

The Stronger
By August Strindberg
Adapted for the stage by Robert Bethune

Characters in the play:

Mrs. X, a married actress, who remains nameless, and who speaks.

Miss Y, an unmarried actress, also known as Emily, who does not speak.

Note:

This excerpt from what is already a very short play simply presents a key moment in the transition Mrs. X makes from one who blinds herself to one who sees—and then blinds herself again.

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The Stronger

Mrs. X

Shut up! Not a word! Don't you dare say anything! I understand now. It was because and because and because! Yes! Now you're even! I see why! Ugh! I won't sit at the same table with you!

She picks up her things and starts to move away.

You're why I had to embroider tulips on his slippers, even though I hate them—because you like tulips!

throwing the slippers on the floor

And you're why we had to spend summers at the lakes—because you don't like the ocean! You're why my son is name Mark—because that was your father's name! You're why I've had to wear your colors, read your favorite books, eat your favorite foods, drink what you like to drink... like this chocolate! Just for example! And that's why—my God, it's horrible to think about it, horrible! Everything, everything comes to me from you! Even my feelings! Your soul crept into me like a worm into an apple, chewing, chewing into me until the fruit is all rotten and black! I tried to run, but I couldn't. You put a spell on me, you bewitched me, you snake, you black-eyed snake, every time I try to get away, you drag me down again, you drag me into deep water with my hands and feet tied, and the harder I fight, the deeper I sink, until I'm all the way to the bottom and there you are, lying in wait, with your huge claws ready to tear me apart! That's where I am now!

God, how I hate you, hate you, hate you! You sit! Motionless, cold, heartless, heartless!. Is it Christmas or Easter? New moon or full moon? Are people happy or sad? You can't feel! Not hate, not love, you're a hawk watching a mouse hole. You can't follow your prey in; you just wait and watch and grab it! Here you sit! People call this corner the rat trap—in your honor! You read your magazines, hoping you'll read about someone suffering, who's unlucky, who's been fired.... You sit waiting, figuring out your chances like a shark at a shipwreck. You sit here, waiting for people to pay you your due!

Poor Emily! Do you know, I really feel sorry for you, because I know you're actually miserable, spiteful and vicious because you're wounded and in pain. I can't get angry at you, though I know I should. After all, you're the weak one. As for you and Bob, I'm don't care. Why should I? What harm has it done? What do I care that you got me so that I drink chocolate all the time? It could just as easily have been someone else. Who cares?

Drinks from her cup.

with an air of wisdom

Chocolate's good for you!