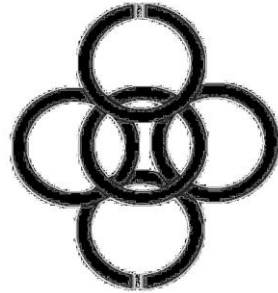


# The Raising



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The Raising  
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# Prologue

It's been said full moons are made for lovers and the insane.

*It must be true*, Chris Morgan thought, *because this chick is driving me mad!*

"Have you ever seen anything more beautiful?"

"*Yeab...* she's sitting on top of me."

"I meant the moon, silly."

Chris rolled his eyes and shifted impatiently. "I know. And sure, it's just fucking beautiful. Now come on baby, enough with the star gazing and a little more action."

"Just one more minute."

Chris sighed. *Yeab, yeab, just one more minute. In the meantime, I'm goin' fuckin' nuts here.*

The woman's long legs were tucked neatly around him, his hands spanning her waist. He pulled them away, sliding up and over her ribcage until he reached the heavy line of her breasts. He paused there a moment, taking time to admire their beauty as the moon's amber sheen lit them provocatively. If this was a test of his willpower, he was going to lose. His fingers nearly trembled as he pinched one of her nipples between his thumb and forefinger, feeling himself grow even harder as the nub swelled, pleading to be suckled.

*Jesus Christ, I'm gonna bust a nut if she doesn't fuck me pretty damn quick!*

Frustrated, he lifted his knees, shuffling forwards to ease the painful knot in his back. The erection he sported was aching almost as badly. Tucked against the dip of her ass, he consciously rubbed his taut member up and down against the woman's warm flesh.

"Is that a hint?" she asked coyly, encouraging him with a sharp tilt of her ass.

Chris bit his lip and groaned, "Shit, doll. If you keep that up, that hint's gonna be dripping down the crack of your ass. Now stop messin' around and climb on board for fuck's sake!"

The woman laughed lightly, squirming on top of him.

*Fuuuccckk...*

\*\*\*\*

Chris Morgan, 36-year-old husband and father of two, had met the woman at a local bar just a couple of hours earlier. A rival trucking company had been short handed and he'd been offered three hundred bucks to drop a load of fertilizer off at a nursery upstate. He would have foregone the trip if it wasn't for the fact this month had been slow and his bank account was getting tight. But even more than that, it was simply fodder to the unending supply of bitch rants from the old lady. That morning's latest wave of venom had been levied just as he was leaving their over-crowded Bronx apartment.

"I can't buy the kids proper cereal anymore. You know they like Captain Crunch and it's 4 bucks a fuckin' whack. Jordan keeps going on about his friend Todd and how his mom buys those little individual boxes? Those are even fuckin' more! I mean, what do want me to tell them, Chris? Daddy can't afford to feed you?"

"Fine! Tell 'em that!" he'd snapped back. "For Christ's sake, they'll sit there in front of the TV picking their noses and eating it, but when it comes to cereal, they have to have the good shit?" He stalked towards the front door, flinging it open. "Do what you want, Dawn. Drain the account. We can always eat rats."

"You're an ass, you know that?" she called, flashing him the finger as he slammed it shut behind him.

"Right back at yah, hun."

\*\*\*\*

The entire way up to Haviland, Chris fumed about the argument. By the time he'd come back through Poughkeepsie, he was seething. It was then he realized, if he didn't stop to imbibe in one or two before heading home, the loaded shotgun his father had bequeathed to him might be bagged and tagged in a double homicide tomorrow. That made him chuckle. Maybe a little too much.

A roadside tavern loomed off the state highway just ahead. The parking lot out front was large and empty. He wouldn't even have to maneuver around cars. Chris smiled at his good luck as he rolled into the dirt lot, parked and went inside. His smile grew even wider as he stepped through the front door. It was nothing more than a dark, grimy hell-hole of a place. It fit his mood perfectly.

A red neon COORS sign flashed on and off over the mirrored bar's shelf of half-empty liquor bottles. To the right of him lay a green felt pool table, pockmarked with gouges and scratches. Two equally worn cues criss-crossed its tattered surface. Water ringed tables with the battered remains of wood slat chairs, sat idly by waiting for one of the shit-faced yokels to use as either a bed or a weapon, depending on the extent of their intoxication.

*I've stumbled onto Hicksville's premier meeting spot*, Chris smirked, plopping his hefty six-foot-one, 190 pound frame down on a barstool.

"Budweiser, please," he said to the obviously bored barkeep leaning against the counter.

The pockmarked guy glowered at the interruption, lowering the wrinkled Penthouse in his hands as if he'd been pulled away from a head-of-state banquet. "Fine," he mumbled and tossed the magazine aside.

With just as much enthusiasm, he shuffled across to the cooler and pulled out a bottle, turning and plopping it in front of the trucker with a curt, "Kitchen's closed." The skin mag was back in his hands within seconds.

"Thanks," Chris said, mouthing a silent "*You prick*" for good measure.

A couple of barstools down, a haggard looking stick of a man sat wasted and dazed in front a half-empty glass of draft. His face drooped, whitewashed eyes peering out of a hound dog's mug. The years of hard work and too much drink were written in every wrinkle, etched across his hunched defeated shoulders. He murmured unhappily to himself as the tavern's front door suddenly burst open. A 50ish looking woman with frizzy blond hair and stretched to the max tiger-striped tights stalked inside like a deranged jungle cat. Her blazing orange Max Factor lips were stamped with an equally vivid sneer.

She planted herself behind him. Liver spotted hands clenched two ample hips as she waited impatiently for acknowledgment. Receiving none, she took hold of one the man's bony arms and shook it like a dog with a bone, begging in a shrill whine, "Come on, Charlie. You promised we were gonna do something tonight."

Obviously having heard this a million times before, Charlie snorted, wrenching away from the garish red fingernail's clamped to his elbow. "Piss off, Mary. I told you I wasn't doing shit tonight. Go finger yourself and leave me alone."

"*Fuck you then!*" she crowed.

A sharp "goodbye" slap knocked the man's head forward before the woman stormed off into the night.

The trucker cringed.

Charlie didn't flinch. Neither did the bartender. It was obvious this 'loving' scenario had been played out on more than one occasion as the old man effortlessly slipped back into his alcohol-soaked lament.

*Poor bastard*, Chris thought. Then he remembered Dawn.

*Fuck, I've got problems of my own.*

Chris had been considering leaving his wife for the last few months. The marriage was simply an experiment in agony now, and even though he still loved her, he wasn't sure he could take much more of the constant bickering. The trucker fingered the rim of his bottle, more annoyed than sad.

Lately, they fought about everything: money, the kids, his job, her lack of a job - *sex*. Mind you, even though she'd put on a few pounds over the years, she was still damned attractive. On those rare occasions she did allow him a passing pity fuck, he happily engaged her with a dip of the old trouser snake.

Chris watched a bead of sweat roll down his glass. *When was the last time I got some? A month ago?*

It had been. And, as Chris recalled, it had been more like fucking a sack of flour. He frowned. *Maybe she doesn't find me attractive anymore? I mean, sure, I ain't no Brad Pitt, but I got all my hair and this beer gut...* He looked down. *...ain't too bad. So why the fuck am I getting nothin' in the sack?*

There'd been a hotel a few miles back. *Maybe I should check in for the night*, he thought. *Play a few games of pool. Get drunk. Start a fight or two.* He thought about it a minute or two, then tossed back the Bud and set the bottle down hard. *Fuck it. Life sucks. Get used to it.* He tossed a fiver on the counter and stood to leave.

That's when he saw her.

The woman's dark hair and eyes to match nearly dissolved into the stained walnut paneling behind her. If she'd never stretched out those two stunning slim legs, he would have never even noticed her. But she did, and happily, he leered at the package. Visually raping the tantalizing dip of cleavage straining against a low-cut black tee. *Jeez, she ain't wearing a bra either!* Chris felt himself stir as she lowered two feather duster lashes, favoring him with a silky smile.

He turned to the bartender. "One for me and one of whatever she's having."

As he crossed the room towards her, the married Chris, the one who had a wife and two kids at home, warned, "*You're gonna regret this.*"

But the other Chris, the one who hadn't sex in a month and now had a raging hard-on, stopped in front of the woman and inquired, "Hey there. You all alone tonight?"

"Unfortunately."

He shivered. Her voice was soft and feminine. Exactly what a woman's voice should be.

*Damn had given him the finger.*

He sat down.

"Pleased to meet you. Name's Chris."

"Charlotte," she introduced, extending her hand.

He accepted it, grinning like a schoolboy as she smiled coyly at the overt brush of his thumb across her knuckles.

They chatted pleasantly over a couple of drinks and he soon discovered she'd been dumped here by a boyfriend after he took off with one of her friends. Chris shook his head, "What kind of an idiot leaves a woman like you?"

Charlotte shrugged, "I don't know, but the jerk left me without a ride home. Would you mind giving me a lift? I hate taking you out of your way, but I don't know how much longer I can hang out here."

When she reached out and touched his knee, Chris contemplated helping her. When her hand strayed further up his thigh, coming to a rest on his bulging crotch, he said, "Of course, doll. Your chariot awaits."

Chris paid the tab and the two made their way outside, the large trucker looking more like a faithful puppy as he bounced along behind her.

"Nice rig," she said as he helped her up into the eighteen wheeler.

"Definitely nice rig," Chris replied, leering at the curve of her rump as she swung around and sat down. He shut the door, then crossed around the front of the truck, humming happily to himself. As he hopped up into the cab, his conscience pestered, *You do realize what your doing, right?*

*Fuck off,* Chris replied silently, slamming the door shut. *Consciences are a pain in the ass.*

A few seconds later they were rolling North down State Highway Nine. It was the wrong way for him and he was going to be late as hell getting back to the city... but fuck it! *Damn's bitching can wait,* he thought, eyeballing the woman beside him.

Charlotte was busy entertaining herself, leisurely pressing her palm down over the front of her denim skirt as she watched the lights of the city flash by her window. Chris could feel his heart racing as she nonchalantly slipped her fingers up under the garment, her hand twitching back and forth. Charlotte's head lolled back against the metal panel of the sleeping compartment, her movements becoming more frantic.

*Holy fuck! She's as hot as an alley cat in heat!*

The trucker struggled to keep his eyes on the road ahead, but he was finding it awfully damned hard considering the circumstances. They were just coming up on the Culinary Institute when Charlotte suddenly spoke up, "You can pull off just ahead." She pointed out a small dirt road that appeared out of nowhere to the left of the highway. A dark line of trees indicated the beginnings of a forest nestled deep into the distance.

Chris nodded and geared down. He pulled the large truck off to the shoulder, then hit the hazards and turned to her, saying with a detectable tone of disappointment, "Sorry, but there's no way I'm taking this beast down that road. I'll never get her out again."

Charlotte's warm brown eyes gleamed seductively in the cab. "I know a spot. If you're game, we could have a little fun."

Chris's stomach flip-flopped at the suggestion.

*Could he do this? Could he cheat on his wife?*

It's not like he hadn't thought about it before and tonight had been a wonderful little diversion... but, could he actually go through with it?

Charlotte slid the black t-shirt over her head and the trucker gulped as her breasts broke free, swaying heavily in the heated cab. His poking erection twitched positively in response and immediately the moral dilemma evaporated..

"Anything you say, doll!"

Within seconds, the two had left the truck and crossed the highway. A narrow trail led into the timberline and the pair quickly found themselves knee deep in dense undergrowth. Thin new branches whipped at Chris's face and arms. Roots tripped him up. As his foot disappeared into a blind dip in the forest floor, he grunted, beginning to wonder if this spot even existed. To add to it, the throbbing lump in his boxers was beginning to droop as a fog of bloodsuckers swarmed around his head. The insects dodged the man's aggravated swipes, honing in on the sweet scent of carbon dioxide.

*Come on, lady. I don't have all night,* he thought bitterly, swatting a mosquito from the back of his hand.

Then as if reading his mind, Charlotte called back with a cheery, "We're here."

"Great!"

*It's about fucking time!*

As they entered the small glen, Charlotte slipped out of her black pumps and let them drop to the ground. A thatch of well trodden earth and bramble surrounded a large gray flat stone in the clearing. Chris peered through the darkness. Massive oaks and fat evergreens enshrined the glade, resembling something out of a pagan god's dream. A natural temple with moonlight pouring through an open canopy, cloaking the granite altar in a blanket of white. The only vestiges of

civilization came in the form of beer bottles, burger wrappers and Styrofoam cups that dotted the serene surroundings.

*Where the hell has she taken me, Chris wondered. Looks like a make out spot for the local high school kids. What the hell do I look like anyways? Some kinda horny teenager?*

His age may have balked at the idea, but his growing pecker said otherwise as he watched in almost insane awe as Charlotte tread barefoot through the cool grass, silken hair cascading over her bare shoulders. She draped herself across the smoky stone edifice and smiled sweetly at him, arching her back upwards, allowing him full view of her breasts. She lifted her bum, easing the mini skirt and panties down over her hips. They fell away and she turned to him, lust creasing the corners of her mouth as she called, "Come here, lover."

Chris eagerly did as he was told. Tugging at his jeans, he hop-scotched, kicking off his worn brown hikers, tossing the pants to one side. The sweat stained t-shirt came next, then he was pouncing on top of the stone facade, clambering up beside her. The rock *thunked* his not-so-young knees and he complained as he lay down beside her, "Geez doll, you couldn't have found someplace more comfortable to do this?"

Charlotte smiled apologetically, but didn't say a word. Trailing her fingers down his mid-section, she faltered over his black boxers, tucking a blood red fingernail inside the elastic band. "I like to be on top," she whispered. The words dangled in the heady atmosphere.

"Anything you say!" Chris tumbled onto his back, wriggling as the cold surface shocked his warm flesh.

Charlotte ignored his fumbling and quickly pulled down his underwear, grinning with satisfaction as his arousal sprang forward. Balancing her elbows on either side of the trucker, she slipped her mouth around him and began.

Chris gasped and moaned, jerking like a fish on a hook as she worked him into a frenzy. He was nearing what he assumed would be the mother of all climaxes, when she suddenly retreated with a wet smack of her lips and seated herself on top of him to play peek-a-boo with the moon.

Now he was beginning to grow tired of the game. Her taunting, teasing, and just plain ignoring was sending him round the bend. "So, what's it gonna be? Are you gonna toy with me all night or are we gonna do this?"

With a smile, Charlotte slipped on top of him and delivered her answer.

Chris gratefully accepted it.

It didn't take long for the trucker to reach a climax. *It had been a month after all.* He focused on the woman's bobbling breasts as she rode him. They were high and firm and perfect. He closed his eyes and fondled them as his balls swelled and his orgasm came with a fury, nearly sending him into oblivion with its force. A volcano capped for centuries. His own brain marveled at its veracity. *Fuck me! I've died and gone to heaven!*

Lost in utopia, he never noticed the sudden gray pallor of Charlotte's once creamy skin or the fact that her own orgasm had never released. Something he probably wouldn't have cared about anyways. He had come.

Chris's heart raced, *thump-thumping* as he wrapped his arms around the woman now covering his body, and held her in a protective embrace. Strangely, he'd been delivered the notion that perhaps this woman had been sent for a reason. Maybe she was an indicator of what he'd been missing for so long. A good relationship. A satisfying relationship. He held her tight and it felt amazing.

Only one thought came to Charlotte's mind as she lay draped across his chest, *Men are so easy.*

She kissed his chin, reaching beneath the stone tablet, "Did you enjoy that, lover?"

"Very much so," he chuckled.

Charlotte stood up. "I'm so glad."

Chris never even had the chance to scream. The ax the woman had perched in her right hand simply curved in an arc and split his blissful smile into two equal portions with a spray of black wetness. His halved head slumped to either side like a ripe pear that had just been cut for a mid-morning snack. A sticky pulp of gray brain matter spilled out, drenching Charlotte's toes in a gelatinous gore.

She planted the ax on the dead man's twitching chest, bracing herself on the butt of its worn handle. She shook her head, amused. "It never ceases to amaze me how all men are slaves to their cocks."

The trucker's lopsided eyes stared blankly into the forest beyond.

Charlotte nudged him with her foot. "What? Not going to defend yourself? Stick up for your lowly species? Fine. Probably for the better anyways. I have a ton of work to do."

With a whistle reserved for arduous chores, Charlotte began dissecting the trucker's body. She severed his arms at the shoulders first and they fell to the damp grass with two separate *thuds*. His legs came next, dangling off the edge of the granite by their knees, swinging as if they were waiting for the number 18 bus that rolled by his apartment every morning.

His torso took a bit more effort. Charlotte cursed him each and every time the ax stuck in his spine and his corpse popped off the platform, forcing her to step on his groin to hold him down as she worked the blade out. She chopped off his penis for the inconvenience.

Satisfied with her handiwork, Charlotte hopped off the stone tablet and shook the crimson paint from her fingers. She nodded approvingly as if she were an accomplished artist admiring a new masterpiece. Chris's body had been neatly stacked into a fleshy pyramid. *Definitely one of my finer works.*

A can of kerosene and matches were hidden under the crimson butcher's block. Charlotte fished them out, dousing the human kindling with a stream of gas, then lit a single match. The trucker's remains went up in a fireball of blue, red and orange sparks.

*It's really quite pretty*, she thought, drawing a few feet away from the roaring pyre to admire the spectacle. Black smoke twisted into the air, twirling under the moonlight like ghostly ballet dancers in some macabre rendition of Swan Lake. She watched the trucker burn for a few seconds more, then closed her eyes and turned her attentions to what she'd really come here for. The entire reason for all her hard work.

She looked up and called to the shadows, her voice rising above the crackling flames, "Old One's, accept my offering. Look with favor on your cowering servant. Curse my soul and give me strength to do your bidding."

A droning hum echoed through the forest glade. The sound of thousands of insects, tiny wings beating furiously as they were led by an ancient hand to the unadorned woman's side.

Like a blanket of ebony silk, they swarmed over her body. Invading fingers took form in their masses and legions of black flies, mosquitoes and gnats punctured the tender folds of the woman's sex. Charlotte's hands balled into tight fists. She pressed them against her bare stomach as the creatures pinched and stung her genitals. She writhed, groaning as her first orgasm of the night finally came, blinding her as it bit through her pubic bone and numbed her thighs.

*They were pleased.*

The makeshift cremation began to smolder and as quickly as they came, the horde of flying night creatures dispersed, leaving Charlotte with the stinking charred embers.

Rejuvenated, she gathered up her clothing and then the truckers, tossing his onto the smoking ashes. She paused to look over her shoulder as she drew her garments back on and made a mental note to have some of The Fold return to dispose of the leavings.

Charlotte tossed back her hair and swept from the glade, thinking of that glorious day when she would finally be reunited with her kindred. *He's coming*, she thought wistfully. *Already his precious world*

*is collapsing around him and soon we will bask in the New World.* Her steps were light and airy as she made her way back to the truck to finish the night's transaction.

A day later, Poughkeepsie Police found the charred remains of the trucker's semi settled low in a deep ravine.

Chris's wife, Dawn, mourned for two weeks, then invited her lover to move in. He was a broker and could afford all the name brand cereal she wanted.

Police never recovered Chris's body.

