

The Ritual

By SBViking, Ranger Elite

Legends tell of places in the deep woods, where the laws of man and the new gods hold little sway. These are the domains of the old gods, places of primal power that can help or hinder an adventurer that has set out to explore them. Legends say that in these most ancient and wild places, the old gods still grant favours, be they boons of soul and mind or powerful relics of bygone ages, to those still willing to perform sacred rituals at these locations. The first stage of these rituals is a cleansing process, often a wash in sacred spring water, to clean both body and soul. The second step of the ritual is to give your body to the priestess that maintains such a site, be she a wandering cleric of the god, or a being of magical origin. The seeker of the favours must lie with the priestess, giving their body and soul to the priestess and, by extension, the old gods. Should a seeker be found worthy, then a hidden shrine will appear and lead the adventurer onwards to trials unknown.

Valerie breathed in, remembering the legends about this place. The crisp air filled her lungs as she observed the sight that sprawled out in front of her. A great cavern rolled forth, golden beams of sunlight cascading their way through the end of the cave, illuminating a shimmering waterfall that rolled from some unknown source high above her head, crashing down onto the edge of the stone platform that she stood on. Standing in the waterfall, completely naked was the priestess who led her here. Her dark hair flowed down her back, mirroring the water that flowed and rolled around her. Her pale skin shimmered as the sunlight danced across the water droplets that coated her from head to toe.

“come on in” The Cleric said, almost singing the words. Val understood her name now, Melody she had called herself. Fitting, she hadn't bloody stopped singing or humming since the moment they met!

“now now, don't be nervous, you've come this far” Melody gave Val a sly wink and a flash of a cheeky smile.

“What are you waiting for? Get undressed, you can't perform the ritual wearing that clanky stuff.” She pointed at the half plate that Val wore. Val sighed and began unbuckling straps and undoing knots that kept her armour on. As Val lay each part of armour she removed meticulously on the ground, she felt nervous. Normally she could rely on her armour and her training to get out of most of scrapes that she ended up in, but being stark naked in a strange cave, her training didn't cover this!

Val was half undressed when Melody began singing, a soft chant at first rose up, intertwining prayer with harmony, creating a song that seemed to awaken the earth around them. Hastily Val kicked off the clothes that still wrapped around her leaving them in a crumpled mess. She stepped tentatively out of her boots and onto the rock, which she found to be covered in a thin layer of moss, providing a nice soft texture under her feet. Val stood, naked in the cavern, listening to the wondrous prayer-song that Melody was singing as she played elegantly in the waterfall.

Val steeled herself, bracing against the chill of the waterfall as she strode through it,

determined to see this through. Even though she was bracing for the chill touch of the water, she still gasped. Her body tensing slightly as the water caressed her skin. she found herself on a small stony island, covered in soft moss. Melody was in front, humming softly to herself as she played with a lock of hair as she stared out across the expanse of the lake.

“are you ready?” Melody asked, spinning quickly to meet Valerie's gaze.

“I, I think I am.” Val replied, still shivering ever so slightly from the waterfall.

Melody tutted, “you still treat this like its a trial, some form of test to be bested with courage and honour” Melody gracefully stepped up to Val, taking her hands suddenly.

“this is about giving yourself, body and soul to me, that is all.” Melody pulled Val in, kissing her firmly on her lips, the chill from the water now left suddenly, replaced by a deep warm sensation. As melody pulled away, revelling in the surprise and confusion that she saw etched on Valerie's face, she once again asked

“are you ready, to begin the ritual.”

“yes...” Val replied, biting the corner of her lip slightly “yes I am...”