Dysthymia Quartet

Michael Gordan

I
Smoke, Mostly Black

Smoke, mostly black, enveloped her.
Wisps at first
dense clouds after.
So thick she could not see lights
marking a doorway out
Or escape routes down basement steps.
Succumb she did, at least for that hour,
To smothering fumes of misery suffusing her head.

II
Perimenopause

She looked at me
The way you might because of
something a dermatologist should see
Irregular boundaries
Puss, Buboes
Multiple layers of inflamed, oozing skin
Once smooth, worthy.

So I talked with her
That my rashness might clear,
Her looks reflect only minor revulsion.

But it was too much
like walking a mine field

in diving fins or metallic snow shoes
Anything sure to ignite.

I decided that best, for now,
Was to hunker down
Let irritability reign
Until it might be less, or no more, for now.

III
Idle Capacity

The news
Undeniably good and self-affirming
Caused massive layoffs in his mind's factory
Producing vast quantities of doubt and angst.
The idle capacity would not remain
Too finely oiled it was for industry
Yet even he could appreciate the wondrous silence
Flowing from unexpected inventories of joy.

IV
The Reservoir

The reservoir filling her tears
So deep that a stone thrown in
Would be sinking still
Pumped not from waters of past regrets
Days drained by sadness
Nights flushed too soon.

The outflow came from a body-drenching fear
That how she's been is how she'll
Always be

Despite doctors, counselors, soothers
Flooding her with advice and pills
She'd never find joy more than in current store.

She could handle her condition
Knowing it might improve
For more than one day, a week, or two.
What now sopped her mind:
Her best, not worst is now.
The reservoir grew deeper still.

Winter Solitude by Sharon Osika-Michales