

***The Anger Suite
v the lesson***

His name was Basil. New to our small town.
Never met a man named for a spice. Never had
a man teach our Sunday school before.
I remember him in shades of grey: the crew-cut hair,
the round-rimmed glasses, the suit. His smile
formed the subtlest of curves.

I missed the older, perfumed ladies who showed us Holy Land maps
and told us Presbyterians didn't serve Communion right;
I missed their flowered dresses, their silver hair piled high,
blue eyes bright, pale skin glowing. They stayed on track.

Basil threw curves. One Sunday, he declared:
"No matter who you think you're angry at,
you're angry at yourself."

"Nonsense! You don't mean that!"
we declared back, seven fifth-graders talking
at once, ganging up on this odd newcomer.
Then the subtle smile, the distant light in grey eyes.
"No, no," he assured us. "You can be angry only
at yourself. Always."

"And what if you hit a cow that suddenly crossed the road?" we asked.
"You *have* to be angry at that cow for getting loose."

"No," said Basil. "You're angry at yourself for driving on that
particular road at that particular moment, not at the cow."

Sunday after Sunday, we argued. Sunday after Sunday, Basil
never backed down,
and smiled and smiled.

Some years after Sunday school was behind me, I learned
I had met a man named, not for a spice, but for a saint.

Ysabel de la Rosa