Tuspedian’s Thesis:

“I’ve heard stories about this library. My days of youth were rather harrowed by it.” I spoke slowly, seeing if I could get a reaction out of Mr. Burkson.

“As have I.” He looked at me obliviously. “Trust me when I say I’ve looked, and again when I say I haven’t found anything.”

“Were you aware of the original owner when you bought this house?” So far, it looked as if Mr. Burkson was telling the truth. In any case, I wanted as much information as I could.

“Original owner? No, not all. I found this house to be grand enough to my liking, so I acquired it. I only learned of its past quite recently.”

“Its past…” I squinted my eyes at him which only revealed more ignorance. Flipping through one of the books on the desk, I opened to a biography of the original owner. “At the age of 13, Lawrencinon Tuspedian earned a triple masters in Forbidden History, Abstruse Psychology, and Brain Science. Shortly after, he attended Miskatonic University for his graduate program, eventually earning a PhD in Human Nature. Following several lawsuits around his thesis, Tuspedian’s PhD was revoked, with Miskatonic sending out public apologies and cutting ties with Lawrencinon Tuspedian altogether. For years after, Tuspedian published several essays under various aliases but never found great acclaim. Despite thoughtful experiments devised later in life, Tuspedian is best remembered for his provocative thesis, which has never been found.”

Mr. Burkson looked at me intently. “Yes, yes. All great minds have heard of Tuspedian’s thesis, a complete analyzation of human nature. I heard he got it all down to one formula. When I learned this was his house during hermitage, of course I looked for it, or any clues to where it could be. Alas, nothing was found, but you’re welcome to look around.” He got up from his chair and walked out of the library. It was just me and the books.

The dark room stretched on endlessly. Massive bookshelves lined the open space and entranced me into the bibliographic maze. Mindlessly, I made my way through the rows, casually thumbing through the old leatherbound pages. Clearly, it was a madman’s library. No romances or mysteries could be found, but rather nonfiction grotesques, diagrammatic encyclopedias, and forlornly esoteric essays stood guard amongst the collection. From what little I decided to read, I couldn’t make out a single idea or drawing that made any sense. Maybe Tuspedian was really a madman, or perhaps I was a lesser evolved mind. In any case, it was not just the books that astounded me, but the very shelves which they lay on. Mounted doubly high as I was and beautifully crafted out of what appeared to be white marble, the shelves towered above any I had previously known and sought to pin me down to the floor in a mercilessly supercilious fashion. To aid this, an inordinate amount of small carvings and incongruent engravings dotted the marble. Caricatures of evil and embossments of anguish seemed to warn the common man away from what they protected. From this I couldn’t yet tell if the word or the chisel had more power over my societal mind.

Eventually I lost my way altogether. All I could see were shelves and books and the way I had come from had vanished. With only a shadow of a panic, I continued to observe the collection. Surely this was too Sisyphean in nature, for Tuspedian would’ve kept his thesis in a much more secluded location, or perhaps disposed of it altogether. With this, I committed to find my way out after I finished my last skim. But, as I began to close one of the volumes—several court records from the Yokel case (with despicably pontificated personal annotations)—I noticed something chillingly off-putting. The pages were unnervingly thick and coarse, even for the time. And when I ran my hand along the cover, it, too, was unusually rough. Before, I had a feeling that something sinister was at play in the library, and now I could pinpoint exactly how accurate my moral intuition had been. For I realized, in a flash of hundreds of years of woe, that I held before me a book bound in *human skin.* I dropped it to the ground and started to run. Now I could see, the shelves weren’t marble, they were *bone*. Even the diagrams and the words were inked in *blood*. Oh, how could it have been more obvious? Tuspedian’s thesis wasn’t a legendary tome, but an immersive experience in human nature. As I fearfully tore through the aisles I couldn’t help but wonder if it was in fact a library or a cemetery of sorts. Were they books or humans? For this, despite my torment, I gave Lawrencinon Tuspedian his due credit in creativity.

Jolting me out of my thought, I was let out of the maze and back to the desk, where Mr. Burkson sat reading. “I thought I had lost you, boy! Did you find it?” He looked at me deeply, skewing his glasses.

“I…No. I need to go now.” I made my way out, still working out the shudders from before. If anyone should know of Tuspedian’s thesis, it certainly should not be this man. But, from the smile on his face and the twinkle in his eye, I had the feeling that Mr. Peter Burkson was already highly aware of and involved in Lawrencinon Tuspedian's thesis.