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The Lunger in the Attic

Lisa Alexander Baron

Everyone gets jumpy
at the sound of my hollow coughs,
and they are afraid to touch me.
Here in this room
level with the tree tops
and the songs of too many birds,
I can still hear my brothers and sisters
below me. But now they are fragmented
voices, and I have to try to imagine
their gestures as they talk.
Drifting in and out of sleep all night,
I wait for the startle
of a red rose—or even a carnation
on the breakfast tray my sister slides through
the window they built for me.

The Dead Abandoned at Crest Sanatorium, 1935

(to be read in the round by different voices)

Patients, nurses, doctors,
gardeners, cooks, potters,
weavers, and all visitors gone.
The wind is the only rattle-like
cough now drifting through
the broken, airy windows
and the hollow halls
of the Sanatorium.
We were dropped off.
Abandoned—
To take the air,
to try the cure.
We fought, but we did not heal.
We were never picked up.
Now we are just a row of stones
Untouched—
as we were untouched in life.
Even a single lily
dangerous,
too dangerous
to lay at our feet.

Lisa Alexander Baron's
latest poetry collection,
While She Poses, was
prompted by visual art.
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