

EMILY BRONTË, TEENAGE NECROMANCER  
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## CHARACTERS

EMILY BRONTË, 17

ANNE BRONTË, 15

CHARLOTTE BRONTË, 19, a teacher at the school

MARIA BRANWELL, their mother, later a ghost

HEADMISTRESS MARGARET WOOLTON, 50s

SEAMUS, a groundskeeper, any age

### The Older Girls:

GEORGINA PIERCE, 17

ELIZABETH BRIGHTON, 15

BRITTANY COOK, 16

DONNA O'CONNELL, 17

### The Younger Children:

ELTON

MARISOL

THOMAS

MARGOT

DRIP

BOUNCER

CLIFF, early teens, a vagabond child, a ghost

GEORGE WADSWORTH, 20, a suitor to Charlotte, possessed of  
a very small fortune

MEAT PUDDING/MR. JACOBY, a spirit trapped in a meat pudding

THE PHANTOM OF ROE HEAD, a ghost

JOHN PIERCE, a ghost

Other GHOSTS

## NOTES ON CASTING

**For a smaller cast:** You may cut all of the roles of the younger children and have Charlotte exclaim offstage when she is speaking with them.

**For a larger cast:** You may add additional younger children.

**Double casting:** The Younger Children may also play the roles of the various ghosts.

## THE SETTING

The Roe Head School for Girls and its environs. An old, slightly crumbling mansion on the edge of the moors. A place prone to fog, marshes, and supernatural occurrences. The locations necessary will include the great hall and dining area, Anne and Emily's private room, and the nearby cemetery.

## NOTES

**Transitions:** There are a large number of scenes in the play, so the faster the transitions can be accomplished, the better. A minimal suggestion of place will do for just about every location—a single wall or even piece of furniture can represent a place.

**On Taking Liberties with Reality:** I have bent reality in a number of places in this play, not just in the creation of ghosts and magical powers. For instance, Anne and Emily were never at Roe Head together—Emily went home and then Anne replaced her (Charlotte was a teacher there, though.) What changes I have made in the historical record I have done to make a more fun, more rich theatrical experience. I hope you agree.

**Alternate Title:** If the word “necromancer” might cause issues in your community, you are welcome to change the play title to *Emily Brontë, Teenage Ghost Hunter*.

# EMILY BRONTË, TEENAGE NECROMANCER

## ACT ONE

*Fog.*

*A woman shrouded in a dark cloak. This is Maria Branwell. Emily, a teenager, addresses the audience.*

**EMILY.** My mother married my father in 1812, when she was twenty-nine years old. Before that point, there is little known of her history. Why did she wait so long to marry? The simple explanation is that she was a shy bookish young woman who found the company of men taxing and disorienting. That is, until her heart was claimed by a learned and serious rector named Patrick Brontë, with whom she fell in immediate love and proceeded to birth six babies in nine years. Which, as one might imagine, left her exhausted and disillusioned with both motherhood and marriage.

The true explanation, however, is not simple.

My mother was no wallflower. Her long disappearances, supposedly engaged in religious study, were merely a cover for her true vocation.

*Maria sheds her cloak, beneath it she wears dashing, swash-buckling gear, complete with a death's head belt buckle and a sash of knives.*

Maria Branwell was an adventuress. A pirate, a rogue, a searcher of mystic relics, and some say, a necromancer of considerable skill with power over life and death itself.

*Charlotte, another young woman, dressed a little more respectably, enters from another side of the stage.*

**CHARLOTTE.** Emily likes to embellish. She is a consummate fabricator. At best our mother was a necromancer of minor skill.

**EMILY.** She could communicate with the spirit world. She battled ghouls and poltergeists.

*Maria confronts a ghostly specter.*

With her magic and fortitude, she kept her family safe—until—

*The specter strikes Maria in the stomach.*

A devilish curse slew her before her fortieth birthday.

*Maria dies.*

**CHARLOTTE.** That was no curse, it was a common disease of the stomach—

**EMILY.** Without her protection, her two eldest daughters succumbed to the diabolical embrace of death, one after the other.

**CHARLOTTE.** The doctors said it was tuberculosis.

**EMILY.** The rest of us, bereft of mother and sisters, believed the official account. That it was merely the accumulation of evil luck which stole the light from our lives. These miseries were commonplace, these diseases could afflict anyone, it was hardly special to have three loved ones die in the space of a year. We were as common as dirt.

**CHARLOTTE.** Do not overstrain their sympathies, Emily. Our father was a rector and our aunt provided us an education that was more than adequate.

**EMILY.** And yet, our true education lay in the relics our mother had collected from the four corners of the world on her adventures. We discovered them on Charlotte's eighteenth birthday—a legacy left by our mother.

**CHARLOTTE.** Which, I confess, I did not believe at first.

**EMILY.** That year, we had been banished from our life at home and sentenced to imprisonment at the Roe Head Boarding School—

**CHARLOTTE.** Sentenced?! It's a lovely school—

**EMILY.** Charlotte was employed as a jailer—

**CHARLOTTE.** Teacher—

**EMILY.** And I labored at my studies in pain and humiliation—until the phantom came.

**CHARLOTTE.** Well, yes, the phantom.

**EMILY.** At which point our true legacy became clear.

*Lights change.*

*Students rush in and out—Emily exits. Charlotte remains. Someone is playing piano—poorly. Practicing. Going over the same patch of music again and again, without much improvement.*

*Scene changes to the Great Hall of the Roe Head School, which, to be honest, is not that great.*

*A gaggle of students rush past—Charlotte tries to instruct them.*

**CHARLOTTE.** Walk please! You are not wild beasts! We must attempt to maintain decorum!

*They slow down slightly.*

*Headmistress Margaret Woolton enters, along with Elizabeth Brighton, an older student.*

**MARGARET.** You have abused that piano enough for one evening, Miss Brighton.

**ELIZABETH.** Yes, Headmistress.

**MARGARET.** Life is short. Let us all have some relief from your music.

**ELIZABETH.** I know the notes in my head, but they don't seem to translate to my fingers.

**MARGARET.** That is the particular challenge of the piano, is it not?

**ELIZABETH.** I do love it.

**MARGARET.** The piano?

**ELIZABETH.** Yes, ma'am.

**MARGARET.** I wish the piano loved you back.

**ELIZABETH.** I shall continue to practice. Perfect practice makes practice perfect.

**MARGARET.** There is wisdom in a strategic retreat from the piano, you know.

**ELIZABETH.** I will remember that.

**MARGARET.** Do. Run along now.

**ELIZABETH.** Yes, Headmistress.

*Elizabeth scampers off.*

**MARGARET.** (*Calling off.*) When I say run I do not mean run! I mean walk with purpose!

**CHARLOTTE.** They are quite coltish this morning.

**MARGARET.** It's the fall air. It energizes them to a most improper amount. Which reminds me: I wish to speak with you about your sister.

**CHARLOTTE.** Which one?

**MARGARET.** You have two sisters, Miss Brontë, one of whom is sweet, obedient, and delightful, and the other of whom is...

**CHARLOTTE.** Emily.

**MARGARET.** Emily. Yes. She has taken to rambling again.

**CHARLOTTE.** She does that.

**MARGARET.** It is not seemly for a young woman to wander about the countryside like a vagabond.

**CHARLOTTE.** I know, Headmistress.

**MARGARET.** She pets stray dogs.

**CHARLOTTE.** She enjoys dogs.

**MARGARET.** I do not enjoy her enjoying dogs.

**CHARLOTTE.** Of course.

**MARGARET.** But the real issue is her ongoing feud with Miss Pierce.

**CHARLOTTE.** I do not believe that is Emily's fault, Headmistress. Georgina provokes her. She says the most awful things.

**MARGARET.** Being a woman is learning to endure both provocation and awful things, Miss Brontë. That is how we get children.

**CHARLOTTE.** I hope never to discover that.

**MARGARET.** Which brings me to the third thing I wished to speak with you about: your own performance.

**CHARLOTTE.** I am doing my best.

**MARGARET.** That is what someone says when they are failing, Miss Brontë.

**CHARLOTTE.** The children are unruly.

**MARGARET.** Rule them, or they will rule you. I do not wish to see you chasing after them again, holding your skirts in your hands like a damsel from an inappropriate play.

**CHARLOTTE.** Right.

**MARGARET.** It has also come to my attention that you have named the children.

**CHARLOTTE.** I can explain—

**MARGARET.** One of whom you have dubbed, “Drip.”

**CHARLOTTE.** Right. Well—

**MARGARET.** And another, “Bouncer”?

**CHARLOTTE.** He is quite bouncy. And Drip—

**MARGARET.** His name is Bentley—

**CHARLOTTE.** It’s simply that his nose—

**MARGARET.** Yes we are quite aware of the poor boy’s issues. His father sends us money for his education, to bring Bentley up as a proper gentleman, and you have named him...Drip.

**CHARLOTTE.** His nose—

**MARGARET.** I know what is occurring with the boy’s nose. I have seen him. You will not refer to him as Drip. You will not refer to Steven as Bouncer.

**CHARLOTTE.** Certainly, Headmistress. Drip does like his name, however.

**MARGARET.** Boys prefer many things which are bad for them. If a boy were given the choice, he would pick his nose with a snake. Our job, as educators, is to prevent boys from doing what they want to do.

**CHARLOTTE.** Yes, ma’am.

**MARGARET.** I say this to you because I am near retirement and I am looking for a successor.

**CHARLOTTE.** Oh.

**MARGARET.** And I believe I have found her.

**CHARLOTTE.** Surely you don't mean me!

**MARGARET.** You show remarkable promise, your nicknames notwithstanding. The day may soon arrive when you shall be named headmistress.

**CHARLOTTE.** I don't know what to say.

**MARGARET.** Do not gawk. Headmistresses never gawk.

**CHARLOTTE.** I...thank you?

**MARGARET.** Of course, to be truly worthy of the job, you must be suitably married.

**CHARLOTTE.** Therein lies the difficulty.

**MARGARET.** Not at all. I have taken the liberty of writing to your father and I believe we have discovered a young man who may be adequate for the task.

**CHARLOTTE.** Adequate?

**MARGARET.** I will not oversell him. His family is not prosperous and his face, though pleasing, is not exceptional. He makes up for that with a character which is...fine.

**CHARLOTTE.** He sounds like the man I've always dreamed of.

**MARGARET.** Is that sarcasm? Are you employing sarcasm like your sister now?

**CHARLOTTE.** Never. I am dying to meet this young man.

**MARGARET.** Remember Miss Brontë, we are a school of impeccable moral character and righteousness.

*Lights begin to change. Far-off giggling.*

Every soul here is part of your charge—you must show them the proper light.

*It's night now. We're on the grounds.*

*Owls hooting.*

*Crickets.*

*A hooded figure (Georgina) enters with a lantern, followed by four others. They're all giggling and having a grand time.*

**ELIZABETH.** Shhhh!

**BRITTANY.** (*Mocking her.*) Shhhh! No one can hear us.

**ELIZABETH.** You'll wake the headmistress!

**BRITTANY.** She sleeps like the dead. She won't hear anything.

**DONNA.** Where are we going?

**GEORGINA.** Why should I explain it again to you Donna, you didn't remember after the first nine times I told you.

**DONNA.** Sorry. I get distracted.

**ELIZABETH.** Shhh!

**DONNA.** You are not my mother, stop it!

**ELIZABETH.** I shouldn't be here. I have a future. What if this puts our immortal souls in jeopardy?

**GEORGINA.** Donna's immortal soul hasn't been in jeopardy since Thomas Wilcott. That settled the matter.

**DONNA.** (*Aghast.*) That was a misunderstanding!

**GEORGINA.** Not what I heard.

**BRITTANY.** Less talking, more celebrating.

*Brittany produces a bottle from inside her cloak.*

I rescued this from Seamus' room.

**ELIZABETH.** You went into Seamus' room?!

**BRITTANY.** He wasn't there you goose!

**DONNA.** What is it?

**BRITTANY.** I haven't the slightest idea. But if he likes it, I assume that it is wicked.

**ELIZABETH.** You are wicked, Brittany.

**GEORGINA.** Who will take the first sip?

**DONNA.** What if it's his sweat?

*Elizabeth and Anne recoil in horror.*

**GEORGINA.** For what reason would he *jar* his sweat?!

**DONNA.** I don't know. He's a man, he's disgusting. They all are.

**GEORGINA.** Anne, where is your sister? I thought she was going to show us the way.

**DONNA.** Show us the way where?

**ANNE.** She said she would be here.

**GEORGINA.** She wasn't in your room when you left?

**ANNE.** She rambles.

**ELIZABETH.** Is this Emily's idea? If this is Emily's idea I don't want to do it. I'm most certain she is truly wicked.

**BRITTANY.** I thought I was wicked.

**ELIZABETH.** More than you.

**GEORGINA.** We needn't wait for her. She'd probably force us to listen to some hideous ghost story or miserable tale of her wretched childhood. Not you Anne, you are lovely and don't trouble us with your history. I always think it best to keep silent about past misfortune.

**BRITTANY.** Like your family misfortune?

**GEORGINA.** My family misfortune is no business of yours, Brittany. I'm sorry, Anne, I'm sure it is horribly difficult to lose a mother and your sisters. But everyone has problems.

**ANNE.** I didn't say anything about it.

**DONNA.** It's best if you can't remember your mother.

**ELIZABETH.** Your mother isn't even dead!

**DONNA.** But she could be one day, and then how sad will I be? I sometimes think it preferable to have her dead before I could remember, then I shan't be sad about it in the future.

*Emily, wearing a hooded cloak and carrying a lantern sneaks in.*

**EMILY.** *(Like a ghost.)* Boooo...

*The girls startle.*

**ELIZABETH.** You scared me half to death!

**DONNA.** I knew it was you!

**EMILY.** Are we all here then?

**GEORGINA.** Yes, we were waiting on you.

**EMILY.** Then wait no further, here I am.

**GEORGINA.** I wasn't sure you'd appear, after you stormed out of dinner.

**EMILY.** I swear, if we are forced to endure "meat pudding" one more time, I shall toss myself off the nearest cliff.

**GEORGINA.** You're used to the concoctions of your own personal chef then? With your family fortune?

**ELIZABETH.** I hear we are to have goose on the Sabbath. That shall be better.

**EMILY.** I am dubious.

**DONNA.** Headmistress said if you were so saucy, you should work in the kitchen. That was funny. She is funny sometimes.

**BRITTANY.** Are we going to discuss the menu or are we going to experiment with this?

**GEORGINA.** Be my guest.

*Brittany takes a swig of whatever is in the bottle.  
All the girls watch, expectant.  
It's horrible.*

**BRITTANY.** It is wretched.

**ELIZABETH.** *(Reaching for it.)* Ooh!

*Brittany hands it over.*

**DONNA.** What is it?

**BRITTANY.** I am not sure it is meant to be drunk at all, to be honest.

*Elizabeth coughs and sputters after drinking some.*

**DONNA.** Are we even certain that it's spirits?

**BRITTANY.** It might be cooking oil.

**EMILY.** All right then, follow me.

**ANNE.** Emily, must we tempt disaster?

**EMILY.** There is nothing to worry about, dear sister.

**ANNE.** Charlotte would not approve.

**EMILY.** It's a good thing I don't see her anywhere.

*The other girls follow them, trading attempts to drink from the bottle. More giggling and joking.  
Fog, if possible, drifts in. (Otherwise the lights dim further.)  
They reach a different part of the grounds, near a graveyard.*

**ELIZABETH.** I hate graveyards.

**DONNA.** What are we doing here?

**GEORGINA.** Shhh! You'll wake the dead!

*Laughs from some of the other girls.  
Emily assumes a perch somewhere.*

**EMILY.** Are you ready to hear the tale?

**GEORGINA.** I told you there was a macabre story at the heart of this!

**BRITTANY.** I hope it's truly horrifying.

**EMILY.** Oh it is. You see, Roe Head School was not always a school for respectable young ladies with impeccable moral character.

*Laughs from the girls.*

It was once the home of a cruel and wicked man. His eyes were black as night—

**DONNA.** (*Whispering.*) How does she know this?

**ELIZABETH.** Shhh!

**EMILY.** And once he had a great fortune, which he squandered through gambling and drink—

**BRITTANY.** He sounds perfect!

**EMILY.** His entire family disowned him, and he stayed at Roe Head, miserable and alone, every day he woke and endeavored to end his life, but he didn't have the courage. Some say that he sealed himself and what little was left of his fortune inside a wall, *alive.*

**DONNA.** Is he still alive?

**GEORGINA.** He was shut in a wall, dear. Fifty years ago.

**DONNA.** Oh.

**EMILY.** But if you look carefully at the space reserved for his grave, you will see—

*They lean in—*

*Roaring, Seamus leaps out of the darkness, carrying a stick.  
He's the groundskeeper, and he's not happy his wine has been pilfered.*

**SEAMUS.** WHAT ARE YE DOIN' OUT HERE YE WAYWARD GIRLS?!

*The girls shriek and scatter and flee in all directions.*

*Seamus chases after them.*

YE STEAL MY WINE?! IS THAT WHAT YE BEEN DOIN'?! I'LL NOT BE TRIFLED WITH! I'LL GIT ALL O' YE AND SEND YE TO THE HEADMISTRESS!

*They've all fled the scene.*

*Seamus is alone now.*

Emily Brontë! This is yer doin', ain't it? I'll have ye this time! Wicked, inconstant girl! She-devil of the moors!

*He stalks off, cursing.*

I'll set the evil eye on ye, that's what I'll do!

*He's gone.*

*Georgina, Anne, and Elizabeth emerge from a hiding spot near the graves.*

**ANNE.** You think he's gone?

**ELIZABETH.** He's headed off that way.

**ANNE.** I nearly died of fright.

**ELIZABETH.** Georgina, are you all right?

**GEORGINA.** I am fine.

**ANNE.** Where did everyone else go?

**ELIZABETH.** He's going to tell the headmistress.

**GEORGINA.** And tell her what? That he was on the moors at midnight searching for his spirits? No, I think not. I think...

*The lights begin to change.*

Do you feel that?

**ELIZABETH.** Feel what?

**GEORGINA.** There's a chill.

**ANNE.** Oh I am frightened.

**GEORGINA.** You don't think...?

*The lights change eerily.*

*If there is fog, it intensifies.*

*Rising from behind the graves is the phantom.*

*It speaks with an otherworldly, echoing voice.*

**PHANTOM.** Trespassers! Interlopers! I claim my ancient rights! I

*walk in life after death! I see you with my dead eye! I bring you calamity and woe!*

*The girls shriek in fear.*

**GEORGINA.** It's a phantom!

**PHANTOM.** *Fall under my gaze two days hence and I shall stop up your blood! Your heart will wither in your chest, your teeth will rot from your jaws! Mine! This is mine! All that I see I shall claim!*

*The phantom seems to lunge towards them as  
Lights out suddenly.*

*Birds chirping.*

*Lights up during the daytime.*

*Anne and Emily's room. It's small and sparsely decorated.*

*Anne, Emily, and Charlotte are fretting.*

**EMILY.** We must do something.

**CHARLOTTE.** We cannot even be certain of what it was.

**ANNE.** I saw it, Charlotte!

**CHARLOTTE.** And it was in the dead of night and you had been consuming liquor!

**ANNE.** The other girls did, I didn't!

**CHARLOTTE.** Am I supposed to believe that?

**ANNE.** I'm not trying to convince you!

**CHARLOTTE.** You never should have been there in the first place! Neither of you should. I have had quite enough of your roaming about the countryside like a vagabond, refusing your dinner, belittling the school—

**EMILY.** I am constrained by this place—

**CHARLOTTE.** You are constrained solely by your lack of grace and refinement! How does it look to have the both of you engaged in this debacle whilst I am employed here? Do you wish me to lose my position? Shall we all return to father in disgrace? Is that what you wish?

**ANNE.** There was a phantom. I saw it.

**EMILY.** And we have the means to deal with it.

**CHARLOTTE.** What means? Whatever are you on about?

**EMILY.** Mother's relics. We need to—

**CHARLOTTE.** You are not seriously suggesting that we engage in dark magic to ascertain—

**EMILY.** It's not dark magic! You should know that.

**CHARLOTTE.** I forbid it.

**EMILY.** You are not our mother, you cannot forbid anything.

**CHARLOTTE.** I am the eldest, I am the one who must shoulder the responsibility—

**ANNE.** So we are to do nothing whilst the phantom terrorizes the children at the school?

**CHARLOTTE.** I see no one who is terrorized except a few girls who should have been fast asleep. Perhaps the phantom appeared because you were mischievous and saucy!

**EMILY.** You have never welcomed me here! I am a burden to you!

**CHARLOTTE.** Oh grab a hold of yourself, Emily! Not everything centers on your ego and peculiarities! Some of us are perfectly capable of attending school like virtuous young women!

**ANNE.** I think mother would want us to try something.

**CHARLOTTE.** I think you do not remember our mother. That is all.

*She spots a small bowl of meat pudding on a dresser.*

And what is this? Is this what you do with your dinner? Collect it in your room like a scrounger?

**EMILY.** I was hoping to entice some stray dogs to eat it. But they are quite sensible and refused.

**CHARLOTTE.** And so now you are saucy with me.

**EMILY.** If Mrs. Ronald cooked edible food, I would eat it. As is, I am using this meat pudding for its true purpose, which is to fling at invaders from France should they appear!

**CHARLOTTE.** Enough. This conversation is over. No more talk about phantoms. You stay in your rooms after dark. You stop wandering the countryside. And no more stray dogs! Surely that is what you saw in the middle of the night!

**ANNE.** Dogs don't speak!

*Charlotte exits in a huff.*

So that's that.

**EMILY.** That is most certainly not that. I have an idea.

**ANNE.** Is it likely to get us killed?

**EMILY.** Oh definitely not.

Probably not.

I have no idea, honestly.

*Lights change. Emily and Anne set up candles in their room while Charlotte is elsewhere, wrangling students.\**

**CHARLOTTE.** Come on then, in you go! Time for bed!

**ELTON.** Thomas struck me!

**THOMAS.** I did not! Elton lies!

**ELTON.** Thomas is a liar!

**CHARLOTTE.** Is anyone bleeding? No? Then shake hands and make up.

**ELTON.** I wouldn't shake hands with him if he were the last boy on earth!

**DRIP.** (*Referring to himself.*) Something is wrong.

**CHARLOTTE.** Drip, that wouldn't happen if you didn't probe your nose so frequently with your finger.

**DRIP.** It's wet.

**CHARLOTTE.** Yes I know it's wet, Drip, your nose is meant to be wet.

**MARGOT.** Why must we learn Latin? Latin is dead!

**CHARLOTTE.** Latin is the language of culture, it is—

**MARGOT.** Dead culture.

**MARISOL.** All the Latins are dead.

**CHARLOTTE.** I don't believe it's true that all the Latins are dead, Marisol. Regardless it is not polite to be so smug about it.

\* If you need to perform this play with a smaller cast, all of the children's lines here may be cut and the actress playing Charlotte may speak her lines as if she is talking to others.

*Bouncer bounces by.*

Bouncer! You have feet. Keep them on the ground.

**BOUNCER.** If I keep both feet on the ground, I can't move. So there. Teacher is stupid.

**CHARLOTTE.** You are not a frog. Stop hopping. I will put lead in your shoes if I must.

**ELTON.** He hit me again!

**THOMAS.** No I didn't!

**CHARLOTTE.** Come on then! Move on, move on! Off to bed with you!

*Charlotte ushers them all offstage as the lights rise on Anne and Emily's room again.*

*It's near midnight.*

*There are candles lit.*

**ANNE.** Is it time?

**EMILY.** Nearly.

**ANNE.** I feel awful that we haven't included Charlotte.

**EMILY.** She had the opportunity to join us and declined.

**ANNE.** Perhaps someday we shall speak to mother this way?

**EMILY.** I hope to.

*Emily finishes setting up.*

**ANNE.** You hate it here, don't you?

**EMILY.** And you don't.

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

**EMILY.** 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?

**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.*

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.** Yesssss...

**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.\**

**MEAT PUDDING.** Hellllooooo.

**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.*

\* 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.** 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.

*Lights change.*

**ELIZABETH.** And then I started weeping, right there at the piano.

**DONNA.** Your poor thing.

**ELIZABETH.** The notes seemed to transform themselves into shrieking ghosts and my fingers froze—Headmistress thought I was crying over my failure to produce music. “You mustn't weep over the piano, dear, it can't do any good.”

**DONNA.** I've often wept over the piano.

**ELIZABETH.** It wasn't the piano that caused my crying! It was the memory of—

**DONNA.** Oh yes.

**ELIZABETH.** I can't sleep. I see it whenever I close my eyes.

**DONNA.** Perhaps the best way to sleep is to think of your lessons. Whenever I'm learning maths I get the most restful sleep.

**ELIZABETH.** Donna, I can't go on like this. What if I fall ill? What if they send me home?

**DONNA.** They shan't! And you won't fall ill. You are the most robust girl I know. And I mean that in the best possible way. They could attach a plow to you.

*Elizabeth gives her a look.*

They won't! Because you're beautiful.

**ELIZABETH.** I don't know what to do.

**DONNA.** It will be all right. No more visiting graveyards.

**ELIZABETH.** No.

**DONNA.** May I embrace you?

**ELIZABETH.** Of course.

*Donna hugs Elizabeth and holds on to her.*

**DONNA.** When I was little I once saw a ghost. Afterwards everyone told me it was an owl and I was imagining things. But I think of owls—they don't know they're scary, they're just owls going about their business. I suppose to mice they're terrifying. You can't even hear an owl when they fly, did you know that? Their wings are silent. So a mouse might simply be wandering about in a field, doing mouse things, and out of nowhere an owl will pierce them with its talons and then bite their head off. So I suppose they have good reason to be scared of owls.

**ELIZABETH.** Is this digression supposed to make me feel better?

**DONNA.** There are many real things in the world one ought to be afraid of. We shouldn't add more. And if the ghost appears again I shall fight it to protect you.

**ELIZABETH.** You? Fight it?!

**DONNA.** Oh yes. I will yell and throw things. We are not mice.

*Georgina enters—*

**GEORGINA.** This is a fine sight.

**DONNA.** Be gentle, Georgina. Elizabeth is suffering from her encounter with the phantom.

**GEORGINA.** I was there as well, you don't see me blubbering like an infant.

**DONNA.** Your family has no money, you are used to seeing horrible things.

*Georgina gives her a look.*

I'm sorry! That wasn't kind.

**GEORGINA.** Your mouth gets ahead of your mind sometimes, Donna.

**DONNA.** It does.

**ELIZABETH.** How can you stand it, though? The sight of that thing?

**GEORGINA.** It was terrifying, wasn't it?

**ELIZABETH.** I fear I shall catch my death.

**DONNA.** Shh! You are very robust.

**GEORGINA.** Have you told the headmistress?

**ELIZABETH.** About the phantom?!

**GEORGINA.** It was on school grounds, she should know about it.

**ELIZABETH.** I would never!

**GEORGINA.** What if it comes back? What if it isn't limited to the cemetery, what if it takes to invading our rooms at night?

**ELIZABETH.** Oh! I hadn't thought of that!

**GEORGINA.** The school should close. We should all go home.

**ELIZABETH.** I hope not. I am thoroughly unwanted at home. Three brothers and a father who hasn't the slightest idea what to do with me except order me about and expect me to clean the house and cook dinner. I am more servant than child there. I couldn't bear to go back.

**DONNA.** You won't need to. We shall face this phantom like soldiers.

**GEORGINA.** We shall do no such thing. If you won't tell the headmistress, then I shall. Someone needs to do something.

*Lights change.*

*Elsewhere, George enters. He's a nervous young man, dressed as best as he can, and holding a small collection of flowers. He's nearly hyperventilating, pacing back and forth.*

*Charlotte enters, dressed more for a date.*

**CHARLOTTE.** Sorry to keep you waiting, Mr. Wadsworth.

**GEORGE.** Please, call me George. I hope we shall be very intimate with each other.

As in fast friends.

As in friendly.

Not in the other sense. Yet.

And may I refer to you as Charlotte?

**CHARLOTTE.** I suppose.

**GEORGE.** Excellent. I must say the portrait I received of you did not do justice to your immense beauty.

**CHARLOTTE.** You received a portrait of me?

**GEORGE.** Your brother sent it. A sketch really. But quite well done. He is most talented.

**CHARLOTTE.** My brother sent you a sketch of me?

**GEORGE.** It was quite small. And you are quite large. I mean—dash it all, that isn't what I meant to say. You are much bigger than how he portrayed you. Which is good. Which is wonderful. I would not want to marry a leprechaun.

**CHARLOTTE.** Are you suggesting that you initially believed that my brother's miniature portrait of me was meant to be life-sized?

**GEORGE.** I don't know what I am suggesting, to be honest. I am merely flabbergasted by your beauty.

**CHARLOTTE.** Flabbergasted.

**GEORGE.** Right. Shall I recite a poem I have composed about your beauty?

**CHARLOTTE.** I'd rather you didn't.

**GEORGE.** It shall remain a surprise then. At any moment this evening, I may pull it out.

**CHARLOTTE.** Oh dear.

**GEORGE.** So tell me about yourself.

**CHARLOTTE.** My mother is dead.

**GEORGE.** I'm sorry to hear that.

**CHARLOTTE.** As is my eldest sister.

**GEORGE.** Quite sad.

**CHARLOTTE.** As is another sister.

**GEORGE.** Yes. Well. Perhaps we should talk about something else then.

**CHARLOTTE.** What is your family like?

**GEORGE.** Mostly dead as well. I do have one sister whom I care for very much, even though she can be quite disagreeable.

**CHARLOTTE.** Ah it seems we have something in common!

**GEORGE.** And you are hoping to become headmistress someday?

**CHARLOTTE.** Whatever gave you that impression?

**GEORGE.** That is the scuttlebutt.

**CHARLOTTE.** Whose butt is scuttling that?

**GEORGE.** It's in the air. So you do not mean to be headmistress?

**CHARLOTTE.** I am nineteen years old, Mr. Wadsworth, I have not yet resigned myself to a life in education. I fear that if the small children are any example, they will drive me mad and I will be locked up in an attic.

**GEORGE.** That sounds dreadful.

**CHARLOTTE.** Yes, small children are dreadful.

**GEORGE.** No the attic part.

**CHARLOTTE.** I suppose that as well. Although one assumes the children wouldn't be there, so.

**GEORGE.** Well I am a progressive man and believe that a woman may enter any occupation she chooses, whether that is education or owning a small bakery. If you were—if we were to—

**CHARLOTTE.** To what?

**GEORGE.** To—become engaged—I would not forbid you from becoming headmistress. Even though many men would.

**CHARLOTTE.** Mr. Wadsworth, we have just met seven minutes ago. Are you proposing marriage?

**GEORGE.** Are you familiar with *Romeo and Juliet*?

**CHARLOTTE.** They both die.

**GEORGE.** Right. Well yes that is not a grand example.

**CHARLOTTE.** *Romeo and Juliet* is a fine example. When one chooses a mate too hastily, one is doomed to murdering relatives, drinking poison, and stabbing.

**GEORGE.** I must confess I have not read *Romeo and Juliet*.

**CHARLOTTE.** I gave you an accurate summary.

*Emily enters.*

**EMILY.** Is this him?

**GEORGE.** Oh! Hello! I am George Wadsworth, pleased to make your acquaintance.

**CHARLOTTE.** What are you doing here?

**EMILY.** And I am Emily Brontë, Charlotte's sister and confidante.

**CHARLOTTE.** Emily, you are not needed.

**EMILY.** Would that that were true, dear sister. However, I have recently made progress on the thing we were working on, and I require something that belonged to our late mother.

**GEORGE.** Oh—um—

**CHARLOTTE.** I cannot imagine anything of mother's that you would require at the moment.

**EMILY.** That is because you lack imagination. I'll just be a moment. Then you may continue with your...

**GEORGE.** (*Simultaneous.*) Date.

**CHARLOTTE.** (*Simultaneous.*) Meeting.

**EMILY.** Yes. Don't mind me. I am not here.

*Emily begins looking for something.*

**GEORGE.** Yes, well, I thought we might go for a carriage ride in the country.

**EMILY.** If you see some dogs, pet them for me.

**CHARLOTTE.** No one is petting dogs this evening!

**EMILY.** Your loss.

**CHARLOTTE.** One moment, Mr. Wadsworth—

**GEORGE.** George—

*Charlotte tries to apprehend Emily.*

**EMILY.** He seems confused.

**CHARLOTTE.** What are you doing here?

**EMILY.** If you're not going to help, Anne and I must do it ourselves.

**CHARLOTTE.** I don't have time to quarrel with you at the moment—

**EMILY.** Yes I know he seems rather agitated. At any moment he may rupture.

**CHARLOTTE.** Must you barrel forward at every opportunity without thinking of the consequences?

**EMILY.** I am retrieving an object, there are no consequences.

**CHARLOTTE.** What is it you are looking for?

**EMILY.** Never mind.

*Stare down.*

You could help us, you know. Participate.

*Charlotte stares back at her.*

Fine then. Go about your date.

*She calls out to George.*

Charlotte was just mentioning how much she enjoys the open air and the smells of the nearby farms.

**GEORGE.** I hope we shall get the chance to smell many things this evening.

That seems untoward. I apologize. We shall smell nothing. Or only things we wish to smell.

Flowers! I have flowers.

*He holds out his flowers.*

They have suffered somewhat in the journey here.

*Charlotte takes them.*

*Emily pockets something small.*

**CHARLOTTE.** I appreciate the effort, results notwithstanding.

**EMILY.** I am off. Do enjoy your time together. A word of advice, Mr. Wadsworth: My sister may put on a severe demeanor, but underneath her icy exterior is a butterfly. Set her free.

**GEORGE.** Oh I—

**CHARLOTTE.** *(To George.)* You shall set no butterflies free.

*Emily has escaped.*

My sister is overly fond of metaphors. Amongst other things.

**GEORGE.** Right. She seems an odd duck.

**CHARLOTTE.** We're all odd ducks. I hope that won't be an issue for you.

**GEORGE.** Not at all. Shall we?

*He escorts her out as the lights change.*

*We hear him as he leaves.*

Now I must warn you my carriage is meager at best and my horse

is known to be cantankerous, you shall need to keep a tight grip on the rails lest you be tossed into the dirt.

*Lights up on Anne and Emily's room.*

*Elsewhere, the other girls are setting the main table for dinner.*

ANNE. Did you retrieve them?

EMILY. It was hardly a challenge. Charlotte's suitor was there.

ANNE. Was he handsome?

EMILY. I did not have time to consider such things.

ANNE. Perhaps he looked like a Greek god.

EMILY. If he did, it was one of the crusty ones—Poseidon or some such.

ANNE. I should have gone. I should have liked to have spied him. Do you think it's love?

EMILY. Absolutely not.

ANNE. It could be love, though. Imagine it: Charlotte is swept off her feet by a mysterious suitor; perhaps he has fought in a war, or been a pirate in his youth.

EMILY. He is still in his youth. If he were a pirate previously, it would have been in his infancy. I don't think Charlotte is likely to be drawn to any infant buccaneers.

ANNE. But our stories are beginning. Haven't we always dreamed of that? That *something* would finally happen? Adventure? Romance? Mystery?

EMILY. I will leave the romance to Charlotte—at the moment I am more interested in the mystery.

*She takes out the object she pilfered—it's a pair of reading glasses on a chain.*

ANNE. Do you think they'll work?

EMILY. I don't know.

ANNE. Charlotte said—

EMILY. I don't care what Charlotte said. She had her chance.

ANNE. I do hope they don't drive you mad. You know what they say.

EMILY. Some people think me already mad.

**ANNE.** They are wrong. You are merely sensitive.

**EMILY.** That's nearly the same thing. Here goes.

*Emily puts on the glasses.*

*The lights change, become surreal.*

*Perhaps a spotlight on Emily. We are now seeing things through her perspective.*

**ANNE.** Can you see anything unusual?

*Mr. Jacoby is standing nearby, a ghost. He looks like a farmer, ghostly white and pale, perhaps glowing with a strange light.*

**EMILY.** Oh!

**ANNE.** What is it?

**MR. JACOBY.** 'Ello!

**EMILY.** I forgot you were still here.

**MR. JACOBY.** Nice day, in'tit? I think! Can't really tell as I'm shut up in a bowl of some kind. Now where was I? Oh yes, my peas. My pride and joy. I find a good pea is sweet on the breath and has a nice snap to it.

**EMILY.** Mr. Jacoby—

**ANNE.** It's Mr. Jacoby?! You should apologize for dooming him to eternal torment.

**EMILY.** I am handling this, Anne.

**MR. JACOBY.** I told my first wife I preferred the peas over her—that is how I got my second wife.

**EMILY.** Yes, wonderful—

*A loud rap on the door startles them.*

Ah!

**ANNE.** Oh no!

*Brittany enters angrily.*

**BRITTANY.** Headmistress says we are all waiting for you and it's exceedingly rude to remain in your rooms like clerics. We are all hungry and you are abysmal.

*She sees Emily.*

Why are you wearing glasses?

**ANNE.** She can't see.

**BRITTANY.** You're blind?

**EMILY.** No I—

**BRITTANY.** I wouldn't care if you were blind as long as you came to dinner. We are not allowed to proceed until everyone is seated and the goose is getting cold. I am *not* eating cold goose.

*She leaves.*

**MR. JACOBY.** Course it was all farms back in those days. I worked for the Pierces, who owned most of this here land.

*Emily takes her glasses off.*

*The lights change.*

*Mr. Jacoby is gone.*

*Emily exhales.*

**ANNE.** They work?

**EMILY.** Apparently. Now let's see what else we can see.

**BRITTANY.** (*Offstage, yelling.*) Don't trouble yourselves, it's ONLY GOOSE!

**GEORGINA.** (*Offstage, yelling.*) YOU NEEDN'T BRAY LIKE A DONKEY, BRITTANY!

*Lights change to the Great Hall.*

*Only the older girls are in attendance—at present Georgina and Donna are seated while Elizabeth is finishing setting the table.*

*Anne and Emily enter.*

**MARGARET.** (*To Anne and Emily.*) There you are. We were about to dine without you.

**BRITTANY.** I was hoping they wouldn't come.

**MARGARET.** Miss O'Donnell, though it's sometimes to be desired, it is rude to hope a dinner companion won't arrive.

**BRITTANY.** She's not a companion, though.

**ELIZABETH.** Are you feeling well, Emily?

**EMILY.** Yes, thank you. And you?

**GEORGINA.** Elizabeth is greatly agitated.

**MARGARET.** No one is agitated. Everyone is well.

**ELIZABETH.** Yes, Headmistress.

**DONNA.** Is Miss Brontë joining us?

**MARGARET.** She is indisposed this evening.

**ANNE.** She has a date.

**DONNA.** Oh!

**ANNE.** I hear he's stunning. Like a Greek god.

**EMILY.** (*Overlapping.*) I said no such thing!

**ELIZABETH.** (*Overlapping.*) I should like to see a Greek god!

**MARGARET.** No one is seeing any Greek gods except in books.

**ELIZABETH.** There are drawings that are quite illuminating.

**MARGARET.** A woman of character does not look at drawings, or imagine any such drawings. And we will not discuss Miss Brontë's date only to say that I'm certain she's comporting herself with dignity and character. As will all of you, should the day come when you will be courted by a man. In the meantime, no one should be thinking about Greek gods or anything Greek for that matter.

**DONNA.** Have you ever been to Greece, Headmistress?

**MARGARET.** Certainly not. It's far too sunny and pleasant there for decent people.

**BRITTANY.** Where is the dinner?

**MARGARET.** Patience, Miss O'Connell!

*Seamus enters, carrying a platter with a goose upon it—  
It still has its head.*

*The girls make happy, hungry noises.*

**DONNA.** It's exquisite!

**SEAMUS.** Aye, she's a fat one all right. Slaughtered her meself.

*Seamus eyes the girls as he talks.*

Caught her stealin' from me and I took me revenge.

**MARGARET.** The goose stole from you?

**SEAMUS.** Aye. She was rootin' about in my things. Real naughty-like. And now we're havin' her for dinner.

**GEORGINA.** Perhaps you should tell us what the goose was trying to steal.

**MARGARET.** Geese can't steal. They are birds.

**SEAMUS.** Aye they're birds all right. Naughty birds that ought not to be stealin'.

**GEORGINA.** That will be enough, Seamus.

**SEAMUS.** You aren't the headmistress here, girl.

**MARGARET.** That will be enough, Seamus.

**SEAMUS.** Of course, ma'am.

*Seamus exits.*

**DONNA.** He seems disturbed this evening.

**GEORGINA.** Yes, Donna. I think he might be. Why do you suppose that is?

**DONNA.** No idea.

*Emily is putting on her glasses.*

**GEORGINA.** Elizabeth, do you know?

**ELIZABETH.** I don't know anything.

**GEORGINA.** Well—

*Everything freezes.*

*Emily has the glasses on.*

*A spotlight on her. The world is strange.*

*Light on the goose.*

*It slowly turns its head towards Emily.*

*Emily shrieks and leaps backwards.*

*It speaks.*

**GOOSE.** *I was murdered.*

**EMILY.** Murdered?!

**GOOSE.** *Avenge my most fowl and unnatural murder.*

**EMILY.** But I—

**GOOSE.** *My chicks are motherless! Man is my enemy! Avenge me! Raise my children as your own! I DEMAND JUSTICE!*

*Emily stumbles backwards, removing her glasses and the light changes back to normal.*

*The goose stops moving.*

*Everyone is staring at Emily.*

**MARGARET.** Miss Brontë! Such a display is—

**EMILY.** I have to go!

*She runs out.*

*Margaret is speechless.*

*A moment.*

**BRITTANY.** I can have her portion, yes?

*The lights change. Night.*

*We are outside again. Near the cemetery from the beginning of the play.*

*Emily stumbles out—she reaches out and puts the glasses on her face again.*

*The lights go strange again.*

*Cliff, a teenage boy about her age, a bit of a ragamuffin, appears, leaning against the wall. He is a ghost.*

**EMILY.** Oh!

*Cliff freaks out.*

**CLIFF.** Ah!

**EMILY.** Aaaah!

**CLIFF.** Aaaaaaaahhh!

**EMILY.** It's all right—my name's Emily—

**CLIFF.** I don't care what your name is, it's rude to sneak up on one like that.

**EMILY.** I wasn't sneaking—

**CLIFF.** You were most definitely sneaking! I was perfectly content to be thoroughly unnoticed, and then you rudely decided to notice me.

**EMILY.** Who are you?

**CLIFF.** I am none of your concern! I don't need to answer any of your impertinent questions—

**EMILY.** Have you been haunting the school?

**CLIFF.** What school?

**EMILY.** This school.

**CLIFF.** This is a school?

**EMILY.** Yes and there is a phantom haunting it—perhaps that phantom is you.

**CLIFF.** Do I look like a phantom to you?

**EMILY.** You do have a rather ghostly pallor about you.

**CLIFF.** Because I am a ghost! But I am no phantom!

**EMILY.** I fail to see the difference.

**CLIFF.** Because you are both rude and stupid.

**EMILY.** You are the rude one. Perhaps I shall trap you. Do you know Jacoby? I have entombed his spirit in a meat pudding and I could do the same to you!

**CLIFF.** Jacoby.

**EMILY.** He's very fond of peas.

**CLIFF.** Oh yes. I believe he was before my time, so to speak.

**EMILY.** So you are more recently dead then?

**CLIFF.** Every word out of your mouth is an insult or a provocation.

**EMILY.** Because you answer nothing.

**CLIFF.** I am beyond the need to answer questions from a pretty girl.

**EMILY.** Pretty?

**CLIFF.** You spoil it by being both stupid and impertinent.

**EMILY.** I apologize if I startled you.

**CLIFF.** Startled me?! I am a—

**EMILY.** I apologize. I am hoping to discover who or what is haunting us. If it is you, and you are merely pretending not to be the phantom, please inform me what I may do to placate you.

**CLIFF.** Stand on your head.

**EMILY.** Stand on my—?

**CLIFF.** Stand on your head and I will be placated. My righteous rage shall abate and all will know peace.

**EMILY.** If I stand on my head?

**CLIFF.** It is a fair request!

**EMILY.** It is a strange request!

**CLIFF.** And I am a peevish spirit so do it!

**EMILY.** Very well.

*Emily prepares herself.*

I often stood on my head as a small child—

**CLIFF.** That explains a lot.

*Emily stops.*

**EMILY.** If you insult me I won't do it.

**CLIFF.** That wasn't an insult it was merely an observation. Standing on one's head can impede blood flow to the brain and cause all sorts of conditions. Most of which are being exemplified by you.

*Emily tries her best to stand on her head.*

*Cliff explodes in laughter.*

You did it! I can't believe you did it!

**EMILY.** You are a naughty spirit!

**CLIFF.** I will do as promised! I'll not haunt the school!

**EMILY.** You weren't haunting the school before, were you?!

**CLIFF.** Of course not! I have better things to do with my time!

**EMILY.** Like tricking girls!

**CLIFF.** Exactly!

*He laughs.*

Emily, that is your name, yes? Why would a spirit choose to torment you? The world of the living is barely a dream to me—I perceive it dimly as if through a clouded mirror. Time passes, the sun rises and sets, and it flows through me as if I were water. I care not for anything that goes on in your world, nor would any spirit I know. The words I have exchanged with you just now are the most I have spoken in decades.

*Emily sulks.*

Don't pout. You had fun. When was the last time you stood on your head? Perhaps it will lend you a different perspective.

**EMILY.** Who are you?

**CLIFF.** My name was Cliff. I was a boy in this house.

**EMILY.** Before it was a school?

**CLIFF.** Yes.

**EMILY.** And you are buried here?

**CLIFF.** I am.

**EMILY.** Was it a cruel place? This house?

**CLIFF.** Life is often cruel.

**EMILY.** Yes.

**CLIFF.** You have been hurt as well I see.

**EMILY.** Not more than most.

**CLIFF.** Is that what you believe? Everyone is doomed for some measure of torment? That's a sad perspective for one so young and full of life.

**EMILY.** Will you help me?

**CLIFF.** Will you come speak with me again? And perhaps stand on your head?

**EMILY.** No!

**CLIFF.** Just speak—then?

*We hear Seamus before we can see him.*

**SEAMUS.** You there! I spot ye! I spot ye all right!

**CLIFF.** You have been spotted, it appears.

**EMILY.** So it seems.

**CLIFF.** If you visit me again I will gladly assist you.

**EMILY.** Very well.

*Emily removes her glasses as Seamus enters.*

*The lights change. Cliff is gone.*

**SEAMUS.** Out and about again like a regular vagabond, aren't ye?

**EMILY.** I was doing no such thing. I am getting some night air after witnessing a crime this evening.

**SEAMUS.** What are ye talkin' about?

**EMILY.** The goose, Mr. Seamus.

**SEAMUS.** The goose?!

**EMILY.** Aye, the goose. I must ask you: where are her chicks?

**SEAMUS.** None o' yer business.

**EMILY.** You cruelly struck down their mother and orphaned the chicks and now you hope to possess them for your own.

**SEAMUS.** They're chicks.

**EMILY.** And they are deserving of love and care. I insist that you deliver them to me at once.

**SEAMUS.** I'll do no such thing ye wayward girl. I'll give ye to the headmistress and she'll whip ye within an inch of yer awful life.

*He grabs ahold of her—*

**EMILY.** Unhand me, sir or I shall be forced to summon all the dark powers at my disposal!

*He laughs—*

This is your last chance! Ghouls and monsters shall dine on your bones!

**CHARLOTTE.** (*Entering.*) Seamus, what are you doing?

*Charlotte enters, somewhat discombobulated, with George trailing.*

**SEAMUS.** Ah Miss Brontë I found this wicked, unprincipled girl—

**CHARLOTTE.** My sister—

**SEAMUS.** Yes, your... She was up to no good—

**CHARLOTTE.** Going for a stroll?

**SEAMUS.** More of a ramble.

**CHARLOTTE.** And you found it necessary to manhandle her as if she were a pickpocket? My sister has a delicate constitution—

*Emily coughs.*

She is exceedingly sensitive—

**EMILY.** It's true—

**CHARLOTTE.** And requires fresh air for the maintenance of her healthful bloom.

**EMILY.** I cannot bloom without it.

**SEAMUS.** Of course, Miss.

**CHARLOTTE.** Do go in and retire for the evening.

**EMILY.** Oh and I will require those chicks in the morning. For my healthful bloom.

*Seamus exits, grumbling under his breath.*

**GEORGE.** Miss Brontë, that was most enchanting.

**CHARLOTTE.** Yes, well—

**GEORGE.** I can see your character and authority are quite suited to your future profession.

**CHARLOTTE.** Mr. Wadsworth—

**GEORGE.** George—

**CHARLOTTE.** It was a...not unpleasant journey with you this evening—

**GEORGE.** Excellent—

**CHARLOTTE.** But I am fatigued and I fear I am much bruised from the constant jostling of your carriage.

**GEORGE.** Yes the carriage is...turbulent.

**CHARLOTTE.** So I must wish you good night.

**GEORGE.** Good night.

*He smiles—*

If you have time for the poem—

**CHARLOTTE.** No.

**GEORGE.** Right. Good night, sweet Charlotte. My heart is full of Charlotte.

**CHARLOTTE.** I said no poetry!

*George exits.*

*A moment.*

I don't want to hear it.

**EMILY.** Hear what?

**CHARLOTTE.** Your opinions on Mr. Wadsworth.

**EMILY.** I have no opinions on Mr. Wadsworth. Anne, on the other hand, has many, many opinions and is eager to let you know them.

**CHARLOTTE.** What are you doing out here?

**EMILY.** Waiting for you, obviously.

**CHARLOTTE.** You were not.

**EMILY.** And why do you care?

**CHARLOTTE.** Perhaps some gratitude is in order.

**EMILY.** For rescuing me from Seamus? As if I couldn't handle that brute?

*She starts to leave.*

**CHARLOTTE.** You are not invulnerable, Emily.

**EMILY.** That's right I have a delicate constitution. I certainly shouldn't be hunting the phantom.

**CHARLOTTE.** You are doing what?!

*Charlotte chases Emily off.*

No one has seen this phantom except for Anne and a few excitable girls. There is no evidence that it exists—the truth of the matter is that it is nothing but a figment of the imagination, a bit of childish nonsense that has gone too far. In the morning it will be over and we will return to normal.

*Lights change as she is pursuing Emily.*

*The other girls and Margaret have gathered after dinner.*

**GEORGINA.** I have something I must confess. As does Elizabeth.

**ELIZABETH.** I have nothing to say.

**MARGARET.** Well, girl, what is it? Speak up.

**GEORGINA.** I fear we have disturbed something.

**ELIZABETH.** Oh don't say it Georgina! We don't know what we saw!

**GEORGINA.** I know what I saw! And I know that it wasn't alive!

**DONNA.** You are scaring her.

**GEORGINA.** I don't care—the truth is...

**MARGARET.** The truth is what.

**GEORGINA.** We...saw something. In the cemetery. At night.

**ANNE.** I believe it was a spirit.

**MARGARET.** A spirit? What nonsense is this? And what were you doing out at night?

**GEORGINA.** It was Emily—she forced us to go.

**ANNE.** No she did not!

**GEORGINA.** Anne is covering for her because she is her sister—

**BRITTANY.** Emily is most wicked—

**DONNA.** That's not true—

**BRITTANY.** She stole a bottle of wine from Seamus and forced us to drink it! I spat it out because it was most foul but Emily tossed the bottle into the graveyard.

**GEORGINA.** She *roused* something.

**ELIZABETH.** You are liars. You are all liars.

**GEORGINA.** But you saw it, Elizabeth. You saw what happened. Tell the headmistress.

**MARGARET.** Well? Did you see this...spirit?

**ELIZABETH.** There was a phantom. It cursed us.

**MARGARET.** Have you all gone mad? There is no—

*The lights begin to change.*

*A strange sound begins.*

*Perhaps fog.*

**GEORGINA.** Shhh!

**MARGARET.** Don't shush me girl I will batter your hide like a drum.

**GEORGINA.** I feel cold.

**BRITTANY.** I do too.

*They look around.*

*The phantom rises—*

**PHANTOM.** *One day has passed! One more remains! Agony and woe await you! My dead eyes will see your evisceration! I am the phantom! I am nightmare made flesh! Trespass and feel my wrath!*

*Shrieks as the phantom swoops*

*and*

*Blackout.*

## **End of Act One**

## ACT TWO

*The next morning.*

*Birds chirping.*

*Chaos.*

*Charlotte is attempting to wrangle the younger students, who are all going in opposite directions.\**

**CHARLOTTE.** No need to panic! We are moving in an orderly fashion with a small modicum of haste.

*Elton sprints through.*

**ELTON.** Chaos reigns!

**CHARLOTTE.** Chaos does not reign, Elton. Wherever have you heard that expression?

**ELTON.** From teacher.

**THOMAS.** I shall wear my trousers on my head!

*Thomas begins unbuttoning his trousers.*

**CHARLOTTE.** You shall do no such thing! Put your trousers back on, Thomas.

**ELTON.** I am the Lord of Misrule!

**MARGOT.** Is it true we're all going to die?

**CHARLOTTE.** No. It's not true, Margot.

**MARISOL.** My uncle says everyone dies.

**CHARLOTTE.** Well, yes, everyone dies *eventually*.

**MARGOT.** So we are going to die?

**CHARLOTTE.** At some point in the future we all will die, but it is—Thomas, a gentleman does not remove his trousers in public.

**THOMAS.** What if I put my shirt on my legs?

*Thomas begins to try this as well.*

\* Once again, if you need to perform this play with a smaller cast, all of the children's lines may be cut and the actress playing Charlotte may speak her lines as if she is talking to others.

**CHARLOTTE.** Putting your shirt on your legs is equally inappropriate.

*Bouncer bounces through—*

Bouncer! No!

*Bouncer stops.*

Cease your endless *hopping!*

*Bouncer is sad.*

**BOUNCER.** What if the only thing giving my life meaning is bouncing?

*Charlotte can't think of anything to say.*

**CHARLOTTE.** I am sorry. You are more than an action my dear. I am...flustered.

**DRIP.** As am I.

**CHARLOTTE.** Yes, I know, Drip.

**DRIP.** Because it's wet.

**MARISOL.** And because we're going to die.

**MARGOT.** I heard the older girls say that a wicked spirit was going to eat us—that's why we're going home.

**ELTON.** We're going home?!

**CHARLOTTE.** Letters have been written home to your guardians apprising them of...the situation. Gather your things—there shall be a brief interlude in the schooling and we shall resume in short order.

**MARGOT.** If we're not dead.

**CHARLOTTE.** If we're not dead.

*Charlotte starts shooing them offstage.*

Come on then, quickly now! Let's go, let's go!

*The younger students exit as Margaret enters.*

**MARGARET.** Miss Brontë—when one is confronting chaos, one must be a beacon of order.

**CHARLOTTE.** Of course.

**MARGARET.** Would you characterize your behavior as a beacon of order?

**CHARLOTTE.** Surely in a situation such as this some leniency is expected.

**MARGARET.** It is precisely in difficult situations that order is most needed.

**CHARLOTTE.** Yes, Headmistress.

**MARGARET.** Which brings me to the subject of your sister.

**CHARLOTTE.** Emily.

**MARGARET.** Yes, Emily. I believe she is the root of the current contagion.

**CHARLOTTE.** Surely not.

**MARGARET.** Both Georgina Pierce and Brittany O'Connell have sworn that it was her actions that disturbed the spirit.

**CHARLOTTE.** Nonsense! How could they be certain of—?

**MARGARET.** You must admit that Emily conducts herself in the most unladylike manner—her constant rambling, foul words, odd moods—she led the other girls into the graveyard on a lark—

**CHARLOTTE.** Emily does not intend—

**MARGARET.** At dinner the other night she became agitated and reacted as if she had seen a ghost, I do not find it far-fetched that she has brought this calamity upon us.

**CHARLOTTE.** Emily has a good heart, Headmistress.

**MARGARET.** And a dark spirit.

**CHARLOTTE.** No.

**MARGARET.** I can see it in the girl's eyes.

**CHARLOTTE.** You are mistaken.

**MARGARET.** I am never mistaken, Miss Brontë. This school is in a precarious position; if we cannot reopen quickly I fear our creditors will foreclose. Your plan then, of succeeding me, would be in ruins.

**CHARLOTTE.** It is *your* plan that I succeed you—

**MARGARET.** Which you have readily agreed to.

**CHARLOTTE.** Why does everyone believe that I am destined for this position?

**MARGARET.** What else will you do with your life, Charlotte? I have placed George Wadsworth in your path—

**CHARLOTTE.** I have no desire to marry George Wadsworth.

**MARGARET.** Then you are as foolish as your sister. He has little income it is true, but he is likely the best you could hope for in your situation.

**CHARLOTTE.** What situation?

**MARGARET.** The worst thing a woman can do is overvalue herself. Esteeming yourself too highly is a guarantee for misery. It's what Emily does and why she will never know the joy of a happy marriage.

**CHARLOTTE.** Perhaps she esteems herself accurately.

*Margaret scoffs.*

**MARGARET.** I have written to your father. She is to return to Haworth.

**CHARLOTTE.** You are expelling her?

**MARGARET.** I am sending her home. Permanently. For the benefit of all.

**CHARLOTTE.** And if that doesn't quiet the phantom?

**MARGARET.** Then all of us will join her.

*Lights change.*

*Elizabeth and Donna are packing their meager belongings.*

**DONNA.** You could come with me, you know.

**ELIZABETH.** I don't think that would work, Donna.

**DONNA.** You are a long-lost cousin and now that we have become acquainted, we cannot bear to be parted. I can throw the most absurd fits. Watch.

*Donna pretends to be highly upset.*

My heart cannot bear being parted! She is my life! I am LOST without her sweet companionship! Do let her stay! Please! I shall be the sweetest, most joyful girl in the world if she remained with us for some time! She is allergic to nuts banish them from the house. Aaaaah. Aaaaaah. Then I shall pretend to be ill and not leave my room for a week.

**ELIZABETH.** How is it at your home?

**DONNA.** You would adore it. We have a few hedges and the most delightful collection of hedgehogs that my father is always grouching about. “Those rodents will be the death of my hydrangeas!” He cares overmuch for the grounds, if you ask me. My younger sisters are abominable, but they will love you precisely as much as I do.

**ELIZABETH.** It sounds delightful.

**DONNA.** It is. You should come.

**ELIZABETH.** I cannot.

**DONNA.** Has your father written already?

**ELIZABETH.** I would rather face a hundred phantoms than my father.

**DONNA.** Perhaps we should ask him to venture into the graveyard and he can frighten the phantom to death.

**ELIZABETH.** The phantom is already dead, Donna. That’s what makes it a phantom.

**DONNA.** Right.

**ELIZABETH.** And one doesn’t ask my father anything.

**DONNA.** My father is practically infirm, it’s wonderful.

**ELIZABETH.** Do not say such things!

**DONNA.** He is so old! One can hear his bones creak every time he gets up from his chair. That’s why the hedgehogs get the better of him. They’re faster and healthier in every way.

**ELIZABETH.** My father is young and full of life and awful. He’s certain to outlive all of his children, if only out of spite. He’s not a kind man.

**DONNA.** I am dreadfully sorry to hear that.

**ELIZABETH.** He hits me. If I am too slow—or if I hesitate before answering, or sometimes for no reason at all, just as though he were a child plucking the petals off a flower. Some careless, casual pain he seeks to inflict, as if that might bring him recompense for his own hurt. My mother... She is in a better place now.

*There’s a knock at the door.*

Enter!

*Anne enters—*

**ANNE.** You must come and see this—one of the younger children has declared that he will live as a pig and now demands slop for dinner! Mistress Woolton is near tears!

*She takes them in.*

Is everything all right?

**ELIZABETH.** I'm not much for merriment at the moment—

**DONNA.** Which of the boys is it?

**ANNE.** I believe his name is Drip. At least that's what my sister calls him. Is there something the matter?

**DONNA.** We are mourning the demise of the school.

**ANNE.** The school is not dead.

**ELIZABETH.** It will be. I am not certain I should ever be allowed to return if I go home.

**DONNA.** Her father is an ogre. The worst ogre. The king of ogres. He's probably mean to other ogres.

*Elizabeth smiles a little at that—*

**ANNE.** Are you certain he's sent for you? Perhaps he's too busy tormenting puppies to bother reading his letters.

**ELIZABETH.** I don't know. I find if I always anticipate the worst, it's less of a shock when it arrives.

**ANNE.** Perhaps there is hope, then.

**DONNA.** I think she should come with me. My father is nearly dead. Which makes him kind. Or at least forgetful, which is mostly the same thing.

**ELIZABETH.** I cannot go with you, Donna.

**DONNA.** What if we concocted a story and said you had fled into the countryside? Anne could write it out, she's always inventing stories.

**ELIZABETH.** It would need to be more than written.

**DONNA.** We could memorize it, like a play. Only I am terrible at remembering things so I should be given a small role.

**ANNE.** I could write it.

**ELIZABETH.** What would you write?

**ANNE.** Do you wish to flee with a handsome young man, or are you striking out for adventure?

**ELIZABETH.** Can it be both?

**ANNE.** Certainly. I'm overfond of pirates in my stories, I must tell you. His name was Captain Blood—

**ELIZABETH.** This is who I fall in love with?

**ANNE.** No no no—Captain Blood is attempting to kidnap you, and you are rescued by a second pirate, whose name is John.

**ELIZABETH.** John the pirate?

**ANNE.** It's an alias. Because he is actually royalty in disguise—

**ELIZABETH.** Ohhh.

**ANNE.** And if your father chased after you, he would find that John the pirate has the readiest blade in the Seven Seas.

**DONNA.** I like him. We'll hide you in the cellar when your father arrives and tell him the tale.

**ELIZABETH.** I appreciate the attempt—

**DONNA.** No no no it will work.

**ELIZABETH.** It is a good thing to imagine a world better than our own.

**ANNE.** I agree. Let us hide you.

**DONNA.** Or perhaps I shall simply fight him. I was ready to fight the phantom, surely I could defeat a man of flesh and blood.

**ELIZABETH.** He's not flesh and blood. He's thorns and armor.

**DONNA.** Then I will pierce that with my ready wit.

*Elizabeth laughs.*

**ANNE.** Pierce.

**DONNA.** Hm?

**ANNE.** You said pierce.

**DONNA.** Yes it's a verb.

**ANNE.** It's a name. Georgina Pierce.

**DONNA.** Right.

**ANNE.** Where have I heard it before?

*She realizes.*

I must go.

**DONNA.** But we are not done with the story!

**ANNE.** I will help you, but first I must speak with my sister.

*She runs out—*

**DONNA.** Which one?

*Lights change.*

*The cemetery.*

*Fog.*

*Emily and Anne enter, looking about.*

**ANNE.** It feels odd to be in this place when the sun is shining.

**EMILY.** Would you prefer to return at midnight?

**ANNE.** No.

**EMILY.** A ghost may appear in the daylight just as readily as the moonlight.

**ANNE.** But the phantom has only appeared at night.

**EMILY.** True. You look over there and I'll look over here.

**ANNE.** May I have the glasses?

**EMILY.** No need for the glasses yet.

**ANNE.** But I should like to have them, to see what may be seen.

**EMILY.** A great many things may be seen, that doesn't mean one ought to see them.

**ANNE.** Now you sound like Charlotte. Oh please impart another life lesson to me, dear sister.

**EMILY.** I am doing it for your own good—

**ANNE.** That is clearly Charlotte's voice you're using.

**EMILY.** Do you wish to hear the cries of every dead creature? A squirrel? A mouse? A pigeon?

**ANNE.** Sure.

**EMILY.** No you don't.

ANNE. Fine. You wouldn't even know about this if it weren't for me. I was the one who remembered what Jacoby said.

EMILY. Pierces. Yes.

ANNE. Do you suppose Georgina is related?

EMILY. We shall soon find out.

*Emily puts on the glasses.*

*The lights change.*

*The world gets stranger.*

*Ghosts appear, near the tombstones.*

ANNE. Do you see anything?

*Emily backs away from the spirits.*

EMILY. There are...presences here.

ANNE. Are there many of them?

EMILY. Be quiet, Anne.

*Cliff emerges, behind Emily, startling her.*

CLIFF. Looking for my tombstone?

EMILY. Cliff!

ANNE. *(To Emily.)* Who is Cliff?

EMILY. I wasn't looking for your tombstone—

CLIFF. May I show it to you?

ANNE. *(To Emily.)* Who are you speaking to?

EMILY. Be quiet. I am speaking to the spirit of a boy who died in the flower of his youth.

ANNE. His name is Cliff?

EMILY. Yes his name is Cliff.

ANNE. He sounds dangerous. Like one might fall off him.

EMILY. Anne!

ANNE. Is he handsome?

EMILY. He is dead!

ANNE. What is his story?

EMILY. I am hoping to discover that if you would simply shut your curious mouth.

**ANNE.** Very well, but I shall require updates.

**CLIFF.** Are you finished?

**EMILY.** Can you hear my sister?

**CLIFF.** Dimly. I see her as if drenched in shadow, as I perceive the entirety of the living world.

*He finds his tombstone.*

Here.

**EMILY.** You were fifteen. No family name?

**CLIFF.** I was an orphan. Rescued from the street by the kindness of an older gentleman.

**EMILY.** Your benefactor. Was his name Pierce?

**CLIFF.** Edgar Pierce. Yes.

**EMILY.** And he was a cruel man who wasted a fortune in drink?

**CLIFF.** You are thinking of his son.

**EMILY.** Your brother, then?

**CLIFF.** We were never brothers. Ever. He was a jealous and bitter rival for my father's affections, even though I was as low as dirt in the house—once the old man died, I was regarded as little more than vermin and treated as such.

**EMILY.** Is that why you are restless?

**CLIFF.** You are full of questions.

**EMILY.** You said you would help me.

**CLIFF.** If you stood on your head.

**EMILY.** Which I did!

**CLIFF.** It was a poor attempt. I hope you have a better one in you.

**EMILY.** Tell me the story and I shall stand on my head.

**ANNE.** *(To Emily.)* Stand on your head?

**EMILY.** I told you to be silent! Stand there and be quiet—and don't go too near any of the other tombstones, there are spirits at each one.

**ANNE.** There are?

**EMILY.** Of course there are, that's why we're here!

**ANNE.** Oh dear.

*Anne approaches a spirit, not seeing it.*

**EMILY.** You're nearly touching one!

**ANNE.** Ah!

*Anne backs up, frightened.*

**EMILY.** Cliff—I believe that the phantom haunting this school must be one of the unhappy Pierces who once owned this home. Perhaps by coincidence, but perhaps not, a girl at this school also bears the name of Pierce. If I may interview the spirit, I may be able to discover why it is angry.

**CLIFF.** You will get no answers from John Pierce, my enemy and foster brother.

**EMILY.** Will you show him to me? You said you would help.

**CLIFF.** He was a jealous and malevolent man. He despised me and despised the love...our sister bore me.

**EMILY.** Your sister?

**CLIFF.** I have spoken too much.

**EMILY.** How did you die?

Why do you roam after death? Isn't that the way of things? If a person cannot find their purpose in life, they—

**CLIFF.** I had a purpose! What greater purpose can a person have than to love?

**EMILY.** Show me John Pierce please.

**CLIFF.** You are like the others. Full of judgements and cruelty.

**EMILY.** I have no wish to be cruel to you—

**CLIFF.** Your presence is cruelty enough.

**EMILY.** How can that be? I have done nothing but—

**CLIFF.** You remind me of her.

**EMILY.** Oh.

*A moment between them.*

**ANNE.** What's going on?

**EMILY.** Shhhhh!

**CLIFF.** Our love was ferocious. As wide as the sky.

**EMILY.** And you cannot be with her.

**CLIFF.** How quickly the living forget the dead.  
If I show you John Pierce will you visit me again?

**EMILY.** Even though my presence pains you?

**CLIFF.** It is a sweet pain.

**EMILY.** All right.

*Cliff beckons for her to follow—he finds another grave.*

**CLIFF.** Demon! Show yourself!

*The spirit of John Pierce appears—he's terrifying, tall, and darkly clothed.*

**JOHN PIERCE.** Who disturbs my rest?

**CLIFF.** You should have no rest, villain.

**EMILY.** Cliff, please.

**JOHN PIERCE.** You wish to torment me further, whelp?

**CLIFF.** *I torment you?!*

**JOHN PIERCE.** I curse the day my father brought you into my home, goblin. If only your vagabond mother had strangled you in the ditch in which you were born.

**EMILY.** Gentlemen, please!

**CLIFF.** Remember your promise, Emily. I'll not trade words with this monster.

*Cliff vanishes.*

*John turns attention to Emily.*

**JOHN PIERCE.** Who calls to me?

**EMILY.** My name is Emily Brontë—

**ANNE.** I don't think you should say your real name.

**EMILY.** Anne.

**ANNE.** It gives them power over you.

**EMILY.** That is fairies, not ghosts!

**JOHN PIERCE.** I know no Emily Brontë.

**EMILY.** I'm not from here.

**JOHN PIERCE.** Then you are of no importance to me.

**EMILY.** This house is important to me. I live here now.

**JOHN PIERCE.** The house is lost.

**EMILY.** Do you haunt it?

**JOHN PIERCE.** I haunted it when I was alive. I was more ghost than man in those days, squandering my life at dice and drink. My only regret is that I failed to burn this place to the ground. I would have gladly burned with it.

**EMILY.** Is it you who haunts it now?

**JOHN PIERCE.** I am glad to be rid of it. And life. You bore me. Begone.

*The other spirits begin paying attention—they move closer.*

**ANNE.** Something feels wrong.

**EMILY.** Did you have children?

**JOHN PIERCE.** My name died with me.

**EMILY.** There is a girl at this school whose name is Pierce—

**JOHN PIERCE.** She is no descendant of mine—

**EMILY.** Your sister then? You had a sister?

**JOHN PIERCE.** You seek my fortune. You will not get it.

**EMILY.** So the rumors are true?

*John Pierce growls.*

*The other spirits growl. They step closer.*

**ANNE.** I think I heard something. We should go.

**EMILY.** Is it not you then? Who is it?

**JOHN PIERCE.** I will answer no more questions, witch.

*The spirits are converging on them.*

**ANNE.** Emily!

*Anne grabs the glasses off of Emily's face.*

*Lights down.*

*Lights up on Charlotte's room.*

*She is playing piano. Poorly.*

*George is listening attentively.*

*She finishes with a flourish.*

**GEORGE.** Capital! Capital!

**CHARLOTTE.** I apologize—that was truly awful.

**GEORGE.** Not at all! You have a...very sprightly way with your fingers. Like little elves. They dance above the keys.

**CHARLOTTE.** They didn't so much dance, as stumble across the keys. And not elves, but rather ogres.

**GEORGE.** If your fingers were ogres I would still cherish them.

**CHARLOTTE.** Mr. Wadsworth, I confess that I find your imagery troubling.

**GEORGE.** I need only a strong editor. And help. So much help.

**CHARLOTTE.** Yes.

**GEORGE.** Which is what a good wife would be for.

**CHARLOTTE.** Editing your imagery?

**GEORGE.** Among other things. Oh I am giddy today.

**CHARLOTTE.** I cannot imagine why.

**GEORGE.** Because I get to be in your delightful presence.

**CHARLOTTE.** Have you ever courted a woman before?

**GEORGE.** No, never.

**CHARLOTTE.** I suppose I knew that answer to that question before I asked it.

**GEORGE.** Then instruct me in how to woo you properly. You are an educator.

**CHARLOTTE.** I have a hard enough time educating small children. How much more difficult would it be to educate a full-grown man?

**GEORGE.** You could try. I am a ready student. I confess I received poor marks in school, but surely...I would do excellently with a teacher such as yourself.

**CHARLOTTE.** Oh dear.

**GEORGE.** I have distressed you.

**CHARLOTTE.** No.

**GEORGE.** I have...annoyed you?

**CHARLOTTE.** Quite right.

**GEORGE.** My heart aches to have given you offense.

**CHARLOTTE.** All right. First lesson: Lower your temperature.

# THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!



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