

From Emily Bronte, Teenage Necromancer by Don Zolidis

EMILY BRONTË, 17, a young necromancer

ANNE BRONTË, 15, her younger sister

MEAT PUDDING, a spirit trapped inside a meat pudding

Anne and Emily are at a boarding school that is being haunted. They are hoping to contact the restless ghost and quiet it. Things do not go as expected.

Is it time?

ANNE

Nearly.

EMILY

I feel awful that we haven't included Charlotte.

ANNE

She had the opportunity to join us and declined.

EMILY

Perhaps some day we shall speak to mother this way?

ANNE

I hope to.

Emily finishes setting up.

EMILY

You hate it here, don't you?

ANNE

And you don't.

EMILY

I like the lessons. Sometimes. And the other girls.

ANNE

I feel like my soul has been placed in a vise. They crank and hope to squeeze me into some acceptable shape – abrade my rough edges, shear off any outgrowths of imagination or fancy, till I am flat and dull like the others. In my heart, I am enormous, like a great cloud lit by the sunset. Every day here they try to crush me – Miss Woolton, the other girls, even Charlotte. Why can't I think the way I want to? Why can't I go where my spirit takes me?

EMILY

ANNE

But that's the way of the world, isn't it? You can't spend your life writing stories of imaginary kingdoms –

EMILY

Why not?

ANNE

Because it isn't done.

EMILY

Our mother lived as she wished – until she found our father.

ANNE

And then she was happy.

EMILY

Whoever told you that?

ANNE

You don't believe she was happy with us?

EMILY

If her spirit were like mine, I imagine she felt... squandered.

ANNE

Do you remember her?

EMILY

She was ill for a long time. She was a hearth fire, sputtering and about to go out. So what we do, Anne, is attempt to fulfill what she could not. Let's begin.

ANNE

I'm frightened.

EMILY

Deep breaths. If this succeeds, we shall ascertain the phantom's intentions and find a way to calm it.

ANNE

Right.

They breathe.

Join hands.

I still wish Charlotte were here.

EMILY

Shh.

Emily speaks with a commanding voice

Spirit! We reach out to you!

ANNE

Hello!

EMILY *(to Anne, under her breath)*

You need to be more formal –

ANNE

Spirit! I'm dreadfully sorry I upset your rest yesterday! It wasn't my fault! It was the other girls!

EMILY

We wish to –

ANNE

Won't happen again!

EMILY

We wish to communicate with you! Come before us!

ANNE

But not in a scary way, please!

EMILY

Hear us!

Something is happening. The lights flicker, perhaps. Or the sound of wind whistling.

ANNE

It's working! Please assume a pleasant shape!

EMILY

Hear us!

A picture falls off the wall.

ANNE

Oh no oh no oh no –

EMILY

Concentrate, Anne!

Things begin to shake.

ANNE

That's all right we're fine here we don't need to speak with you after all! Carry on!

WHUMP.

Something larger happens.

If you can manage it, a book might fall from a bookshelf or leap into the air.

EMILY

Someone is here! I can feel a presence!

Everything happens at once.

The lights flare very brightly and then simmer back to normal.

All the wind and noise cease.

EMILY

Are you with us?

A loud gurgling noise assaults them. Anne recoils in terror.

VOICE

Grrgahghghghwhs...

ANNE

Ah!

Anne leaps onto the bed.

EMILY

We are not alone.

ANNE

Oh I don't like this at all!

EMILY

Spirit, have you joined us?

VOICE

Grgargggrrggfgulllll...

ANNE

It's coming from over there!

Emily tries to triangulate the source of the voice.

EMILY

Can you hear us?

A throaty, gurgling voice replies loudly.

VOICE

Yessss....

ANNE

Oh dear. Again, sorry to bother you!

VOICE

It's very dark.

The voice clears its throat.

ANNE

It's coming from the meat pudding!

Emily scurries over to look.

*The MEAT PUDDING on top of the dresser is beginning to move.**

**The Meat Pudding should be played by a puppeteer inside the dresser, manipulating its surface – much of this doesn't need to be terribly visible to the audience, but if the audience caught a glimpse of the surface of the pudding burbling and shifting, that would be awesome.*

MEAT PUDDING

Helllllooooo.

ANNE

Did you put the phantom in the meat pudding?

EMILY

You were the one who suggested it take a pleasing shape! And I must say, this is *not* pleasing at all!

ANNE

You surely don't think this my fault!

EMILY

Spirit, what has disturbed you?

MEAT PUDDING

Wasn't disturbed afore, but I did saw a rabbit with three ears once. Highly disturbing. When I was alive. Now I'm dead.

ANNE

Who were you in life?

MEAT PUDDING

Name's Jacoby. I was a farmer. Grew crops. The soil's quite poor so it was a difficult life – I remember a lot of weeds.

EMILY

Oh dear. We may have contacted the wrong spirit.

ANNE

Are you familiar with any angry spirit who might be haunting us?

MEAT PUDDING

Mostly peas. I loved raising peas. A good pea is more valuable than gold. Why I had a recipe for pea soup that would -

EMILY

Excuse me, Jacoby, is there anyone else there?

MEAT PUDDING

Where?

EMILY

Who might be crossing over from the other side. An angry spirit. A phantom?

MEAT PUDDING

I'll check. Once I can move. But I don't seem to have feet.

EMILY

Not here. *There.*

MEAT PUDDING

My father's name was Early. Cause he came early. Ironically, he was often late. People would say, 'Oh there's Early, late again.'

EMILY

Right.

ANNE

Can we send him back?

EMILY

Thank you for time, Mr. Jacoby. We seem to have contacted you in error.

MEAT PUDDING

I understand. Don't want to talk to me. I'm not what you would call interesting. Just go home, Jacoby. No one wants to hear your stories about the weather. I once got hit with a hailstone so large it knocked an eye out of my head.

ANNE

How did...?

MEAT PUDDING

I popped it back in afterwards. An eye is just an orb. You can pop them in or out just as you like.

ANNE

I don't think that's true.

EMILY

Thank you for your visit, Jacoby. We no longer require you. Please go home.

MEAT PUDDING

Of course. How do I do that?

EMILY

One moment.

Emily and Anne huddle away from the pudding.

Do you have any thoughts?

ANNE

How should I know anything?! This was your idea!

EMILY

I – thought it would be more self-explanatory, to be honest.

ANNE

Just... get rid of him.

EMILY

I could... bury him?

ANNE

You mean throw him in the rubbish?

EMILY

Or – I could feed him to a dog. I lied earlier, the dogs do love the meat pudding. They would be most pleased.

ANNE

And what happens if he doesn't die?

EMILY

He's already dead –

ANNE

But what if he continues to exist? *Inside* the dog?

EMILY

Oh.

ANNE

And what if then he moves *outside* the dog?

EMILY

Oh.

ANNE

You would have talking poo.

MEAT PUDDING

I'm still here you know. I can hear you. Even though I don't have ears.

EMILY

Right.

Emily finds a lid and puts it on the pudding.

Problem solved.

ANNE

Now what?

EMILY

I have another idea.