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## Diary of a Madman

*Nicolai Gogol (1809 - 1852) Translated by Claud Field*

Read by: Martin Reyto

Language: English

Length: 53 minutes

Style: Solo

Genre: Short Fiction

### Product Formats and Options

Format	Package	Catalog	EAN/UPC	MSLP
MP3 CD	DVD case	DB-6020	0687700170372	\$8.99
MP3 CD	CD jacket	CJ-6020	0687700170365	\$7.99
MP3 CD	Security sleeve	CD-6020	NA	\$3.99
MP3 download	Zip file	DL-6020	NA	\$2.99

“**Diary of a Madman**” 1835 is a farcical short story that ranks with “The Overcoat” and “The Nose” as among Gogol’s best. The madman of the tale is a low-ranking Russian civil servant in the time of Nicholas I, Ak-senty Ivanovich Poprishchin. An underachiever who yearns for power and dignity but lacks both competence and motivation, he is constantly and rightly belittled by the Section Chief. He responds with anger and resentment, is unhappy about his lot in life, frustrated at his inability to change, and envious of those who are better off, which is basically everybody. He has fallen in love with Sophie, the beautiful daughter of his boss, and yearns for her attention. Naturally, she finds him irritating and unattractive. It is no wonder that he becomes acutely alienated and must resort to illusions and delusions to invent an acceptable alternate reality. His diary records his gradual dissent into insanity. He hears and un-

derstands conversations between two dogs and believes he has discovered letters written between them, which reveal information about Sophie, such as her engagement to another man. Before long he is making entries with dates such as April 43, 2000; he has lost all sense of time. He believes he is heir to the throne of Spain, makes himself a Spanish royal uniform, and waits for Spanish deputies to arrive. By then, however, he believes Spain and China are the same country. The brilliance of the narrative is how Gogol compels us to surrender to Propriochin’s delusional world and feel that it is perfectly logical, given the circumstances.

**Nikolai Vassilievitch Gogol** (March 31, 1809 - March 4, 1852) was a Russian author best known for his short stories, his play the Government Inspector, and his novels *Dead Souls* and *Taras Bulba*. During his lifetime he was considered a preeminent figure of the emerging natural school of Russian realism but has since come to be known for his gifts for satire, absurdity, surrealism, and the grotesque. Born in the government of Pultowa, in Ukraine, then Little Russia, he was educated in a public gymnasium and subsequently in the Lyceum newly established at Niejinsk. In 1831 he was appointed teacher of history at the Patriotic Institution, a position he then exchanged for the professorship of history in the University of St. Petersburg. He resigned at the end of a year when it was learned that he was unqualified. From 1835 he devoted himself entirely to literature. In 1836 Gogol left Russia and lived most of the time in Rome. In 1837 he wrote *Dead Souls*. In 1840 he went to Russia for a short period to superintend the publication of the first volume of ‘*Dead Souls*,’ and then returned to Italy. In 1846 he returned to Russia and fell into a state of fanatical mysticism. One of his last acts was to burn the manuscript of the concluding portion of *Dead Souls*, which he considered harmful. His stories include ‘The Nose,’ *Overcoat*, and the collections ‘*Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka*,’ ‘*Mirgorod*,’ and *Arabesques*’.