

## **Paranoia**

Paranoia is a conviction, typically unfounded or of doubtful accuracy, that individuals or parties are 'out to get you.' This anxiety is easy enough to substantiate, in the paranoid person's mind, for the evidence used to support the charges raised by the paranoid person, is typically flimsy, gathered off the street or, as we would say today, picked up online. It might then be added that ours is an age of ready misinformation in abundance, and that reliable sources of information are hard to identify.

Paranoia, consequently, preys easily on the half informed, and the consumer of dread and fear mongers. We are currently in a period of a great nation's political destiny, in which many individuals find themselves existentially threatened in their work and market places, and in which the rapid transition of events can lead swiftly and suddenly to changes of fortune. Not surprisingly, citizens eager to know the truth, and to make intelligent choices, within this dangerous social milieu, are hyper sensitized to what they hear as threatening or destabilizing. In the contest of rival inner mythologies, there is ample room for paranoia to create fresh devils and demons and to lay claim to conspiracy theories, which acquire a plausibility to which in a less fraught social era they would never have been able to lay claim.

Paranoia can of course thrive in the unsure milieu of a great state, but is equally potent on the micro level. Jimmy is hoping to make the call for quarterback in the big game. On his way to the locker room he spots Butch, his rival, talking in a low tone with coach. He knows, he just knows, they are talking about the Syracuse game, and the secret line up that will leave him out in the cold.