**August Strindberg *The Stronger* (1889)**

Adapted by Kevin Carr

**Second Version**

**Fragment 1: Intro-Map**

**Sinead:** Why, Amelia darling! Fancy seeing you here! All alone on Christmas Eve, like a poor old bachelor!

**Olga:** You know it really hurts me to see you like this. Alone – alone in a café – and on Christmas Eve!

*Closed Eyes Impro*

**Both:** Amelia, Amelia, Amelia…

*Mapping with ‘letter’ and ‘baby’*

**Sinead:** You know what, Amelia? I really think you’d have done better to keep him. Don’t you remember, I was the first person to say to you: “Forgive him!” Remember? You could have been married now, with a home. Do you remember last Christmas how happy you were with his parents in the country, and how you said that a happy home life was what really mattered, and that you’d like to get away from the theatre? Yes, Amelia, my dear – home’s best – after the theatre – and children, you know – no, of course, you don’t.

**Olga:** repeats underlined text

*Imogen diagonally on*

**Fragment 2: Synchronization**

**Olga:** Come and have dinner with us this evening, Amelia, to show you aren’t cross with us – aren’t cross with me anyway. I think it’s so horrid being bad friends with anyone – especially you. It’s so strange about our friendship – when I first met you, I was afraid of you, so afraid I didn’t dare let you out of my sight. Wherever I went, I took care to be near you – I didn’t dare become your enemy, so I became your friend. But I always felt awkward when you came home to us, because I saw my husband couldn’t stand you – and then I felt uncomfortable, as though my clothes didn’t fit. I did everything to make him be nice to you, but without success. And then you went off and got engaged. Then you and he became great friends – as though you’d been afraid to show your true feelings while you were uncommitted – and then – what happened next? I didn’t become jealous – funnily enough. Why are you so silent? You haven’t said a word all the time – you’ve just let me sit here talking! You’ve sat there staring at me, winding all these thoughts out of me like silk from a cocoon – thoughts – suspicions - ? Let me see! Why did you break off your engagement? Why did you never come and visit us after that? Why won’t you come and see us tonight?

**Olga:** No! You don’t need to say anything – I see it all now!

*Imogen off and Sinead on*

**Fragment 3: Harry**

**Sinead:** So *that* was why you – and why you – and why you -! Yes, of course! Now it all adds up! So that was it! Ugh, I don’t want to sit at the same table as you!

**Olga:** Repeats underlined text.

**Sinead:** That was why I had to embroider tulips, which I hate, on his slippers – because you liked tulips! That was why – we had to spend our holiday at Malaren that summer, because you couldn’t stand the sea – that was why my son had to be called Eskil, because that was your father’s name – that was why I had to wear your colours, read your authors, eat your dishes, drink your drinks – your chocolate, for instance – that was why – oh, my God!

**Olga:**  It’s horrible, now I think of it – horrible! Everything, everything that belonged to you, entered into me. Even your passions! Your soul crept into mine like a worm into an apple, eating and eating, boring and boring, till there was nothing left but skin and a little black mould. I wanted to run away from you, but I couldn’t – you lay there like a snake with your black eyes, bewitching me – when I tried to use my wings they dragged me down. I lay in the water with my feet bound, and the more I tried to swim with my hands the deeper I sank, down, down, till I reached the bottom, where you lay like a giant crab ready to seize me in your claws! And I’m lying there now!

**Fragment 4: Death**

*Sinead alone.*

**Sinead:** Ugh, how I hate you, hate you, hate you! But you – you just sit there, silent, calm, not caring – not caring whether it’s night or day, summer or winter, whether other people are happy or miserable – unable to hate and unable to love – motionless like a stork over a rat-hole! You couldn’t pounce on your victim, you couldn’t hunt it, but you could wait for it! You sit here in your corner – do you know people call it the rat-trap because of you? – and read your papers to see if anyone’s in trouble, or ill, or has got the sack from the theatre – you sit here reckoning your victims, calculating your opportunities like a pilot counting his shipwrecks, like a goddess receiving sacrifice!

Poor Amelia! Do you know, I feel sorry for you, because I know you’re unhappy – unhappy like someone who’s been hurt – and evil because you’ve been hurt. I can’t be angry with you, though I’d like to be – because you’re the one who’s the baby, not me. Oh, that business with Bob doesn’t bother me – why should it? And what does it matter whether you taught me to drink chocolate, or someone else did? It’s all one in the end.

**Fragment 5: Ending**

*Imogen and Olga onto map with 3 moves, Sinead joins and they stop. Then all three move.*

**Olga:** Anyway, if you’ve taught me how to dress – *tant mieux!* It’s just made my husband fonder of me – your loss has been my gain. I suppose you hoped I’d run away? But you’re the one who’s run away – and now you’re sitting here regretting it ever happened. But I don’t regret it! You know, when all’s said and done, perhaps I really am the stronger of us two; now anyway.

**Sinead:** You never took anything from me, you only gave. You couldn’t keep any man’s love, for all your tulips and your passions – as I have done. And why are you always silent, silent, silent? I used to think it was because you were strong; but perhaps it was just that you had nothing to say. Now I’m going home – and taking the tulips with me – *your* tulips!

**Both:** Thank you, Amelia, for all the good lessons you’ve taught me. Thank you for teaching my husband to love! Now I am going home, to love him.

*Impro with 1 move then exit.*

**THE END**