



## EnchantedChanges.com

### Dark King – The Edge

*Shadow connection · rage, Devouring thoughts, and the third option*

#### Micro-Drill Session – 5 Minutes

You're here because a thought scared you.

You don't have to obey it.

Feel what's under you—bed, floor, chair, car seat.  
Just notice it.

Breathe with me.

In through your nose...

**In... two... three... four...**

Out through your mouth...

**Out... two... three... four... five... six...**

Again.

**In... two... three... four...**

**Out... two... three... four... five... six...**

Imagine black stone under your feet, blue fire on the walls.

The Dark King is in front of you, ember-ringed eyes on yours.

“You're on my edge,” he says. “We step back together. Do as I say.”

One hand to the back of your neck, one over your sternum if you can.  
If not, just *imagine* his hands there.

**In... two... three... four...**

**Out... two... three... four... five... six...**

Now put your hands on the outsides of your thighs.

Tap with me:

**Right... right... left... left... hold.**

Again.

**Right... right... left... left... hold.**

Your brain hears: *steady, steady, steady, steady, stay.*

“Now,” he says, “your fire needs somewhere to go.”

If you can, put your hands on something solid in your world—a wall, a desk, the steering wheel, the side of a stall. If you can’t touch anything, just *imagine* the black pillar from this hall under your palms.

“Stone can take what skin can’t,” he says. “Remember that.”

He breathes in, and you match him.

In... two... three... four...

“Now push,” he orders. “Not into doors. Not into ribs. Into *this*.”

Out... two... three... four... five... six... and *shove* the anger, the picture, down your arms and into the surface.

Again.

In... two... three... four...push!

Out... two... three... four... five... six...

Your muscles might tremble. The stone does not move.

Some of the pressure in your chest loosens, sliding down into the wall, the wheel, the imagined pillar.

He taps it once with his knuckles.

“*This* volunteered,” he says. “They did not. Give the impact here. Not to flesh.”

Now picture your shadow pulling loose, rising as a wolf—scarred, bright-eyed—sitting at your heel, facing outward.

That is your anger.  
Your Familiar.  
You are not alone.

One more breath:

**In... two... three... four...**  
**Out... two... three... four... five... six...**

The King's voice, low and rough:

“Remember: breath. Stone. Cadence. Wolf at heel. You step off my edge and back into your life. You matter on the board more than they ever taught you.”

Feel what's under you again.  
Tap once more:

**Right... right... left... left... hold.**

You can go back to your day when you're ready.  
The hall, the wolf, and the King will still be there next time you need them.

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You're not a burden. You're a human at the edge. Reach out.

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### Dark King – The Edge

*Shadow connection · rage, Devouring thoughts, and the third option*

#### Emergency off-the-edge reset – 9 Minutes

You're here because a thought in your head scared you.

They need to pay.  
I want to disappear.  
I don't trust myself right now.

You don't have to obey it.

Feel whatever is under you—bed, floor, chair, car seat.  
Just notice it.

Breathe with me.

In through your nose...  
**In... two... three... four...**  
Out through your mouth...  
**Out... two... three... four... five... six...**

Once more.  
**In... two... three... four...**  
**Out... two... three... four... five... six...**

The room thins to shadow.  
Air cools.  
Your feet are on black rock.  
Pillars rise, blue-white flame in iron brackets.

Warm breath brushes the back of your neck.

“Turn,” a low voice says. “Face what called you.”

You turn.

He stands inches away.

Dark hair, silver at his temples.

Eyes ringed with embers—bronze and coal with a razor line of gold, like fires someone tried to stamp out and failed.

He reads every Devouring thought in your face.

For one heartbeat, he flinches.

Then the King settles over him: controlled, calculating.

“I am the Dark King,” he says. “The Devouring they whisper about. I summoned you to be eaten. To hollow you out and burn what’s left as fuel.”

He studies you like a piece on a board.

“But you came here instead of doing what’s in your head,” he murmurs. “That makes you... interesting.”

“The worlds are built on impossible choices. You, little warrior, will be my quiet rebellion. One time I interfere. I arm you—and you walk yourself back off my edge. Agreed?”

If anything in you says yes, even faintly, let it answer.

His hand lifts, then pauses.

“These halls obey consent. Even mine. May I touch you? Neck and chest. To teach your body to breathe under orders instead of panic.”

If your whole being says yes, let it.

One palm presses warm and solid to your upper chest.

The other settles at the back of your neck.

“Grow tall,” he murmurs. “You were not built to bend for them.”

**In... two... three... four...**

**Out... two... three... four... five... six...**

Again, same count.

**In... two... three... four...**

**Out... two... three... four... five... six...**

“Fast breath says blood in the water. Slow in, slower out says, Stand down. We are under command.”

The roar in your head steps back half a pace.

“There. The edge moved. Remember that.”

He lets you go and nods toward a black pillar.

“Hands here. Stone can take what skin can’t.”

If it feels okay, plant your palms on the cold rock.

**In... two... three... four...push!**  
**Out... two... three... four... five... six...**

Your muscles shake. The stone does not.

He taps the rock.

“Pillars volunteered. Walls and bone did not.”

“Now hands on the outsides of your thighs.”

You drop your hands to your legs.  
He covers them with his.

“Cadence. Kings used it. Guardians refined it. You’ll use it as a code.”

He taps, moving your hands:

**Right... right... left... left... hold.**

Again on your own:

**Right... right... left... left... hold.**

“Your brain hears steady, steady, steady, steady, stay. Same breath. Same taps. Anywhere.”

Your shadow thickens and pulls loose.

It rises as a wolf—lean, scarred, eyes bright—then settles at your side, shoulder against your leg.

“This is the part of you that decided no one else was coming, so it would have to guard everything. You treated it like a curse. So it chewed on everyone. Them. You. Anyone close.”

He nods at the wolf.

“Listen carefully. Your anger—the wolf—is your Familiar. It chose you. You are not alone.”

If it feels right, tap your thigh.  
The wolf sits at your heel, eyes turned outward.

He steps close again, ember-ringed eyes locked on yours.

“Out there they hand you two choices: swallow it until you rot, or explode and let them call you the monster.”

“There is always a third square. Tonight it’s this: breath. Stone. Cadence. Wolf at heel. You walk yourself off my edge and back into your life.”

“Warrior,” he adds, quieter, “you matter on that board more than they ever taught you. Stay alive long enough for the Guardians to find you.”

The hall thins—pillars fading, flames narrowing to points.

Feel what’s really under you—mattress, tile, chair, seat.  
Notice your legs. Your breath.

Run it once:

Hand on the back of your neck, hand over your sternum.

**In... two... three... four...**

**Out... two... three... four... five... six...**

Hands on your thighs.

**Right... right... left... left... hold.**

Picture your wolf at your heel, watching the doorway, not you.

You can open your eyes whenever you’re ready.

When the thoughts turn sharp and loud, remember:

Stone hall.

Pillar under your hands.

Cadence in your bones.

Wolf at your side.

A King who should have devoured you...

...and chose instead to shove you back toward life.

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#### Short Session – 17 Minutes

[Arrival – the thought that scares you]  
You're here because a thought in your head scared you.  
Maybe it sounded like:  
They need to pay.  
I want to disappear.  
I don't trust myself right now.

You don't have to push it away. You also don't have to obey it.

Feel where your real body is—bed, couch, floor, bathroom stall, car seat.  
Just notice it.

Take a breath in through your nose...  
**In... two... three... four...**  
and let it out through your mouth...  
**Out... two... three... four... five... six...**

Again.  
**In... two... three... four...**  
**Out... two... three... four... five... six...**

As you breathe, let the edges of the room blur.  
Color drains toward charcoal and deep blue.  
The air cools—stone-cool, cavern-cool.

Your feet find polished black rock.  
Columns rise around you, carved from dark stone, blue-white flame burning in iron brackets.

You're in a shadowed hall.

And then:

Warm breath brushes the back of your neck.  
Close. Predatory. Powerful.

“Turn,” a voice murmurs at your ear. “Face what called you.”

---

[First contact – his choice]  
You turn.

He is *right there*.

Dark hair, a few strands silvered at the temples.  
Eyes ringed with embers—bronze, coal, a razor-thin band of gold—as if someone tried to stamp out the fire and failed.

Every Devouring thought you’ve had is written in your face.  
He sees it.

For a heartbeat, he *flinches*. Just once.  
Then the calculation drops over his features like a mask sliding into place.

“I am the Dark King,” he says. “The Devouring they warn you about.”

His gaze doesn’t move.

“I summoned you to be eaten,” he says. “To hollow you out and use what’s left as fuel.”

A beat. His head tilts.

“But you came here instead of doing what’s in your head,” he adds softly. “That makes you...interesting.”

He considers you like a piece on a board.

“The worlds are built on impossible choices,” he says. “You, little warrior, will be my quiet rebellion.”

He folds his arms, a King in full.

“One time,” he says. “I interfere one time. I arm you, and you walk yourself back off my edge. Agreed?”

If something in you says yes—even a whisper—let it answer.

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[Battle Breath – under a King’s hand]

His hand comes up halfway, then stops.

“These halls obey consent,” he says. “Even mine. May I touch you? Neck and chest. To show your body how to breathe under orders instead of panic.”

If your whole being says **yes**, let it.

He places one palm flat against your upper chest, below your collarbones.  
The other settles along the back of your neck, thumb resting where skull meets spine.

“Grow tall,” he murmurs. “Spine up. You were not built to bend for them.”

You let the back of your neck press into his hand.

“In,” he says.

You watch his chest rise.

**In... two... three... four...**

He exhales, slow and deliberate.

**Out... two... three... four... five... six...**

You follow.

Again.

**In... two... three... four...**

**Out... two... three... four... five... six...**

“Fast in, fast out tells your animal there’s blood in the water,” he says. “Slow in, slower out says, *Stand down. We are under command.*”

One more time.

**In... two... three... four...**

**Out... two... three... four... five... six...**

Something in you drops half a notch. The roar in your head steps back one pace.

He feels it under his palm.

“There,” he says. “The edge moved. Remember that.”

He lifts his hands away, leaving the imprint behind.

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[Pillars – impact into stone]

He jerks his chin toward a black column beside you.

“Hands here,” he orders. “Stone can take what skin can’t.”

If it feels okay, place your palms on the pillar—shoulder-width, fingers spread.

“Picture the worst version of that thought,” he says quietly. “The one where you smash, crash, or hurt someone. Do **not** act it out in your world. You give it to *this*.”

He draws a breath.

**In... two... three... four...**

“Now push,” he says.

You exhale and shove into the stone.

**Out... two... three... four... five... six...**

Your muscles shake. The pillar doesn’t move.  
But some of the pressure in your chest drains into the rock.

Again.

**In... two... three... four...**

**Out... two... three... four... five... six... and push.**

Heat slides down your arms into the stone.  
The picture in your head loses a little of its sharpness.

He taps the pillar once with his knuckles.

“Stone volunteered,” he says. “Walls and bone did *not*. Remember the difference.”

---

[Cadence – your wolf’s drum]

“Hands,” he says. “On the outsides of your thighs.”

You drop your hands to the sides of your legs.

He covers them with his, big and hot.

“Cadence,” he says. “Kings used it. Guardians refined it. You’ll use it as a code.”

He taps, moving your hands.

**“Right... right... left... left... hold.”**

You feel the pattern drum into your muscles.

Again, slower:

**“Right... right... left... left... hold.”**

On *hold*, his palms press your hands firmly into your legs.

“Your brain hears, *steady, steady, steady, steady, stay*,” he says. “When your thoughts sprint for the worst thing you can picture, your hands vote for staying.”

He releases you.

“Your turn,” he says.

Tap:

**Right... right... left... left... hold.**

“Stairwell, classroom, car seat, bed at three a.m.,” he says. “Same breath. Same taps. You don’t need me in the room for it to work.”

---

[Wolf – why your anger isn’t the enemy]

Your shadow thickens at your feet and pulls loose.

It rises into a wolf—lean, scarred, eyes bright with hurt and fury.

It circles you once, then plants itself at your side, shoulder against your leg.

“This,” the Dark King says, “is the part of you that decided no one else was coming, so it would have to guard everything.”

The wolf watches you—waiting.

“You’ve been treating it like a curse,” he says. “So it’s been chewing on everyone. Them. You. Anyone too close.”

He nods at the wolf.

“Listen carefully,” he says. “Your anger—the wolf—is your Familiar. It chose you. You are not alone.”

If it feels right, tap your thigh once.

The wolf sits at your heel, eyes turned outward instead of inward.

“When you need this hall again,” he says, “when the pictures start up, this one will find the way back. He knows the scent now.”

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[Third square – off the edge]

He steps closer, ember-ringed eyes locked on yours.

“Out there,” he says, tipping his head toward the dark, “they give you two choices: swallow it until you rot, or explode and let them call you the monster.”

His mouth curls, bitter.

“There is always a third square,” he says. “Tonight, it’s this: breath. Stone. Cadence. Wolf at heel. You *walk* yourself off my edge and back into your life.”

He lets the words land.

“Warrior,” he says quietly, almost like he hates having to care. “You matter on that board more than they ever taught you. Stay alive long enough for the Guardians to find you.”

The hall begins to thin—pillars fading, flames narrowing to points.

“Remember this,” he adds. “Hand on neck. Hand on chest. In four, out six. Stone, not skin. Pattern, not panic. Wolf, not weapon.”

The stone under your feet softens into whatever is really there.

---

[Return – drills you can run anywhere]

Feel your actual surface now—mattress, floor, chair, seat.

Notice the weight of your legs. The air moving in and out of your lungs.

If it feels okay, run the drills once:

Hand on the back of your neck, hand over your sternum.

**In... two... three... four...**

**Out... two... three... four... five... six...**

Drop your hands to the outsides of your thighs.

Tap:

**Right... right... left... left... hold.**

If you want, picture your wolf sitting at your heel, watching the doorway, not you.

You can open your eyes whenever you're ready.

And any time the thoughts turn sharp enough to scare even you, remember:

Stone hall.

Pillar under your hands.

Cadence in your bones.

Wolf at your side.

A King who should have devoured you...

...and chose instead to shove you back toward life.

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#### Full Immersion – 42 Minutes

[Arrival – the thought you don't say out loud]

You're here because something in you has started whispering things you don't dare say. And it is getting louder.

Maybe the thought sounds like:

They need to pay.

They need to suffer.

I am so tired—I just want to end it all.

They'll miss me when I'm gone.

Feel where your real body is—bed, floor, bathroom stall, car seat.

Just notice it.

Take a breath in through your nose...

In... two... three... four...

and let it out through your mouth...

Out... two... three... four... five... six...

Again.

In... two... three... four...

Out... two... three... four... five... six...

As you breathe, the room around you thins.

Edges smear.

Color drains toward charcoal and deep blue.

The air cools—stone-cool, cavern-cool.

Your feet find polished black rock.

Columns rise up around you, cut from the same dark stone, disappearing into shadow. Blue-white flames burn in iron brackets, their light narrow and sharp. Shadows move like they're listening.

It's silent.

Then you feel it:

Warm breath at the back of your neck.

Close. Predatory. Powerful.

“Turn,” a voice murmurs, right against your ear. “Face what called you.”

---

[First contact – embers and the question]

You turn.

HE is right there.

Close enough that, for one suspended heartbeat, you could almost touch foreheads.

Dark hair, a few strands silvered at the temples.

A short, precise beard framing a mouth that has sworn off softness.

And his eyes—

Night-dark centers, ringed with ember-light: bronze and coal and a razor-thin band of gold. They look like fires someone tried to snuff out and couldn't. A faint glow at the edges where the world failed to kill the last of the flame.

Those eyes sweep your face.

They read the rage. The exhaustion. The picture in your head you don't want anyone to see.

He flinches.

Just once. A sharp, almost imperceptible recoil—like he expected a spark and instead found a live grenade.

He goes very still.

Then you see it: the calculation drop over his features. The King coming back to the surface. Arms clasped behind his back he studies you, and you can feel him measuring.

“Why are you here?” he asks at last.

It isn't polite. It's an interrogation.

Answer him.

You don't have to speak aloud. In this hall, your exact thought is enough.

I want them to hurt.

I want to disappear.

I don't trust myself anymore.

Whatever it is—let it rise.

He watches the truth move across your face.

Something in his jaw changes. A flicker. A decision forming.

He takes one step back, claiming his own space, and straightens to his full height.

“I am the Dark King,” he says, judging your reaction. “The thing they whisper about when power goes wrong. The Devouring they warn children of in their stories.”

His gaze never leaves yours.

“I summoned you to be Devoured,” he says. “To hollow you out and chew you up. To spit your bones back into the earth and use what’s left of you for kindling.”

The words land heavy.

“You are not what I expected,” he adds slowly. “Not who I expected.”

His eyes narrow, the ember-ring bright.

“Did you know who I am?” he asks.

Let your answer come.

Yes.

No.

I had a feeling.

I don’t care.

Whatever it is, he can feel it.

“And yet,” he says softly, dangerous, “you came.”

---

[His war with himself – the quiet rebellion]

He turns away from you and walks back to the throne—a great carved seat of the same black stone, raised on a low dais.

He lowers himself into it as if the weight is familiar.

One hand drops to the armrest.

His fingers begin to drum.

Right... right... left... left... hold.

The pattern is precise, unconscious at first—then sharper, like he’s arguing with himself in that silent rhythm.

His gaze goes distant for a moment, over your shoulder, over this hall, through three-thousand years.

You stand there in the charged quiet and feel him choosing.

When his eyes come back to you, they’re harder. And clearer.

He pushes up from the throne and steps down off the dais again, each footfall deliberate.

In a few strides, he’s in front of you, too close again. You feel his presence like gravity, like an incoming storm.

He looks you over like you’re a puzzle piece he’s finally placed.

“The worlds are built on impossible choices,” he says, voice low and edged. “And you, my new friend...”

His mouth curls, humorless.

“...you will be my quiet rebellion.”

The words are almost a snarl.

He folds his arms across his chest, shoulders squared, head high. A King in full measure. His eyes burn with something sharp and sly.

“They demanded everything from me,” he says. “My loyalty. My power. My son. My Queen. They stripped me and called it justice.”

He begins to circle you, slow, the way a predator circles something it has decided not to kill—yet.

“I will not allow them to do the same to you,” he says. “Not if I can put one piece on the board they didn’t account for.”

He stops behind you for a beat. You can feel him there—heat at your back.

“You are needed,” he says. “A piece of a greater puzzle. If you fall off the edge now, they nod and say, ‘We knew it. Broken. Dangerous. Another monster handled.’”

His voice drops, darker.

“I have enough monsters,” he says. “I don’t need you becoming one of mine.”

He steps around to face you again.

“Do not make me regret this choice,” he says, every word carved. “You do not belong here as ash and echo. Your place is on the board. You were meant to be a Catalyst.”

He lets that word sit between you.

“One time,” he says. “I will interfere one time. I will arm you so you can stand. After that, it is you and your choices.”

His gaze pins you.

“Do we have an understanding?” he asks.

If something in you says yes—let it answer.

---

[Battle Breath – under a King’s hand]

His hand comes up halfway, then he stops himself.

“These halls obey consent,” he says. “Even mine. May I touch you? Neck and chest. To show your body how to breathe under command instead of panic.”

If your whole being says yes, let it.

He moves slowly, letting you see each inch of motion.

One palm presses flat to your upper chest, just below your collarbones—hot, heavy, steady.

The other slides to the back of your neck, fingers spanning the base of your skull, thumb resting where bone meets spine.

“Grow tall,” he murmurs. “Let your spine remember it wasn’t made to fold for them.”

You let the back of your neck rise into his palm, crown lifting a fraction.

“In,” he says.

He draws his own breath, and you feel his chest move under your hand, like a living metronome.

“In... two... three... four...”

He exhales, long and controlled.

“And out... two... three... four... five... six...”

You follow.

Again.

In... two... three... four...

Out... two... three... four... five... six...

“Fast in, fast out tells your animal instinct there’s blood in the water,” he says. “Slow in, slower out tells it, ‘We are under orders. We do not bite without thinking.’”

One more time.

In... two... three... four...

Out... two... three... four... five... six...

You feel the tiniest drop—the roar in your head stepping back half a pace.

He feels it under his palm.

“There,” he says. “The edge moved. Remember that.”

He lifts his hands away, leaving the imprint behind.

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[The web – masks on your skin]

His eyes flick over you, head tilted.

“Now,” he says. “Let’s see what the Devouring has wrapped you in.”

You feel it then.

Fine, cold threads across your chest and ribs. Around your throat. Over your fists. Across your back.

Silk-thin, spider-fine—glowing faintly in this light. A web spun over you, not around the room.

“Hm,” he murmurs. “They’ve been busy.”

Masks cling to the webbing against your skin—shapes made of your own thoughts.

“That one,” he nods toward the band tight around your jaw, “says, ‘I am a monster.’ The one knotted behind your eyes says, ‘I am beyond saving.’ The one binding your hands whispers, ‘There is only one way out.’”

He looks back into your face.

“You’ve been moving with all of that on,” he says. “No wonder every step feels like wading through broken glass.”

He lifts his chin slightly.

“Name the worst one,” he says. “Here. In this hall. The one you’re most ashamed of. The one you’re afraid if anyone hears, it proves they were right about you.”

Let it surface.

I want to see them suffer.

I want to end everything.

If I go down, I want to take someone with me.

Be exact. Ugly. Honest.

As you let the thought take its true shape, the mask closest to it cracks.

A strand of webbing snaps and falls from your ribs. You inhale, startled.

The breath goes in easier.

“Truth cuts silk,” he says. “Lies—that ‘I’m fine, just tired’ those things you keep chanting, are spells—they bind it tighter.”

He nods toward the band at your throat.

“Another,” he says quietly. “The one that says you deserved it. Or that you are the problem. Feel where it sits, then drag it out of the shadows.”

When you do, the strand there fractures. A second mask drops and dissolves against the stone at your feet.

Air moves through your chest with a fraction more space.

“We are not tearing it all off tonight,” he says. “You rip every thread at once, it snaps back twice as hard. Tonight, we loosen enough that you can breathe and see where you’re standing.”

---

[Pillars – anger into stone]

He jerks his head toward the circle of heavy black columns surrounding the center of the hall.

“Come,” he says. “You’re carrying too much fire for bone and skin. Stone can take the extra.”

He leads you to one of the pillars—floor to ceiling, twelve thick pillars sunk deep into the floor, their surface cool and solid.

“Hands,” he says. “Shoulder-width. Here.”

If it feels okay, you place your palms against the first stone pillar.

He stands at your side.

“May I anchor?” he asks.

If yes, his hands cover yours—larger, hotter, bracing you into the surface.

“When the picture hits,” he says quietly, close to your ear, “the one where you’re slamming someone into a locker, or putting a car into a wall, or pulling a trigger—tonight, you give it to the pillar.”

He inhales.

“In... two... three... four...”

“Now shove,” he orders. “All of that fury, through your arms, into the rock. Not into doors. Not into ribs. Here.”

You exhale and push.

Out... two... three... four... five... six...

Your muscles shake. The stone does not move, but something in you does—the pressure in your chest sliding down your shoulders, out through your forearms, into the column.

Again.

In... two... three... four...push!

Out... two... three... four... five... six...

Heat drains. Your jaw loosens. The images in your head lose a little of their brightness.

He lifts his hands away, leaving yours where they are.

“This,” he says, tapping the stone with his knuckles, “is what you do instead of putting your fist through plaster. Instead of using someone’s face as your outlet. Stone is part of this hall. It volunteered.”

He gives the pillar a single, hard pat.

“They do not deserve your rage,” he says. “Not the walls. Not the ones who happen to be standing nearby. The stone can hold it. That’s its work.”

---

[Cadence taps – your pattern, not his sermon]

He steps back in front of you.

“Now we teach your wolf a song,” he says.

“Hands on the outsides of your thighs.”

You let your hands drop from the pillar to rest on the outer edges of your legs.

He covers them again, big palms closing over your fists.

“Cadence,” he says. “Kings used it first. Guardians turned it into drills. You’ll use it as a code.”

He taps, moving your hands.

“Right... right... left... left... hold.”

You feel the pattern drum into muscle and nerve.

Again, slower.

“Right... right... left... left... hold.”

On “hold,” he keeps both your hands firmly pressed into your legs, pinning you to your own body.

“Your brain hears this as, ‘steady, steady, steady, steady, stay,’” he says. “When your thoughts start sprinting toward the worst thing you can imagine, your hands can vote for something else.”

He lets go.

“You,” he says. “Your rhythm.”

You tap.

Right... right... left... left... hold.

The pattern sits in your bones, stubborn.

“Stairwell. Classroom. Driver’s seat. Bed at three a.m.,” he says. “Same count. Same breath. You don’t need me to be there for it to work.”

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[The wolf – Familiar at your heel]

He looks down.

Your shadow thickens and pulls away from your feet.

It rises and settles into shape:

A wolf. Lean, dark, scarred. Fur bristled. Eyes bright with fury and hurt. Lips peeled back just enough to show teeth.

It circles you once, all suspicion and readiness, like it’s spent years protecting you and getting nothing back for it.

“This,” the Dark King says, “is the part of you that decided a long time ago that no one else was coming. So it would have to guard everything.”

The wolf’s gaze snaps to your face.

“You’ve been treating it like the enemy,” he notes. “So it’s been chewing on everyone. Them. You. Anyone who gets too close.”

He watches you both.

“Listen carefully,” he says. “Your anger—the wolf—is your Familiar. It chose you. You are never alone now.”

The wolf steps in close, shoulder brushing your leg.

“Call it to heel properly,” the King says. “Not by screaming at it. With your hand.”

If it feels right, pat your thigh once.

The wolf sits at your heel, still alert, eyes turned outward now instead of inward.

“When you need to come back here,” he says, “to push against the pillars, to turn the fire into weight instead of damage, this one will bring you. He knows the scent of this place now.”

He glances up, something almost like grim amusement at the edge of his mouth.

“And when you go looking for more than stone and breath,” he adds, “seek Dmitri. Guardian. If you think I am frightening...”

There’s the ghost of a humorless huff.

“...Dmitri understands wolves,” he finishes. “He will see yours. He’ll see you. He’ll know what you are meant to be.”

His gaze sharpens again.

“You did not hear that from me,” he says. “I prefer, for the moment, to stay off their board.”

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[Grief and the third square – why you are not him]

He steps closer again, extending one hand.

“Give me your hand,” he says.

If you offer it, he takes it in both of his—palms rough, heat like banked coals.

“May I?” he asks. “Heart.”

If your answer is yes, he lifts your joined hands and lays them against your chest, right over your sternum.

Then he covers them with his own, sealing them there. The weight is undeniable.

“Here,” he says quietly, “is the real problem. Someone should have stood between you and what happened,” he says. “They should have taken the hit, not you. It shouldn’t have happened. You shouldn’t have had to suffer. The system failed you. People failed you. You are entitled to feel this grief.

Your grief isn’t the danger. What you do with it is the danger.”

He doesn’t call it weakness.

“Grief,” he says. “The part of you that knows something sacred was broken. That it wasn’t supposed to be this way. That you weren’t supposed to be treated like this.”

His eyes go somewhere else for a moment.

In the flicker of torchlight you see it: a Queen standing with a baby being torn from her arms. Eleven staffs raised. A younger version of him refusing to kneel.

“When they took my son,” he says, voice low and unsteady at the edges, “grief came first. A tide. It rose so high I could feel it reaching for my knees.”

For a moment, the embers in his eyes blur. The glow smears like someone dragged a thumb through wet paint. When he blinks, a single tear escapes, carving a faint, scorched track down his cheek before the heat eats it away. He lets it happen. Just once.

He swallows.

“An impossible choice. No way out.”

His mouth twists.

“I told myself staying on my feet would prove a point. That if I didn’t bow, they’d see I was right.”

He shakes his head once, sharply, at himself.

“It wasn’t strength,” he says. “It was pride. And that pride cost me my realm, my name, my family. Every step since has been Devouring.”

He meets your eyes—embers and heat and something still wounded.

“You are not like me,” he says, each word deliberate.

He presses your joined hands harder into your chest.

“You’re here,” he says. “Still feeling. Still wanting something different. You came to this hall instead of making the worst picture in your head real.”

“You already chose the third square once,” he adds. “You came here.”

His fingers loosen a fraction.

“That ache?” he says. “It’s your shield. It shows up to say, ‘I deserve more than this.’ As long as you can feel it, your flame is still lit.”

He lets your hand go.

---

[Guardians, impossible choices, and sending you back]

He takes you in again from head to toe.

“I’m going to tell you something they don’t want you to know. Out there,” he says, tipping his head toward a darkness that feels like every corridor and street you’ve ever walked, “they keep handing you two choices.”

The shadows around you flicker with images.

A teenager walking a school hallway, rage buzzing under their skin.

A man staring at a kitchen table, fingers curled against wood, wanting to break it.

A woman gripping a steering wheel so hard her knuckles are white, picturing the crash.

“Swallow it until it rots you from the inside,” he says. “Or explode and let the world finally see the blast.”

His eyes harden.

“There is always a third square,” he says. “They won’t offer it. You have to find it.”

For now, I'll give you three tools."

He ticks them off, not like a lecture—like orders.

"Breath," he says. "Battle Breath. In four. Out six."

"Impact," he adds. "Stone, not skin. Pillars, not bone."

"Pattern," he finishes. "Cadence taps. Right, right, left, left, hold. Your wolf's drum."

Shadows shift again.

You catch glimpses of Guardians scattered through your world—fishing docks, battlefields, alleyways—kids and adults who should have broken and didn't. Later, you see flashes of them grown: scarred, tired, still stepping between danger and someone smaller.

"Those are the ones who learned alchemy instead of letting the Devouring have them," he says. "They were exiled as children. Lost in your world. They survived anyway."

He straightens fully now.

"The Devouring has enough mouths," he says. "What it doesn't have is enough people who know how to stand at the edge and not jump."

He inhales once, slow, as if sealing the decision in his own bones.

"My quiet rebellion is this," he says. "Your place is not here as fuel. Your place is with them. With the Guardians."

His gaze pins you again.

"When you can," he says, "seek them out. Especially Dmitri. Do not use my name. Tell them you stood in a stone hall, wrapped in webbing, and walked back out with your wolf at heel."

A faint, feral smile curves his mouth.

"They will recognize you," he says. "And they will know exactly who meddled."

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[Return – off the edge, with drills]

The torches narrow.

The pillars blur.

The hall begins to thin like smoke lifting off the floor.

Before it goes, he speaks one last time.

"Remember this," he says. "The next time the picture starts. The locker. The gun. The cliff. The car."

He taps two fingers lightly against the back of his own neck, the spot his thumb pressed on you.

"Hand here," he says. "Hand on your chest. Breath."

If it feels right, mirror him.

One hand at the back of your neck. One over your sternum.

In... two... three... four...

Out... two... three... four... five... six...

Then let your hands drop to the outsides of your thighs.

Tap:

Right... right... left... left... hold.

“Stone if you can find it,” he says. “Pillar. Wall. Counter. Steering wheel. Imagine this hall if you have to. Hands shoulder-width apart, palms flat against the surface. Push the fire into that instead of into flesh.”

He looks at you one more time, ember-ringed eyes steady.

“Warrior,” he says quietly. “Get off my edge. Stay alive long enough for them to find you.

You matter on that board more than they ever taught you to believe,” he says, almost like he hates having to admit it. “And remember, that came from *me*.”

The stone under your feet softens into whatever surface you’re really on.

Feel it now: mattress, tile, bench, seat.

Notice the weight of your legs. The air moving in and out of your lungs. The way your hands remember the pattern.

In... two... three... four...

Out... two... three... four... five... six...

Right... right... left... left... hold.

If it feels right, imagine your wolf sitting at your heel, eyes outward.

You can open your eyes whenever you’re ready.

And any time the thoughts turn sharp enough to scare even you, remember:

Stone hall.

Web loosening.

Pillars taking the hit.

Wolf at your side.

A fallen King who should have devoured you...

...and chose, just once, to shove you back toward life instead.

### **Important:**

*Dark King – The Edge* is a fictional, guided support tool designed to help you pause, breathe, and choose a safer next step.

It is **not** a replacement for therapy, medical advice, or emergency services, and it does not create a therapeutic relationship.

If you are in crisis, thinking about hurting yourself or someone else, or unable to stay safe:

- Call or text **988** (U.S. Suicide & Crisis Lifeline), or
- Call your local emergency number (such as **911** in the U.S.), or
- Go to the nearest emergency room or crisis center.

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