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## Le Horla

### *Guy de Maupassant (1850 - 1893)*

Read by:	M. L. Cohen	Language:	English
Length:	56 minutes	Type:	Solo
Genre(s)	Fiction, Short Fiction, Short Stories		

Product Formats and Options				
Format	Package	Catalog	EAN/UPC	MSLP
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*Le Horla* is a short horror story published in 1887 by Guy de Maupassant. Written in the form of a journal by an upper-class, unmarried narrator, it conveys his troubled thoughts and anguish that begin four days after he spies a beautiful Brazilian three-masted schooner while sailing and waves to it, unconsciously beckoning a supernatural being to his ship. He soon senses the presence of a being that he calls the “Horla”, a neologism that combines the French words “hors”, meaning “outside”, and “la” meaning “there,” and that can be defined as “the outsider” or “what’s out there”. He contracts a high fever, wrestles with insomnia, and awakes from nightmares sensing someone kneeling on his chest and watching him; he wonders if he is going mad when he discovers the glass of water beside his bed is empty despite his not

having drunk from it. When he reads about a large number of Brazilians who have fled their homes bemoaning the fact that “they are pursued, possessed and governed... by a species of vampires which feeds on their life while they are asleep... [and] drinks water”, he realizes that the Horla had come from the vessel he had hailed. The presence of the Horla becomes increasingly intolerable to the point he is ready to kill either the spirit or himself. The story is cited as the inspiration for H. P. Lovecraft’s “The Call of Cthulhu” and has inspired or been adapted for many film, television, and radio productions.

**Guy de Maupassant** (August 5, 1850 – July 6, 1893) was a French writer considered one of the fathers of the short story. He wrote over 300 stories as well as six novels, three travel books and a book of poems. A protégé of Flaubert, he was a naturalist, depicting human life and social forces with an economy of style, clever plots, and surprise denouements. He was born into a prosperous family in Normandy. His mother separated from his father when he was eleven and he lived with his mother in the seaside town of Etretat. The Franco-Prussian War broke out soon after he finished college. He enlisted in 1871 and moved to Paris, where he served as a clerk in the Navy for ten years. He had been introduced to Flaubert while in junior high, and in Paris Flaubert took him under his wing and guided his literary efforts. *Boule de Suif* was a huge success upon publication in 1880. He followed with “Deux Amis”, “Mother Savage” and “Mademoiselle Fifi”. He was methodical and prolific, producing two to four collections a year during the 1880’s, and had a practical business acumen that made him a wealthy man. He avoided the limelight, preferring to travel, often cruising on his yacht, the *Bel-Ami*. He later became reclusive and obsessed with self-preservation and a fear of death, likely due to syphilis, which he had contracted in his youth. He was committed to an asylum after a suicide attempt in 1892 and died the following year.