

Dissipated Memories

Ann is being stalked by the man of her dreams. But not
everything is as it appears.

She turned the corner, sensing the man's presence behind her. Quickening her pace, trying to reach her office, she knew she'd be safe behind the lock and door. Plus, there were weapons, weren't there? Her mind flew through the possibilities: A vase to hit him over the head. A pen to impale in his jugular. Or she could brace the door with her desk chair. That would keep him out.

"Ann?" She heard the echo of his voice.

Chills ran down her spine. "Leave me alone!"

The station was her refuge, where she'd escape the pressures of being a busy mother of three. Ann Wittmore, the prime-time weather reporter, had delivered trustworthy reports for nearly thirty years. She was well-known. She was reliable. She was in trouble.

"Help!" she cried in vain. Her words echoed off the empty corridor.

Ann ran down the hall, through the studio, and past the green screen. Her office was across the building. She had worked her way up the ladder, earning herself a plush view of rolling hills and miles of farmland. This was the first time in her life that she'd regretted her hard work and tenacity.

Ann turned the corner, and a blinding light forced her to stop and shield her eyes.

* * *

The sun glimmered off the water. Billowy clouds sparsely decorated the blue sky, and the vivid green of lush vegetation framed the pond. Ann looked out and saw a couple sitting on a rowboat, floating haphazardly in the middle.

Ann watched the couple's courting dance wistfully. Their laughter and indistinct dialogue made her long for a partner.

The woman squealed as if her counterpart had flicked the icy water in her direction. Enjoying the intimate moment, Ann giggled, and both their heads turned. Ann's eyes locked with his mossy-green gaze for only a moment. Another blinding light forced Ann to blink.

* * *

Ann looked around her office. She was safely behind the locked door, but the handle was rattling. He was there, trying to enter, and she was trapped.

"Ann? Open up." he said, shaking the door hard.

Panic filled her gut. She ran past her desk and to the window, slapping her hands on the glass to stop herself. Ann's fingers fumbled with the lock.

"Ann, it's me," his voice purred.

She flipped the window's lock at the same time she heard him ramming the door. He was large, at least six feet tall, and had broad shoulders. If he broke through the door's lock, she

couldn't ward him off. She threw open the window and looked down at the ground. At an estimate, she'd have a twelve-foot jump.

The door finally gave, leading to a deafening crack. Ann flung around in time to see the man rush through the door. His sandy-brown hair was a bit on the longer side, and his moss-colored green eyes connected with hers.

She gasped with terror.

He dashed toward her, reaching just as she slipped through the window and leapt. Ann hit the ground with a thud.

"Ann!" he bellowed.

She shook her head, clearing the blinding pain and disorientation.

* * *

The foliage was an array of autumn colors, and the crisp, cool air blew Ann's blonde hair across her face. The grass crunched as she crossed the park heading toward benches strategically placed next to a small pond.

Ann sat on the wrought iron, enjoying the colorful reflections dancing across the water. The sky matched the trees in color and awe as the sun began to set behind the clouds, shrouding them with a golden lining.

"Sunsets are my favorite," said a voice from behind her.

Ann looked over her shoulder and smiled at a man with moss-colored eyes.

"Me, too."

She looked back toward the sun and blinked.

* * *

Catching her breath while on all fours, she crawled away from the building until her vision cleared. Ann rose, looked back once, and hobbled down a moonlit path. The station faded in the distance.

"Ann, please!" he begged.

Tears streamed down her face. "I said to leave me alone!"

A stoic chuckle filled her ears. "Oh, Ms. Ann. What are we go'n to do with you?"

Ann pressed on despite her body's protest. She had no other choice in hoping to escape.

His footsteps grew louder. It would be only a matter of minutes before he'd catch her. Peaking with desperation, she ran towards the neighboring farm pond. She could hide in the reeds. The water grew closer and closer until she could feel it engulf her.

* * *

"Ms. Wittmore? What'd I say about doz'n off in that there tub?" the voice cooed.

Ann's eyelids fluttered open, and she looked into the chestnut brown eyes of a robust woman with a round face, broad

smile, and poorly kept hair. Although the woman had a familiar face, Ann couldn't quite seem to draw up a name.

"I'm sorry," Ann said simply.

The woman's smile grew. "Ms. Wittmore, look who's here to see you." The woman stepped aside slightly, just enough for Ann's gaze to lock on to a pair of moss-colored eyes. Ann, frozen with fear, could feel her color drain from her face.

The woman frowned and looked over her shoulder. "I'm sorry, Mr. Wittmore. It seems Ms. Ann is hav'n a bad day. Let me get her proper, and I'll bring her on down to the garden if she'd like."

With melancholic expression, he nodded once. "Thank you, Betsy," he mumbled as he shuffled off.

"He scares me," Ann whispered.

"Now, hush your mouth. Don't you fret 'bout ol' Mr. Wittmore. You've got a real good man there. He'd follow you to the Earth's end. Who else would stand by your side when you don't even know him from a hill o'beans anymore? Bless your heart."