

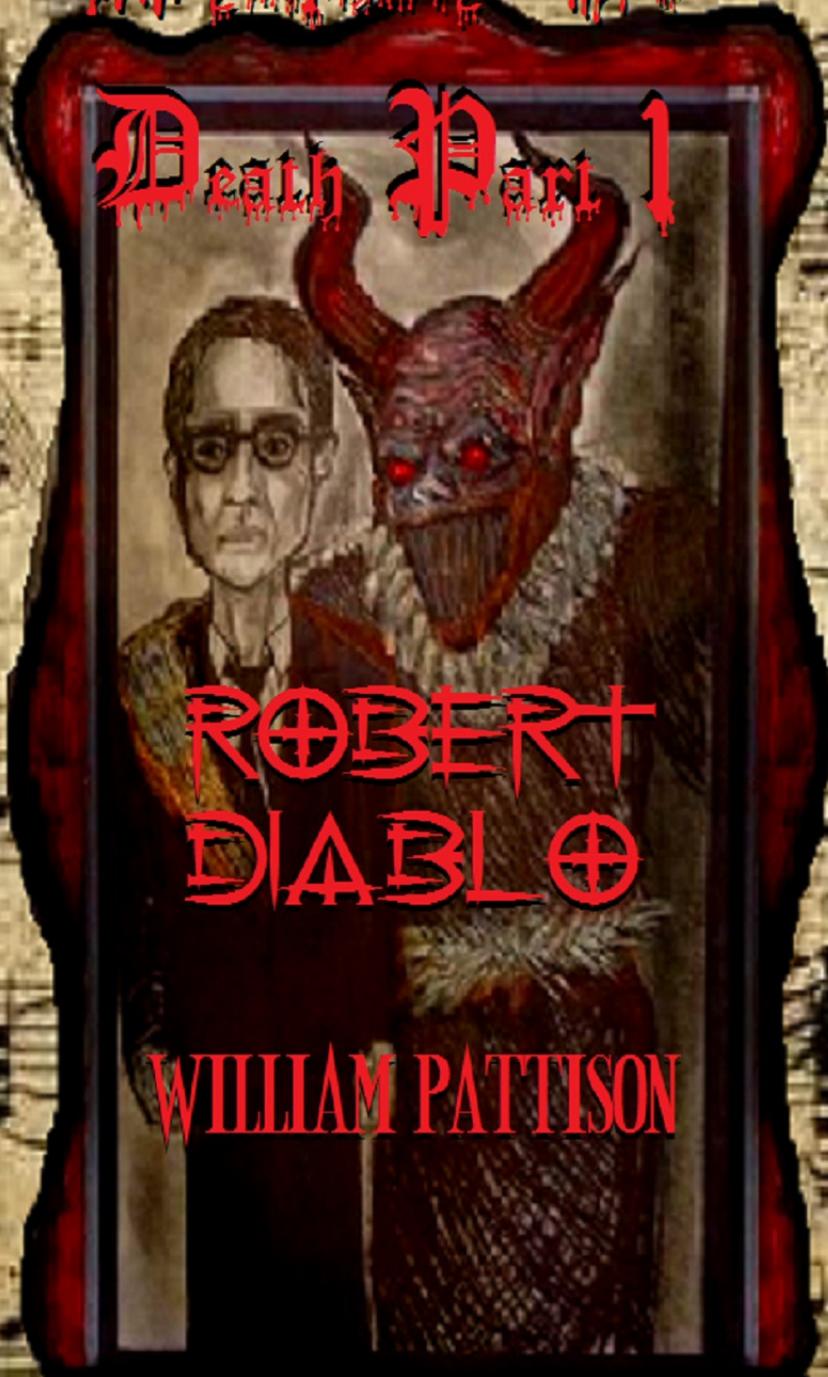
THE ROAD TO DAMNATION BEGINS...

Symphony Of

Death Part 1

ROBERT  
DIABLO

WILLIAM PATTISON



Symphony of Death

Part 1

ROBERT  
DIABLO

BY

WILLIAM PATTISON

Dedicated to my mother, Lorraine B Pattison,  
the lady who got me started in horror  
Also to Shawn Buffington and the cast and crew of  
The Horror Seasons  
Also to the master of splatter punk,  
Clive Barker  
And finally, as always,  
To my eternal inspiration  
Kathleen Wilhoite

# Part 1



The road to damnation begins.

# Foreword

BY

SHAWN BUFFINGTON

I was first introduced to William Pattison's work when he wrote a screenplay for a short film I was hired to direct. Based on the strength of that segment, the production team extended that short into an anthology called "The Horror Seasons".

In the following years I had the privilege to read more of his work, including a series of Friday the 13th novels and "The Traveler: A Conflict of Interest". I've had the honor of watching William grow in that time as an artist and storyteller. "Symphony of Death" is yet another progression of his craft. I found myself hooked from the onset, and captivated by the twists and turns he tells masterfully with his unique style. In this way he shocks his readers with the plot twists in this story. Some of which completely blindsided me.

This story is not only rich in plot, but in character and in setting. It is a world that the author is clearly comfortable in and makes his readers feel part of as well.

But make no mistake... I am not writing this foreword only to let you know that you are in for a thrill-ride; I must also forewarn you that after reading this book you might find yourself hesitant to switch off the lights. You might find yourself disturbed and haunted. And you will definitely find yourself eagerly anticipating what is yet to come...

**Forward:**  
**Tales of Terror**  
BY  
WILLIAM PATTISON

I have always been a fan of horror short stories. My mother would actually read me stories from a series of scare tales titled *Tales of Terror*. Each of these would have different subtitles and subjects. My favorites were *Tales of Terror: Ghosts*, *Tales of Terror: Vampires*, and *Tales of Terror: Werewolves*. I would sit back and enjoy these short monster stories. My father couldn't understand my fascination with such things, but my mother did.

My mother, Lorraine B Pattison, had been an avid horror fan since 1931, when she first saw James Wales' *Frankenstein*. The entire week that it was showing in San Francisco, my mother was there watching it. The monster simply fascinated her. After that she was hooked, and when I was young she passed her fascination with horror on to me.

Now for me, one of my favorite subgenres of horror films is the anthology film. I watched the original *Tales from the Crypt*, *Vault of Horror*, *Tales of Terror*, *Twice Told Tales*, and the list goes on and on. I honestly doubt there are very many anthology films I haven't seen.

Then in 2004 I got to actually work on an anthology film. An associate of mine, Greg Russell Tiderington, asked me to write a script based on a rough idea he had for a short film. The title of the script was *The Darkest Secret*. But I will wait to give any details for that story, since I'm adapting that script into a story for Part Two of this series.

Anyway, an independent filmmaker named Shawn Buffington acquired *The Darkest Secret* and was inspired after reading the script to actually make his own anthology, which became *The Horror Seasons*. The wraparound story for *Symphony of Death* is inspired by Shawn's wraparound story, which is about a composer who performs a rock version of *The Four Seasons*. He sees the stories of the anthology play out in his head as he is performing. Later we find out that he had been working on a symphony titled *The Symphony of Horror*, and as he was composing it people dear to him were dying. He ends up stopping, but after seeing the visions during the *Four Seasons* performance, he goes back to composing it. In the end, a couple of minutes after he finishes his symphony, death comes to him.

After *The Horror Seasons* was released, I came up with a series of treatments for a sequel to it, which I titled *The Horror Seasons II: Symphony of Death*. It was going to be four stories and a wraparound, like *The Horror Seasons*. I took the idea to Shawn, but he didn't want to have anything to do with it. Supposedly he'd had a lot of issues with the

cast and the other writers on *The Horror Seasons*, and that kind of soured his opinion on doing another anthology.

So for the next several years I went around to dozens of other independent filmmakers. Most said that the stories I had would be too hard to do on a shoestring budget, something I didn't understand at all because my stories, such as *The Darkest Secret*, were mostly character-driven. Other filmmakers simply told me they wanted to do strictly slasher films and not anthologies, which they thought were stupid. Hell, I even tried to do the film myself but I got no support at all and gave up.

Later I started offering individual stories to people who were doing anthology comics, but they had their own writing staffs and didn't want the extra cost of paying me royalties. So my anthology sat in storage and I moved on to do other projects.

In the latter part of 2013 I found out that a lady I knew, Reyna Young, aka Miss Misery, had done a single-issue anthology piece titled *Forgotten Tales*. I contacted her and offered her two of my stories from *Symphony of Death*, *The Blood and the Rose* and *Anniversary*. However, she wasn't interested. It seemed she was actually turning *Forgotten Tales* into a movie and had the script already set. I told her that if she ever thought of doing a sequel movie or another issue of the comic anthology, I had the treatments and I'd be willing to work with her. She said she'd think about it.

So then came the time when my co-host on my podcast, Derek Young, asked me to do the book version of his script, *Psychotic State*. Working on the book, which ended up quite a bit different from the film, I got the idea of taking the stories I had for the *Symphony of Death* film and creating my own anthology book. As I finished on *Psychotic State*, I became more excited about the idea of doing an anthology book.

I started going through all of the treatments I'd written over the years and ended up dumping two of the weaker stories I'd had for the anthology film, those being *That Which is not Seen* and *Angel of Death*. Instead, I added four more stories, including an abandoned story I recycled from Jen and Sylvia Soska, "The Twisted Twins", which had originally been titled *BOB*, but is now the first story of this anthology, *Robert Diablo*. The other titles I had originally added were a book adaption of *The Darkest Secret*, *Confession*, and a manuscript I lost in my house fire, *Frankenstein Triumphant*. From the original *Symphony of Death* treatments I have included *The Blood and the Rose* and *Anniversary*.

Recently I decided to pull *Frankenstein Triumphant*, because it didn't work well with the rest of the anthology. I replaced *Frankenstein* with a new story I came up with, titled *Shadowman VS The Undead*. It is a story about a Real Life Super Hero member in the zombie apocalypse. Fans should find it intriguing.

So there you have it. Now Danny Darkk is getting ready to perform the *Symphony of Death*. You don't want to miss that. After, I'll be back to give you the skinny on *Robert Diablo*.

Enjoy the show...if you dare...

**Prologue**  
**The Birth of the Symphony of Death**  
BY  
WILLIAM PATTISON

Philip Grissini carefully dipped the feather he was using to write with into the inkwell. He'd always written his music this way. It just seemed natural to him. After all, every great composer in history had used quill and ink, so why shouldn't he?

Soon he would be done with his master work. This symphony had been both heaven and hell to him. All great works of art require sacrifice, but none like this. This had cost lives, every precious life that had been part of his.

*If I'd only known the cost, I would never have lifted my quill and started this nightmare*, he'd thought to himself for the hundredth time. But he had, and in truth he doubted he really had a choice in the matter. The symphony had chosen him, not vice versa. It was the master and he was merely the puppet on the strings, doing what it needed him to do.

He remembered the thrill that had come over him when he had first had the idea of doing a symphony on such a macabre subject.

"You want to do a symphony glorifying death?" his brother Christian had asked with surprise. "Sounds interesting."

Both Philip and his brother Christian, under the name of The Twisted Syndicate, had made a career out of creating freaky music based on horror themes. Their shows had become very popular with horror fans. He and Christian would enhance the music with an outrageous stage performance and special effects. The critics raved that The Syndicate's performances had been a feast for the eyes and ears.

But then their luck started to turn bad. Their horror version of Vivaldi's violin concertos *The Four Seasons*, which had been aptly titled *The Horror Seasons*, had been hit with tepid reviews and yawns from the audience.

If they were going to keep their fame, they had to hit the public with something great, something beyond anything that they had done in the past. That was why Philip was actually happy to have a nightmare about a hooded figure, who carried a parchment with his own signature upon it. It provided the inspiration that became *The Symphony of Death*. Little did he know that this inspiration was going to turn into a curse that would tear his life to shreds and leave him broken, scared, and alone.

The symphony was broken up into seven separate pieces, with narrative pieces inserted between each musical theme.

The first death happened only five minutes after he had finished the opening music piece. The victim had been Christian.

The police report read that he had been drunk while driving. They concluded that he had passed out and crashed into a tree, and supposedly had hit with such an impact that his face had been imbedded into the steering wheel. Philip knew that that couldn't have been the case, because his brother had not touched even a beer in over fifteen years. Yet the autopsy report stated that his blood alcohol level had been far above the legal limit.

Then six weeks later, when he finished the second music piece, his year-old baby daughter, Dai, died from what the doctor diagnosed as crib death. That was when he began to suspect that these were not mere coincidences, and that there was an odd connection.

This connection was confirmed when his dad died a couple of months later. His mom and dad had been visiting to help comfort his wife, Kathleen, who had taken the death of their daughter hard and had gone into a deep depression.

His dad's death had been immediate and unexpected. He had been sitting on the living room couch watching a movie with the ladies while Philip had been in his study working on the symphony. Five minutes after he finished putting down the last notes of the third piece of the symphony, he heard screams echoing down the hall and through the closed door.

Immediately, Philip jumped out of his desk chair and rushed out the door to see what happened. A cold chill had gone up his spine the moment he heard the screams. When he got to the living room, he found his dad on the floor, with his mom kneeling beside him. His wife was already on the phone calling 911.

Unfortunately, it was a wasted effort. His dad had been dead the moment he hit the floor. According to the coroner's report, he had died instantly due to the collapse of a weakened portion of his brain.

This just sounded wrong to Philip. His dad had not had perfect health, but he was sure that if he had had such a genetic defect in his brain, someone should have noticed something earlier on.

After that, Philip stopped working on the symphony for a while. Unfortunately, the symphony made him aware that such actions had consequences. The evening after he stopped working, he had the worst nightmare he had ever had in his life. In the nightmare he saw Christian, poor little Dai, and his dad in a flaming pit, hanging on hooks and being ripped apart and put back together by large, gray-skinned, horrific-looking horned demons. One of these creatures, with a patch over its right eye, stopped torturing his dad long enough to inform Philip that all of their suffering would stop the moment he started working on the symphony again. Until then, it told him, he would spend his nights watching his loved ones suffer.

The demon had not lied. Every night, Philip's dreams were filled with blood and guts, and limbs being either pulled out or cut off. He'd wake up screaming and covered in sweat, the smell of brimstone still burning the inside of his nose. Kathleen had to move to the guest room because it was impossible to get any rest in the same bed as him. As he slept, he would thrash around violently. On the second evening of his nightmares, she tried to awaken him and ended up getting a black eye for her trouble. At one point Philip tried to stay awake to avoid the horrifying visions, but that didn't last long. He kept dozing off and would end up still getting a dose of hell for all his trouble.

Eventually, he broke down and started working on the symphony again, but at a drastically slowed pace. This seemed to satisfy the symphony. He was once again able to sleep the night in peace.

But after four months, the fourth piece of the symphony was nearing completion.

Fear overcame Philip. Who was going to be ripped from him this time? he wondered. Was it going to be his dear, sweet, mom? The thought of that wonderful woman hanging from hooks, naked, with those monsters assaulting the very flesh that had given him birth made him want to puke. But then there was Kathleen. She was his angel on Earth. She was the love of his life and had given him strength when he thought he would fall. When he had had his brief flirtation with booze and drugs she had been his anchor. Life would be empty without her at his side. But he knew that would happen, if not this time then the next. The symphony had made it perfectly clear what the price of its birth was going to be, and Philip was helpless to stop it.

Of course, as always, five minutes after he finished that dreaded fourth piece of music the screaming started.

“Philip!” he heard Kathleen scream.

He ran into the kitchen and found his mom on the floor, writhing in pain. Her face was cherry-red and she was grasping her chest. She couldn’t even scream; only a gurgling sound escaped her lips. Her eyes looked up at her son in a pleading way, but he was powerless to stop this and he knew it.

“Call 911!” Kathleen urged him.

*What is the use?* he silently wondered. Both he and Kathleen knew it would be a wasted effort. Death had come for its sacrifice.

But Kathleen was being Kathleen. For her, hope sprang eternal.

“God damn it, Philip, do what I said! She’s fucking dying!” she yelled at him.

Philip went through the motions as instructed. He told the dispatcher on the other end that his mom appeared to be having a heart attack. He, of course, left out the fact that the reason for her having the heart attack was that he had inadvertently made a pact with Death to write its symphony, and the cost was the deaths of everyone he loved in the world.

After what seemed like a torturous eternity, his mom let out one last gasping breath and fell silent. Immediately, Kathleen checked her pulse and started pumping the old woman’s chest.

“Don’t just stand there, get down here and breathe! After all, this is your mother!” Kathleen yelled at him.

Philip did as he was told. He breathed into the dead woman’s mouth while his wife pumped her chest in a vain attempt to start her heart. At least it gave them something to do while waiting for the paramedics.

Ten minutes later, the ambulance arrived and the paramedics declared his mom dead. All he could think was, *no surprise there*.

Within a few days after his mom’s funeral, Kathleen started going through a change. He wasn’t sure if it was because she knew she was going to be the next person to die or if the symphony was influencing her, but from that moment on she was not the angel he had married. She became increasingly resentful of him and started verbally attacking him over the littlest of things.

“Going to work on your fucking symphony?” she’d scream at him when she saw him heading for his study. “Seems like you love that thing more than anything else in your life. You allowed that fucking thing to kill your brother and your parents. You allowed that fucking thing to kill my baby girl. You monster! You fucking monster! Why don’t you just kill yourself? Do the world a favor!”

Each time she brought this option up, he wanted to shout back at her that he had tried, but the symphony had stopped him. That’s right. He had had no luck with ending his life.

After his mom died, he started drinking again. Most days he would get a couple of notes done on the symphony and spend the rest of the day chugging down bottles of Jack Daniels like water. Jack was his only comfort and the best mistress he could have.

Finally one day, he couldn’t even remember how long after the funeral, he broke down. He smashed his bottle of Jack, took a shard of the glass, and tried to slice his wrist. Unfortunately, he couldn’t find the strength to do it. He wanted to, with his very soul. He wanted to spare Kathleen the fate of the others, but he couldn’t push the piece of glass into his exposed wrist. His body simply refused to do it. He ended up dropping the piece of glass and falling on the floor in a fetal position, crying and begging God to help him.

But he realized that God wasn’t listening to him. Heaven had forsaken him for his arrogance.

Outside the door he heard Kathleen yell at him, “Stop bawling like a baby, you fucking pussy. You’ll get no sympathy from me. Fucking weak-kneed loser!”

He was two-thirds of the way through the fifth piece when Kathleen decided to attack him physically.

Strangely enough, even with all of her screaming and insults, Kathleen would still cook him a nice dinner each evening. The food was a comfort, but the company was not. Kathleen would sit silently across the table and glare at him through the entire meal. Every time he tried to make simple dinner conversation she would instantly snap at him.

“This tuna casserole is wonderful. I’ve always loved your tuna casserole,” he told her one evening.

“Good,” she shot back at him. “I hope you choke on it and die. It would be the best day of my life.”

Of course, that was nothing in comparison to Fajitas Night. That night the game changed, and he lost his dear Kathleen before death even took her.

It happened on one of his sober days. These were days when he would clean up and go to see his friend/agent/promoter, Claude Le Monte. It was a few hours of sanity and an escape from the madness that had taken over his world.

He’d done a good job so far in keeping Claude ignorant of what was really going on. All Claude knew was that he was in the process of writing a rock symphony and that he had started it not too long before Christian’s death. Philip had avoided telling him about the connections that the tragedies in his life had had with the symphony. He mused that, knowing Claude, he would more than likely turn his curse to the perfect publicity gimmick for the symphony.

*COME SEE THE SYMPHONY OF DEATH. THE ONLY SYMPHONY WITH A BODY COUNT!* he silently mused. Claude had already been talking about turning the symphony into a tribute to Christian. What a lovely thought, but he sincerely doubted

Christian would be feeling very honored, while hanging in hell with pig-snouted demons flaying his flesh.

That evening Philip had gotten home in an exceptionally good mood. When he walked through the door he was met by the enchanting smell of steak, red and green peppers, and onion being cooked on the stove. As much as he loved Kathleen's tuna casserole, her fajitas were heavenly.

"Kathy?" he yelled out enthusiastically. "Are those fajitas I smell? What's the special occasion?"

There was no answer.

He headed into the kitchen, where he saw Kathleen standing stiffly in front of the stove in her favorite flowered dress, her back to him.

A chill went up his back, which told him something was really wrong. Still, he addressed her yet again. "Kathy, I smelled the food. It smells wonderful. What's the special occasion?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing special," she said in a disturbing monotone. "It's traditional for the doomed man to have a good meal before he dies."

"Doomed man?" he asked, confused. "What the hell are you talking about?"

Kathleen turned around and glared at him. She had a chef's knife in her hand.

"You know exactly what I'm talking about," she said accusingly. "I looked in your office today. You're nearly finished with that fucking piece of music. You plan on finishing it and letting me die like the others. Well, I'm not going to let you. If you won't kill yourself to end this, then I'll do it for you!"

With that, Kathleen let out what could only be described as an animalistic shrill. Then she charged him like a maniac, with the knife swinging in front of her. He managed to dodge her, but not without her drawing blood. The razor-sharp blade managed to slice him across his forearm. Blood soaked the sleeve of the plaid shirt he had chosen to wear that day.

Kathleen turned and looked at him with a sadistic grin on her face. "What's wrong, lover? You don't want to play? I do. Just remember, it tends to get a little bloody the first time."

She lifted the knife over her head and ran at him again, screaming like a banshee.

Philip managed to grab the arm that held the knife and slammed her up against the island in the middle of the kitchen.

He was stunned. *How the hell is this happening?* he asked himself. *Why is the symphony allowing her to attack me?*

Philip was trying to keep the knife away, but Kathleen seemed to be charged with adrenalin. He was having a hard time keeping her arm up in the air, much less keeping her pinned to the island. He started getting tired and her arm started slowly moving closer to his face. When she noticed this, she smiled up at him again. "You are so out of shape. I told you take your vitamins, but you didn't listen. Now look at you. Pathetic."

He knew he was fighting a losing battle. She was too ramped up and full of energy. He loosened his grip on her wrist and threw himself back. When she lunged, he caught her by surprise. The blade of the knife barely missed his shoulder, and he went stumbling backward up against the oven.

Kathleen let out a psychotic scream and went after him. Philip quickly moved sideways and grabbed the handle of the pan of steak fajitas. He swung it wildly, sending

its scalding contents splattering in Kathleen's face and all over her flowered dress. Then, continuing the motion, he hit her in the side of the face. Kathleen went flying sideways and hit the island with the back of her head. She half-knelt there for a couple of seconds and then dropped face-down on the white-tiled floor.

After taking a couple of moments to catch his breath, Philip headed over to the area beneath the sink and found some silver strapping tape and a box cutter. With these items he bound her arms and legs.

*Now what to do?* he asked himself. At this point he had two options. He could leave her taped up and deal with it after he finished the fifth piece of the symphony. Unfortunately, that could lead to questions like, 'How did your wife get these bruises on her arms and legs? Oh, and how about this nasty burn mark on her face?'

In the end, Philip called the police and told them truthfully that he got home from visiting his promoter and Kathleen flipped and tried to kill him. Hey, it was the truth.

What was even better was the fact that she had woken up just before the police arrived, and was raving about how he needed to die. That made it that much easier when it came to the questions from the police. He simply told the truth, that Kathleen had gotten it in her head that because the others had died coincidentally while he was working on his symphony that that was the reason for the deaths, so she thought by killing him she could save herself from dying. Of course, he didn't admit that it was in fact the truth.

So, poor Kathleen was sent to County General to be put under observation to find out what had made her flip.

None of this really mattered to Philip though. His angel was gone. That thing they dragged out of his house was merely a shell. The symphony had taken away the love of his life and he was now alone.

The morning after he finished the fifth piece of *The Symphony of Death*, he got a call from County General informing him that sometime during the night his wife had managed to escape from the psychiatric ward. The man from County General, as delicately as he could, informed Philip that they had found Kathleen in the janitor's closet, dead. According to the man, she had drunk a bottle of drain cleaner.

It was soon after that the symphony finally broke Philip. He tried in vain one last time to stop, but the nightmares were unbearable. Now when he closed his eyes he saw his mom being electrocuted by demons holding long cables that looked like veins. They had opened his mom's chest to reveal her beating heart. They would then jam those cables into her heart and shock her to the point that her veins would explode. The demons would sit back and howl and laugh with pleasure at this sadistic floor show, and then start it all over again.

Then there was Kathleen. The demons hooked her up next to baby Dai. The demons kept putting the baby's arms and legs in the wrong places, which he figured was done on purpose, so she constantly looked like a twisted piece of modern art. The demons chose to slowly flay the skin from Kathleen's muscles. The demon he assumed was the head man, the one with the eye patch, would force him to watch this slow intricate process. Kathleen would scream and curse at him, blaming him and telling him how much she hated him. Eventually one of the demons would tire of her bitching and would grab her by the jaw and rip it off. That would be a slight relief for him, but then he would have to watch her tongue lash from side to side in the bloody maw that was the remains of her mouth.

After two weeks he broke down and started working on the final musical piece, the one he knew would cost him his life. But the truth was, what life was there left to lose? All of his loved ones were gone and all he had was his guilt to keep him company. So he worked on, knowing that at the very least, when he was finished he was going to be reunited with his loved ones, even if it was going to be in hell.

When he was getting close to completing the symphony, he called Claude and asked him to come over.

“Is the symphony done?” Claude asked.

“It will be by the time you get here,” Philip told him.

“Good. I’ll bring a bottle of champagne and we’ll have a toast to your masterpiece,” Claude told him before hanging up.

Philip held up as much as he could, but the symphony wanted to be born, and it was making him feel like an addict in need of a fix. It had been that way for over a week now; the symphony’s influence had been so strong that he couldn’t eat or sleep. All that mattered was the notes on the page.

Philip heard Claude knock on the front door and let himself in. It wasn’t like Philip even worried about locking the door anymore. He was a doomed man—if someone wanted to come into his house to steal, more power to them.

“Maestro? Philip?” Claude yelled.

“I’m in my study,” Philip said as he finished the final note.

Now he was free. It might only be for five minutes, but after six months of pain and loss it felt good. It felt like the best minutes of his life.

“You really need to remember to lock that front door,” Claude lectured him. “It’s not safe these days. Who knows what could have crept through your door. You might have found yourself murdered.”

*I could only hope*, Philip thought. Who knows, that might have undone his deal. But unfortunately too late.

“My god, Philip, you look like shit,” Claude said. “I respect your dedication, but fuck man, take a bath and shave. You look and smell like a homeless person.”

*What an apt description*, Philip thought. He was indeed a man without a home. Home was where the heart is, and his heart was hanging on hooks in hell.

“Unfortunately, I won’t have time to clean up,” Philip informed him.

“What do you mean?” Claude asked. “We got all night, and a bottle of champagne to finish, unless you got some of the hard stuff you’d rather dig out? I’m good either way.”

“I left you a note. It’s on my desk right there,” Philip told him, pointing out the white envelope that was sitting beside the hand-penned sheet music. “Once I’m gone, please read it. It will explain everything. I wish I could personally, but there just isn’t time.”

“Come on Philip, you’re scaring me,” Claude told him. “What’s this shit about not having time? The symphony’s finished, and it’s time for us to celebrate.”

But Philip wasn’t listening. He was looking at a dark figure that was slowly coming up from the floor.

Philip went over to the desk and picked up the sheet music. “Is this what you want?”

“You know I do. We both want it,” Claude told Philip, holding out his hand to take the papers. “This is going to be for Christian and all the other loved ones you’ve lost.”

“Damn it, Claude, I’m not talking to you,” Philip said. He pushed him aside and stepped up to the figure towering over him. “It’s finished. Do you want the fucking thing or not?”

Philip heard a soft voice say, “No, it stays here.” The voice seemed to be coming from every direction. “But it’s your time to leave,” it added.

Then the figure pulled back its hood and revealed its face.

Philip was in shock. The face under the hood was his own, looking back at him! Suddenly the world around him began to spin. Philip Grissini fell to the floor, dead.

Claude ran over to his friend, dropped to the floor, and laid Philip across his lap. He looked down at Philip’s dead eyes and began to weep.

Philip’s masterpiece was scattered across the floor of the study. It had fallen from his fingers as he fell.

When the doctor’s report came out a couple of days later, it said that the reason for Philip’s death was unknown.

Two days later, Claude Le Monte locked the sheet music for *The Symphony of Death* in a safety deposit box at his bank. The sheet music would sit in there for ten years.

And when it was finally removed, that was when the real legend of *The Symphony of Death* began...