

The Word

My mother did not look at me when she spoke  
and she spoke from somewhere else, a look

she would soon master. *Your sister was raped*  
*when she was two, before she came to us,* she said,

turning her robe's pink sash over and over  
in her hands. I was twelve and rape was a word

of dark alleys, fists, a man driving by in a truck  
offering candy. I did not know why

she told me this, or why she said *keep this between us*  
as she wiped crumbs from the couch's tan fabric.

Or why after I brushed my teeth, I stood  
in the doorway of my sister's room

as the house settled, the pipes stopped running,  
the back door locked. My sister

slept, black hair across her cheek, her fingernails  
the bright pink I had painted earlier in the day,

her small fist curled in on itself, a pale shell caught  
between closing and opening.



## ABOUT AMANDA AUCHTER

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Amanda Auchter is the founding editor of *Pebble Lake Review* and the author of *The Glass Crib*, which won the 2010 Zone 3 Press First Book Award for Poetry, and *The Wishing Tomb*, which received the 2012 Perugia Press Award as well as the 2013 PEN Center USA Award for Poetry. She is currently at work on a memoir about adoption and the foster care system, *What Took You So Long*.

