

"It's okay, there's nothing there," Eli reassured himself. He walked over to the room and grabbed the door handle, his hair standing on edge and sweat flowing from every pore in his body. "One..." Deep breath. "Two..." Deeper breath. "Three!" Eli threw open the door and stood shocked. Behind the door Eli saw two men. One was in a bathtub with red ice surrounding his blue body. Beside him a man was sitting on a stool next to a table. The table had many brownish-red lumps piled in a bloody heap, and on top of the pile was the distinct shape of a human tongue. The man sitting next to the bathtub turned and looked at Eli, his eyes were sunken and he had patches of missing hair where it had been pulled out. His lips parted in a crazy smile revealing a large number of broken teeth, and he pointed the scalpel he held in his blood-covered hand at Eli.

"It's too late for him too," said the man in a high-pitched voice, drooling in anticipation, like a dog with a bone. Eli stood frozen, his brain issued a hundred different commands that his body would not obey. The man let out bone chilling cackle and, with lightning quickness, sunk the blade of the scalpel into Eli's left thigh. The pain hit Eli like a train and he was instantly brought back to reality. He looked over at the parrot, who was now calm and quiet. Its mysterious gray eyes connected with Eli's, and he felt as if the bird was staring into his soul. Eli turned and ran through the open door as fast as his pain infused leg would let him; he got into his room and threw the door closed behind him

-Excerpt, *The Bird Room*