He could feel it, when it started to draw near. Not in his body — he was so deep into his magic he was barely aware of even *having* a body — but in his soul, in his magic, tiny crackles like static electricity before a huge lightning storm. It built, and built, and built.

And then it let go.

Neville's burst of power, impressive though it was, was *nothing* compared to Harry's. Four ancient lines converging within him, on top of an already incredibly powerful innate magical core. Every last drop of that surge, directed right into the wards, carefully restrained. Harry waited a beat, then two. Voldemort's magic rose in an enormous wave of power, crashing against the wards.

Harry pulled his hands off the Wardstone, and told the wards to drop.

The others had moved at the same time, reinforcing his decision. They could feel the wards 'fail', feel the influx of dark magic as it spilled onto the grounds.

Hannah couldn't stifle her gasp of pain as she moved her arm back down. Harry's eyes darted to her in alarm, and she shook her head ever so slightly, eyes squeezing shut. "It's fine. I'm fine. Go. Good luck, all of you."

It felt wrong, leaving her there. But there was no other option — Hannah could not fight, and they needed one of them there to protect the Wardstone, just in case.

So they exited the room, stepping back out into the castle.

The sounds of battle weren't immediately obvious. The castle gave them a shortcut down, and Harry's wand slid into his hand as he hurried down the steps. He felt *strong*. His magic was humming through his veins, eager to be used, more powerful than he had even begun to imagine.

At the bottom of the stairs, Harry paused, halting his two friends. "Be safe," he said, meeting each of their eyes in turn. "I want to see you on the other side of this. Both of you."

They nodded, and stepped through the door.

Immediately, they were right in the midst of the action — people were hurrying through the Entrance Hall out to the grounds; they wouldn't let the fight get inside the castle, not if they could help it. Not with the students in there.

To Harry's surprise, the suits of armour that usually lined the corridors had mobilised, marching outdoors with military precision. Where the hell had McGonagall been hiding that spell?

He didn't have time to think. He reached for the wards, reached for the magic he knew better than anyone's. Draco was outside, and Harry had to find him.

Neville and Luna stuck with him as they entered the fray — Harry didn't think, shooting spells as easy as breathing, his magic jumping to obey him without a second of hesitation.