

Anna Karenina

Leo Tolstoy

Translated by Kyrill Zinovieff
and Jenny Hughes



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Main Characters
with their
patronymics, nicknames and surnames

Agafya Mikhailovna – *Agafya* – Levin’s housekeeper
Alexei Alexandrovich – *Karenin* – Anna’s husband
Alexei Kirillych – Count *Vronsky*
Anna Arkadyevna – *Anna Karenina* – Karenin’s wife, Oblonsky’s sister
Anna Pavlovna – Madame Petrov, wife of a dying painter at a German spa
Darya Alexandrovna – *Dolly* – Princess Oblonsky, Kitty’s sister, Oblonsky’s wife
Yekaterina Alexandrovna Shcherbatsky – *Kitty* – Dolly’s sister, marries Levin
Yelizaveta Fyodorevna – *Betsy* – Princess Tverskoy, Vronsky’s first cousin
Ivan Petrovich – Vorkuyev, a publisher
Konstantin Dmitrich – Kostya – *Levin*, marries Kitty
Lidia Ivanovna – *Countess Lidia* – Karenin’s friend
Marya Nikolayevna – *Masha* – Nikolai Levin’s mistress
Matryona Filimonovna – nurse to the Oblonsky children
Mikhail Vasilyevich – *Slyudin*, Karenin’s private secretary
Nikolai Dmitrich – *Nikolai Levin* – Konstantin’s brother, Koznyshev’s half-brother
Nikolai Ivanovich – *Sviyazhsky* – Levin’s country neighbour and Marshal of Nobility
Sergei Alexeyevich – *Seryozha* – son of Anna and Karenin
Sergei Ivanovich – *Koznyshev* – half-brother of Konstantin and Nikolai Levin
Sergei Arkadyevich – Stiva – Prince *Oblonsky*, Anna’s brother, Dolly’s husband
Varvara Andreyevna – *Varenka* – Kitty’s friend
Vasily Lukich – house tutor to Seryozha

Anna Karenina

Vengeance is mine, and I will repay.*

PART ONE

I

ALL HAPPY FAMILIES ARE ALIKE; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.

There was total confusion in the Oblonsky home. The wife had found that the husband was having an adulterous affair with their former French governess and had announced to her husband that she could no longer live under the same roof with him. This state of affairs had been going on for three days, and was acutely distressing to both husband and wife as well as to all the members of the family and to the servants. All the members of the family and the servants felt there was no point in their living together under the same roof and that people happening to meet at the same inn would have closer ties between them than they – the members of the Oblonsky family and their servants – had. The wife would not leave her own rooms and the husband had not been home for three days. The children were wandering about the house like lost souls; the English governess had quarrelled with the housekeeper and had written a note to a friend asking her to find a new job for her; the chef had left the day before while dinner was in progress; the under-cook and the coachman had given notice.

On the third day after the quarrel, Prince Stepan Oblonsky – Stiva, as he was called by his friends – awoke at the usual time, that is at eight o'clock in the morning, not in his wife's bedroom but on the morocco-leather sofa in his study. He turned his ample, well-groomed body on the springs of the sofa as if getting ready for another long sleep, clasped the pillow tightly from the other side, and pressed his cheek into it; but then he suddenly jumped up, sat down on the sofa, and opened his eyes.

“Well, now, how did it go?” he reflected, trying to recall his dream. “How was it now? Oh yes! Alabin was giving a dinner in Darmstadt; no, not in Darmstadt, there was something American about it. That's right, Darmstadt was in America in that dream. Oh yes, and Alabin was giving a dinner on glass tables, yes – and the tables were singing *Il mio tesoro*, and yet it wasn't

Il mio tesoro but something better, and then there were some sort of little decanters, and the decanters were women,” he mused.

A mischievous twinkle lit up Oblonsky’s eyes and he smiled as he mused. “Oh, it was nice, very nice. There was a lot more in it too, splendid stuff, but you can’t put it into words, nor even express it in thoughts when it’s not in a dream.” And, noticing a shaft of light streaming in at the side of one of the cloth curtains, he gaily swung his feet off the sofa, feeling for his gold morocco slippers, which his wife had embroidered for his birthday the year before; then, from a habit of nine years’ standing, he did not bother to get up but stretched out his hand to the place where in his bedroom his dressing gown hung. And it was then that he suddenly remembered how and why he came to be sleeping not in his wife’s bedroom but in his study; the smile vanished from his face and was replaced by a frown.

“Oh! Oh! Oh! O-o-o-oh!” he groaned, as he remembered everything that had happened. And in his imagination he once more visualized his quarrel with his wife in all its details, all the hopelessness of his position and, most agonizing of all, his own guilt.

“No, she won’t and can’t forgive me. And the worse of it is that I’m to blame for it all – I’m to blame, and yet it’s not my fault. Indeed, that’s the whole tragedy,” he thought. “Oh! Oh! Oh!” he repeated in despair, recalling what, for him, had been the most painful impressions of the quarrel.

Most unpleasant of all had been that first moment when, returning from the theatre gay and pleased with life, with a huge pear in his hand for his wife, he had not found her in the drawing room; to his astonishment he had not found her in the study either, and finally saw her in the bedroom, holding in her hand the wretched note which revealed everything.

Dolly, the perpetually busy and preoccupied and not, he thought, very bright Dolly, was sitting motionless with the note in her hand and looking at him with an expression of horror, despair and fury.

“What is this? What is it?” she had asked, pointing to the note.

And as is often the case, it was not so much what he had actually done that tormented Oblonsky when he remembered the incident as the way in which he had responded to his wife’s words.

What happened to him at that moment was what happens to people when they are unexpectedly caught out at something all too shameful. He had not been able to compose his face suitably for the situation in which his wife’s discovery of his guilt placed him. Instead of taking offence, denying the whole thing, justifying himself, asking forgiveness, or even remaining unconcerned – anything would have been better than what he in fact did! – his face quite automatically and suddenly (“a reflex of the brain”, thought

Oblonsky, who was addicted to physiology) broke into its usual, amiable, and therefore silly, smile.

He could not forgive himself for that silly smile. Dolly had winced on seeing it, as if from physical pain, and bursting out with her usual vehemence into a stream of savage words, had run out of the room. Since then she refused to see her husband.

“That silly smile was to blame for everything,” thought Oblonsky.

“But what is to be done? What can I do?” he asked himself in despair, and found no answer.

2

OBLONSKY WAS A MAN who was honest with himself. He could not deceive himself by convincing himself that he was sorry for what he had done. He could not now be sorry that he, a handsome, amorous man of thirty-four, was not in love with his wife, who was only a year younger than he was and the mother of five living children and two who had died.* He was sorry only that he had not been able to hide things better from his wife. But he felt all the gravity of his situation, and pitied his wife, his children and himself. Perhaps he would have contrived to hide his sins better from his wife had he expected this news to have such an effect on her. He had never thought over this question clearly, but he hazily imagined that his wife had guessed long ago that he was unfaithful to her and turned a blind eye to it. It even seemed to him that a woman like her, worn out, ageing, by then plain and in no way remarkable, unassuming, just the good-natured mother of a family, should, out of a sense of fairness, have been forbearing. It had turned out quite otherwise.

“Oh, it’s terrible! Oh dear! It’s terrible!” Oblonsky repeated to himself, and could think of no solution. “And how splendid everything was before it happened, how well we got on! She was contented, happy with the children, I did not interfere with her at all, let her deal with the children, with the household, just as she wished. True, it wasn’t a good thing that *she* was a governess in our house. It wasn’t a good thing. There’s something trite, something vulgar, about making love to one’s children’s governess. But what a governess!” (He vividly recalled Mlle Roland’s mischievous black eyes and her smile.) “But after all I did not take any liberties while she was living under our roof. And the worst of it all is that she is already... It’s just as if it were all on purpose! Oh! Oh! But what, what’s to be done?”

There was no answer, apart from that general answer which life gives to the most complicated and insoluble questions, which is that one must live from day to day, that is, “forget oneself”. To forget oneself in sleep was no longer possible, at any rate until night time; it was no longer possible to go back

to that music which the little decanter-women had sung; he had therefore to forget himself in the dream of life.

"Well, we'll see," said Oblonsky. He got up, put on a grey dressing gown lined with blue silk, knotted the cord, took a deep breath, filling his broad chest to capacity and, going to the window with the usual sprightly step of his turned out feet which so easily carried his ample body, raised the blind and rang loudly. The bell was immediately answered by his old friend and valet, Matvei, who was carrying his clothes, his boots and a telegram. Matvei was followed by a barber with shaving tackle.

"Are there any papers from the office?" asked Oblonsky, taking the telegram and sitting down at the looking glass.

"They are on the table," answered Matvei, giving his master a questioning and sympathetic look, and added with a sly smile after a moment's pause: "Someone came from the livery stables."

Oblonsky did not reply and merely glanced at Matvei in the looking glass; but the glance they thus exchanged revealed how well they understood one another. Oblonsky's look seemed to say: "Why do you say that? Don't you know what's happened?"

Matvei put his hands in the pockets of his jacket, moved his foot, and looked at his master in silence with a good-natured, hardly perceptible smile.

"I told him to come back on Sunday and, till then, not to trouble you or himself for nothing," he said, in an obviously prepared phrase.

Oblonsky saw that Matvei wanted to have a little joke, in order to attract attention to himself. Tearing open the telegram, he read it, guessing some of the words, garbled as usual, and his face brightened.

"Matvei, my sister Anna Arkadyevna* is coming tomorrow," he said, momentarily staying the barber's shiny, plump hand which was clearing a pink pathway through his long, curly whiskers.

"Thank God!" said Matvei, indicating by this answer that, like his master, he understood the significance of this arrival, that is that Oblonsky's favourite sister Anna might effect a reconciliation between husband and wife.

"Alone, or with her husband?" asked Matvei.

Oblonsky could not speak, as the barber was busy with his upper lip, and so he raised one finger. Matvei nodded his head in the looking glass.

"Alone. Shall I have a room prepared upstairs?"

"Ask Princess Oblonsky. Let her decide."

"Princess Oblonsky?" repeated Matvei, as if in doubt.

"Yes, ask her. And here, take the telegram to her and see what she says."

"Want to play it that way, do you?" Matvei thought to himself, but he only said: "Very good, sir."

Oblonsky was already washed and brushed and was about to dress when Matvei, treading slowly in his squeaky boots, re-entered the room, telegram in hand. The barber had left.

“Princess Oblonsky told me to say she was going away. Let him – you, that is – do what he likes, she said.” And he stood staring at his master, head on one side and hands in pockets, with only his eyes laughing.

Oblonsky was silent for a moment. Then a kind and rather pathetic smile appeared on his handsome face.

“Well? Well, Matvei?” he said, shaking his head.

“Don’t worry, sir, it’ll sort itself out.”

“Sort itself out?”

“That’s right, sir.”

“You think so? Who’s that there?” asked Oblonsky, hearing the rustle of a woman’s dress outside the door.

“It’s me, sir,” said a firm and pleasant female voice, and the stern, pock-marked face of the nurse Matryona Filimonovna was thrust round the door.

“Well, what is it, Matryona?” asked Oblonsky, going up to her at the door.

Though Oblonsky was entirely in the wrong in regard to his wife and was himself aware of it, almost everyone in the house, even the nurse, Princess Oblonsky’s principal friend, was on his side.

“Well, what is it?” he said, dejected.

“You go to her, sir, and own up again you’re in the wrong. God will help, perhaps. She’s suffering ever so, it’s a shame to see, and the whole house is upset. You must take pity on the children, sir. Confess you’re in the wrong, sir. It can’t be helped! If you have your fun...”

“But she won’t see me...”

“But you do your bit. God is merciful, pray to God, sir, pray to God.”

“All right, you can go now,” said Oblonsky, suddenly blushing. “Well, now let’s get dressed,” he added, turning to Matvei and he threw off his dressing gown with an air of resolution.

Matvei was already holding out, like a horse’s collar, the shirt he had prepared; he blew at an invisible speck and, with obvious relish, enveloped his master’s well-groomed body in it.

3

WHEN HE HAD FINISHED DRESSING, Oblonsky sprayed himself with toilet water, adjusted his cuffs and automatically distributed cigarettes, pocket book, matches and watch with its double chain and bunch of charms in various pockets, shook out his handkerchief, and, feeling clean, fragrant, healthy, and in good spirits in spite of his misfortune, went, with a slight

bounce at each step, into the dining room where, waiting for him, was his coffee and, beside the coffee, letters and papers from the office.

He read the letters. One was very unpleasant – from a merchant who was buying timber on his wife's estate. It was essential to sell that timber; but now, until he had made peace with his wife, it was quite out of the question. What made this all the more unpleasant was that a financial consideration was thereby involved in his reconciliation with his wife. And the thought that he might be influenced by this consideration – seeking a reconciliation with his wife in order to sell the timber – wounded his susceptibilities.

When he had finished with the letters, Oblonsky drew towards him the papers from the office, quickly went through two of them, made a few notes with a large pencil and, pushing them aside, turned to the coffee; while he was drinking he opened the morning paper, which was still damp, and started to read it.

Oblonsky subscribed to, and read, a liberal paper, not one which was extreme but one which expressed the majority viewpoint. And though, strictly speaking, neither science, nor art, nor politics interested him, he firmly held the same views on all these subjects as those held by the majority and by his newspaper, and changed them only when the majority changed its ideas or, rather, did not change them; it was they that imperceptibly changed in his mind.

Oblonsky did not choose either trends or points of view; but trends and points of view came to him of their own accord, just as he did not choose the shape of his hats or coats but took those which everyone was wearing. And as he moved in a certain set and had a need for some intellectual activity such as usually develops with mature years, it was as essential to have points of view as it was to have a hat. If there was any reason why he preferred liberal to conservative ideas, which were also held by many of his set, it was not because he thought liberal ideas more sound but because they fitted in better with the pattern of his life. The liberals said that everything in Russia was bad, and indeed Oblonsky had many debts and quite definitely not enough money. The liberals said that marriage was a dying institution and that it was essential to reform it, and indeed family life gave Oblonsky little satisfaction, and forced him to lie and to dissemble, which was quite abhorrent to his nature. The liberals said, or rather, implied, that religion was only a bridle to restrain the barbarous section of the population, and indeed Oblonsky could not endure standing through even a short service in church without getting pains in his legs, and could not understand why there should be so much terrifying and high-flown talk about the next world when it could be great fun living in this one. At the same time Oblonsky, who was fond of a joke, sometimes enjoyed embarrassing a conventional man by telling him

that indulgence in pride of ancestry should not make one stop at Rurik* and repudiate one's first ancestor – the ape. Thus, liberal ideas became a habit with Oblonsky, and he loved his newspaper, like his post-prandial cigar, for the slight haze which it produced in his head. He read the leading article, which pointed out that there was no reason nowadays for the cry that radicalism was threatening to swallow up all conservative elements and that it was the government's duty to adopt measures to crush the hydra of revolution; on the contrary, "in our opinion, the danger lies not in the imaginary hydra of revolution, but in the tenacity of traditionalism, holding back progress", and so on. He read another article, too, on finance, which mentioned Bentham and Mill* and which made digs at the Ministry. With his naturally quick perception he realized the significance of each dig; where it originated, for whom it was intended and what had occasioned it, and this, as usual, gave him a certain pleasure. But today that pleasure was poisoned by memories of Matryona's advice and of the unsatisfactory situation at home. He also read that Count Beist,* according to rumours, had gone to Wiesbaden, that one need no longer have grey hair, that a light carriage was for sale, and that a young person was offering her services; but this information did not give him the mild ironical pleasure that it usually did.

Having finished the newspaper, a second cup of coffee, and a roll and butter, he got up, brushed the crumbs from his waistcoat and, expanding his broad chest, smiled happily – not because he had anything particularly pleasant on his conscience; his happy smile was occasioned by a good digestion.

But that happy smile immediately reminded him of everything, and he sank into thought.

Two childish voices (Oblonsky recognized the voice of Grisha, who was his youngest boy, and Tanya, his eldest girl) could be heard outside the door. They were pulling something along and had overturned it.

"I told you you can't put passengers on the roof," shouted the little girl in English. "Now pick them up!"

"Everything is topsy-turvy," thought Oblonsky. "There are the children, running about by themselves." He went up to the door and called them. They abandoned the box which they were pretending was a train, and came to their father.

The girl, her father's favourite, rushed confidently in, threw her arms round his neck and clung on, laughing, delighted as always by the familiar smell of scent exuded by his whiskers. Then at last she kissed his face, flushed from stooping and beaming with tenderness, unclasped her arms and was about to run away; but her father held her back.

"How is Mama?" he asked, stroking his daughter's smooth, soft little neck. "Hullo," he said, smiling at the boy who had come to greet him. He

was conscious that he was less fond of the boy than of the girl, and always tried to treat them equally; but the boy felt this, and did not reciprocate his father's chilly smile.

"Mama? She's up," the little girl replied.

Oblonsky sighed. "That means she's spent another sleepless night," he thought.

"Well, is she in a good mood?"

The little girl knew that there had been a quarrel between her father and mother, and that her mother could not be in a good mood, and that her father must have known this, and that by asking her about it so lightly he was being hypocritical. And she blushed for her father. He realized this immediately, and blushed too.

"I don't know," she said. "She didn't say we were to have lessons, but said we were to go for a walk with Miss Hull to Grandmama's."

"Well, go along then, Tanya darling. Oh yes, wait a minute," he said, still holding her and stroking her soft little hand.

He took a box of sweets from the mantelpiece, where he had placed it the day before, and chose two of her favourites, a chocolate and a fondant.

"For Grisha?" she asked, pointing to the chocolate.

"Yes, yes." He gave her little shoulder another pat, kissed the nape of her neck, and let her go.

"The carriage is ready," said Matvei. "And there's a woman come to ask you something," he added.

"Has she been here long?" asked Oblonsky.

"Half an hour or so."

"How many times have I told you to come and tell me at once!"

"Well, you have to have time at least to finish your coffee," said Matvei in that semi-gruff, semi-friendly tone at which it was impossible to take offence.

"Well, show her in at once, then," said Oblonsky, frowning in vexation.

The woman, the widow of a captain called Kalinin, had come with an impossible and muddle-headed request; but Oblonsky, as was his wont, asked her to sit down, listened to her attentively, without interrupting, and gave her detailed advice about whom she should apply to, and how, and even wrote in his large, sprawling, handsome and easily legible handwriting, a brisk and businesslike note for her to a person who might help her. When he had dismissed her, Oblonsky took his hat and paused to think if he had forgotten anything. It appeared that he had forgotten nothing except what he wanted to forget – his wife.

"Oh yes!" He hung his head, and an expression of dejection came over his handsome face. "Shall I go to see her, or not?" he asked himself. And an inner voice told him that he should not go, that apart from hypocrisy nothing

would come of it, that nothing could come of it, that it was not possible to mend or patch up their relationship, because it was not possible to make her attractive and capable of exciting love again, or to make him into an old man, incapable of loving. Apart from hypocrisy and lies nothing could come of it now; and hypocrisy and lies were abhorrent to his nature.

“But still, it will have to be done sooner or later; after all it can’t be left like this,” he said, trying to give himself courage. He straightened himself, took out a cigarette, lit it, puffed at it twice, threw it into a mother-of-pearl shell which served as an ashtray, and with quick steps went through the gloomy drawing room and opened another door into his wife’s bedroom.

4

DOLLY, WEARING A DRESSING JACKET, her now thin, but formerly thick and beautiful, hair plaited and pinned at the nape of her neck, her face lean and haggard, thus adding prominence to her big, frightened eyes, stood, surrounded by articles strewn all over the room, in front of a chest of drawers from which she was taking something out. Hearing her husband’s step, she paused in what she was doing and looked at the door, trying vainly to assume a stern and contemptuous expression. She felt that she was afraid of him, and afraid of the forthcoming encounter. She had just been trying to do what she had tried to do at least a dozen times already in the last three days: sort out those of her own and the children’s things which she would take to her mother’s – and once again she could not bring herself to do it; but now, as at the previous attempts, she told herself that the present situation could not continue, that she must take some sort of action, punish him, shame him, pay him back if only for a small part of the pain he had inflicted on her. She was still saying she would leave him, but felt this to be impossible; it was impossible because she could not get out of the habit of considering him as her husband, and of loving him. Moreover, she felt that if here, in her own home, she had scarcely been able to cope with her five children, they would be worse off in the place she intended to take them to. As it was, during the last three days, the youngest had fallen ill because he had been given some bad broth and the others had almost gone without their dinner the day before. She felt that it was impossible to leave; but, deceiving herself, she continued all the same to sift through the things and to pretend that she would leave.

When she saw her husband, she put her hand into a drawer, as if searching for something, and only looked round at him when he had come right up to her. But instead of having looked stern and resolute as she had intended, her face expressed perplexity and suffering.

“Dolly!” he said, in a low, timid voice. He bowed his head, hunched his shoulders, and tried to look pathetic and submissive, but nevertheless radiated freshness and health.

With a quick glance she took in his radiantly fresh and healthy figure. “Oh certainly, he’s happy and content!” she thought. “And what about me? And that repulsive good nature of his, which everyone loves and praises him for – I loathe his good nature,” she thought. Her mouth contracted, a muscle twitched on the right-hand side of her pale, nervous face.

“What do you want?” she asked quickly, in a hoarse, unnatural voice.

“Dolly!” he repeated, with a tremor in his voice. “Anna is coming today.”

“What’s that got to do with me? I can’t receive her!” she cried.

“But really, Dolly, you must...”

“Go away! Go away! Go away!” she cried, without looking at him, as if her cry was provoked by physical pain.

Oblonsky could remain calm when he thought about his wife, could hope that, to use Matvei’s expression, it would all *sort itself out*, and could calmly read his paper and drink his coffee; but when he saw her haggard, suffering face, when he heard that sound in her resigned, despairing voice, he caught his breath, felt a lump in his throat, and his eyes shone with tears.

“My God! What have I done! Dolly! For God’s sake!... After all...” He could not go on – for he was choking with sobs.

She shut the drawer with a bang and looked at him.

“Dolly, what can I say?... Only one thing: forgive me, forgive me... Think back, can’t nine years of life atone for moments, moments...”

She lowered her eyes and listened, waiting to see what he would say, as if begging him somehow to convince her.

“Moments of infatuation...” he managed to utter, and would have continued, but at that word, as if from physical pain, again her mouth contracted, and again a muscle twitched on the right-hand side of her face.

“Go away, get out of here!” she shrieked even more shrilly. “And don’t talk to me about your infatuations and your abominations!”

She turned to go, but reeled and clutched the back of a chair for support. His face dilated, his lips swelled, and his eyes filled with tears.

“Dolly!” he said, sobbing by now. “For God’s sake, think of the children; they are not to blame. I am to blame, so punish me, tell me to atone for my guilt. I am ready to do everything I can! I am to blame, there are no words to express my guilt! But Dolly, forgive me!”

She sat down. He could hear her painful, loud breathing and felt unutterably sorry for her. She made several attempts to speak, but failed. He waited.

“You think of the children when you want to play with them, Stiva, but I always think of them and know that now their life is ruined,” she said,

obviously using one of the phrases which she had repeated to herself many times during the last three days.

She had called him “Stiva”, and he looked at her with gratitude and made a move to take her hand; but she moved away from him with repugnance.

“I am thinking of the children and therefore would do anything in the world to save them; but I don’t know myself how to save them: whether by taking them away from their father, or by leaving them with a dissolute father – yes, a dissolute father... Now tell me, after... what has happened, how could we possibly go on living together? How could we possibly? Well tell me, how could we possibly?” she repeated, raising her voice. “After my husband, the father of my children, has embarked on a liaison with his children’s governess...”

“But what’s to be done then? What’s to be done?” he said in a piteous voice, not knowing himself what he was saying, his head drooping lower and lower.

“I think you’re vile, loathsome!” she shrieked, getting more and more worked up. “Your tears are just so much – water! You never loved me; you have no heart, no sense of honour! You are vile, loathsome, a stranger to me, yes, a complete stranger!” She pronounced the word *stranger*, which horrified her, with pain and hatred.

He looked at her, and the hatred expressed on her face frightened and surprised him. He did not realize that his pity for her exasperated her. She saw that he felt pity for her, but not love. “She hates me,” he thought. “She will not forgive me.”

“This is terrible, terrible!” he said.

At that moment in another room a child, which had probably fallen down, cried out; Dolly listened, and her face suddenly softened.

For a few seconds she was obviously trying to collect herself, as if she did not know where she was or what she was doing; then she got up quickly and went towards the door.

“Well, anyway she loves my child,” he thought, noticing how her face had changed at the child’s cry, “*my* child; so how can she hate me?”

“Dolly, just one more word,” he said, going after her.

“If you follow me, I shall call the servants, the children! Let them all know that you are a scoundrel! I am going away today and you can live here with your mistress!”

And she left the room, banging the door behind her.

Oblonsky sighed, wiped his face, and walked slowly out of the room. “Matvei says it’ll sort itself out; but how? I can’t see even a possibility. Oh dear! How awful! And she shouted in such a vulgar way,” he said to himself, recalling her scream and the words “scoundrel” and “mistress”. “And perhaps the maids overheard! It was terribly vulgar, terribly.” Oblonsky stood there

alone for a few seconds, wiped his eyes, sighed and, squaring his chest, left the room.

It was Friday, and in the dining room the German clock-maker was winding the clock. Oblonsky remembered the joke he had made about this meticulous, bald-headed German – that “he himself had been wound up for life, in order to wind up clocks” – and smiled. Oblonsky loved a good joke. “Perhaps it will sort itself out after all! ‘Sort itself out’, that’s a good expression,” he thought. “I must tell people about it.”

“Matvei!” he called. When Matvei appeared he said to him: “Get the little sitting room ready for my sister Anna and get Marya to help you.”

“Very good, sir.”

Oblonsky put on his fur coat and went out on the porch.

“You won’t be dining at home, sir?” said Matvei as he saw him off.

“I’ll see. Here, take this for what you have to buy,” he said, giving Matvei a ten-ruble note from his wallet. “Will that be enough?”

“Enough or no, we’ll obviously have to make do with it,” said Matvei, slamming the carriage door and stepping back into the porch.

In the meantime Dolly, having soothed the child and gathered from the sound of the carriage wheels that her husband had left, went back to the bedroom. This was her only sanctuary from the domestic cares which surrounded her as soon as she went out of it. Already, in the short time she had left it to go to the nursery, the English governess and Matryona had managed to ask her several urgent questions to which she alone could give an answer: What should the children wear for their walk? Should they be given milk? Should not another chef be sent for?

“Oh, leave me, leave me alone!” she said and, returning to the bedroom, sat down at the same place where she had been sitting while talking to her husband. She clasped her emaciated hands, with rings hanging loosely on her bony fingers, and began to go over in her mind all they had said to each other.

“He’s gone! But how does he stand with *her* now?” she thought. “Can he really still be seeing her? Why didn’t I ask him? No, no, we can’t come together again. Even if we do stay in the same house – we are strangers. Strangers for ever!” – she again repeated, giving it a special significance, the word which she found so terrible. “And how I loved, my God, how I loved him!... How I loved him! And don’t I still love him? Don’t I love him more than I have ever done? The most terrible thing is...” she began, but did not finish her thought, because Matryona thrust her head round the door.

“You really should send for my brother, madam,” she said. “He’ll cook the dinner for you; or else the children won’t have anything to eat till six, like yesterday.”

“Oh, very well, I’ll come and see about it at once. And has the fresh milk been sent for?”

And Dolly became immersed in the worries of the day and for a time drowned her grief in them.

5

OBLONSKY HAD DONE WELL AT SCHOOL thanks to his natural gifts, but he was lazy and mischievous and so he had finished near the bottom of the class; but, in spite of his habitually dissipated life, his low rank in the civil service, and his youth, he occupied a respectable position as head of a department with a good salary in a Moscow office. He had obtained this appointment through his sister Anna’s husband, Alexei Alexandrovich Karenin,* who held one of the most important positions in the Ministry to which this office was attached; but even if Karenin had not nominated his brother-in-law for that post, hundreds of other people – brothers, sisters, relations, cousins, uncles, aunts – would have obtained that post or a similar one, with the annual salary of some six thousand roubles which he found indispensable – for in spite of his wife’s ample enough fortune, his affairs were in a bad way.

Oblonsky was related to, or friends with, half of Moscow and Petersburg. He had been born into a set which was, or had become, the ruling class. A third of the official, political world in authority, the old men, were friends of his father and had known him since he was a baby; he was on intimate terms with another third, and the rest were his good acquaintances; consequently, the distributors of worldly goods in the form of jobs, leases, concessions and such like, were all his friends and could not pass over one of their own kind; and Oblonsky did not have to exert himself particularly in order to obtain a remunerative job; all he had to do was not to refuse, not to feel envy, not to quarrel, not to take offence, all of which, thanks to his natural kindness, he never did. He would have thought absurd any suggestion that he would not obtain a job with the salary he needed, especially as he did not require anything exorbitant; he wanted only what other men of his age were getting and he was capable of fulfilling duties of that sort no worse than anyone else.

Oblonsky was not only liked by all who knew him for his good-natured, cheerful disposition and his undoubted honesty, but there was also something about his handsome, radiant appearance, his shining eyes, black eyebrows and hair, his pink and white complexion, which produced a physical effect of friendliness and gaiety on those who met him. “Ah! Stiva! Oblonsky! There he is!” – people almost always said with a smile of pleasure when they met him. Even if it did sometimes turn out, after talking to him, that nothing

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