

*Tyrel Kessinger*

**My Friend, The Demon**

I think if I was friends with a demon I could make good use of that. You think anyone would mess with someone who had one of those up their sleeve? None of those boys from the party the other night would have bothered me or Ella I can tell you that. Of course I'd have to give my demon friend a name. I wouldn't just want to call her demon. I think I'd name her Dusti Dev, which is Tajik for "demon friend," but of course I'd call her Dusti for short and because it's a super cute name. And because it's totally opposite of my name, Gulnaz, which means as delicate as a flower which is not something any smart person would ever want to be. No, if my demon friend Dusti could have been there those boys at the party wouldn't have been able to trap me and Ella in the upstairs bathroom. She'd have materialized from the shadows and disconnected them from those parts they're so proud of. See, Dusti and I will share a psychic bond. She will know when I need her and she will know what I need her to do. I'd be able to feel her, call her, no matter where I was or what I was doing. Sometimes I think of all the other girls, all the women, who'd still be a part of this ugly ass world if only they could have had their own demon friend. A friend that would lurk deeper in the darkness than even the darkest of men and knew how to bring an end to bad things happening and to the people who made them happen. If every girl had a friend like Dusti just think what all we'd be able to do. You know, basic ass shit like walking to our cars at night, jogging, wearing questionable Halloween costumes, taking Ubers, breaking up with unstable boyfriends. Remember that woman from India on the news a few days ago that died after being gang-raped? Who am I kidding? Do you remember any of them? Anyway just imagine if any one of them had had a friend like my Dusti. Instead of some poor girl killed in one of the worst and most horrifying ways imaginable instead there'd be a pile of flaccid bodies left in the demon friend's wake. Instead, the girl would have made it back home and lived at least long enough for the next awful thing to happen to her. Just like I'm also pretty sure if my Aunt Luisa had had a friend like my Dusti then she'd still be here too wouldn't she and then her husband wouldn't be in prison. Nope, his ass would be scattered pieces finding new homes in the bellies of various types of hungry sea life and my aunt would still be giving me shitty Christmas gifts every year. If you ask me the coolest thing about Dusti would be that most of the time the power of her presence alone would make a man piss himself like a widdle tittybaby. After all, Dusti would be over seven foot tall with skin the color of dirty snow, thin coal black scraggles of hair, serrated teeth straight from a child's nightmare, eyes the color of pure death. Oh, and she'd have a set of badass wings all leathery and soft and warm like the way a cat sleeping in the sunlight is but she wouldn't be able to fly, poor thing, because she'd be too scared to. Though none of this would make her ugly. Not my Dusti. Not to me. Not even if she tried. In my eyes she'd look like an angel with a soul like a cozy fire. We're talking straight adorbs. With Dusti in my corner the boys at the party wouldn't have been able to do what they did to me and Ella because I'd have called her forth like a magic spell and watched as real justice unfolded. It's fine to smile when you imagine what their little whimpers would have sounded like as she'd pick them up by their scruffs with a

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hand the size of a dinner platter. No one would believe any of this of course. That I had a demon friend named Dusti with eight-inch claws and a deep willingness to bring the world to its knees for me. Which would be fine. I think I'd want to keep her to myself anyway. She'd be too beautiful to share, an unbroken spirit that I wouldn't want the world, which is never not dead set on breaking things, to break. This would be my way of protecting her I guess. Because she shouldn't have to rip off the arms of one of the boys who cornered me and Ella and beat him to death with it. She shouldn't have to remove a still beating heart and crush it like a grape. She shouldn't have to witness such terrible things at all. Yet there we'd be. Ella would shit herself, obviously, seeing Dusti appear like a silent crack of thunder, ready to bring grief to the grief-givers, but at least she'd be whole today. She'd have a hard time believing it too until we were ankle deep in blood. She'd be crying ugly tears and hugging Dusti and asking me where I'd been hiding my monster friend all this time. I'd have to correct her that Dusti was a demon not some awful monster. I mean no duh I know monsters are real and that they never stop prowling and they never stop coming and they never stop bringing their darknesses. I know they're always looking. But if I had a friend like Dusti by my side I'd tell them oh please yes come on and find me won't you please.