



Sierra's Sunrise

By

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Diamond Reeves is a paid escort. He gets paid for escorting beautiful women anywhere they want to go. But he'd never met a woman like Sierra. Though beautiful, intelligent, and remarkably independent, lurking beneath the shadows in her eyes, Diamond can see a haunting sadness. He makes it his passion to take away the sadness and fill her heart and her life with much joy.

Sierra Daniels was a loner. And she liked it that way. She'd suffered much heartache and loss in one lifetime. She wasn't willing to open her heart to anyone again.

Until she met Diamond Reeves. They were as different as day and night. At least she thought so. But as she spends time with him, she discovers they aren't so different after all.

Can she forget her past and forge a bright future with a man like Diamond Reeves when she has nothing to offer him?



Sierra rubbed the spot above her forehead that pounded like a hammer against her skull. The pain radiated all the way to the back of her head and down her neck. Tension filled her from her toes to her shoulders. Every inch of her ached with it. Her mind screamed out along with the rest of her body. This couldn't be happening. It just couldn't.

Sierra leaned back in her chair, closing her eyes. She was the vice-president of Global Corporation. She was always poised, dignified, and well versed. She never had a problem with telling anyone no. So why hadn't she been able to tell her boss no today?

Why had she suddenly turned into a mass of quivering nerves? She had lost her edge. Somehow she had lost the ability to stand on her own two feet and to take control of a situation. That was a first for her. Sierra took pride in always being able to handle any situation. She was smooth, confident, and people looked at her with a certain fear and admiration. Those who worked under her always knew she was on top of things. But today, she had failed and failed miserably.

She was not sure she could go through with this. Her boss was asking a lot of her. She was out of her element on this one. Sierra, though fluent in many languages, and very capable of handling herself in a boardroom, she was not one capable of keeping a room full of people entertained. She was no social butterfly and she was not embarrassed to admit it. Sierra was one who kept to herself as much as possible. She was very private and she liked it that way. She never got close to anyone. She hadn't in a very long time. Not since . . . She blocked the memory from her mind.

She clenched her fist, took a deep breath, then picked up the phone. She hesitated only briefly before dialing the number. It rang twice before being picked up on the other end. "Remington's Escort Service, how may I help you?"

Sierra thought of hanging up, but then quickly changed her mind. Her voice shook when she replied, "Yes, my name is Sierra Daniels. I need to hire one of your escorts."

"I'd be happy to arrange that for you," the woman replied in her professional voice. "What night would you like to book him?"

"Saturday night, two week from today," Sierra answered. "I am required to attend a fund raiser gala at Amelia's. It will be a black tie affair. He'll need to dress accordingly."

"Certainly," the woman responded. "Anything else I can help you with?"

Sierra thought a minute. Sierra mumbled under her breath, "*Just make sure he shows some kind of intelligent life form*". The woman couldn't quite understand what Sierra was saying, but when she asked her to repeat herself, Sierra said to never mind.

"Very well," the woman said at last. "I have your escort as Diamond Reeves. I believe he will be quite suitable for your needs, Ms. Daniels. I am certain you will be very fond of him. He is well educated, business oriented, and very much on top of the happenings in the business world."

Sierra thought about how bored she was already. The evening was sure to be a complete disaster. She wanted someone intelligent. She didn't want some kind of robot that functioned like a well-oiled machine. But on the other hand, Sierra had to smile. She eased back in her chair grinning from ear to ear. Maybe Diamond Reeves is just what she needed to pull this off. For the first time since hearing the news, Sierra felt the tension ebb away. If her boss wanted to her to make an appearance at a gala for the sake of making Global Corporations look good, she'd make darn sure she fulfilled her obligations. She'd make sure of that.

The knock came promptly at seven. Sierra's heart jolted with slight trepidation. She moved to the door and with some hesitation she opened it. Immediately her breath left her as she gazed into the most remarkable blue eyes she had ever seen before.

Diamond Reeves was unlike anything she had ever witnessed before. Tall and slender, he was like a statue of some Greek God. He was muscular despite the fact he was thin. She could see the hint of those muscles through the thickness of his black tuxedo.

His eyes raked over Sierra coolly, calmly, yet with an audacity that sent a chill straight to her bones. Sierra straightened her back. It seemed as if hours had passed since she'd opened the door. But in reality she realized it had only been seconds.

"My name is Sierra. You will be escorting me to a gala fund raiser. I hope you won't be too bored."

She stepped aside to retrieve her purse and a gold glittered wrap to go with her sleek, off white backless dress with a scooped neck and sequins down the front. The skirt of the dress was ankle length and wrapped her legs like a second skin. If she was anything, Diamond thought to himself, she was elegant, beautiful and sophisticated. Her hair was curled tightly around her oval shaped face. Her green eyes, though shimmering from the light above her head, there seemed to be hidden in their depths, a deep sadness. He was curious to know the reason why.

Diamond extended his hand and helped Sierra through the door and out into the cool night air. He curled her arm around his as he led her to the car. Once they were both settled inside, he started the engine and the two of them proceeded on their way.

A thick silence filled the inside of the car. The only thing that stirred the peace was Sierra's heavy breathing. Diamond noticed the clenching and unclenching of her fist. Obviously she was under some amount of stress. He was not certain of the cause and didn't want to venture the reason for it.

As they drove on, the drive seemed interminable. He wanted to break through the tension. He had never before met a woman he couldn't relate to. Talking came easy to him. It was second nature. He was usually fun loving and capable of holding his own. He could talk about any subject with ease and confidence. He could talk business, sports, cooking, or even fashion. He took it upon himself to study the news, radio and internet to keep abreast of all the latest happenings around the world. But somehow he didn't think that Sierra was all that interested in small talk. At the moment she seemed a million miles away.

"Anything you want to talk about?" Diamond asked quietly without taking his eyes off the road in front of him.

Sierra turned her head slightly, staring up at him with half closed eyes. She sighed heavily then shrugged her shoulders. "I'm thinking this was a big mistake."

"Why is that?" Diamond replied. "You look lovely. You're likely to turn every man's head tonight. You ought to feel good about that."

Sierra's head began to reel with the compliment, but she quickly brushed it aside.

"To be honest with you, Mr. Reeves, this is the last thing on earth I want to be doing tonight." She shifted nervously in her seat. Inadvertently her dress tightened around her legs, drawing Diamond's attention. "And as far as I am concerned, the men shouldn't even glance my way. It would be a waste of their time, to say the least."

Diamond Reeves found the statement to be somewhat puzzling. This woman before him was an enigma. He couldn't figure her out. She was beautiful. He could tell she was affluent. The dress and the way she held her

posture, so prim and proper, told him a lot. The sapphire necklace and matching bracelet was quite valuable, if his guess was right. Diamond studied Sierra for a long, quiet moment. He assessed her from head to toe. Beautiful. Glamorous. Delicious. She had so many qualities that other women lacked. But he could tell that deep down, she was a lot more than beauty and glamor.

“So why are you doing this?”

Sierra was startled by the sudden question after such a lengthy silence. For a moment she had forgotten she weren't alone. “Doing what?”

“Going to this gala, if it's the last thing on earth you want to be doing?”

Sierra took a deep breath. At first she looked away and stared out the window unable to form any words. How could she tell a virtual stranger exactly how she felt? After a minute she replied, “You wouldn't understand. Besides, I don't want to burden you with my problems.”

“It wouldn't be a burden.” Diamond wasn't sure why he'd said that. And for a moment he thought Sierra would speak. “Sometimes it helps talking about it.”

For a split second there was a fire that lit deep in the center of her eyes. Then like a flash it was gone. He'd seen her stiffen, then relax. “I can turn the car around and take you back home if you like.”

“You're very thoughtful,” Sierra commented. “But I can't go home. My job is riding on this. I was forced to come tonight because my boss demanded it of me. He said it would make the company look good.”

Diamond heard the resentment in her voice. He thought carefully about what to say next. “What kind of boss is he that would force an employee to do something she clearly doesn't want to do?”

Sierra shrugged her shoulders then eyed Diamond with a look of desperation. “My boss is a good man. Has a good heart. He doesn't know my secrets and he couldn't know just how much tonight will hurt me.”

“Hurt you?”

“Yes. Hurt me.”

Diamond was confused, if not a little bit curious. “How can tonight hurt you?”

Sierra knew they were quickly approaching their stop. It would take too long to tell him everything he needed to know. There was no point in getting into it now. Besides, it would do no good to be stressed when she made her grand entrance.

“Never mind. I shouldn't have said that.”

Five minutes later they pulled up in front of the large, oval glass structure where the gala was being held. Limousines and rolls royces pulled in and out of the circular drive. Men in tuxedos and women in long, sequined gowns walked too and from. Most looked opulent if not a bit snooty for Sierra's tastes. Diamond coasted along until he found a parking lot not far from the front entrance.

Before he shut off the engine, he twisted in his seat, half-leaning against the driver's side door. “Are you sure you wouldn't like to talk before going in there?”

She shifted only slightly to stare back at him. There was a warmth and compassion in his eyes. And at that moment she noticed just how extremely handsome he was. How truly remarkably handsome he was. It made her hand shake. She had to admit that she was utterly and completely attracted to the man after knowing him only a short while.

She was certain that were insane. Bill Gumby had been after her for years and even after that length of time, she had not found him attractive, either physically or emotionally. What was it about Diamond Reeves that turned her inside out?

"We don't have time to go into all the details," she explained. Her voice trembled when she spoke. He could hear the tears hidden just below the surface. He could see the shimmer of tears in her eyes. "Just stick close to me and don't let me out of your sight. Is that understood?"

"Clearly," Diamond responded.

"If anyone gets to close, you get closer. Is that understood?"

"You're the boss," he said with a smile on his face and a gleam in his eyes.

"I don't want to be fighting men off all night."

"Is that why you hired me tonight? To be your bodyguard?"

She thought about the statement he just made. "Pretty much that sums it up."

He watched her indefinitely. Thoughts were racing through his mind, and then he spoke quietly. "What do you have against men anyway?" he asked.

Her eyes clouded and became dark. She lowered her lashes. She was struggling to form an answer. He could see the deluge of her pain as it coursed through her. On a shaky breath she replied, "A few years back I lost my husband in a terrible crash. Since then, I have allowed no one to get too close to me. Do you get my point?" She inhaled deeply before continuing. "I think relationships are a waste of time."

He understood all too clearly. He just sat there staring at her without saying a word. He assessed her from head to toe without flinching. He had his work cut out for him tonight and boy was he in trouble. He wasn't sure he was going to be able to pull this off without some how being affected by it all.

Sierra Daniels was attractive and brilliant in so many ways. She was sure to sweep him right off his feet. And there was nothing he could do about it. The funny thing was. He had no desire to do anything about it. Nothing at all. He was certain this would turn out to be the best night of his life. When he walked away from Sierra tonight, he was sure to never forget her. Ever.

The minute they walked into the banquet area, the entire room went silent and all eyes were on Sierra and Diamond. For a moment he was taken aback that one person could have such control over a group of people. But when he looked at Sierra with her shoulders squared and her head held high, he could understand why she could manipulate whomever she wanted. Himself included.

She eased into the center of the crowd. As she passed those she knew, they offered hugs, handshakes, and kisses on her cheek. They all smiled warmly at her and greeted her with affection. It was clear that Sierra was well liked and had many friends there tonight. One thing still puzzled him however. And that was the fact that Sierra detested coming here tonight. He could not understand that when it was apparent that everyone adored her. Well it wasn't for him to figure it all out. He had a job to do and a job he would do well.

Sierra was in her element. She moved through the crowd with elegance, grace, and beauty. Her steps were slow and measured. Only once, Diamond had seen her falter in her movements. That's when she had come in contact with William Dixon. He had seemed to hold her a little too close and a little too tight.

Sierra had stiffened in his embrace. And as his lips met her cheek, to Diamond, it was more like a sensual caress instead of a friendly peck. He could see Sierra's displeasure, though she did well to disguise it.

They moved on past him and toward their table. At last they arrived and seated themselves at the large round table. Immediately a waiter stepped up and greeted them with a slight bow. Deftly he poured each of them a glass of white wine.

Sierra smiled politely and thanked the waiter who then quickly disappeared. Sierra seemed to gulp down the single glass of wine. It was only moments later that William Dixon was back. He took the seat on Sierra's right.

She looked around for the waiter, hoping for another glass of wine.

Williams' hand rested against Sierra's thigh. Immediately she lifted it away and as she did, Diamond moved so swiftly to her aid that it made the other man's head swim.

Sierra felt the warmth of his hand, as it slid across her shoulder. The tips of his fingers grazed the back of her neck just before his traveled down the length of her spine, making her tingle from the sensation. She leaned into him, gazing up into those remarkable eyes.

They stared at her from thick lashes.

"Have I told you how lovely you are tonight?" Diamond whispered some where near her ear.

She was breathless and nearly as speechless. "I do believe you did, just before we left the house."

"Well then let me tell you again, how beautiful you are. I am the luckiest man alive tonight."

William Dixon did not look to pleased with the situation he found himself to be in. If looks could kill, Diamond was certain he would be dead right now. His beady little eyes swam with disdain. It was all Diamond could do to keep the smirk of victory off his face.

Just then a squeal of a child's laughter peeled off in the distance. Sierra jumped as if startled. Her hand hit her wine glass and it toppled over. Luckily it was empty. She attempted to right it, but it only rolled off the table and crashed to the floor. It splintered into a hundred pieces at her feet.

Another child laughed.

Sierra looked around, then abruptly stood up. Her chair fell backward. Tears welled up in her eyes as her hands trembled violently.

"I have to get out of here," Sierra exclaimed.

As she darted off in the direction of the front entrance, the tears began to flow down her cheeks. She felt their sting. Sensing her distress, people moved out of her way, allowing her to pass. Diamond followed in pursuit of her.

Just as she made it out the door, her heel broke on her shoe. She stumbled forward. She fell to her hands and knees, skinning them both. She tried to come to her feet, but she stepped on the hem of her dress, causing her more grief and embarrassment.

At last Diamond came to her rescue. He lifted her up from the pavement as if she didn't weigh an ounce. He scooped her up firmly into his arms and carried her to his car.

Once inside, he pulled a starched, white handkerchief from his front pocket. He glanced at both of her palms before dabbing them gently with the handkerchief.

Sierra was crying in jest refusing to meet his gaze.

"I knew I should have taken you home. If I ever have the displeasure of meeting that boss of yours, I will tear him limb from limb. I have no respect for a man that would put a person through something like this."

Sierra said nothing so Diamond merely shut the door, walked around to his side of the car and got in. He started the engine, kicked the car into gear and took off. In her haste to get away, Sierra's hair had become a tangled mess. But God she still looked gorgeous. Even with her make up smeared and mascara running down her cheeks in thick black clumps.

Diamond knew it wasn't a good time to strike up conversation, so he remained quiet. It wasn't long before they pulled up in Sierra's driveway. She hadn't stopped crying since they left the fund raiser.

He wasn't sure what to do in a situation like this. He wanted to talk to Sierra, make sure she was going to be all right. He needed the comfort of knowing she'd be fine.

Sierra was first to get out of the car. She took off the last of her shoes and threw it in her yard. With bare feet she moved across the lawn and up the stairs that led to her house. She was in such a daze that she didn't notice that Diamond was following behind her. It wasn't until she stopped so suddenly he ran into her. Then she finally realized he was there.

When she looked at him with tear-swollen eyes, he wasn't sure what she would say, or what he would say in return. When she said nothing at all, she swiveled in the direction of the door. Her hands shook so badly that she couldn't get the key in the lock.

With practiced ease, Diamond took the Key from Sierra and with one deft movement of his hands, the door swung open.

"Are you going to be all right for the night?" he asked with a genuine interest. "I hate to leave you like this? Do you get this way often?"

That was certainly none of his business. Sierra took offense to the question. Though anger was just brimming she couldn't find it in her to be angry with him. He'd been so kind to her. And he was just so darn handsome.

"There's nothing left for you to do tonight. You are dismissed."

Sierra's words stung. Dismissed! No one dismissed him like that and gets away with it. For a moment he wanted to lash out at her, but one look at the tears in her eyes made him think otherwise. For some reason this woman, out of no where, came in and sucked the breath right out of him.

Sierra had a way of making him feel things he hadn't felt in a long time. Things like compassion, sympathy, and, most of all, reluctance to leave her side.

Where the thoughts were culminating from he couldn't fathom. It was all a mystery to him.

He lingered a little longer than he should have. Then with an abrupt salute he pivoted on his heels and was heading toward his car. And as he drove away, he couldn't put Sierra out of his mind. She stayed with him long into a cold, sleepless, haunting night.

Sierra awoke to a pounding in her head, then to a pounding on the door. She tried to smother the annoying racket by putting a pillow over her throbbing head. But it was useless. The incessant knocking continued until she was forced out of bed.

When she looked at the clock on her nightstand it was after noon. She couldn't believe she had slept half of her day away.

Sierra secured her big blue fluffy robe around her as she padded barefoot down the stairs to the front door.

The knocking grew louder and more irritating. By the time she reached the door she was full of anger at having had her sleep disturbed.

She tore open the door with a vicious jerk. At first her eyes were full of ire. But as she stared up at the face of the man she'd only met the night before, she was held speechless. Her mouth gaped open in startled amazement.

“I was about two minutes away from calling the police,” Diamond said roughly. “I was worried you might have done something stupid.”

A certain sadness crept over her face and Sierra was forced to look away. Was it guilt or sorrow that made her feel this way? There had been a time when she would have done something stupid. When her world had been ripped apart she’d been helpless then to stop the rage, the loneliness, the grief. She had wanted to escape the nightmare. It didn’t seem that long ago. It seemed just like yesterday.

Diamond was glaring at her. The sun was just behind him as he loomed in front of her.

“What do you want.”

Diamond pasted a wide grin across his face and snaked around Sierra before she could even utter a protest.

“I was thinking that maybe you’d like to go have a picnic lunch out at the park today.”

Sierra tightened the sash around her waist that securely held her robe in place. Her hair was a mess.

“Don’t you have some where to be? Don’t you have someone to escort around town or something?”

“Actually that’s just a weekend job,” Diamond said with a huge grin plastered across his face.

“Well then, don’t you have someone where better to be than standing here bothering me?”

“Am I bothering you?” Diamond asked, lowering himself onto the cushion of her couch and crossing one leg over the other. His arm stretched out over the back of the couch. He looked quit pleased with himself. He was too comfortable and it sent shivers up Sierra’s spine.

“Look, I don’t know what kind of game you are playing, mister,” Sierra said cryptically, “but I don’t like it. So why don’t you go back to where ever it is you belong and leave me alone.”

Diamond shot to his feet anger flashing across his face. “To my knowledge, I wasn’t aware I was playing a game.” In an instant his irritation evaporated. “I took the day off my real job to come spend a few hours with you because I thought you needed a friend.”

Diamond turned, stormed half the length of the formal living room, then turned abruptly toward Sierra. He was going to say something, but when he saw the tears streaming down Sierra’s cheeks, he could utter a word. He was held speechless by the sadness in her eyes. She had a hollow, empty look about her.

“I’m sorry,” Sierra uttered. “I know I must look awful to you. I know you don’t understand what is going on with me. It isn’t anything I find I can discuss with anyone. I pretty much keep my feelings and emotions to myself.”

Diamond agreed with a shake of his head. "I can see that. Sometimes that's not always best, though it may seem like it at the time."

Sierra backed away from Diamond. He was too darned good looking for his own good. He was tall, lanky, and richly handsome. Her hand trembled for a moment. It was then that Diamond first noticed the photo. It was a family photo. A man, a woman, and a child. A beautiful child. A girl around the age of four or five. Diamond wasn't sure.

She had golden curls encompassing a round and jolly face. He could see that her eyes were vivid blue and very much alive with laughter and love. She was a happy child. But there was no sign of her anywhere in the house.

There were no toys, no clothes, no laughter. Nothing. Nothing but a deadly, depressing silence.

Then it dawned on Diamond what the whole problem with Sierra was. Not only had she lost her husband, she had lost her daughter too. She had lost her entire family, everything that she loved and everything that mattered to her. It was all taken from her.

It was like the air had been sucked right out of his body. His shoulders caved in and he became limp and lifeless right where he stood. He thought for a moment that he would collapse right there in the living room. His face turned white and milky. Suddenly he didn't look or feel so great.

Concern washed over Sierra. She stepped closer to Diamond. "Are you alright?" she asked. She touched his arm and led him to the couch. She eased him down in to plush cushion, forcing him to lean back.

Instead he leaned forward, putting his head between his knees. This confused Sierra.

"Are you going to faint?"

Diamond chuckled then sat up straight. Color was slowly returning to his cheeks. His eyes had lost their shine, but even that was slowly coming back.

"No, I think I'll be alright."

Sierra sat beside him. "What happened?"

Diamond hesitated thinking of a lie he could tell her that she would accept. Then he opted for the truth. He turned toward the photo sitting on the wall for the world to see.

"It was the photo," he admitted with a haunting sadness tainting his voice. "You lost your daughter, too, didn't you?"

For a moment Sierra just sat there staring at him. His eyes locked with her and refused to turn away. "You didn't want to go to the fund raiser because there were going to be a large group of children there. And that would only have reminded you of your own daughter. Your loss."

“Yes,” Sierra admitted truthfully. “The company I work for always attends different charity functions. They do it for publicity more than anything. It helps to draw new clients. Anyway, the charity’s usually consist of women’s shelters and the like.”

Sierra shifted, feeling restless. “We’ve never done this particular fund raiser before. And quit frankly, I’m not sure why we did. Children with cancer. I knew it was going to be hard, but I really didn’t know how hard it would be.”

Diamond eased forward and leaned in close to Sierra. “How did the accident happen.”

Sierra glanced over her shoulder to look at the picture. Then quickly she went back to staring at Diamond.

“It was a rainy Saturday afternoon. Abigail was six. She loved her father and wanted to spend every waking moment with him, no matter what it was.” Sierra turned wistful. “Any way, my husband was going to the lumber yard to get some fence posts and some other things. I don’t even remember what all he had gone after. It all seems so irrelevant now.”

Sierra looked as if she had drifted back in time and was no longer in the present. “They were heading back from the store. The rain was really coming down. Visibility was restricted to a few feet at best. Chuck was always a good driver. He paid attention to what was around him. Especially if Abigail was in the car with him. He loved her.”

“I’m sure he did,” Diamond said. He grabbed Sierra’s hand and held it gently in his own.

“Well, he was driving slowly, according to the police reports and eyewitnesses. But as fate would have it, a drunk driver came out of nowhere and plowed right into them. They were hit head-on with the force of an army tank. They were both killed instantly. They didn’t suffer. At least that is what the police told me.”

Diamond didn’t know what to say. Words seemed so insignificant. All he could do was slip his arm around Sierra and draw her close in the embrace of his arms. She went willingly allowing herself to succumb to the comfort he offered. She said nothing as she rested her head in the crook of his arm. He smelt nice, manly. It was intoxicating.

His arms, though strong, were gentle. The tips of his fingers grazed across the skin at her neck. For the first time in years, since the death of her husband and daughter, Sierra didn’t feel the devastating effects of her loss. For the first time she didn’t feel empty or alone.

At last she pulled away. Diamond stared at her in silent acceptance. She wiped the remnant of tears from her face and she smiled. It was a soft, sweet smile and it melted Diamond’s heart.

“I think we have a picnic to get to,” Sierra said. “That is, if you still want to go,” she added at the last minute.

“I think you’d better hurry,” Diamond said a little too quickly. “I wouldn’t want to be kept waiting.”

Sierra made a face at Diamond, then bumped him in the ribs with her elbow. She scurried to her feet then bolted toward her bedroom. She threw on some fresh clothes, a comfortable pair of shoes. She washed her face, combed her hair, then returned to Diamond in less than fifteen minutes.

The picnic was wonderful. The sky was sunny and perfect. The sound of children’s laughter belted around them, but this time Sierra could handle the memories it provoked. Instead of an overwhelming sadness, she could reflect on the memories she had stored inside her mind.

She could, at last, recall the joyous times she had had with her daughter. Though the years were cut short, at least she had them. She got more time with Abigail than some mothers got with their own children before they were taken away.

Sierra had accepted her husband’s death far easier than she had her daughter’s. Now both deaths were behind her and she could move forward. She didn’t know what the rest of her life had in store for her, but she was willing to proceed with it and let nature take its course, whatever it was.

Slowly the day drifted to night, then night to dawn. Sierra and Diamond never left the park and as the sun lifted into the sky, it was like magic. The sky turned from ebony to the most remarkable shades of pinks, lavenders, and peaches.

Sierra had drifted off to sleep and lay beside Diamond on the blanket they had brought along. For Diamond it was the most beautiful sunrise he had ever seen in his life. And he knew it was because of the woman who lay beside him. He was going to call every sunrise from this day forward “Sierra’s Sunrise” because Diamond was now certain that Sierra was the reason the sun came up each day.