

## Skia

by Fiona Knepper, age 17

She enjoyed my presence. I made her happy and she did not even know that it was me she was spending time with. I have watched her grow up. Being with her throughout her life means so much, too much to me to leave her now. I must change. Change shape. Change color. She is getting over me in this way, I must move on like she is with me. I cannot let her go now.

It is finished. I have changed. Now she loves me again. Same way she did before, but stronger.

She is growing, so I should too. Being her Skia is a very important job for me. The only payment I receive is her happiness. When she was born, I knew she was going to grow up to be the beautiful, compassionate young woman she is now. When I met her, I was in her prized stuffed dog. As a baby she would not let go of me even if her mother were persistent. As she grew older, she would parade me around because she was proud. When she had a nightmare, she would hold me tight because I would release her fear. She would take me to school with her so I could vanquish her worries. Now, that dog was no longer her go-to when she is sad, lonely, fearful, happy, and excited, I must change myself to please her. Now that she is much older, I know reminiscing on those times will not help her now.

“Pheonix, darlin’, dinner is ready!” Her husband hollered down the hall with a raspy voice. She signed heavily as she put her pen down. She looked at me, smiled, and closed the cover, hiding the pages covered in secrets and feelings. Being her journal lets me see her. All of her. What she is feeling and thinking. I get to travel with her to the places her family takes her, work, retirement parties, wherever she goes, whatever she does, she tells me. I help her release

feelings. I keep an eye on her. She walks out of the room her voice traveling down the hall and into her room when she speaks to her husband. It is the sweetest sound always has been despite her olden age. She is the most beautiful human I have seen. Inside and out.

“Skia,” a voice boomed. This is not the voice I enjoy hearing. I ran memories of what I have done in the past hoping I was not in trouble. I could not be in trouble. I was protecting Pheonix. Doing my job. Why would he be here?

“I am here,” I said knowing he could see me in any form as myself anyways. There was no need to say anything, but I did not know what else to do.

“You must move on.” His voice boomed and I knew the part of my job I hated the most was nearby.

“Why? She is not dead yet, nor will she be soon. She is only 78!” I exclaimed. I did not want to leave her. She needed me still and I needed her.

“Pheonix will do fine on her own. You have done everything you can for this wonderful girl. She has a couple more years that will be full of excitement and joy. You have done well. Time to move on, Skia.” I knew he was right. He always is. How would Aphantico ever be wrong?

“Yes. I will move on.” I sighed silently wishing I could stay with her to see her cross to the other side.

In a split second, my surroundings changed. It was no longer Pheonix’s room where she would lay and laugh. It was a dark room with a bed covered in clothes and LED lights hung around the ceiling.

“What is this?” I asked. This is not how my transitions have ever been. I was supposed to arrive in a hospital ready to take on a new baby’s life.

“For you, I have another challenge.” Aphentico snickered. “Her name is... well do not worry about it for now.”

“No. Tell me. All names have their reasons. Who am I to take care of now?” I knew this was going to be bad. Between the silence and the vague detail to her name, something had gone wrong.

“Her last Skia left her. She needs someone. She needs someone to believe in her. Please just do this for her.”

“A Skia left?” I exclaimed. Now I knew this was serious.

“Focus!”

“Yes. I will accept this challenge. But you must tell me her name.”

“Her name is Lilith.” Accepting this challenge blindly had been a mistake. Every human is given a name based on how they will be when they grow up. Lilith’s parents do not know the extent of her name. They have doomed this child. This was not going to be as easy as I thought this was going to be at all. Just by her name, I knew that this challenge was close to impossible.

“How old?” I asked still shocked at the situation I was put under.

“25 and a half.” Great! Not only is she named “destruction”, but she is older than any other human I have been given! How was I supposed to accept this? To leave my well known Pheonix behind for a much stranger and scarier version of a monster? I wish I could go back to the easy life. The seventy-eight amazing years with the best human I have ever been with. Now I

have to take care of Lilith. An abomination to human kind. It is no wonder why her last Skia left her. However, I know that I am the best. I have shadowed many successful creatures throughout my span of life. I should see this as time to advance myself to the next level of humans.

“Challenge accepted.”