



With a Closed Fist: Growing Up in Canada's Toughest Neighbourhood

Kathy Dobson

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Offering a glimpse into the culture of extreme poverty, this memoir is an insider's view into a neighborhood then described as the toughest in Canada. Point St. Charles is an industrial slum in Montreal which is now in the process of gentrification, but during Kathy Dobson's childhood, people moved for one of two reasons: their apartment was on fire or the rent was due. When student social workers and medical students from McGill University invaded the Point in the 1970s, Kathy and her five sisters witnessed their mother transform from a defeated welfare recipient to an angry, confrontational community organizer who joined in the fight against a city that turned a blind eye on some of its most vulnerable citizens. When her mother won the right for Kathy and her two older sisters to attend schools in one of Montreal's wealthiest neighborhoods, Kathy was thrown into a foreign world with a completely different set of rules that she didn't know—leading to disastrous results. This compelling, coming-of-age story documents a time of great social change in Montreal and reveals the workings of an educational system trying to deal with disadvantaged children.

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