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Review of Holding My Breath by Sidura Ludwig

Kevin Clouter

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Holding My Breath.

By Sidura Ludwig.

Aug. 2008. 272p. Crown/Shaye Areheart, \$23 (9780307396228).

Ludwig's debut focuses on the lives of four women in post-World War II Canada. Their characters are familiar: one is young and pretty and dreams of fame, one harbors a dark secret, one stoically tries to keep the family together, and one quietly observes them all. Ludwig slowly reveals the flaws of each character while resisting the temptation to absolve their sins at the end. She does not always trust her characterization, however, and too often the women shout warnings, such as "Don't tell me how to live my life" and "Don't you make her grow up too fast," which feel cribbed from a soap opera. A common theme in the story is people

disappearing; sometimes they come back, but more often they do not, leaving those left behind to endure. Although Ludwig's voice is still forming, her ability to convey the obligation of family is mature, especially as it relates to betrayal and the seeming impossibility of forgiveness. —Kevin Cloutier

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