



My Grandmother's Final Gift

BY LAUREL-ANN DOOLEY

The picture sits on a brass-topped table in a far corner of our living room. It is a tiny, yellowed snapshot encased in a small silver frame. Yet it has a peculiar power over me.

She is smiling into the camera on the sloping campus of McGill University. It is her daughter's graduation day, and springtime and family pride are in full bloom. Standing on the groomed lawn in a new hat bought especially for the occasion, she looks remarkably as she did years later when she became not my mother's mother but my grandmother, and my first best friend.

At least once a week, my mother would take me to visit her, the trip from our St. Laurent suburb to her

Closse Street apartment in downtown Montreal a voyage of Metros and cabs. There was nothing particularly momentous about those visits; each was indistinguishable from the rest, a series of small moments strung together like beads.

We spent hours sewing button eyes on Teddy bears at the kitchen table, the late afternoon sun streaming in and glinting off our needles. On other days, we watered the dark purple violets clustered in their pots on the brass-topped table in the front room, ate ladyfingers and drank tea. We went for walks in winter snowfalls, scrunching down side by side on the dark pavement outside of the Sisters of Notre Dame Convent to see if every snowflake really was differ-