

Lady Celandine

She was a beautiful lady. Slim and lithe, athletic and fit, not obviously muscular, but toned and honed. She had bright eyes, which would be best described as amber, the hue of a clear, rich honey and her hair was a warm, rusty ginger, like molten toffee.

She had a handsome partner and a brood of triplets and she worked hard to keep them well fed by working every night and after a few short hours sleep, she would keep her home tidy and entertain the babies.

Sometimes, when she had a moment to herself, she would go to her favourite spot, a quiet small area of woodland, where she would lie under the canopy of the kissing bowers, on a carpet of soft oak leaves which mingled with the greenery and the heliotropic yellow blooms of her favourite flower, the celandine.

One day, she ate something which didn't agree with her and she started to feel unwell. Knowing her brood were safe and sleeping at home, she walked with increasing discomfort to her special place. She sat amongst the little yellow flowers and took steady breaths to try to keep her head clear and to soothe her churning stomach.

She started to feel faint, and so accepted the waves of fatigue that swept over her and lay down and felt as though she was on a cloud, so soft was the blanket underneath her. She felt the involuntary impulse to curl up, in embryonic fashion, and this brought some comfort to the cramps in her belly.

She felt as though she were drifting into a dream, but one she could direct, as she thought about her triplets, slumbering in their unique way, in one bed, top to tail; that was the only way they would settle. She thought of her partner, his loyalty and strength. He would look after their brood, should she die she reassured her aching heart.

She started to drift further into unconsciousness and her honey eyes began to mist over so that the bright tiger orange became biscuit fawn. Her beautiful body started to slow down as though preparing itself for the long journey to the next world, and her auburn hair, once slick and shiny, dulled and paled and blew gently in the breeze.

Her breathing was bearably perceptible when the woman and her dog neared. The dog, sensing imminent death, gave her a wide berth, but the woman, captured by her beauty, knelt down beside her. The woman too, instinctively felt that her life was ebbing away, but instead of creating panic, she just stroked her face gently and offered her some kind words of solace.

As she took her last breath, she was thankful for the soothing kindness of the woman. Humans are funny creatures, she thought; one had poisoned her deliberately, but another would bend down to caress her face, risking a bite or contracting one of the diseases that we are all supposed to carry.

The woman stood up and called her dog to her side and put his lead on. As she began to walk away, she stopped and turned to see the beautiful lady one last time. The fox lay curled amongst the oak leaves and celandine, her beauty stilled, her vitality dimmed and her brood made motherless by one cruel human with a poisoned pill.

