rapacious conquerors. Even when their enemies operate under different banners, each serves the same purpose: to sow disorder, and to separate people from the natural freedoms that are every being's inheritance.

Closer to the present, after the Imperium has claimed most land masses on the planet and squelched magic, a doctoral student, Freda, finds a scroll during an archaeological dig. It hints at the Anima's origins, and its secrets propel her into a quest to learn the truth about the ancient ways. She may even become the twelfth and final Anima herself—if fate doesn't have other plans.

The novel plays upon a painful dichotomy of empowered womanhood: even the Anima, who has the ability to change the world, makes considerable sacrifices to fill her role. The novel's women want to be mothers, lovers, daughters—even just free; the forces that they stand against prevent them from pursuing individual happiness, though. Generation upon generation, their wrenching sacrifices grow.

Though for the last Anima “the future remains unwritten,” *Birth of the Anima* is a feminist fantasy novel with a serious hook.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (March / April 2021)

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