

An impressionistic painting of a woman with blonde hair, wearing a light-colored, off-the-shoulder dress, sitting in a dark, ornate chair. The background is a textured, colorful wall with a framed picture on the right. The overall style is soft and painterly.

*Signet Classic*

Leo Tolstoy

**Anna Karenina**

WITH A NEW INTRODUCTION  
BY PRISCILLA MEYER

# Part One



## CHAPTER 1

All happy families are like one another; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.

Everything was in confusion in the Oblonsky household. The wife had found out that the husband had had an affair with their French governess and had told him that she could not go on living in the same house with him. This situation had now gone on for three days and was felt acutely by the husband and wife themselves, by all the members of the family, and by their servants. All the members of the family and the servants felt that there was no sense in their living together under the same roof and that people who happened to meet at any country inn had more in common with one another than they, the members of the Oblonsky family and their servants. The wife did not leave her own rooms, and the husband had not been home for three days. The children ran about all over the house looking lost; the English governess had quarreled with the housekeeper and had written to a friend to ask her to find her a new place; the chef had left the house the day before, at dinnertime; the under-cook and the driver had given notice.

On the third morning after the quarrel Prince Stepan Arkadyevich Oblonsky (Stiva, as he was called by his society friends) woke up at his usual time, that is at eight o'clock, not in his wife's bedroom but on the morocco leather sofa in his study. He turned his plump, well-cared-for body on the well-sprung sofa, as though intending to go to sleep for a long time, hugged the pillow

disclosed everything. Dolly, whom he always thought of as preoccupied, busy, and not very intelligent, was sitting motionless, holding the note in her hands, and looked at him with an expression of horror, despair, and anger.

"What is this? This?" she asked, pointing to the note.

And as it often happens, it was, as he recalled it, not so much the event itself that distressed him as the answer he had given to his wife's question.

What happened to him at that moment was what happens to people who are caught red-handed doing something disgraceful. He had not been able to assume the expression that was appropriate to the situation in which he had found himself after the discovery of his guilt by his wife. Instead of taking offense, denying the whole thing, justifying himself, begging forgiveness, or even remaining indifferent (any of these would have been better than what he actually did), his face quite involuntarily ("Reflexes of the brain," thought Oblonsky, who had a liking for physiology), quite involuntarily smiled its usual kind and, for that reason, rather foolish smile.

This foolish smile he could not forgive himself. Seeing it, Dolly gave a start, as though he had hit her, and with her habitual passion burst into a flood of bitter words and rushed out of the room. Since then she had refused to see her husband.

"It's all the fault of that stupid smile," thought Oblonsky.

"But what's to be done? What's to be done?" he asked himself in despair and could find no answer.

## CHAPTER 2

Oblonsky was a truthful man in his attitude to himself. He could not deceive himself into believing that he was sorry for his conduct. He could not now feel sorry because he, a handsome and susceptible man of thirty-four, was not in love with his wife, the mother of five living and two dead children, who was only a year younger than himself. He was only sorry not to have been able to hide it from his wife better. But he felt the whole gravity of his position and he was sorry for his wife, his children, and himself. Perhaps he would have been able



on the other side, and pressed his cheek against it; suddenly he jumped up, sat down on the sofa, and opened his eyes.

"Yes, yes, now how was it?" he thought, trying to remember a dream. "Yes, now how was it? Oh, yes! Alabin was giving a dinner in Darmstadt; no, not in Darmstadt but in some American city. Ah, but in my dream Darmstadt was in America. Yes, Alabin was giving a dinner on glass tables—ah yes, and the tables were singing *Il mio tesoro*. No, not *Il mio tesoro*, something better. And there were some little decanters there, and the decanters were also women," he recalled.

Oblonsky's eyes sparkled gaily and he smiled as he sank into thought. "Yes, it was nice, very nice. There was a lot that was excellent there, but it can't be put into words, or expressed in thoughts, now that I am awake." Then, noticing the shaft of light coming through the side of one of the holland blinds, he briskly thrust his feet down from the sofa to feel for the slippers his wife had given him as a birthday present the year before and which she had worked in gold morocco and, as had been his custom during the last nine years, stretched out his hand without getting up for the place where his dressing gown hung in the bedroom. It was then that he suddenly remembered how and why it was that he was sleeping not in his wife's bedroom but in his own study. The smile vanished from his face and he wrinkled his forehead.

"Dear, oh dear!" he groaned, remembering what had happened. And in his mind's eye he saw again all the details of the quarrel with his wife; he realized the utter hopelessness of his position and, most tormenting fact of all, that it was all his own fault.

"No, she won't forgive me! She can't forgive me! And the worst of it is that it was all my own fault. It is my own fault and yet I'm not to blame. That's the tragedy of it," he thought. "Dear, oh dear!" he kept saying in despair, recalling the most painful aspects of the quarrel.

The most unpleasant moment was the first, when, having returned from the theater happy and gay, with an enormous pear in his hand for his wife, he had not found her in the drawing room. Nor, to his amazement, did he find her in the study. At last he had discovered her in the bedroom with the unfortunate note in her hand that

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Anna Karenina

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