The Business of Mr. Burkson:

Ladies and gentleman, I wasn’t always the man I am today. I used to be like you. There is no punishment for my crimes greater than that which I have served while carrying out the crimes. For now I truly see before me the maniacal depths of my evil intelligence and hope to expand upon the productions that started my unraveling wrath of terror.

It wasn’t until I worked as a secretary for a Mr. Peter Burkson. God, the name alone sends a sinister warning through my mind and begs me to stop, but you must know. If not for them, for me. Mr. Burkson was an ordinary man, a little rich and maybe a little bit quirky at times but nonetheless fairly normal. I would help him with the tasks he didn’t have time for. He was quite busy with his business—the details of which he never cared to share. In any case he gave me a place to stay and food to eat and I had all I could ask for at the time. A stable life, a reliable day. Each of us did our separate work for the day and chatted together in the evening. It was at one of these chats that the whole thing started.

Before I move on I must emit a torrential warning, if not for ethics, then legality, for the verbal contents of my speech may introduce visions so horrid that they may surmount even that of the physical realm and bring before your mind an illusionment so grotesquely palpable in nature that you may begin to forget that the subject at hand is merely descriptive and not interactive. The longevity of this peculiar tale is so destructive that perhaps you ought not to hear it—I certainly advise so—but for those who do so wish to…*extend* their imaginations in such a wicked way, this is certainly where you ought to begin.

It was at one of these aforementioned chats that, as I have warned, it all began. He was sitting at his desk, as was the usual, and I was seated at the sofa, as was the usual. I was thumbing through one of his library’s many unusual reads, per the record I believe it was *Flavor*—quite a terrible tale for one with half a moral mind—when Mr. Burkson called me over to his desk. Naturally I thought he was going to flop a stack of papers on me that I was to assist him with. However, he began by telling me that he had been working on a project and that that project was sewing. Well I told him that that was fair enough and asked if I could observe his progress to date—please keep in mind that at the time I had no idea what his “progress” could possibly have been. He fumbled with the desk drawers after staring me in the eye for a little while. Eventually he brought out his project and to be honest with you it took me a minute to fully accept what I was seeing. Why, for what he had pulled out and placed on the desk was a severed hand with a graying thumb crudely stitched to the end of it. And it took everything to believe that *this* was the sewing project of the honorable Mr. Burkson.

Well, as bad as it was, I stayed in the chair and observed the hand. When Mr. Burkson saw the small amount of curiosity displayed upon me he launched into a justification of medical research and whatnot and tried with what he had to keep me there at that desk. “Isn’t it interesting,” he began. “The magnitude of your emotional connection to a random assembly of joints and ligaments you’ve never seen before? Or in counter, why do you act as such in response to the vision of something you see and use every day?” Now here it’s important that you must note that I am a spawn of man and act by rationality, for when evidence and reasoning, presented in such a justified and logical way as Mr. Burkson explained, are presented, I must play it where it lands and take it as a locally objective truth of the matter. I’m sure all good folk in this room today would’ve stayed like I did to hear the oddly compelling argument of Mr. Burkson.

So began the routine anatomical exhibition of objects so rarely viewed in such a deconstructed and unique way that Mr. Burkson walked me through during our daily chats. During the day, we worked. But as the hours tired, we retreated to his dark study to observe the otherwise unobservable. For that first month we messed around with rather superficial objects. Cutting and sewing and performing the same rudimentary actions as would any noble doctor you revere would. “Isn’t it strange,” he would begin. “How intrinsics break down when presented with opposing environments? Why is this?” His so well-developed pseudo-axioms wormed their way into the very core of my mind and altered the very basis of my foundational intelligence. Slowly—although I did not realize it at the time—Mr. Burkson’s casual arguments broke down my emotional shell and revealed to me the naked form of my rational self. This vicious cycle continued until Mr. Burkson was sure that he had rid me of all external influences and moral maladies, until he was ready to begin a more advanced practice of our habits.

I was pondering what abnormal sin I could commit next when Mr. Burkson called me into his study. He said he had something special for me. The windowless room bore its constant shadow upon the hard floor and far reaching shelves of the ever mysterious study of Mr. Burkson. I glanced around the room. I didn’t see anything. I walked in a little further. There it was. A body. Now, we had worked on large specimens before, but this was certainly the biggest yet. Now, if you would like to leave, go ahead, because I do not wish to perjure good men and women like you. I was eyeing the newfound object curiously when the old man scooped his arm around my back and ushered me towards it. I fell naturally into his step, if not even a little quicker, for I could not wait to see what the task would be.

At this time, Mr. Burkson began whispering instructions in my ear: coordinates, tools, angles, the do’s and don'ts of anatomical necropsy. So I got to work. I was good, too, he had trained me well. Light work was made of the formerly put together mess of somatic pieces. And as the day came to an end I resolved to continue my work tomorrow. However… “Congratulations,” Mr. Burkson thrust his arm around me once more. “Isn’t it curious, the quasi-negligible, yet highly emotional, distinction between a necropsy and a vivisection?” That all too familiar rictus appeared on his face as he backed away out of the room. I stood there. Vivisection? Did I just…Was I capable of such a horrid crime? Had my practices really taken me so far as to yield the most terrible results in the field of murder? I had to change. But I couldn't clean my hands yet.

The police have the details, the likes of which I’m sure wouldn’t treat you well at night. The only thing I would like to note is that Mr. Burkson seemed ready for it. As if he *wanted me to do it*. And I’m sure that a part of him did. But I killed that evil spawn not in the way it had taught me to kill, but in the nastiest and most grotesque way known to man. In contrast, I made long work of diminishing that devilish object for which so many had fallen victim too.

I fully accept and pay for all of my crimes that I committed whilst in the custody of Mr. Peter Burkson. I will not soften nor sugarcoat the evils that they entail, but hope to warn you with such a horrid tale. I stand before you today, ladies and gentleman, with my only plea being that you must never fall into the same wicked trap that I did.