

# Sketches from '69

I was stoned  
By small children  
As I attempted  
to sleep  
in a laundry basket  
In a back alley  
Behind a tenement building  
On the Lower East Side  
of my native New York  
(A district where I  
had lived in Bliss  
as a Hippie  
Several years before...  
seemed like a lifetime...)

I spent DAYS in  
Tompkins Square Park  
my former haunt  
Where a Madman now  
Looked thru my large  
wicker basket  
Containing, as he rightly guessed,  
All my "wordly possessions"

As  
a man looking a lot  
Like an old friend of  
an old friend  
Circled the fenced jogging track  
CEASELESSLY  
(he had been an Anarchist poet  
he had become a compulsive  
WIRE, quite mad himself,  
as was I ...)

I was taken in  
By a kindly Black Man  
Who became frightened  
When I wouldn't eat  
for MANY days  
And refused to speak to him  
Hidden under a blanket  
in his only chair  
(His bed was too  
frightening  
to  
me...)

I GRABBED a Greyhound  
Back to California  
And never left  
the bus,  
Never eating,  
urinating,  
defecating  
(I sensed an unspoken conspiracy  
Among my fellow passengers,  
Led by an FBI Agent...  
third row,  
right window...)

I arrived back in Ben Lomond  
behind Santa Cruz  
Frightened a former friend  
By my mere appearance —  
my emaciated body  
wild eyes —  
And was relegated to  
An outlying cabin  
Where I had  
Only two short years before  
Spent agonizing nights  
With my small daughter  
(Now safe in New York  
with her Father)  
I saw my daughter's NAME  
Spelled out in the bushes  
(a diet of sugar-sodas  
and cookies  
can DO that...)

I starved and terrorized myself  
Seeking oblivion and ecstasy  
alternately,  
Simultaneously, perhaps  
Lunging into the icy stream  
After baking in the Summer Sun  
Achieving brief — too brief —  
Unconsciousness

I picked a Place to Die  
There in the Redwoods  
My Home:  
An old shack  
Half-eaten by time and damp

And then,  
desperately  
Caught a ride to Isla Vista  
a hippie enclave in the  
otherwise laid-back  
brain-dead  
Right-wing  
Southland

A ride with a former consort  
The Machiavellan guru  
Who had led me  
to this mad path  
(unknowingly?)  
He, passing through,  
Grudgingly including me,  
for a time, in his plans...  
(He deposited me in an  
abandoned chicken coop  
upon arrival...)

I starved and binged  
before "anorexia" or "bulemia"  
were fashionable  
(or even named)  
Haunting the small college town  
A spectre in white:  
Was I SAINT?  
Was I "French?" I was asked...  
I stole food from  
unlocked homes  
And left notes of Thanks

I played games  
with people on drugs  
I heard of the Bank-burning  
the War Protests  
(I AM, and WAS, a  
Far Stranger Ranger  
than THAT!)

I was hospitalized by  
Concerned onlookers  
hospitality-givers  
Frightened for my imminent demise...  
Who had written me poems of Eulogy  
Had bathed me  
Tried to medicate me, feed me  
Had fucked me  
Invited me to parties  
where I briefly  
"came to life..."

My MANY deaths  
in 1969...  
I wouldn't die  
I COULDN'T LIVE  
the World that had been  
my theatre  
my lover  
my mirror  
my canvas  
My Radiant Dreams  
Spreading like Wildfire  
Reseeding the Earth in  
Beauty and Love  
...till 1969

ALL  
WAS  
LOST

I  
WANTED  
"OUT ...."

The Doctors said  
"catatonia"  
then "schizophrenia"  
"Identity Crisis"  
THEY did not know  
WHO I WAS;

I knew:  
I WAS NOBODY  
ANY  
MORE  
in 1969

—Marion Sue Fischer