

The Tunnel

By Lisa Alexander Baron

The Children's House, Crest Tuberculosis Sanatorium, 1918

If our legs are stronger today,
Billy and me are gonna ask to go for a walk
to see our moms at the Big House.
But we're gonna have to go through the Tunnel.
We're already talkin about how we're gonna
scare each other and pretend, well,
Billy will pretend to be a real train
comin down the dark cave of the Tunnel.
He'll start screamin like a train whistle
and get louder and louder
and try to grab me. Last time, I just kept
lookin up at all those white bulbs
hanging from those wires and all shining,
well, like, stars in the dark.
And every star was like my mom
smilin at me. Then, it's my turn,
and I start to play the Monster.
I turn around real quick and start running at Billy:
The Monster's getting closer, Billy –
he's got your legs now, he's knocked you
flat on your back – you can't breathe, you're
choking -- better keep lookin up at those stars,
so you know where to go...

Lisa Alexander Baron is the author of four poetry collections, including *While She Poses* (Aldrich P, 2015), prompted by visual art. "The Tunnel" is a dramatic monologue, which is part of a play in progress exploring living and healing at a turn of the 20th-century Tuberculosis Sanatorium. Baron's poems appear in *Chautauqua*, *Confrontation*, *Fourth River*, *Potomac Review*, and *Philadelphia Stories*. She is an MFA graduate of Vermont College of Fine Arts and teaches rhetoric, including health care advocacy, at Lehigh County Community College and Lasalle University in Philadelphia.