

He could do this. He was far more powerful than Dumbledore realised, with the Slytherin family magic within him — the *full* family magic, awakened by the connection between the heirs.

Dumbledore, on the other hand, was old and dying and not nearly as strong as he once had been.

Harry could do this.

He pushed even harder, feeling things start to *shift*, like water pressing against a dam with a single crack in it. All that pressure, focused on the weakest spot, and eventually... *it breaks*.

The candles on the walls streamed with fire as Harry's magic surged out of him. At the same moment, the door slammed open — Dumbledore stood there with a thunderous expression, his wand raised. "How?" he gasped, gaping at Harry. Harry just smirked.

In an instant, his form twisted, shrinking down and sprouting fur — the ropes around him might be magical, but they still fell loose to the mattress when his skinny fox limbs slipped through them. He jumped off the bed, becoming human once more; his animagus form was good for subterfuge, but right now he needed to fight.

His wand was still in its holster, invisible to all but Harry, and it shot out at the twist of his wrist, smacking into his palm.

"Impossible," Dumbledore murmured, making Harry laugh.

"Not hardly," he retorted, ducking the spell sent his way and shooting one back in return. "You're not as strong as you think, old man."

He danced to the side, trying to draw Dumbledore in closer. He had to get out of there. He'd used up so much magic just breaking the spells on him, he didn't have much left for a proper duel.

As soon as Dumbledore stepped further into the room, Harry barrelled past him, putting up a shield at his back — stronger than anything they were taught in schools, enough to block even the dark hexes that Dumbledore was sending his way. The headmaster was not holding back; he wanted Harry under his control, or dead in the process.

Harry wasn't a fan of either of those options.

They seemed to be in a small cottage; at the end of the hallway was a cosy living room, and Harry's eyes widened at the sight of the front door. Then a spell seared past his temple, and he cursed, whipping around and firing a sickly yellow Compression curse in return. Dumbledore's eyes narrowed.

"And you say you haven't fallen to his influence," he said. Harry scoffed.

"It's no worse than what you've tried to hit me with," he taunted, gaze flicking between Dumbledore and his way out.