



## **GHOSTBREAD**

**Sonja Livingston**

*Winner of the Association of Writers and Writing Programs  
Award for Creative Nonfiction*

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### **Praise for the book**

*"I know where I came from. With this declaration, the author of Ghostbread takes us on a journey through a childhood scarred by poverty and graced by love. Like an American version of Angela's Ashes, the book allows us to encounter— and see,*

*taste, and smell— poverty through the eyes of a beleaguered and intelligent child. We are grateful to be reminded of the human reality at the heart of a world that is all too often hidden in governmental 'poverty indicators,' and also glad that the author has survived to tell the tale."*  
— Kathleen Norris, author of *Acedia & Me: A Marriage, Monks, and a Writer's Life*

*"Ghostbread weaves together a child's experience of not belonging, the perilous ease of slipping into failure, and the deep love that can flow from even a highly troubled parent. This is rich, sensual storytelling. An amazing debut from a wonderful new writer."*

— Dinty W. Moore, author of *Between Panic and Desire*

*"Exquisite in its details and insights, Ghostbread shows us the invisible undersides of poverty. Sonja Livingston renders this so solidly that we come to understand the roots of despair, and the beauty that can be found in the midst of squalor. In an age when memoir exploits the seamier sides of life, thrusting their authors into the limelight, this book holds back, quietly resisting shock value in favor of understanding."*

— Judith Kitchen, author of *House on Eccles Road*

### **About the book**

*"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.

**Sonja Livingston** has earned a NYFA Fellowship, an Iowa Award, and Pushcart Prize nomination for her nonfiction writing. Her work has appeared in several textbooks on writing, as well as many journals, including *The Iowa Review*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *AGNI* and others. She holds an M.S. Ed. from SUNY Brockport and an MFA from the University of New Orleans and teaches in UCLA Extension's Creative Writing Program. Livingston is an elementary school counselor in Rochester, New York, where she lives with her husband, the artist Jim Mott.