

Copyright © 2021 by Jessica Lind Peterson

All rights reserved

Published by Seneca Review Books, an imprint
of Hobart & William Smith Colleges Press

300 Pulteney St., Demarest 101

Geneva, NY 14456

www.hws.edu/senecareview

Seneca Review Books is grateful to Hobart & William Smith Colleges,
Hobart & William Smith Colleges Press, *Seneca Review*, and the
TRIAS Writer-in-Residence Program for their generous support.

ISBN: 978-0-910969-06-2

LCCN: 2020945359

Designed by Crisis

Printed in Michigan

Thank you to the following journals, where these essays first appeared (some-
times in different versions): “That Far North” (under the title “Strange Season”)
in *Orion*; “This Is Doris Ronn” in *Alaska Quarterly Review*; “Beat a Dead” in
Seneca Review; “The Seahorse Difference” in *Anomaly* (formerly *Drunken Boat*);
and “The Little Girl, Her Drunk Bastard Parents, and the Hummingbird” in
Passages North. Some names and identifying details have been changed.



*Deep in the forest there's an unexpected clearing which can
be reached only by someone who has lost [their] way.*

T O M A S T R A N S T R Ö M E R

*When I was six I tried to sleep every night with my
arms folded behind my back like wings. This didn't
last long, because it is very hard to sleep with
your arms folded behind your back like wings.*

H E L E N M A C D O N A L D

THE LITTLE GIRL, HER DRUNK BASTARD
PARENTS, AND THE HUMMINGBIRD

1

BEAT A DEAD

15

BEAUTIFUL WEATHERS: A COLLAGE ESSAY

24

THE SEAHORSE DIFFERENCE

31

THAT FAR NORTH

36

DEAR G.B.,

55

THIS IS DORIS RONN

75

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

99

NOTES

101

*Sound
Like
Trapped
Thunder*

**THE LITTLE GIRL, HER
DRUNK BASTARD PARENTS,
AND THE HUMMINGBIRD**

A little girl with reddish brownish hair and big feet sat in a tree house in her backyard. The tree house was situated on the ground next to the garage, not up in a tree like you were thinking, and the tree house was made of wood from the rotting back porch as the little girl's father was a railroad worker, and railroad workers do not have special access to wood scraps like construction workers do. Also notable, the tree house had no roof and no walls, which made things sunny and fresh-smelling like dirt and apple blossoms and leaves and garages. The no roof/no walls detail will come in handy during the part where I tell you that a hummingbird flies into the tree house, because if I told you that a hummingbird flies into a tree house that *did* have a roof/walls you might think the hummingbird would have died on impact. I'm only trying to save you from despair.

In the little girl's hands was a round piece of wood which held a white piece of cloth which held a cross-stitch pattern of bright summer flowers which was very pretty indeed, though the stems on the flowers were a little bit crooked but so was the floor of the tree house

and that certainly may have had something to do with it. The little girl was briefly paused in her work because she felt like something was missing in her pretty scene of crooked flowers and so she needed to think about it. She always thought best when she was in her tree house so this was all very convenient. And speaking of conveniences, the thinking break came at a good time because the needle had caused a major indent on the end of her right index finger and she had put it in her mouth to soothe it. Let's just call it what it was—a sewing injury. (Her grandmother had told her this might happen. Her grandmother cross-stitched and also baked bread that the little girl was very fond of. Sometimes, she ate a whole half of a loaf right out of the oven with butter and raspberry jam and it ruined her dinner, but her grandmother let her and that is why this grandmother was her very favorite grandmother out of all her grandmothers. Also, the other grandmother always made the little girl sit in her great big lap and pluck the wiry black hairs from her chin with a tweezers. Gross, but also a nice challenge on Sundays. There was love there but a favorite grandmother is a favorite grandmother and no one on planet Earth can argue with that kind of sound logic. Her favorite grandmother was especially important these days since her father was a drunk bastard and her mother was on her way to becoming a drunk bastard. These are strong words but these are strong times. At first, it was just wine. Lots and lots of red wine. Her grandmother came to stay for two weeks and discovered a gargantuan number of

wine bottles in the recycling bin and also two opened bottles in the unused basement sauna under an old ten-gallon paint bucket. After her grandmother confronted her mother about all those wine bottles two things happened. One, the mother began putting empty wine bottles into the neighbor's recycling bins very early in the morning on the day of recycling pickup. Two, the mother began drinking 7 and 7s with Canadian Club because it worked faster and that is what the drunk bastard father drank and Canada is not far away so it's good to support our border friends. If the grandmother said anything about the whiskey bottles the mother could just blame the father – badda bing, badda boom. It actually worked because even though the little girl told her grandmother that the mother was still doing weird, drunk bastard-type things like burning her arm so badly while taking a roast out of the oven that the fabric from her Christmas sweater actually became scorched into her skin like a tattoo, hiding her glass of booze behind picture frames in the early afternoons, talking to the little girl, who was thirty-eight years old, in a baby voice as if she were a toddler, and also forgetting her birthday all the time—her grandmother dismissed it, saying that perhaps the mother didn't want to get rings on the important parts of the coffee table and she was just being considerate of the furniture.)

Just so we're clear here. Two drunk bastard parents, one nice grandmother who is good at baking.