

The last

She went eagerly to the priest. It was an honour to be offered up by the tribe. Her sacrifice would make the tribe stronger and more cohesive. By giving her life up, Ceridwen would ensure the coming harvest was bountiful. Yet, still, a small part of her wished for more life. There was more she wanted to do.

As the priest offered her last meal, she let her mind scan through these last sensations and sift through the final feelings.

The gruel was warm and soft. The bland, pappiness meant the herbs which the priest had added were detectable as a kind of chewy grit that lingered on the tongue. The valerian was bitter. It would, at least, help her connect with Ceridwen. This was after all, her purpose- her life was to be given to enhance those of her community.

The wooden spoon clanked in the now empty bowl and the priest raised his voice to the dawn sky. His song thanked her for her sacrifice and asked the Goddess to ensure her spirit passed on safely and to bring prosperity to the tribe.

Still, the little part inside her was sad to go, despite the honour. The part wished her purpose had been different, had brought small bouncing children and a happy family life. However, she understood the honourable position her sacrifice afforded.

The herbs from the meal of gruel began to kick in. Her muscles relaxed and her ears thrummed with the bass notes of the priest's song.

She allowed herself to follow the elders to the Sarsen Stone. It loomed grey and huge in the pink morning.

The first rays of sunlight danced behind her eyelids. Her ears heard the priest draw the sacrificial stone knife. It was all over suddenly!

The body lay quietly in the soil. Her body stayed cold and curled under the growing grass.

Aeons later, the scientist was amazed to find the last meal was still accessible in the desiccated stomach. With reverence, he slit the dried skin and noted methodically the final meal of grain and valerian root. Forensically, he noted the details in his log and smiled at his rare find.