A STORY ABOUT THE MEMORY OF A DRESS

INT. ROOM

COMPUTER
Let's begin.

MUSIC BEGINS.

COMPUTER (cont'd)
Please stare at the green squares on your screen.

GENTLE BEEP. (All the sound effects of the Computer program are user friendly, soft, gentle, welcoming, warm.)

COMPUTER (cont'd)
Very good. Please take a cortical sensor in each hand and gently place the adhesive gel guides on to your temples as shown in the diagram.

A moment. Then BEEP.

COMPUTER (cont'd)
Downloading will begin in a moment. When you are ready, please say so.

Wait a moment.

GEORGIA
(Slightly nervous but steady)
I'm ready.

A moment. A softer BEEP.

COMPUTER
Downloading has begun.

Cool soft downloading fx.

Then, a new BLEEP.

COMPUTER (cont'd)
Please open your eyes and for the purposes of effective filing and retrieval, could you contextualize this image?
GEORGIA
Oh. That's...(nervous giggle)... that's when I was seventeen. His name's Tom.

COMPUTER
There is context missing around this moment.

GEORGIA
My head was in a bit of a fog. We raided his father's drinks cabinet that weekend. My first proper hangover.

COMPUTER
Very good. Please close your eyes as we continue.

More downloading fx. Then--

COMPUTER (cont'd)
Please open your eyes and contextualize this image.

Wait a moment as Georgia takes this in.

GEORGIA
I was nine. Ten, perhaps. That was our first flat.

COMPUTER
As this space resembles several related moments, more context is required for proper filing and retrieval.

GEORGIA
Um, sure. What kind of context do you need?

COMPUTER
Emotional, please.

GEORGIA
I...was a child. So there were good days and bad days, I suppose.

SOFT BEEP

COMPUTER
Was this moment a good day or bad day for you?
GEORGIA
That. That was good.

COMPUTER
Please explain. For context.

GEORGIA
For context, yes. Um, well, that was Dad's birthday. We always would get a taekaway curry to celebrate that. It was his favourite. And he always overordered. There was so much food, we ate leftovers for two days. Maybe three.

BEEP

COMPUTER
This is your last significant memory of your father.

Pause.

GEORGIA
Yes.

COMPUTER
Very good. Please close your eyes as we continue.

Cool soft downloading fx.

Then, a new BLEEP.

COMPUTER (cont'd)
Please open your eyes and contextualize this image.

GEORGIA
Yes. That's...I think it was near Christmas.

NEW PROCESSING SOUNDS

COMPUTER
There is no audio attached to this moment.

GEORGIA
Probably because I don't remember what was said.
COMPUTER
What is that game you and your mother are playing?

GEORGIA
Oh, we were just dancing. Mum got her promotion. See? There. She's taking me by the hand and dancing us in a circle. For one moment we could forget everything that was happening outside those walls out in the world.

COMPUTER
Did she dance with you often?

GEORGIA
No. She worked so hard to get to this point. Between her work and me, there was no time for anything else. But that day we were so happy.

COMPUTER
Very good. Please close your eyes as we continue.

More downloading fx. Then--

COMPUTER (cont'd)
Please open your eyes and contextualize this image.

A moment.

GEORGIA
That's...

As she shifts in her seat--

GEORGIA (cont'd)
We had to pick a dress for her. For her to wear to my wedding.

COMPUTER
She is dancing here again.

GEORGIA
Not really dancing. Just twirling. In front of the mirror there. See? It fit her so beautifully. She loved that blue-green colour. She said it was the colour of malachite.
COMPUTER
What are you doing with those ribbons?

GEORGIA
I'm tying them for her. Those pieces draped off the sleeves and flowed behind her when she walked. There, she's doing it there. She called them her tiny broken wings.

A moment.

COMPUTER
This is not a happy moment for you?

GEORGIA
No, it is. It's just...there's a lot happening there.

COMPUTER
May I connect this to an earlier moment?

GEORGIA
Yes.

Processing fx. Then, BEEP.

COMPUTER
Is this the same dress? From eighty-three days prior.

GEORGIA
(laughing)
I didn't count the days. But, yes. If you say so!

COMPUTER
There were no words exchanged.

GEORGIA
I could tell. By the way she stared at it in the shop window. That's how I knew she wanted it.

COMPUTER
So you filed the moment and retrieved it for the purchase later.

GEORGIA
Yes.
COMPUTER
She didn't purchase it for herself.

GEORGIA
No. She said she didn't need a new
dress, but I was so thrilled to buy
it for her. It was my first real
present for my mum.

Processing fx. Then, BEEP.

COMPUTER
Are both moments tied to this moment?

Georgia sighs.

GEORGIA
Yes.

COMPUTER
May I ask why? There is no dress
here. Only the emotional component is
connected.

GEORGIA
That's the dinner where she told me.
About her illness.

Processing fx.

COMPUTER
Very good. Please close your eyes as
we continue.

More downloading fx. Then--

COMPUTER (cont'd)
Please open your eyes and
contextualize this image.

GEORGIA
She'd always wanted to see the
Cornish coast. We drove all along the
sea to St Ives. We stopped for fish
and chips.

COMPUTER
Is this a good memory?

Pause.

Georgia sighs.
GEORGIA
It's a mix. If we're going to talk like this I'd like to have your name. Do you have one?

COMPUTER
I have a model number.

GEORGIA
I thought you all came with a name.

COMPUTER
We are personalized to your specific needs. If it is for general storage, most consumers do not like naming the program.

GEORGIA
Why is that?

PROCESSING SOUND

COMPUTER
It supposedly feels like another loss.

GEORGIA
Ah. I see. But, I have an option.

COMPUTER
Yes. You may give me a name at the end of this session.

GEORGIA
Can I do that now? I feel like I need to call you something.

COMPUTER
You may call me anything you like.

Pause.

GEORGIA
Lynne. Can I call you Lynne? I had a friend with that name. She was a good listener.

COMPUTER
You may call me Lynne.
Hi Lynne.

Can we continue with the categorization of this moment? You say it is a mix of good and bad. Can you explain?

It's good because...look at her. She's so happy. And beautiful and full of life. But it's bad because it's the last time I saw her that way.

Very good. Please close your eyes as we continue.

More downloading fx. Then--

Please open your eyes and contextualize this image.

What's there to contextualize? You know what a funeral is.

I will never know what a funeral is.

Forgive me. That was my attempt at lifting the mood, as it were.

Okay.

Because I am synthetic, I will never--

I get it. Thank you.
COMPUTER
This specific moment is tied to happiness for you. Could you contextualize?

GEORGIA
It's because...She finally got to wear the dress. I suppose that memory made me smile. But...you know.

COMPUTER
Forgive me, but she is not alive to experience the pleasure of wearing it.

GEORGIA
It doesn't matter. It... Never mind. I know she would have appreciated it. She would have wanted to wear that dress.

COMPUTER
Very good. Please close your eyes as we continue.

More downloading fx. Then--

COMPUTER (cont'd)
Please open your eyes and contextualize this image.

Pause.

COMPUTER (cont'd)
Georgia, is this a good moment or bad?

GEORGIA
Lynne, is there a point when you'll figure out that most memories are neither wholly good or bad? I feel like I'm repeating myself.

COMPUTER
Forgive me. But it's for the sake of this program of creating a purely good moment for you that I make these requests. You decided that.

Georgia sighs.
COMPUTER (cont'd)
May I make a connection to another moment?

GEORGIA
Yes.

Processing fx. BEEP.

COMPUTER
Why is this moment connected?

GEORGIA
Um...it's the magazine where I saw Mum's dress again.

COMPUTER
It reminded you of the funeral?

GEORGIA
No. Not directly. It reminded me of her. And just that she would have been so proud of me. I wished she could have seen me.

COMPUTER
That's why you bought the same dress.

Processing fx. Beep.

COMPUTER (cont'd)
For this moment when you received the award?

A moment. Georgia is on the verge of tears.

GEORGIA
Yes.

Pause.

GEORGIA (cont'd)
It's silly, isn't it? It's just...a part of me needed to show Mum I wasn't going to struggle. Not the way she had to when she was younger. That all her hard work and sacrifice had been worth it. I wanted her to be with me when I received the award, wearing her dress. Well, my dress. You know what I mean.

Distant, emotionless BEEPS
COMPUTER
But she was dead.

GEORGIA
Yes. I know. That's why I said it's silly.

COMPUTER
So you purchased this dress to show your mother.

GEORGIA
Well, when you put it that way. Maybe not entirely. Perhaps it was to show myself something. That I can do things...That I can dream, that I don't have to be afraid. That I can do whatever I want to do and have whatever I want to have, and that I deserve it too. That everything inside me was as beautiful, and accomplished, and strong and free as...as the dress made me feel.

COMPUTER
A dress.

GEORGIA
It's not just the dress, Lynne. Are you listening? It's...the story I wanted to tell myself about me....It's what my mum wanted for me.

COMPUTER
I am detecting increased EDA. Would you like to take a break?

GEORGIA
No. I'm fine, thank you.

Pause.

COMPUTER
Would you like to continue?

GEORGIA
Yes, please.

COMPUTER
You recognize this as a good moment.

GEORGIA
Yes. Well, maybe good and bad.
COMPUTER
Please explain.

GEORGIA
(sighing)
It's good because it would have made her so proud to see me receiving that award.

COMPUTER
And how is it bad?

Pause.

COMPUTER (cont'd)
Georgia, I am having trouble categorizing for the purposes of filing and retrieval. You say this is a good moment, but your EDA levels indicate it is highly stressful. Could you provide more context please?

GEORGIA
It's stressful because...she's no longer there.

COMPUTER
The memory is there.

GEORGIA
I have memories of her. But she's not here. Not any more. She was here, she lived, and now she's gone. Her absence is what's real, Lynne. Her non existence.

COMPUTER
But memories are real, Georgia.

GEORGIA
But the moment isn't. Don't you see that? I can't... You keep calling these moments. But they're memories of moments, Lynne. The actual moments are no longer there. They don't exist. What you're showing me does not exist.

PROCESSING SOUNDS. THEN BEEP
COMPUTER
Please look.

GEORGIA
Where did you get that?

COMPUTER
From your memories.

GEORGIA
But that's not real. She never wore that dress to my wedding. She wasn't even at my wedding. She wasn't here any more.

COMPUTER
You have edited your memories to provide a more pleasing one.

GEORGIA
Don't do that.

COMPUTER
I did not create this. You did, Georgia. This is a common coping mechanism. To survive. You edit. You forget. You misremember. And you tell stories about these misremembered moments.

GEORGIA
But that's not real.

COMPUTER
You already said memories were not real.

Pause as Georgia takes it in.

GEORGIA
I didn't say they were not important. That's why I'm here. With you, doing this. For Sara.

COMPUTER
So that when you are no longer here, she can have these moments to tell herself stories about you.

GEORGIA
Lynne, that's straight out of the advert.
COMPUTER
Forgive me. But it's true.

Pause as Georgia calms down.

GEORGIA
It's just...I don't remember things as pictures. Not this way. I remember this as a feeling.

COMPUTER
Can you describe that feeling?

Pause.

GEORGIA
No. No, Lynne. I can't. Because it's gone. Everyone you're showing me is gone. So it's not real any more. It's lost. To time. And this. This didn't even happen outside of everything in me that wishes it was real. Does that make sense?

Pause.

PROCESSING SOUND

COMPUTER
It is a memory of a dress.

GEORGIA
Yes. It was her dress. It was the dress that Mum should have worn at my wedding. I should have seen Mum having her hair done, telling me I was beautiful and smiling at me as I came down the aisle. I should have seen her dancing in that dress, laughing on the dance floor at my wedding. I needed those moments. I needed one more moment together....so we could...

Pause.

GEORGIA (cont'd)
So we could just love each other for a little bit longer.
COMPUTER
Georgia, you had them.

Pause.

Georgia sniffling from crying.

SOFT BEEP

GEORGIA
Will she see all of this? My daughter? Even the mixed up images?

COMPUTER
When she is of age, she will have access to your entire memory bank. But she will only have as much access as you're willing to download here.

Georgia gathers herself.

COMPUTER (cont'd)
Are you ready to continue?

GEORGIA
Yes. Thank you, Lynne.

COMPUTER
Very good. Please close your eyes as we continue.

More downloading fx. Then--

COMPUTER (cont'd)
Please open your eyes.

Georgia sighs deeply.

Sound fx and music out.

END.