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## Rings

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# Shapiro: Rings

## RINGS

Rochelle Jewel Shapiro

A thick white whip of Jolene bleach to lighten her downy upper lip,  
the newly golden hairs soon jaundiced by nicotine. Her nostrils

rimmed red as her eye whites, cuticles yellow, teeth—front two lower ones  
leaned together like sunlit tombstones in receding cemeteries.

Smoke wreathed our rooms like the nine circles of hell.  
Her name, my mother, was Beatrice, Mother of Lipsticked Filters,

L-jointed butts piled sour and high in cut glass ashtrays.  
Lying on the double bed, cig bobbing between her lips, she pulled her blue

maternity smock up to her neck. With her three girls in eager waiting, she balanced  
the ashtray on her five-month belly risen with child number four.

“See how the baby kicks?” she asked, laughing. We girls  
were agog at the faceted ashtray wobbling like a séance table.