

-Alphabet Challenge: E is for Exorcism

By Kouta Slatefang.

New Mexico, 1868.

Elijah Farcastle heaved a great sigh as he adjusted the brim of his hat.

"There ain't no such thing as ghosts..."

"But you don't know that for sure!" Bessie, a buxom bovine, and his girlfriend, interrupted.

"Don't believe everything ya hear. James 3:8." Elijah smirked and walked out of the saloon, leaving Bessie bewildered.

"What has gotten into him?"

Minutes later, Elijah found himself outside the old chapel. It was poorly maintained, even when it was in use, and one could easily tell from the shattered windows and overgrown shrubbery just how little people seemed to care about their town. Elijah walked up the path slowly, his boots crunching against the gravel and stone. Beside him walked an old friend, a cat, by the name of 'Dead-Eye' Luke, not because he was accurate with a Colt, more like he was blinded in a rifle-related accident and forced to don an eyepatch 10 years prior. Since then, he vowed never to touch a gun again, and relied on Elijah to deal with any unpleasant business regarding violence. The wolf promised Luke's mother he'd take care of the cat, and he wasn't about to give up on that promise.

"Luke, you'll wanna go on home, ain't nothing here, except some faulty superstition."

"Elijah, haven't you heard the rumours? This place was built on an Indian burial ground!"

"Somehow I doubt they'd build a House of God on burial grounds."

"Well they damn well did, El, and I ain't letting you risk your life-!" Elijah held up a large handpaw to silence the cat. All their sensitive ears could pick up were the sounds of raindrops spattering on the normally arid ground.

"Well I'll be, a storm's comin'."

"It's an omen, Elijah, come on!"

"I'm not leaving until I prove once and for all this chapel isn't haunted!" The cat sighed heavily. He knew he wasn't going to win this.

"Alright, El. Was nice knowin' ya." With that, Luke paced away, his worn boots barely making sound.

Elijah turned to face the chapel, and counted to five, as he did when his temper rose. He was a religious person, but not superstitious. He tapped the simple wooden cross looped around his broad neck, and opened the doors to the chapel.

Immediately, he was greeted with the stale, yet comforting stench of rotting wood and old carpet. There was a hole in the roof which allowed some of the newly-formed rainfall to create small puddles around some of the overturned pews. Elijah could still see Luke walking back to town through the shattered window of what was once Saint Peter. Drawing his revolver, a well-maintained Smith & Wesson, he walked amongst the overturned furniture to the altar, silently wishing he wasn't so overly cautious that he had to draw a weapon in the House of God. He examined the old bible placed on a stand, and it was open on a random page. The wolf could see that Matthew 13:49 was circled in red ink...

"That ain't no ink-!" Elijah gasped as the doors leading to the cellar on both sides swung open violently as a harsh, howling wind echoed through the broken windows. Elijah ducked down, holding onto his hat as an ancient voice of those long dead boomed,

'LEAVE THIS PLACE, AND DEFILE IT NO MORE!'

The wolf couldn't believe what he was hearing. He quickly dashed down the stairs into the old cellar, pushing aside old crates to find several unmarked stones... "So the legends were true...Oh, Lord, what have we done?" Elijah couldn't help but feel partly responsible, as he was the one to campaign having a chapel built in town. He had failed to foresee the consequences of building around those twelve little stones...and now he would pay the ultimate price. He had failed to notice an odd vortex of swirling blue energy behind him, and was forced forward, smashing him face-first against the cellar wall. "What in the name of-?" He whipped around, revolver drawn, to face the intruder, who was not what he expected at all...

'ELIJAH FARCASTLE...' The spirit started. It was an equine creature, its modesty barely covered by a simple cloth, with an ornate headdress covering its long black hair.

"How d'ya know my name?!"

'SILENCE! YOU WERE THE ONE WHO DEFILED OUR ANCIENT BURIAL GROUNDS, AND IT IS YOU WHO SHALL PAY THE PRICE, LEST YOU COMPLETE ONE TASK...'

"A-And what would that be?" Elijah stammered. He had never seen anything like this in his long, storied life.

'A SIMPLE SACRIFICE. YOUR LOVED ONE, BESSIE, MUST BE BROUGHT HERE TO CLEANSE THE GROUNDS, AS SHE IS THE ONLY CREATURE PURE OF SPIRIT IN YOUR CURSED TOWN.'

"Oh, you think you're gonna get your grimy paws on mah Bessie? You're sadly mistaken." Elijah growled.

'EITHER SHE PERISHES, OR YOUR WHOLE TOWN PERISHES, INCLUDING HER.'

Elijah was frozen solid with fright. His heavy breaths making vapour against the cold, dark cellar air.

"Ain't there a third option? I ain't giving up Bessie, and I ain't losing anyone I hold dear to me."

'SO BE IT. ENSURE YOUR TOWN IS EMPTY BY MIDNIGHT, WHEN THE SOULS OF MANY DEAD WARRIORS WILL RECLAIM WHAT IS RIGHTFULLY OURS.'

Elijah gritted his fangs and nodded silently. The spirit stepped aside to allow the wolf to pass, making his way out of the chapel into the saloon, where everyone had gathered. Elijah kicked open the doors, making everyone gawk at him with surprise. Bessie, who was the barmaid, was the first to speak.

“Lijah, what in the-?!”

“You were right, Bessie, I admit it in front of all these people,” he gestured frantically to all his friends, and other patrons. “There are ghosts in that damned chapel, and we have to leave by midnight, or else we all die!”

“Good Lord...Well, folks, y’all heard him, we better pack our stuff and get!” Bessie sighed, as the patrons grumbled. Elijah was never one to lie, but to force them to leave town? They were torn, would they be hoaxed by a trusted citizen, or would they truly be slaughtered were they to stay? They soon found out.

Some say you could still hear the anguished cries of those foolish enough to disregard Elijah’s warning, in that old ghost town by the ravine. Others recount that you could still see the panicked ghost of Elijah himself rushing into the saloon every Wednesday night to issue his frantic warning...

The End