After crash-landing in Tatooine's dune sea, smuggler Platt O'Keefe discovers that the desert planet's wildlife can be both a hindrance and a lifesaver.

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"Great . . . . . . . . . . Just fantastic." Platt curses sourly. She raps her fingers on her freighter's smoldering control console. "There's nothing like trying to blast out of Mos Eisley, then your ship decides it's ready for the junkyard." She looks through the cockpit viewport. Sand. Not dunes, just sand, piling higher every minute. Platt had ditched her ship, Pok's Demise, in a Dune Sea gravel storm.

Platt reviews her escape, trying to figure out what has gone wrong. She'd been having a few with Sovar, her "cargo solicitor." The cantina visit was a sort of payment for the crummy cargo he'd traded with her. Then the bounty hunters showed up. Platt dashed back to Docking Bay 86, ran on board Pok's Demise, sealed the personnel and cargo hatches and punched it. She was out even before the bounty hunters could get off a shot.

Of course, in those rushed takeoffs, there wasn't really time to run a full diagnostic check on the ship's systems. Platt found out that two minutes later, when her maneuverability jets cut out. Then her ion drives. Then the main generator. No doubt her shield generators were a mound of slag right now. The nearest uncontrolled landing area was a few kilometers below: the Dune Sea. Platt did her best to angle the ship for a smooth crash. At least she didn't feel too banged up.

Platt looks out the viewport. The sand completely covers it. "Well, if I have to wait out the storm, I might as well check out what's left of my ship," she sighs. There isn't much. The ventral gun mount was torn off during the crash. The underbelly sensors are gone. Sand has filled the forward maintenance crawlyways. The cabins are a mess. Bee-Zerobee hasn't been secured; his remains are scattered all over the main corridor. So much for the droid. He had suffered enough.

Platt expects to find her cargo bay smeared with glaze cakes, the almost worthless cargo Sovar has stuck her with. Flashing the glow rod over the bulkhead, she can't find even the smallest morsel of glaze. The containers are still secured in their webbing, but something has gnawed the top web straps away. The crate lids have been unlatched and tossed off. Platt looks inside one and sniffs around. She smells glaze cake and something else... something animal.

Platt hears scratching noises in a maintenance duct beneath the deck plates. Pipes clatter in the aft engineering station. Somebody is crawling around there. Platt has run into sneaky shipjackers or stowaways before, but none could ever eat all those glaze cakes and manage to smell as bad as the crates do now.

She cautiously approaches the hatch to the aft engineering station. Platt takes the glow rod with her other hand and draws her blaster. With a swift kick, her foot connects with the hatch's controls. The metal door whines as it slowly opens. Platt flashes the glow rod and peers inside. Two large thumper feet pummel her to the deck. Several creatures with snouts pound over Platt. Some have nastily pointed horns. They skitter over her and off into some other part of the ship.

Platt pulls herself off the deck, cursing. Pok's Demise has scavengers, vermin from Mos Eisley. She shines the glow rod into the engineering bay. Bits of machinery and starship parts are everywhere. The ion coil exchangers have been pulled into lots of little pieces. And two power coupling sheaths are gnawed straight through. The creatures have picked and pulled apart important components of almost every system.

Platt must have picked up the scavengers when Sovar came by to take her for that drink at the cantina: She had left her freighter's cargo hatch open. "Well, there's not much I can do about it now," Platt says to nobody in particular. "The best I can do is sell this old heap to the Jawas for scrap."
Platt jumps back in surprise as five scurriers pop out of the open hatch and race off into the desert. The pesky scavengers must be seeking out the nearest food source—garbage. Trash means there must be some kind of civilization around here. Platt kneels down and digs through her pack for the macrobinoculars. She climbs the nearest dune and focuses the macros, trying to track the scurriers.

There they are, already about a kilometer out, if her macrobinoculars’ range readouts are correct. The numbers suddenly read four meters as a massive blur rises in her macros’ viewscreen. A gigantic head and long neck burst out of the sand. Platt drops the macrobinoculars and stumbles backward in fear. She doesn’t care if it’s a sandworm, krayt dragon or worse. Platt just scrambles to clear her blaster of its holster. She’s about to whirl and shoot whatever it is, when a warm snout playfully nuzzles her hair.

Platt looks up to see a ronto with an innocent smile on its snout. Its sand-flaps dangle from the back of its head. The beast coos as it rubs her hair again. “Hey, stop it,” says Platt, gently pushing the ronto away. She gets up and dusts herself off. Platt notices a set of reins dangling from the animal’s snout and a squarish saddle strapped to its back. She reaches up to scratch the ronto’s neck. It bends down and licks her face. “Hey there, big fellah. Where’s your rider? Poor creature, you must have been stuck out here during the gravel storm. I guess those sand-flaps helped protect you. Sometimes I wish I could curl up and wait out a sandstorm.”

The ronto just affectionately rubs its snout against Platt’s hair.

Platt slings her backpack over one shoulder and approaches the ronto’s saddle. There are no ropes or harnesses to climb. Turning its long neck to stare at her, the ronto knowingly kneels down on the sand. Platt grabs the saddle, steps onto the ronto’s bent leg and swings herself up.

Settling into the awkward saddle, she pats the creature’s neck. “Good fellah. Now, can you take me home?” The ronto looks back at her quizzically. “You know, home,” says Platt insistently. “Food, water, civilization? Hello...” she says, patting its head. “Is there anything clicking in that tiny brain of yours? Look, fel-

lakah, if I don’t find civilization, I can’t hop a transport back to Mos Eisley. If I make it that far, I have to find a new starship with bounty hunters all over my tail. But I’m not going anywhere unless you start walking. Get it?”

The ronto cranes its neck back and nuzzles her hair once more. “Look, you can mess up my hair as much as you want when we reach a settlement, okay?” Platt isn’t sure if the creature understands. Maybe it does, maybe it doesn’t. Maybe it just feels like moving on. Anyway, the beast abruptly stands up and begins stomping off over the sand, following the same path the scurriers had moments before. Platt sighs. She pats the ronto’s neck. “Good fellah.” 😊

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**SCURRIER**

**TYPE:** Scavenger

**DEXTERITY 3D** - Running 4D, Perception 2D+2 - Sneak 3D+2, Strength 2D+1 - Climbing/jumping 3D+2.

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** BITE: Does STR damage. HORNS (males only): Do STR+1 damage. MANIPULATION: Scurriers’ forepaws can manipulate small objects and pick apart machinery as if they had a repair skill of 4D.

**MOVE:** 15

**SIZE:** Up to 1.2 meters long

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**RONTO**

**TYPE:** Beast of burden

**DEXTERITY 2D** - Running 3D, Perception 3D, Strength 5D - Stamina 60.

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** HEAT ENDURANCE: Rontos are extremely adaptable to desert conditions, though they still need water to survive. SENSE OF SMELL: Rontos have a keen sense of smell. They add +1D to any PERCEPTION roll involving smell. SKITTISH: Rontos are easily upset by any machines that move significantly faster than they do. Add +3D to their ORNERINESS when around fast-moving vehicles.

**MOVE:** 10

**SIZE:** 4.25 meters tall

**ORNERINESS:** 10