

Fallout Equestria: Zebra Badlands

Season 1 Episode 2

Into the Wastelands

It suddenly struck me that that tiny pea, pretty and blue, was Home. I put up my thumb and shut one eye, and my hoof blotted out the planet. I didn't feel like a giant. I felt very, very small. ~ Marigold somewhere over Zebrica.

Looking out on his first sight of the surface, the first pony to do so since the pegasai were taken. Processed Cheese had emerged into the bottom of a narrow canyon barely wide enough to have accommodated the train had it made it clear of the tunnel. If the tunnel hadn't curved as it exited the cavern the train never would have fit.

Looking up and out of the canyon the full weight of the situation escaped me, the sky was little more than a sliver of cerulean so far over his head that it looked like some pony had painted a line of the brightest blue he had ever seen on the ceiling.

Enough light trickled down into the canyon that Cheese didn't really need to keep the flood lights on my back on but after being on for centuries he was reluctant to turn them off for fear that they might not turn on again. The tracks followed the floor of the canyon to the right where judging by the increasing swath of blue it must come to an end or at least widens enough that the train wouldn't be practically scraping the walls. To Cheese's left the tracks continued for some distance past before ending at a bumper. Around the bumper what looked like the remains of a pile of corroding drums were spilled down the canyon laying scattered about as though a giant hand had tossed them in a fit of pique.

Not really a fan of toxic waste Processed Cheese took his first steps into the wastelands and the rest of his life by following the long forgotten tracks through the canyon.

Panting in the oppressive heat as the stone walls of the canyon reflected the heat of the sun down on to a pony caked in dust and dried sweat. Processed Cheese was melting, overloaded with crap and having never been outside of climate controlled underground shelters.

Walking along the bottom of a narrow canyon following a set of train tracks didn't

exactly do much to stimulate the mind, it was on the other hoof great for allowing a little voice in your head voice all your complaints like how the straps were starting to chafe or how the corner of one of the ammo boxes was sharp and poking in him in the side as he walked.

Unfortunately for Processed Cheese what his path lacked in mental stimulation it more than made up for in walking blindly past predator dens. Humming tunelessly to himself Cheese didn't hear the loose rocks tumbling down as several lizard heads peaked out their eyes swivelling to stare at the odd noisy in clattering along below them. Most creatures of the wastes know better than to come out of their caves but for most creatures a meal doesn't announce itself by making as much noise and light as possible.

Before Cheese had gone more than a dozen paces past each den yet another creature of the wastes had begun to scurry after him. Say what you will about being fresh out of the catacombs and melting from the heat Cheese still has what could be called a good dose of common sense so when he heard the sound of something coming up from behind he made sure to stop and see what all the fuss was about.

"Great Caesars ghost!" it was a living carpet of ravenous bad land critters heading his way. Lizards and scorpions the size of foals were snapping at each other in an effort to be the first to reach the finish line first and be the one to claim the prize of delectable pony. Funny how mere moments ago he was ready to collapse from exhaustion, now he was all but flying as he galloped like mad to get away the bugs and lizards, unfortunately though for Cheese well his running away was putting some distance between himself and the monsters that were currently chasing him it was making so much racket that it attracted more critters from dens ahead of him. Whenever he managed to get far enough that a critter decided he was less tasty than the critter next to it several more had taken its place.

Having been chased completely out of the canyon and onto a sandy plain Processed Cheese was done. Flanks foaming and raw from his packs as he ran, well tried to run by this time he could have been passed by a three legged tortoise. Following him though refusing to give up the chase was the oldest looking desert rat mouse you'd find in the badlands looking almost as pitiful as his prey as it half dragged itself after Cheese.

Such was the state of the pair of them that neither one noticed the dip in the ground until Cheese vanished from the rat mouse's field of view. Tumbling down into a dry creek bed

does wonders for one's perspective on the world, unfortunately the acquisition of this new perspective does not always result in enlightenment. In Cheese's case it resulted in a whole new set of aches where the pokey cornery bits of his bags and boxes jabbed him in the sides and a lump on his skull from one of his flood lights hitting him in the head.

Laying on his back looking up at the sky also gave Cheese a different kind of perspective after hours of being chased through a canyon by a horde of gibbering beasts his mind has had enough, quite frankly Cheese was too damn tired to be scared of the vast all-encompassing nothing that was stretched out below him and his mind decided that now would be a good time for a nap.

Fortunately for Processed Cheese his sudden disappearance was of such concern to the old red mouse that it scurried away from the unconscious pony in an effort to avoid becoming a meal for whatever had taken his prey.

"Oooooowww, remind me to never do that again" Cheese felt like someone had decided that it was his morning to volunteer to be made an example of all over again. Everything hurt like he was once again bruised. His legs were cramped up worse than his uncle Charlie when he tried to make alcohol out of engine degreaser. Peeling his eyes open didn't help the issue any as he had no idea where he was.

"If that is what you would like, I shall try with all my might"

"Who, what? Who is there?" Springing up in the bedroll Cheese turned to spot the other pony. Unfortunately for him the sudden motion and his already cramped limbs brought him back down to the floor nearly as fast. "oof, please whoever you are don't hurt me. I don't mean you any harm." Realizing that even if he did in fact mean the other person harm he was in no condition to do so and was lacking so much as a bottle cap to defend himself with as everything was taken from him well he was passed out. "Please I don't mean you any trouble just let me go; I don't even know how I got here."

"A pocket of light in the middle of the wasteland night." a sudden blinding flash as the other pony... err zebra turned on one of Cheese's flood lamps illuminating a small cluttered hut and an old wizened Stallion. "Do you so value your strength and size, that you can be so blatantly unwise?"

"I'm sorry, I don't understand." Cheese didn't know what to say. On one hoof even if he

knew where he was he was in no condition to do anything but lay there. On the other hoof for all he knew the old Zebra did something to him in the first place after finding him. On third hoof after being chased through the canyon and into the open plains by a swarm of who knows what it was exceedingly clear that life working in the catacombs had not prepared him for life under an open sky. On the forth hoof he was really hungry and apparently not listening as the old zebra was looking at him expectantly as though waiting for an answer.

Cheese looks at the old Zebra “Oh. Um sorry, uh yes?”

Sighing and shaking his head as he turns and scoops out a two bowls full of broth and two of the Zebra cakes that he obviously took from Cheese’s packs.

“Once again I ask you true, do you know just what you do? Do you know to fight or flee this truth you have for me?” Looking intently at Cheese now that he knows Cheese is paying attention.

“Um well, truthfully. I don’t know, when I woke up this morning I thought I knew everything I needed to know. I knew how to mop up coolant leaks and reactor waste. I knew what I was supposed to do all day. But now I don’t know I was chased by giant bugs and things that wanted to eat me, I saw a giant ball of fur and gross almost pull its own face off trying to intimidate me and it did.”

The wizened old stallion just nodded his head well Cheese related what had led him to falling into a dry creek bed. He didn’t even start to snore till close to the end.

“Sounds to me not too bad a first day in the wasteland you had.” Looking straight at Cheese the old stallion gravely informed him that “Forgive me for my words quite terse, but the journey ahead will get much worse.” Getting up and walking over to a cluttered shelf full skulls and fetishes mixed with a liberal helping of wasteland junk the old stallion rooted around till he found a battered and worn book which he tossed on to the table. “Go ahead and take a look for this is one very important book. The Wasteland Survival Guide a pony from other lands did provide. Many copies exist today to show new ponies the way. In Zebrica there is no guide for you live or fall is all you can do will but is it enough to see you through.”

The wizen old stallion would hear no talk of Cheese departing till the sun had set as this part of the waste was far too hot to travel by day and many places we much worse he claimed as though the sun itself chose them as spots to rest during its journey through the

sky. To pass the time the two talked about the old stallion's own experiences, as he told his tale he would flip to points in the in the guide that held a picture of something related to his story.

"I remember when I was not so old but much like you still young and bold. My tribe had not yet been displaced by yet another zebra race.

The life was harsh and I not yet wise, for a dainty hoof was to be my prize. My tribe did rule that all must mate to hold our home from hellish fate.

The wasteland will spare no time for hope and love, it finds a crime. A truth tribe well understood so edict read, and understood all the mares not then bred must I take into my bed.

So stood there like a fool as truth of the rule did come to light with a smirk of delight. But pride they say can lead you in a downward way. For though it was my right, I did not find my love's hut at night. For as with tradition I did contend, she a spiteful mare in the end. The flower fair that I desired had already found a sire.

So it was with heavy heart, I chose at random where to start. At first it was a grand arrangement, with every mare a fun engagement.

But again with pride did I carry, for of mares there was one I was wary. So the truth I did conceal till the elders did reveal. Of this fact that was my shame of this other on the bed she was my mother.

By the time the sun had rose I had gathered up my clothes. For the shame that I awaken when my mother I had taken. To the wastelands I did run for the night of taboo fun. What was not yet known to me as I kissed her, my mother and the rest were all my sisters."

As the afternoon wore on Processed Cheese learned that for reasons no one could fathom Cherry Sparkle-cola was imported into Zebra lands by the train load even though no one seemed to like the taste, resulting in plenty of bottle caps.

With the old stallion's help Cheese sorted out issues with his inventory making his ammo box saddle bags work better with his tool harness to act like make shift armor barding. Refusing to give up all his floodlights the two of them dismantled one of them into something that would attract less attention by mounting the lights on to the boxes with some wonderglue.

Well Cheese was distracted shrugged into his barding the old stallion muttered to himself and stuffed something into Cheeses bags. As the sun started to paint the sky red the old stallion pointed to the northwest and a bright star just over the horizon. “Fresh Cheese see the star so bright, the second one to the left follow it through the night. For three days pace, follow it till you are out of this place.”

Processed Cheese sniffled as he held back tears, “Thank you for helping me, from what you said most other wastelanders would have just picked my body clean after the sun made me into a Cheese Melt.” Unable to hold back any longer Cheese embraced the old stallion.

Forced into immobility by the sudden embrace the old stallion “Have you lost your mind, one does not simply embrace my kind.” His eyes wild and ears twitching with discomfort.

Letting the old stallion go Cheese sniffled again. “oh, um so that way then.” Turning towards the star. “Be well, and don’t eat all the zebra cakes in one sitting.” Breaking into an easy trot he wandered away from the old stallion’s hut with a destination firmly in mind and a better understanding of what he was expecting to encounter getting out the area around his old home.

A cool evening breeze ruffled Cheese’s mane as he stopped at the top of a rise as the path he trod had begun to lead back into the foot hills next to the plains. Looking back over his route he could still make out the white light of the flood lamps that he had left behind with the old one. A bright spot on the plains like a star fallen from the sea of stars over his head, silently thanking the old stallion one more time as Cheese did his best to ignore the desire to dig himself into the ground to avoid the open sky.

As he looked back in thanks the hut erupted in flames. In the light painting the plains around the fire shadows could be observed fighting across the plains as the fire enlarged them into giants.

Processed Cheese turned away from the plains and headed further into the foot hills as one of the shadows fell. He was too far away to help the old zebra and had most likely doomed him to die as the lights drew his attacker towards him. In his heart he could feel that it was because in pursuit of him that the attacker had come to the old one’s hut and it would be the gravest insult to his death if he just went back there to die next to the old

stallion.

With a heavy heart Cheese followed the path of the star further into the foot hills, he had to get off the plains the pursuit he had been afraid was following him had just made itself known.

A few minutes earlier

The Old Zebra stood in the door to his hut silhouetted by the flood lights he now had after helping the young colt he had found the day before. Normally the old stallion wasn't one for helping others but then normally there were no others in this part of the badlands, the closest outpost of civilization was the very town that the colt had managed to escape from.

The old zebra hadn't even known there were ponies in that camp, it was obvious to any that there were once pegasai living there as the locals has somehow managed to overcome the issue of zebra and pegasai being incompatible as there were a number of feathered zebras mixed in with the normal bat winged guards.

The town boasted the only cloud cover in the area as winged zebra snipers sat on clouds watching the approaches into town, their stripes a rainbow of colours as if in grudging defiance to their white coats.

Somehow the pony had managed to find the only way out of that the sniper rifles of the guards hadn't been able to see, even well carrying a lighted beacon to his location.

Lost in his thoughts the old zebra went back into his hut to the stars were quiet to night no messages waiting to be read. So preoccupied was the old one that it wasn't until he had sat down at the table to read the leaves of his tea that he noticed the smell in the air.

"So it seems to be, the young one was this time wiser than me."

Pulling back the hood of her invisiblity cloak before answering a zebra mare glared at the old stallion. "Why, why help him? Tell me wisefather what do you gain from this, he is going to be caught. It is my trial to catch him and bring either him or his head back. You know it is our tradition to kill trespassers in the Zebrica."

The old stallion just contemplated his tea leaves before answering, "Really who a trespasser be, he was born here unlike me. You claim that it is tradition but only because

if his condition. Born like his father of stripe mother then you would have called him brother.”

The mare just glared daggers at the old stallion. “You, you foolish old zebra. You are going to sit there and presume to tell me that our traditions are stupid, that our way of life that has protected everyone in this region including you is worth throwing away because you feel like helping some pony that has escaped his right place under the hooves of the Caesar.”

The old stallion just tilted his head as he contemplated the flared wings of the enraged mare sitting across his table from him. The aqua blue feather tips standing out in stark relief next to the charcoal covered stripes.

“Eyes of blue and feathers bright, your anger is an exotic and arousing sight” the old stallion smiled.

Roaring as she lunged at the old stallion over the table. The tiny hut to cluttered to for the two zebra to fight properly they were reduced to grappling their actions sending various artifacts scattering till one of the flood lamps crashed into the fire pit sending glowing coals amongst the tinder dry relics of the old zebra’s possessions.

The fire spread through the hut, quickly surrounding the pair and forcing them to escape into the outdoors to avoid succumbing to the heat and flames. Well the old stallion was trying the force air into his aged lungs his attacker slammed a forehoof into his chest in a blow that forced the smoke out of his lungs through the simple act of crushing them. Both zebra knew how this was going to end, but honour dictated that she allow him to die fighting, there shadows spread over the plains as they fought.

Dusting the ash from her hooves as the fire burnt itself out with the coming dawn the mare finished her vigil over the now cremated remains of the old stallion. She had allowed her prey enough time to evade her, but no matter he was on foot and she would make up the time soon enough.

Her strong legs thrusting her into the air she banked as she climbed starting the first of a series of lazy circles that would take her over the entire plain.

Level up: Sorry only part way to level three. Leveling up goes faster when you actually do something.

Quest Perk: The Hunted, you can feel breath of the hunter on your neck everywhere you go. You gain increased movement speed in the wild but no longer gain rested bonuses when resting without a companion close by. Temporary companions do not grant rested bonuses.