

And so it began. A scream welled up in Sam's throat, but nothing broke the silence. Scrambling away from the glass, the brothers grabbed hold of each other like long lost friends. They stared at each other in disbelief. Questions raced through their minds, yet they did not speak. Beneath his jacket, Tom felt his brother begin to tremble. There was something in his eyes, his gaze fixed in the distance, mouth slightly ajar as his breathing became jaggedly and heavy. Tom tilted his head quizzically, trying to read his brother's eyes. Unable to speak, he squeezed his brother lightly on the arms as if in that movement he was asking him a question, or looking for reassurance. But there was no response. Tom's heart raced inside his chest: He felt the warm blood rush around his body, almost losing his footing as his head became light and fuzzy. Deep in the pit of stomach he felt a dull ache, his dry mouth cracked as he tried to talk and a gargling noise escaped from his lips. The more he tried to communicate with Sam, the more he realised his body would not respond.

It was in that moment that he heard it. Only faintly at first, as if it was meaning to be concealed, just a whisper on the wind. There it was again, a rumour, not even a whisper. Had his brother noticed? He couldn't tell; his eyes were as blank as a lifeless TV screen, a deep, bottomless, empty pit of blackness. Wide and round they stared, unblinking, into the distance, where Tom could not see. Unless he turned around. Unless he glanced over his shoulder. Tom did not dare. He knew it was there, watching; waiting; ready to pounce. Pulling Sam closer to him, Tom felt his brother's body tense, stiff like a statue and cold against his body.

Suddenly, Sam took a sharp breath in, as if he'd just been given the kiss of life and the oxygen started hurtling through his veins, sending blood rushing through his body. He breathed the air deeply,

snatching it in large gulps like he was drinking water. Choking and stumbling, coughing and spluttering, Sam grasped onto Tom's jacket as he slipped to his knees. Tom caught him just in time. Whatever had held Sam in the trance had let him go, and now he could barely stand....

"Boys?" the words echoed down the hall. There was no reply. Slowly, the bedroom door creaked as it opened, the bunk beds looked like they had two occupants all curled up on each level. Two duvets and pillows made distinct body shapes, curving over like a dome with pillows trapped underneath them. A shadow moved across the TV screen, briefly blocking out the fuzzy glow as the figure moved stealthily around the room. Curtains were drawn; controllers picked up from off the bedroom floor and, without a sound, the invisible button at the bottom of the screen was pressed. The gentle glow flickered and went out, sucking the whole picture into blackness. On the opposite side of the screen, a tiny blinking light turned from green to red. Underneath, a whirring sound went unheard. A soft pad of footsteps crept across the carpet and the door creaked shut.

Darkness shrouded them. One moment the bright lights of the game shone down onto their skin like the burning sun; the next split second the Garden of Doom, where they stood clinging to each other, was plunged into blackness. Instantly, they both regained the ability to talk. Their throats were dry and scratched from the silent screaming, their muscles ached from holding onto each other so tightly and their heads pounded from the quick change from light to dark.

"W..w..what's going on?" Sam whimpered. Tears were rolling down his face, burning his flushed cheeks as they navigated into the empty void of blackness beneath the edge of his chin.

"I don't know," Tom croaked. He cleared his throat as quietly as he could and pulled Sam down to the floor, where they sat together blinking into the pitch black air around them.

Tom knew that it would come, he could feel its eyes on them, even in the darkness. It was all a matter of time.