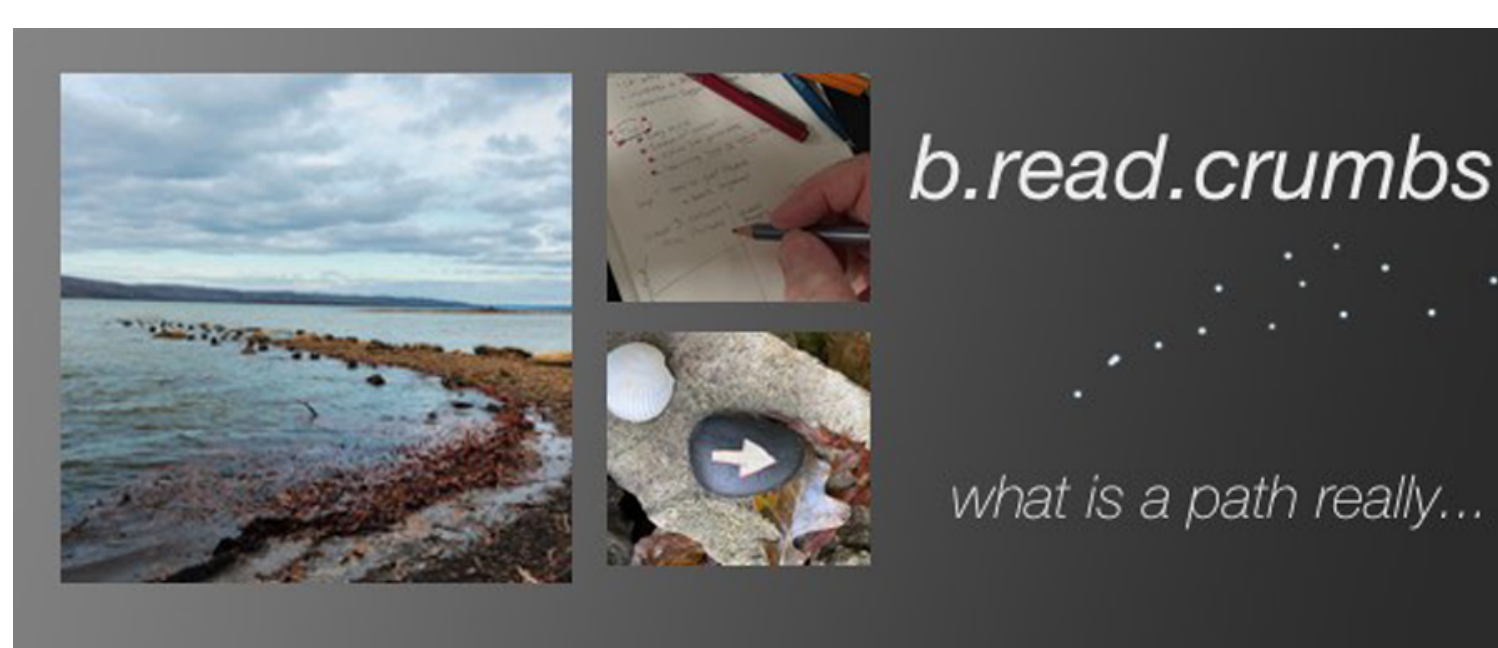


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b.readcrumbs, the short issue

August 2022

[Sidura Ludwig](#) | [Julie Herman](#) | [Deborah-Zenha Adams](#)

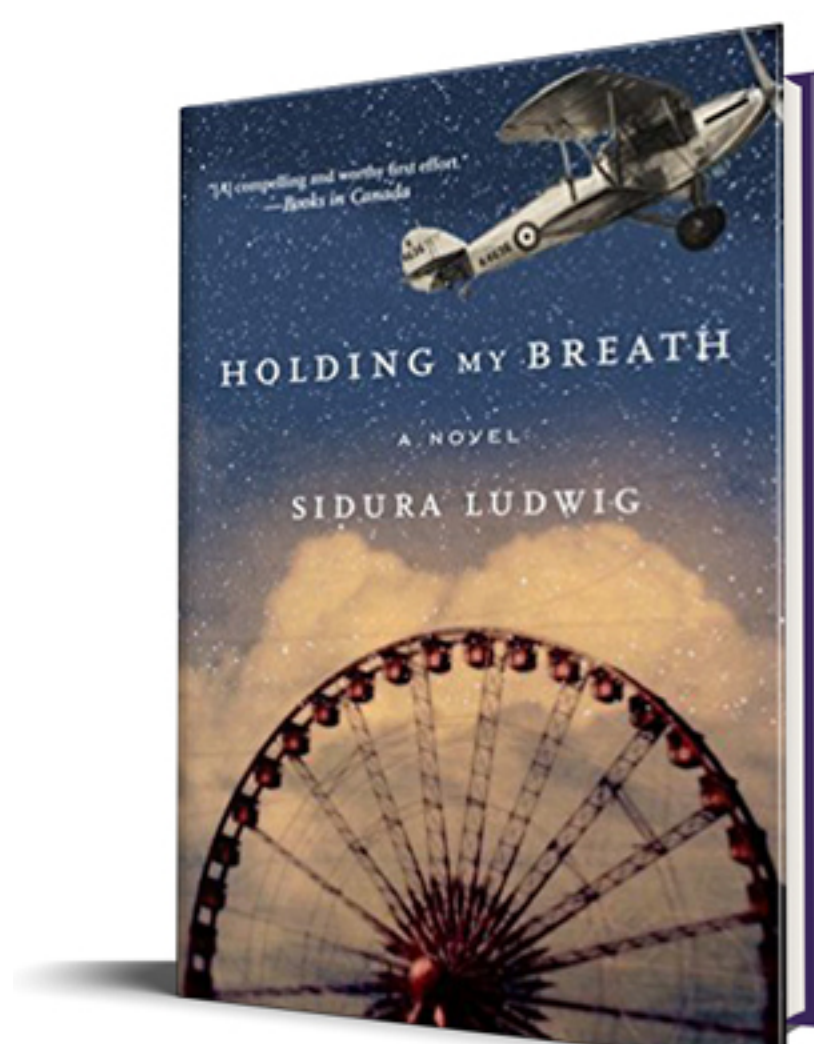
I first met Sidura sitting in College Hall at VCFA, listening to a lecture. She was rapt, and, after it was over, I could see that she had absorbed every single point the faculty member had made. Then she smiled. I knew immediately that we would become friends. Her dedication to her art, her willingness to share her knowledge, and the kind and generous spirit that is Sidura shines in everything she does. If you have not yet read her short story collection, I urge you to do so.

Sidura Ludwig

Short stories saved me when I was ready to give up on Writing.

About eight years ago, Writing and I were experiencing a rocky patch. I was trying to make it work. Writing was not cooperating. Specifically, I was working on a novel. I think I had something like 300 pages. And one day I sat back and realized it was going nowhere. There was no story. I was once again working on a manuscript only fit to see the inside of a desk drawer.

I was a young mother at the time with three kids, the youngest was two. So needless to say, I was always tired. So tired, I realized, I couldn't even read a novel. Every night when I tried, I fell asleep before I could get into the story.



If I couldn't READ a novel, what made me think I was in the right place to WRITE a novel?

But here's the thing about my relationship with Writing: it's all I've ever known. All I've ever identified as. All I ever wanted, career-wise, was a meaningful writing life. I wished, right then in the depth of writing despair, that I could go back to being a writing student and fall back in love with the written word.

So, I opened up a new Word document, wrote a short story I didn't realize I had in me. And then breathless thought, yes. *This is what I've been waiting for.*

It's not that short stories are easier to write than novels. But at that time in my life, I needed a story I could hold in my crowded, distracted head; something I could start and finish in a short period of

time. I enrolled in a short story course. I wrote more and more stories from various prompts and exercises. I even explored the characters I had been working with in my novel. But in the short story form, it was like I got to look at them in photographs. Snapshots of the meaningful moments in their lives.

That's what I've learned to love about short stories: they bring us into moments that otherwise might seem insignificant, but actually are turning points for characters. I always tell people—in a short story, a character has to move emotionally from point A to B. If there's no movement, then there's no story.

But now that I have the hindsight of those eight years (and a published short story collection to boot!), I realize that there's a link with writing short stories and with parenting young children. Both are about being present and appreciating the small moments. Because those small moments, those few pages, carry the weight of something much larger. A moment in time that forever changes the direction a person is going – even if we're not necessarily privy to what came before or what comes after.

Sidura Ludwig is a published writer for children and adults. Her short story collection, YOU ARE NOT WHAT WE EXPECTED (House of Anansi Press) was short listed for the Danuta Gleed Award and won the Vine Award for Fiction. Her debut picture book, RISING, is coming out with Candlewick, spring 2024. She lives in Thornhill, ON with her husband and three children.

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Three things that tickled my fancy this month:

- This summer, I'm trying my hand at making pies. This crust is unbelievably easy and delicious! <https://www.bhg.com/recipe/pies/pastry-for-double-crust-pie/>
- For a great short story collection, try ALL THE SHINING PEOPLE, by Kathy Friedman. It's a beautiful, complicated look at the South African Jewish community in the Greater Toronto Area. <https://houseofanansi.com/collections/short-story-collections/products/all-the-shining-people>
- I just found out that Wozzles in Halifax, Nova Scotia is the oldest children's bookstore in Canada (established 1978)! So if you're in the Maritimes, gives this place some love: <https://wozzles.com>

Julie Wray Herman

I have only written one successful short story. It was published in an anthology edited by Barry Flowers and Jan Grape from the members of the American Crime Writer's League, MURDER PAST, MURDER PRESENT. I was so proud when that story was accepted. Short stories are hard to write. Born from a visit to the old jail building in downtown Bellville, where they had a gallows right in the middle of the jail, and tales of prisoners escaping out the windows using bedsheets. Who could resist that?

One time out of twenty, I set out to write a short story, and it worked. Every other time that I sat down to write one it turned out to be a nascent novel. As I am the least likely to give good advice about writing one, I'll talk about books that might actually help you learn more about the form instead.



The benefits to reading short stories is that you can gulp them in one sitting, then savor the aftereffects. One of my favorite recent finds is the YA short story collection, FORESHADOW, Emily S. R. Pan and Nova Ren Suma, both outstanding novel writers, collaborated to bring 13 writers of diverse backgrounds, publishing a story once a month for a year. At the end of the year, they sold the collection to a publisher, who put it out into the world, and you too can enjoy these marvelous stories. Emily and Nova did a dive into craft with each of these stories, similar to the way George Saunders did with Checkov's stories in his book, A SWIM IN THE POND IN THE RAIN.

If short story writing is for you, check out both Sidura's and Deb's short stories. They are both excellent at this form!

Three Things:

All of these are embedded within the piece above:

- YA short story collection, FORESHADOW
- George Saunders looks at Checkov's stories: A SWIM IN THE POND IN THE RAIN
- I have found True Love in a Journal Company: NOTEBOOK THERAPY.

Julie Wray Herman. Weed puller. Pet keeper. Horse wrangler. Word stringer. Proud mom and Grandmom. Happy wife. Member: SCBWI, SinC, MFA from VCFA WCYA juliewherman.com

Deborah-Zenha Adams

Shorter Than Usual

Are we too wordy? Do you read through the b.read.crumbs newsletter, or just skim it, or (yikes!) delete it and move on?

Our inquiring minds want to know.

So if you're willing to give us some input, we'll make it as simple as possible. Please click the following link to send us an email letting us know that you read this far. I promise we won't ask anything else of you.

[I read every word in the b.read.crumbs newsletter!](#)

Thank you for clicking that. Now go write something.

Three Things To Share

- If you read to the end of our April b.read.crumbs, you know that I recently attended a retreat at the Settlement School in Hindman, KY. Just a few weeks later, the School and the town were devastated by the flooding in that area. Please consider helping with the recovery process in any way you can. <https://hindman.org/>
- The Letters Live series, in which celebrities read letters of all sorts. I particularly enjoyed: [Olivia Colman reads a letter responding to an unsolicited penis photograph](#)
- "A Thief in Monkey Junction" is a short story I wrote after falling in love with the Wilmington, NC area. For the next little while, it's freely available as a PDF on my website. <http://www.deborah-adams.com/short-story/>

Short bio:

Deborah-Zenha Adams is often lost in the woods without a paddle. She is an award-winning author of novels, short fiction, CNF, and poetry; she is also a certified naturalist and a yoga educator, a vegetarian, and a Prius owner. Yes, she's the living stereotype of a liberal tree-hugger.

