**Paranoid: A Chant**

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.