



Ghostbread

Sonja Livingston

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"When you eat soup every night, thoughts of bread get you through." *Ghostbread* makes real for us the shifting homes and unending hunger that shape the life of a girl growing up in poverty during the 1970s.

One of seven children brought up by a single mother, Sonja Livingston was raised in areas of western New York that remain relatively hidden from the rest of America. From an old farming town to an Indian reservation to a dead-end urban neighborhood, Livingston and her siblings follow their nonconformist mother from one ramshackle house to another on the perpetual search for something better.

Along the way, the young Sonja observes the harsh realities her family encounters, as well as small moments of transcendent beauty that somehow keep them going. While struggling to make sense of her world, Livingston perceives the stresses and patterns that keep children—girls in particular—trapped in the cycle of poverty.

Larger cultural experiences such as her love for Wonder Woman and Nancy Drew and her experiences with the Girl Scouts and Roman Catholicism inform this lyrical memoir. Livingston firmly eschews sentimentality, offering instead a meditation on what it *means* to hunger and showing that poverty can strengthen the spirit just as surely as it can grind it down.

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