

Cynthia Ring

DYKE

mundane seaweed-colored sofa, black laptop case, loopy handwriting in a five star notebook come to mind,  
she turns off her scarlet sport's car headlights,

dad's still up,

“where were you?” he asks, a football game? prom?

“out.” with one hand on the steering wheel, the

other on the inside of some chick's thigh,

babe, I don't have any lube, here, use

my vanilla lip gloss,

*SMACK!* dad hits her, the cops come, what can I do when he turns  
around, sticks his bound hands

through the bars and \*click\* the cuffs unlock?

what do I say when gauze starts comin' off her eye

and I don't have any tape?

SAMSARA

*"IT'S BEEN NINE MONTHS  
SINCE MY DAD DIED.  
I'M FINE."*

*—RACHEL*

Tortilla chips talk  
about Rachel,  
her navy blazer from the Gap's unbuttoned  
"She thinks nothing's changed,"

they say, and rightly so,  
'cause I still kiss my own fingertips,  
Rachel turns, tilts,  
offers her wine-wavy hair  
for my sticky lipstick-smear hand  
to touch

*"ARE YOU GIVING UP  
ON YOUR WRITING DEGREE?"*

*—RACHEL*

"Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it  
and struck the high priest's servant  
and cut off his right ear"—

I wish  
the slave's severed ear—  
crusted over scarlet,  
sinews still crackle and send out static  
at the slightest touch—  
was placed in the wall  
behind the laptop where I click-tap  
until my fingertips  
chap red

*"I'M GONNA PICK OUT  
A SIMPLE HEADSTONE FOR MY DAD,  
NOT THE SCARY JESUS ONE"*  
—RACHEL

I must draw a star below my left thumb in black Sharpie  
to help me breathe thru the marble amid my shoulder,

but that doesn't dilute the double-take  
when I see my prescription can be renewed  
after 10/29,

the same date she sent a txt which read,  
"My dad passed away this morning  
Please pray"

MOKSHA

*“IT’LL TAKE YEARS, HONEY”  
—RACHEL*

B4 90s party  
I Coldplay cry,  
tau text Taylor,  
mascara muon,  
comb my streaked hair  
pin turn,  
she doesn’t knead my not-coffee breath,  
so I gather all my forget-me-do’s  
and  
she’s in the Netherlands now

*“THE DOCTORS SAY MY DAD  
HAS TEN YEARS,  
SO I’M OKAY”  
—RACHEL*

It was the end of the first semester,  
so I forget what color the car—  
  
wasn’t Rachel folding camis  
while her dad, Mark,  
balanced a cancer-crate stuffed with Jane Austen novels  
on his head and said,

“Susquehanna makes a god hamburger  
The ketchup’s  
**like volunteer firefighters**  
**rising to the occasion”**

*“EVERYBODY HAS A QUIET TIME”*  
—RACHEL

I huddle in the Ford Explorer’s backseat,  
shiver,  
blow on my cupped hands

She sits in the front,  
box of Cheerios  
in her lap,

her thin silver bangles clinking together  
as she gathers  
her scarlet hair  
into a ponytail

*“I LIKE MY SEX, THANK YOU”*  
—RACHEL

As she twirls my car keys near her crotch  
she can see her future ginger husband now,  
right by Big Ben

“He’s gonna be wearing a wool purple sweater,”  
she asserts,  
her black ballet flats feather-touch  
the concrete

SU Paranormal will think they’re ghosts  
with cashew cock  
and baby-back breasts,

shout “Are you trying to say something  
through the air vent?!”

—Bold text from *Stories Are Made of Mistakes* by James Galvin

## L'ESPRIT D'ESCALIER

I'm a None and ur so sugar-sure of your self:

“I don't like some things the bible says,” you explain, “but I have to believe them,” then my shoelace almost catches in the bottom of the rosslyn escalator—I'm a frayed *frase* in your recent blog post about your mission to france, I donate 20 bucks to your fund despite napping for three hours to cope with your claim tht I don't understand prince caspian's ending, pull my plaid blanket over my head 'cause that pissed me off, prince caspian's ending hits me too car crash close, this pome can't swerve 'round—I'm sorry—step over abstractions

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*adoro tu fe,*  
*adoro tu fe, adoro tus creencias, adoro tus creencias*

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as sure as you dye your hair brown every six weeks and declare, I give good hugs, good hugs

L'esprit d'escalier—the feeling you get after leaving a conversation, when you think of all the things you should have said. Literally translated to “the spirit of the staircase”

Frase—Spanish for “sentence”

Adoro tu fe—Spanish for “I adore your faith”

Adoro tus creencias—Spanish for “I adore your beliefs”