

Paranoid: A Chant

by Stephen King

I can't go out no more.
There's a man by the door
in a raincoat
smoking a cigarette.

But

I've put him in my diary
and the mailers are all lined up
on the bed, bloody in the glow
of the bar sign next door.

He knows that if I die
(or even drop out of sight)
the diary goes and everyone knows
the CIA's in Virginia.

500 mailers bought from
500 drug counters each one different
and 500 notebooks
with 500 pages in every one.

I am prepared.

* * *

I can see him from up here.
His cigarette winks from just
above his trenchcoat collar
and somewhere there's a man on a subway
sitting under a Black Velvet ad thinking my name.

Men have discussed me in back rooms.
If the phone rings there's only dead breath.
In the bar across the street a snubnose
revolver has changed hands in the men's room.
Each bullet has my name on it.
My name is written in back files
and looked up in newspaper morgues.

My mother's been investigated;

thank God she's dead.

They have writing samples
and examine the back loops of pees
and the crosses of tees.

My brother's with them, did I tell you?
His wife is Russian and he
keeps asking me to fill out forms.
I have it in my diary.
Listen—

Listen
do listen:
you must listen

In the rain, at the bus stop,
black crows with black umbrellas
pretend to look at their watches, but
it's not raining. Their eyes are silver dollars.
Some are scholars in the pay of the FBI
most are the foreigners who pour through
our streets. I fooled them
got off the bus at 25th and Lex
where a cabby watched me over his newspaper.

In the room above me an old woman
has put an electric suction cup on her floor.

It sends out rays through my light fixture
and now I write in the dark
by the bar sign's glow.
I tell you I *know*.

They sent me a dog with brown spots
and a radio cobweb in its nose.
I drowned it in the sink and wrote it up
in folder GAMMA.

I don't look in the mailbox anymore.
The greeting cards are letter-bombs.

(Step away! Goddam you!
Step away, I know tall people!
I tell you I know *very* tall people!)

The luncheonette is laid with talking floors

and the waitress says it was salt but I know arsenic
when it's put before me. And the yellow taste of mustard
to mask the bitter odor of almonds.

I have seen strange lights in the sky.
Last night a dark man with no face crawled through nine miles
of sewer to surface in my toilet, listening
for phone calls through the cheap wood with
chrome ears.
I tell you, man, I *hear*.

I saw his muddy handprints
on the porcelain.

I don't answer the phone now,
have I told you that?

They are planning to flood the earth with sludge.
They are planning break-ins.

They have got physicians
advocating weird sex positions.
They are making addictive laxatives
and suppositories that burn.

They know how to put out the sun
with blowguns.

I pack myself in ice—have I told you that?
It obviates their infrascopes.
I know chants and I wear charms.
You may think you have me but I could destroy you
any second now.

Any second now.

Any second now.

Would you like some coffee, my love?

Did I tell you I can't go out no more?
There's a man by the door
in a raincoat.