

## Wilderness House Literary Review 5/1

Michael Steffen  
**The Imposter**

He's a weatherman who sees tomorrow's rain  
And doesn't think of an umbrella.  
Weirdly aware he isn't made of  
Salt, he is unlike the rest of us  
In that he doesn't panic when it showers.  
He'll wrinkle a suit, won't run for cover.  
He is an old sailor. In northern gale or temperate westerly  
The sea is the sea, as a child  
Behaved or terrible is ever a mother's child.  
Like us, though, he gets caught in the rain  
Without his umbrella. Unlike us  
The merely incidental in hindsight, days later,  
Torments him to remorse. We were only forgetful.

When it's one of us instead of the rain  
And he is caught off guard, he calls his own bluff  
Saying "sorry" at least once into hollowness,  
A half a teaspoon sweet, on the brink  
Of unnerving you in his attempt to placate.  
You hadn't even minded being called "very natural."  
But now you start to. What might "very natural" mean  
Now that he "didn't mean *exactly very natural*"?  
What did that mean?

He has a deep hobby (comic books  
Or calculus) that resounds in his head  
Throughout the day, confusing you  
As drawn too simply, too intricately factored  
Into a complex equation.

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If you wondered  
What he knew about you anyway  
It would give him an edge  
You could not acknowledge  
Secretly in his likeness.

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### Dour Larkin

Everything wrong, the awful pie he ate,  
The apple for the basket to the floor.  
What's our pleasure reading his defeat  
If not for the resilience of his humor  
Left in tact despite some very strange  
Crabbing from events he couldn't change?

There is a sort of dim transparency  
Aboard the Whitsun train of grooms and brides  
Meditating the bachelor's jealousy.  
Or is he sour to be on that ride's  
Promise of new grass over each next hill  
Mindful mostly of the terminal

And all that luggage he chose not to pack?  
Summering with his mother, in soliloquy  
Pecking at Hamlet from Horatio's cloak—  
Tongue in cheek, knowing the average guy  
Wanted his winter hand in just a glove,  
That we love what doesn't exact our love.

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### Achievers—Bless You

In glass carriages where they are understood  
The best are inclusively best, not more or less  
Than all of the others who participate,  
Given appearance, with privacy exacted  
Publicly. And what they choose to take  
They give away. They push it back into  
The narrow deal, the promise eroded by  
Each individual love that hates to share  
The neutrality intended for them, until  
One of them fails a test or stoops to become  
Even more unlike us, unforgettably human.

These poems are from *Partner, Orchard, Day Moon* to be published later this year by Cervena Barva Press.