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For the first time all evening Owen Lars looked thoughtful as well as concerned as he gazed down the passage Luke had taken. "That ' s what I ' m afraid of," he whispered. Luke had gone topside. He stood on the sand watching the double sunset as first one and then the other of Tatooine ' s twin suns sank slowly behind the distant range of dunes. In the fading light the sands turned gold, russet, and flaming red-orange before advancing night put the bright colors to sleep for another day. Soon, for the first time, those sands would blossom with food plants. This former wasteland would see an eruption of green. The thought ought to have sent a thrill of anticipation through Luke. He should have been as flushed with excitement as his uncle was whenever he described the coming harvest. Instead, Luke felt nothing but a vast indifferent emptiness. Not even the prospect of having a lot of money for the first time in his life excited him. What was there to do with money in Anchorhead anywhere on Tatooine, for that matter? Part of him, an increasingly large part, was growing more and more restless at remaining unfulfilled. This was not an uncommon feeling in youths his age, but for reasons Luke did not understand it was much stronger in him than in any of his friends. As the night cold came creeping over the sand and up his legs, he brushed the grit from his trousers and descended into the garage. Maybe working on the ' droids would bury some of the remorse a

little deeper in his mind. A quick survey of the chamber showed no movement. Neither of the new machines was in sight. Frowning slightly, Luke took a small control box from his belt and activated a couple of switches set into the plastic. A low hum came from the box. The caller produced the taller of the two robots, Threepio. In fact, he gave a yell of surprise as he jumped up behind the skyhopper. Luke started toward him, openly puzzled. "What are you hiding back there for?" The robot came stumbling around the prow of the craft, his attitude one of desperation. It occurred to Luke then that despite his activating the caller, the Artoo unit was still nowhere to be seen. The reason for his absence or something related to it came pouring unbidden from Threepio. "It wasn't my fault," the robot begged frantically. "Please don't deactivate me! I told him not to go, but he's faulty. He must be malfunctioning. Something has totally boiled his logic circuits. He kept babbling on about some sort of mission, sir. I never heard a robot with delusions of grandeur before. Such things shouldn't even be within the cogitative theory units of one that's as basic as an Artoo unit, and..." "You mean...?" Luke started to gape. "Yes, sir...he's gone." "And I removed his restraining coupling myself," Luke muttered slowly. Already he could visualize his uncle's face. The last of their savings tied up in these droids, he had said. Racing out of the garage, Luke hunted for non-existent reasons why the Artoo unit should go berserk. Threepio followed on his heels. From a small ridge which formed the highest point close by the homestead, Luke had a panoramic view of the surrounding desert. Bringing out the precious macrobinoculars,

he scanned the rapidly darkening horizons for something small,
metallic, three-legged, and out of its mechanical mind. 100Test 下载
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