

20th Century Anna

by Lillian Ann Slugocki

Anna was in a stone cold stasis for about a year in the late 80's. Where she did nothing but work a dead end job, forty hours a week. Cashiering in a strip mall because she dropped out of college, always too high. Now it was almost a year later. She knew she had to leave, but Christ the girl was really digging in her heels. But nothing worked anymore! Her divine inspiration had dried up, and when she wrote, she filled up notebooks with nonsense, if she did anything at all. She was paralyzed. Even her mother felt sorry for her. The same mother who had burned with jealousy over her beautiful daughter, but not any longer. Now her mother remembered the baby who cried all night long, inconsolable, and how her husband said, Don't spoil her.

Anna Anna Anna

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Why can't you mimic your mythical counterpart? Anna Karenina? Have you never considered the tall dark stranger? The boot to the face, the fangs on the neck? Vronsky is Russian Gentry, a veritable prince and he swept that Anna off her feet in two seconds flat. And her life was never the same. He saved her, not for long, I know, but longer than she would've had. I know how Tolstoy thinks. Had Anna never met her lover at a train station in Petersburg, she would've died in a skating accident, wearing a black velvet ribbon on her neck. Because if she hadn't meet Vronsky, she wouldn't have attended the Winter Ball. These things bored her.

Instead, she would've bundled up her three children, Nicholas, Sasha and Alex, and traveled to their dacha on the Volga River. She liked her husband, but he bored her, too. He only saw a two dimensional woman. He only saw mother and wife, nothing else. She was always relieved to be rid of him. Because then she could imagine another life, one without his tall shadow blocking the light. She liked nights spent in the company of her own imagination. Where she roamed free; maybe another time, another place. This

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world of hers. She could fall in and out of love many, many times. Shed her clothing like she shed her skin.

So, when she slipped through the ice, she was alone. The nanny was busy with the children, and didn't hear her cry out. Her husband, who bored her, was fifty miles south settling his accounts.

In terms of time, both real and imagined, both lived and liminal, if Anna had never met Vronsky, she would've died three days later. So her story, as written, isn't tragic. Not at all. And this is not social realism, Mr. Tolstoy, but rather, the truth.

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What this Anna, 20th Century Anna, doesn't see is that she would be far happier if she would allow a tall dark stranger to enter her life, and save her. Like her counterpart. Even if that happiness is transient, fleeting, like the life span of a white moth. White moths, or *Prodoxus decipiens*, co-habitate on flowers, but do not pollinate them. They live approximately 30 days, from the quarter moon to the next quarter moon. But 30 days in insect chronology is about 27 years, which is how old Anna is when she dies in the parallel version of her life.

