

Burning Skies

a post-apocalyptic adventure for the Fallout PnP System

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Introduction

„Gooooooooood Morning, N-C-RRRRR!!! Folks, we got a great show tonight, featuring ramblin’ Pete Cordino and... the man-of-many-tribes: Tahoun Fidley. I know how much you liked Mr. Tahoun’s escapades in the wild, wild wastes. So, we’ll just let ramblin’ Pete wait a little and start off with Mr. Fidley. Great you could come, Tahoun.”

“Always a pleasure being here Jay.”

“Why don’t you tell our audience a bit about your last trip? Suppose you didn’t get that scar by falling out of the bed?”

“You wouldn’t say that if you knew my wife. But yes, I did have quite a hard time.”

“Well? Last time we met, you told me that you were headed up to Oregon.”

“Yeah, I was. I just wanted to visit some old friends up there. But you see, I tried a shortcut and stumbled upon somethin’ very interesting: a tribe I had only heard of.”

“Folks, this promises to be very interesting...”

Author’s note: This adventure is written in a dialogue-style way. The GM may use the narration in order to base an adventure on the events described herein. However, it is also possible to “let the players listen to the interview” and then decide on their own what they want to do: They might want to visit the tribals or just regard the radio-show as an additional source of information.

Burning Skies is not adventure for non-experienced characters, since much of the events are in the wasteland and involve good survival skills. Given that there is a lot of interaction with tribals, a good portion of diplomacy is needed, too.

The Interview - Setting

“Me and my fellas took the route through the mountains to the north of Modoc. Usually, if you wanna go to Oregon, you better travel up to Klamath. Now, although there are more tribals in the vicinity of Klamath, the tribes over there are well-known. What’s more important: they are friendly.”

“And the tribals you met were not?”

“Hold your horses, I ain’t there yet. See, I am talking of crossing the mountains. Imagine a place full of spore plants, molerats and geckos – the goldens, not those itsy-bitsy silver ones. I’m not quite sure why there are that many of those post-war creatures up there, but they sure are hungry.”

“Ok, I get it. The place is dangerous. Anything else up there? Deathclaws?”

“Haven’t met none of those, which kinda surprised me. Lots of prey around, after all. Anyhow, we crossed the occasional group of raiders, but nothing else. No slavers, no marauders, no nothing. Occasionally, one meets a hermit or some lonely traveller, maybe even scouts of some faction, but the mountains north of Modoc are really desolate. Creepy, too. Everywhere you look, all you see is barren stones. Hardly any vegetation. No water to speak of. Sand storms every day. One helluva tough place.”

“Which makes me wonder... how did YOU survive?”

“I am an expert. Seriously, I am not advising anybody to go up there. See, if you don’t have enough food and water, you will have to go look for some. If you find any, then you’ve also found trouble. Water means that there are critters nearby. Luckily, the beasts you’ll encounter will also satisfy your desire for food.”

“Ok. Let’s finish our seminar in survival. Can you tell us about the tribe’s location?”

“No, can’t do that unless they want me to. They know that I hold my promise, otherwise I wouldn’t be alive to tell the tale. But maybe this might help the would-be trappers out there: we got out of Modoc early in the morning and travelled per pedes for three days until we reached the mountains. Then we travelled for 10 days straight to the north until we reached a small canyon. Can’t miss it cause you’ll detect a slight smell of sulphur when you are nearby. Just follow your nose.”

“Uh, right. So that’s where they are – and per pedes means?”

“Oh, by foot. Can’t use any vehicles up there. I wouldn’t tag along any brahmin either. The beasts up there are pretty hungry. Also, you wouldn’t be able to take them down the canyon. The walls are damn steep. To be honest, I wouldn’t have cared less about that crack in the earth if I hadn’t seen that sign by chance.”

“What sign? You mean like a tribal symbol or something like that?”

“Yes. It looks like a simplified bird of some sorts. It is carved into the mountain side – about five yards high and three yards wide. You’ll find a small trail closeby that leads down into the valley. Move carefully though, the trail is secured with traps.”

The Interview - Village

“So you went down there and met them. What’d they look like? What’s their story?”

“They call themselves people of Calore, which is also the name of their village. As far as I could find out, they are descendants of an aeromedical team who crashed down there during the great war. Their language is full of references to their heritage, and their clothing has vague links to that of a medical flight crew. Their elder told me that there had been 60 to 70 people who survived the crash. Since most of them held medical and military professions, it wasn’t too difficult to survive out there.”

“But why did they stay in the canyon? Why did they develop a specific culture?”

“See, they were trying to contact their company headquarters but because of radiation, the radio connection was down. The military fraction of the survivors advised to built shelters within the canyon in order to endure the fallout. They wanted to stay put until it was safe to move out. They wouldn’t have survived if it wasn’t for the medical equipment and knowledge they possessed. As to their culture, I think that after a decade of waiting and trying to get in touch with the outside world, they just grew tired of making an effort. The elder told me that at that point of time, they had appointed a leader – a holy man with a healing touch. Maybe a doctor trained in pressure point therapy or something like that, I dunno. Well, their leader decided that it was best for them to stay in the valley and that was it.”

“Simple as that? No quarrels among the group? No threat to force them to stay?”

“You have to understand that these people had dedicated their lives to rescuing other people. They just weren’t used to be in need of rescue. Also, after years and years of waiting, people get closer to each other. Some even get TOO close, if you catch my meaning. About half of the team members had been nurses.”

“Ok. I understand how the village was founded, but why did they isolate themselves?”

“For a while, they tried to keep the equipment in shape, lived according to company rules and so on. No steps forward tribalism for, say, three decades. This changed after a tragic incidence. One day, a group of former militia members arrived in the community. Although at first welcomed, they soon had to be “disposed of” because they’d shown themselves to be extremely violent. Fearing further occurrences like this, the community concealed its technology and disguised itself by taking on a much simpler way of live. After a while, this masquerade turned into reality: tribalism was born. While they learned a lot about survival in their environment, they have lost some of the knowledge they had onced possessed. Much of their equipment was non-operational and the aircraft wreckage had been turned into a shrine. It took me a lot of smooth talking to get into these holy places for a quick lookaround.”

“Tahoun, this is really fascinating. We’d all like to hear more of that, but first we gotta take a short break... stay with us folks, you don’t wanna miss that!”

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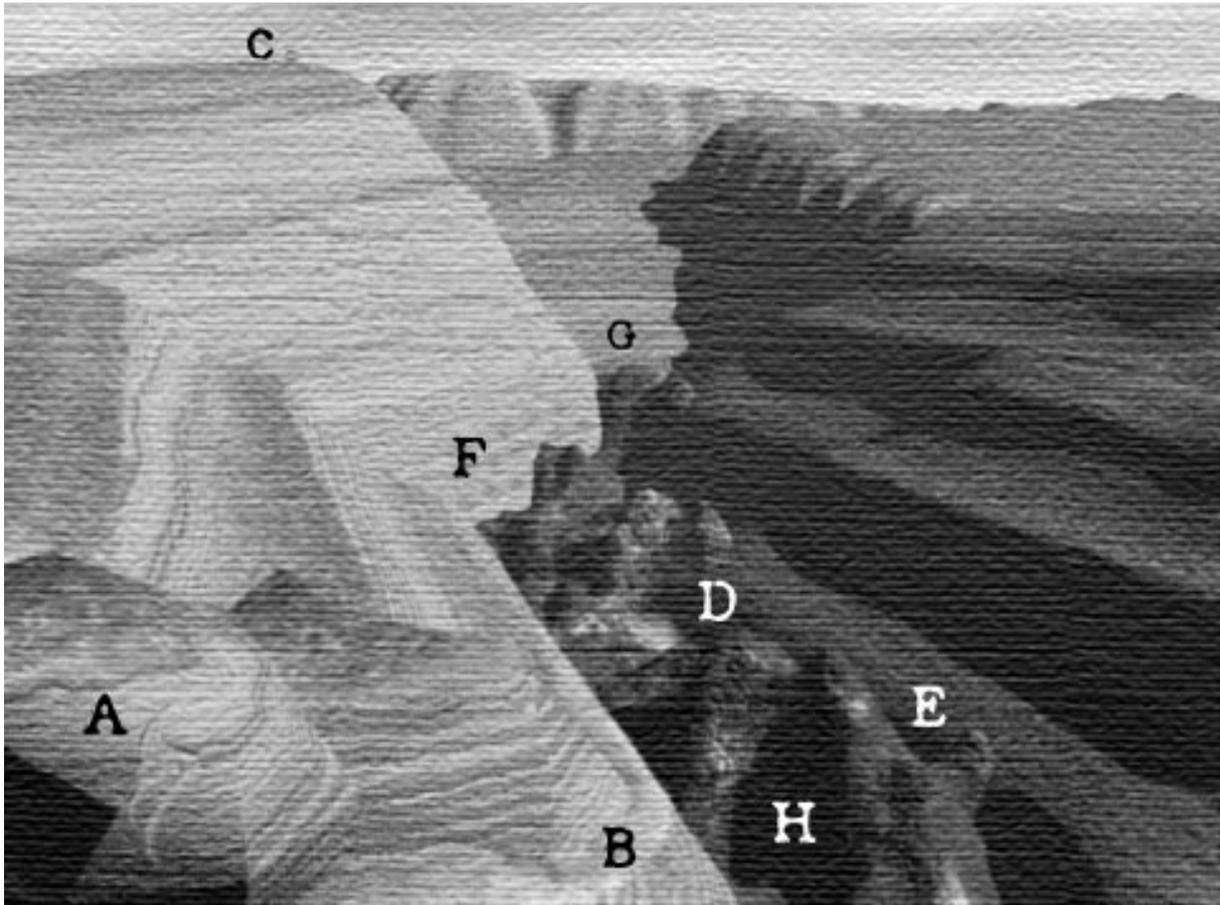


“All right, we have a couple of minutes before we get back on air. So, tell me.”

“Tell you what?”

“Aw, come on, Tahoun. I know that you don’t wanna get into details in public, but you know how curious I am. I don’t get out much, y’know.”

“All right... I made this painting on my way back and marked interesting spots in the canyon. It’s a great place- an oasis in the middle of the desert.”



A = border mark B = trapped trail C = watchpost D = village centre
E = shaman’s cave F = cave housings G = crashsite temple
H = guarded entry gate

“You’re right, looks like an oasis. The cliffs look steep- why do they live in caves?”

“They need the space in the canyon to cultivate corn and other plants. They even have water down there. It’s radiation count is almost at zero, which explains how they could survive for such a long time. The mountains are very rich in coal, so they act like a filter system. The vegetation keeps the water from evaporating, and they have build an aqueduct structure. They also herd geckos for their food and clothing.”

“What’s with the watchpost?”

“Oh, it’s more of an initiaton ceremony. To reach adulthood, one has to climb up there and stay on guard for three days. Still, it’s never empty. I’ll explain why later on. Looks like you’ve gotta get back on air now.”

“Hi, we’re back with Mr. Fidley’s account on the tribe of Calore. Please go on.”

“Right, lemme give all those yahoos out there some interesting facts. Calore has a population of 300 to 350. Everyone who is old enough to hold a spear owns one. Women and men are treated alike, so if you’re stupid enough to get yourself into trouble, you’ll have a whole village against you. Also, note that these folks use bows. Their leader has a pre-war combat bow and is dreadfully proficient with it. I’m saying all this because there’s one born every minute who tries to find out just how tough “them tribals” are. Believe me, they’re tough. Also, it’s their terrain- they have traps everywhere and know how to hide themselves from your view.”

“What’s with social structure? Customs? Economy?”

“They don’t have a monetary system. Everything is based on trade. The only exception is food and water. They cultivate corn and hunt for whatever comes down into the canyon. The food is shared among the whole village. Water is rationed, even though there is enough for the village. As to customs- where to begin? They have too many. For example, every gal who marries wears a white nurse cap. The caps are original: they are many decades old and are passed from one generation to the other. Another custom I’ve seen: a guest is welcomed with a small bowl of strange, salty corn called pean-nutz.”

“They have guests in the village?”

“I’ll explain: they live in families and every family has its cave system. A family consists of the grandparents, the parents and the children. The grandparents live in the house of their firstborn child. If someone from another family comes into the family shelter, he is considered a “guest” and greeted with that salty pean-nutz stuff. By the way, all families are treated as equals. There is a leader, but he is not allowed to have a family. Same thing is true for the elder who acts as the chief doctor.”

“They’re not allowed to marry? Why is that?”

“I don’t know. They both pick apprentices who take their places when the time comes. There are also other positions, such as the chief tec, chief nurse and chief commander. They act as engineer, doctor and hunt-leader and they are allowed to marry. As far as I could see, there isn’t a real division in status. The young ones are very respectful of their elders though. If you’re really looking for some kind of hierarchy, I’d say it’s determined by age. There are still military ranks from past times, but to me it seemed more like a game since one person was corporal one day, major the other and private on again another day.”

“Seems like a nice society to live in. What’s with rules? Anything to watch out for?”

“Just use common sense and you’ll do fine. Don’t try messing around with the gals and don’t try to go anywhere they don’t want you to go. They are pretty friendly, actually. Once you get past the “kill the strangers” stage, you’ll get along nicely. They do have occasional guests from other tribes- that’s how I had heard of the Calore of the first place. But the important rule they have: don’t lead any strangers back to us.”

“What’s with the watchpost? You mentioned that during the commercials.”

The Interview - Individuals

“Remember when I said that “it’s never empty”? Well, it’s not, even when it is.”

“Huh? I guess, I didn’t get that. Say again.”

“The watchpost is a crude stone building which is built into the landscape. On top of that thing, there are blue paddings which power the EAGLE within the watchpost.”

“Whaddaya mean, eagle? You mean a real, living bird?”

“How the hell should an animal feed on solar power? No, EAGLE stands for Enchanced Automated Guarding Labor Entity. They installed it after the trouble with the raiders. Every now and then, someone has to go up and look after it. Other than that, it functions all on its own and watches for intruders. If a humanoid not belonging to the tribe enters the canyon, it will ring an alarm down in the leader’s place. Besides being a guard, the EAGLE is also a low AI. I found out how to talk to it and learned a bit about the past of the Calore that way.”

“You talked to ...a machine? Aw, come on, Tahoun. No way, you’re havin’ me, right?”

“Believe it or not, EAGLE was very nice to talk to. In comparison to you, of course.”

“Gee, thanks. Any other interesting, non-living beings you talked to?”

“The guy who’s at the gecko pens near the entry gate is a dimwit called Choco. He also just stands around all day long, so talkin’ to him is pretty much like talkin’ to an inanimate object. Same is true for one of the entry guards, his name is Geprod, I think. The one-eyed guard, Avella, is a nice fella though. He likes to chat and gossip and is always in a good mood. The last guard I met was Lecit, a very stern and attentive person- a true professional.”

“Hmm. I don’t think we have time to talk about every single person in Calore, so maybe you could speed things up a bit by just naming the “important” folks first?”

“All right. Let’s start off with the leader of Calore. He is a silent, rough man about 40 years of age. They call him Burning Skies.”

“Burning Skies... sound like a true hero’s name.”

“No doubt in that. While he was an apprentice for the old leader, he spotted someone in a hot air balloon, floating towards the canyon. Fearing that the person might inform others of the location of Calore, he took an aim with his bow. Somehow, he must have hit the fuel tanks or something, because the whole thing went up with a big display of fire. Hence the name “Burning Skies”. After that event, he received the pre-war combat bow of the old leader and became the youngest leader of all times. He’s been holding that position for over 20 years now.”

“Wow. Now that sure was a good shot, huh folks?”

"Maybe. But Burning Skies had never intended to become a leader. All he wanted was to finish his time as an apprentice and then marry the girl he loved. It didn't work out the way he wanted, and he's still bitter about that. By the way, the girl hasn't married either. She's become the elder of the village."

"Sounds like she took that job because she didn't want to marry anyone else."

"Right. The two of them are a perfect couple, yet they'll never be able to marry. She is called "Silent Tears" by her people. Noone has ever seen her shed a tear. They say that she has lost that ability when her mate became the leader of Calore. So, she studied healing, herbs and all other necessary skills to become the elder of the tribe."

"I hope that the stories of the other people aren't that sad."

"No, that's the only big tragedy in Calore. The other people live fairly happy. The chief is a woman called Lyra. She's old, but still very keen on new technology. They had to restrain her from taking my gun apart to see how it functions. I gave her an old, jammed desert eagle though. Funny to see a 54 year old gal smile like a child... Her husband is a formidable cook and likes to try out new recipes- he used to go out and search for ingredients, but he's gotten too old for that now. They live together with their son, who also has a family of his own now."

"Uh, yeah... what's with the others? Chief Nurse and Chief Commander?"

"Chief nurse is a guy, so as you see, the titles don't have anything to do with gender. His name is Ahmadi and he's a very funny guy. He takes care of the kids of other people, helps tending small injuries and so on. He's the maid for everything- if anything has to be organized or if anyone needs help with something, they go to him. That way, he also hears a lot of gossip and boy, does he love gossip! His wife always shakes her head and tells him that he's worse than her girlfriends. Their second daughter is married to the chief commander, by the way. I guess not everyone was happy with this- the chief commander is a guy who's not very popular. He's a tall hunter called Sahvar. An unpleasant person with no humor at all. He remarried after his wife got killed by a pack of molerats who entered the canyon. I tried to keep away from him since he has an aversion to strangers. It's very hard to gain his trust."

"But you managed to gain it somehow?"

"Eventually, yeah. It was very hard though. I helped out with some problems they had and got wounded. I guess, he then realized that I truly didn't mean any harm."

"Can you tell us more about that or are there any people you haven't told us about?"

"The two guards at the crashsite temple, Kipfer and Lief, are tough but friendly. They won't let you in unless you are in company with any one of rank. Another notable person is Ladok, a farmer who cultivates spore plants. I dunno why, but they don't attack him. He found a way to process the spores to make them edible. Oh, another remarkable person is Silah. She's not native to the village- she got captured by slavers who "shoot beams of light" and fled over the mountains when their "flying houses" landed. She knows how to handle a spear and gives lessons to the kids in the village. A very kind, but loud person who likes to talk to the "spirit" of her grandpa."

The Interview - Trouble

“All right, now what’s the deal with that new scar on your face?”

“That was a .45 at point blank. As you can see, I was extremely lucky.”

“I thought they didn’t have weapons in the village?”

“Well, the aeromedical team had arms, but after decades, there just isn’t any ammo left. I actually traded an old MP5 for a stimpack. It still worked and I sold it in New Reno for a thousand bucks. But it wasn’t the Calore who shot at me. It was a group of raiders who had found the canyon. A tribal had led them to their location. I’m not quite sure why he had done that because we didn’t have time to ask him. Sahvar put an arrow through that guy’s head.”

“How many raiders did you fight off?”

“It’s been a group of 20, each one of them armed with rifles and handguns. Some few had automatics and shotguns. All clad in leather armor and fairly experienced. Burning Skies wanted to let them get close into the canyon first, but I didn’t want them to cause any harm down there. So, me and my three pals went up there to “greet” them. While we were holding them off, Sahvar and his groups closed in from behind and together, we were able to take them out. After the fight, Sahvar wanted to keep the weapons, but Burning Skies gave them to us so we could “dispose of them”. He figured that learning to use guns would mean having to trade with strangers. He didn’t want to become dependend on any one.”

“Are these common problems in the canyon?”

“No, usually the Calore are busy fighting the molerats who come down from the mountains. I also heard that they had some trouble with expanding the caves, but what it was, I can’t quite remember. The only big problem they have are outsiders. Those who are welcomed always pose a risk since they might lead others to the canyon. Intruders in general are identified by EAGLE, but who knows how long that AI will be operable? That thing would need a good fix-up, but I just didn’t have the balls to try it. If I was more of an engineer, I would have been busy helping Lyra with her projects. But I am more of a people person, so I mostly hung around with Ahmadi. I’m sure that Burning Skies or Silent Tears may have also had some little tasks on hand, but I guess they wouldn’t have trusted a stranger with that anyway.”

“What? You mean even after you helping with the raiders?”

“These are two people who have devoted their lives to their village. They won’t trust anyone with important tasks- they’ll rather do it themselves. Maybe that’s why both of them don’t have apprentices yet. As far as I know, Burning Skies would like to have one but he is too much consumed with daily tasks to make a right choice in that matter. I would have liked to help him. After all, he saved my life. He was the one who shot the guy with the .45 aimed at my face.”

The End

“So now we know what you were up to. How long did you stay in Calore?”

“I’ve been there for three weeks. I got to know the people and learned a part of their way of life. During the first week, there was a rush of molerats and during the second week, we got attacked by those raiders I mentioned. There was always work to do on the fields, the pens, the cave expansions, up at the watchpost or on the trails, so I didn’t just “sit around”. I would have liked to go further up to Oregon, but Burning Skies told me that it wasn’t good to continue in that direction.”

“Why is that?”

“He didn’t want to go into details, but I think it is another tribe, though I am not certain which one. The tribal who betrayed their location was an Achomawje. They’re a trading tribal community. Maybe someone just made them an offer they couldn’t refuse? I guess that Burning Skies wanted to gather more information before pointing his finger at someone. That’s why he kept silent about it. I am pretty sure that he will be forced into action some time in the future though. It is even possible that these peaceful people will have to prepare for war if diplomacy doesn’t work out. In that case, the loss on both sides would be vast. I just hope that they can find a way.”

“Have you ever experienced war between two tribes?”

“Yet, but usually it was because of land or some blood feud, not because of the desire to be left alone. Burning Skies is angry with himself because he let it come that far. Up to now, none of his people had to die because of outsiders. But their situation keeps getting worse every year. There are even more molerats coming in- though I’m not sure whether this is because of the cave expansions or something else. Praddok, some old coot in the village, thinks that it’s the Achomawje who are driving the molerats towards the village, but he has no proof. On the other hand, he also thinks that aliens fly down to earth to steal gecko hides. I think that he just keeps losing them somewhere, but who knows? We’re living in a time where giant mutated lizards and rats roam the wilderness. I think his explanations are as good as anything else.”

“Well, they sure make a good story. Yours, however, are much better. It was a great pleasure having you here, Tahoun. Thank you very much.”

“Well, you are welcome.”

“Folks, this was Mr. Tahoun “man of many tribes” Fidley, speaking to you from Radio NCR, best radio station in the wasteland. Coming up: ramblin’ Pete. So, stay tuned.”

Authors Note: NPC stats, weapon stats (combat bow), detailed maps etc. may be included for those who are interested. A detailed list of quest is also available. However, the quests may be “seen” in the narration (try reading between the lines). If you want more Info on the tribe and tribal structures (or how to play a tribal), then you will have to wait until I am done with the tribes add-on. Any questions or comments are welcome: snirgles@hotmail.com