

We completed a round trip between our hunting grounds and the connection point just in time for the stables to finish converting the first batch of machine carcasses into our mounts. It had taken a few hours for us to walk to our hunting grounds, target and kill a group of [watchers](#), and then drag them to the cliff face before rolling them down.

A few bits were snapped off by the fall, but we quickly wrangled them together and started the long walk back, dragging the corpses on our crude wooden sleds. When we got back to the connection point, we dropped all eight of the metal husks into the four empty stables before making our way out. I did not want to be inside when whatever entity-driven magic was set up to activate went off. Watching them work had already proven to have some weird effects on our minds, I did not want to tempt fate.

While we waited for the final countdown, I had my soldiers gathering medicinal herbs to bring back with us to HQ. We could stuff a bunch into the transfer box, and they counted for a good number of medical resource points, so it was well worth the effort.

Finally, the stables activated, a green glow emanating from inside them. Johnson and I shared a look before rushing inside. Carlos, who had been with me, was sent out to get everyone who had been walking around the forest, while Johnson and I stepped into the stable, both of us stopping and staring.

"That... is not what I expected," Johnson admitted, and I nodded in agreement.

"Well... it might be weird to us, but whole civilizations prospered on their backs..." I pointed out, scratching my head. "I'm sure they are a great way to get around?"

"Sure, still gonna get a lot of weird looks."

"Pretty sure that was a given."

I stepped forward, looking into the stable space. Two of the small cubicles, which previously held two metal corpses each, now held our mounts. Both of them were kneeling on the ground, as if they were resting there. They were still massive, the tops of their heads looking up and over the short wall facing the hall of the stable.

"[Is that a camel](#)?" Joseph asked, stopping beside Johnson. "Our mounts are robotic camels?"

"Appears so," I confirmed, opening up the stable door and stepping inside so I could get a better look.

The camel zoomorphs were big, but lacked any obvious armaments, ranged or physical. They were overall more... contained than most zoomorphs, with plates, wire coverings, and woven barriers covering almost all of their bodies. Even its legs were well made and protected, potentially because in its "native" environment, it would have to contend with fine sand, a death knell for most sensitive moving parts.

Four thick tubes connected its head to its body, and I could follow them with my eyes all the way back to its large reservoir along its back, which was built in as its hump. Along the back were two cylinders connected directly to its body, though I had no idea what they contained. Ahead of its hump was a smooth area that would probably be a good place to sit, assuming we could get saddles for them.

I walked around the mount, inspecting and peaking at it, before putting my hand on its back. It took some poking and prodding, along with progressively simpler commands, but eventually the camel stood, allowing us to get a good look at its extended legs. While at a distance they seemed thin and spindly, up close, I could see they were quite robust, significantly denser than standard zoomorph appendages. These were clearly well-designed, and I was relatively certain they would carry the robot, a passenger, and a good amount of goods.

"Sir, we found the upgrade tablet," Carlos said, stepping into the enclosed area and handing me said tablet.

I nodded and accepted the upgrade tool, scanning through all of the upgrades available for the mounts. There were quite a few, including attachments, cosmetics for them to wear, and upgrades to their actual bodies. Considering I had a good chunk of caps, I managed to buy four overall upgrades for all of the mounts, both for the two we had and any we made in the future.

The first was to improve the quality of the control programming. This would make them easier to ride and easier to control, allowing them to respond to verbal commands without poking and prodding them into action. It was described as a quality-of-life upgrade, but being able to easily maneuver them with less experience could prove vital in a life-or-death situation.

After that, I also purchased the simple and advanced tacking, which were two different purchases. The first included a simple setup of reins, strapped to the head of the camel robot, as well as a saddle and small saddle bags. The second purchase made the saddle more comfortable, expanded the saddlebags, and included a plethora of anchor points and straps for bags or whatever else we wanted to tie onto their backs.

The final purchase was an increase in durability. It did not make them invincible, but it should make them less likely to collapse and refuse to move after just a few light attacks. Considering there was a significant chance we would be forced to fight from on top of them, making them at least bullet-resistant was worth the caps. I would likely eventually buy the second level of that upgrade, and maybe even the third if the system provided one.

With my funds back down to zero, or at least close, I couldn't buy anything else, but I did make note of a few more upgrades I was interested in, including the ability to buy a cart attachment for them, as well as increasing their strength. Increasing their speed was also a possibility, and would likely end up getting purchased more than once, assuming there was an option for it.

When I was done spending caps on them, predominantly because we were now almost completely broke, with only one hundred and fifteen caps remaining, we quickly set their tack

up. It was a relatively intuitive design, and the tack also came with basic instructions. We then guided the camels outside and began the trip back to the hunting ground.

We needed eight more corpses to finally fill the remaining empty stable cubicles, and having the camels help only made sense and was likely good experience for later.

The second trip took considerably less time and was easier, with the camels pulling two sleds on their own, each with two metal carcasses on board. We made excellent time, and when we were finished stuffing the husks into the empty cubicles, the sun was just starting to set. I ended up calling it an early day, so that we could recover from a long day of dragging along the husks.

The following day, we spent most of it working with the camels, getting familiar with how to guide, ride, load them up, and just basically deal with them in general. We stuck to the Fallout world this time, entering the stables in the early morning to find four of the large mounts completed. I was tempted to run experiments on the seemingly physics-breaking link between the Fallout stables and the Horizon stables, but I resisted the urge to play with the fabric of reality. Instead, we put on their tack and took turns riding them around the HQ.

Riding on the back of a large, robotic camel was surprisingly easy. I had ridden a few horses before, though I was far from what anyone would consider an expert, but I knew enough to feel that the camel was considerably different. The swaying cant they had as they moved was more exaggerated, and if you were caught off guard leaning the wrong way, it could really throw you around. That said, the ride wasn't uncomfortable. And they easily went at least twice as fast as a person without pushing, which meant we could easily cut the trip to Rivet City in half.

When I was first purchasing the camels, I was concerned about things like fuel or charge, but they apparently didn't need either of those, and instead ran on a timer of all things. They could travel for fourteen hours a day, but then needed ten to enter a "recharge" state. I was baffled that the entities had just handed over such a lenient way to travel, but I realized that they would be rather useless if I couldn't use them outside of a certain range around the HQ.

Not to mention how difficult it would have been to secure a stable source of fuel. Hypothetically, they could have added it in as just another material for me to unlock and start producing, but that wouldn't have been much better. Having a time restriction on usage limited them in some way, without making them pointless, or a constant money sink.

Eventually, we called it a day, as everyone got at least some time riding the camels. We even had a chance to practice moving in large groups, as eventually the third batch of mounts was finished, giving us a total of eight.

The following day, the third and final batch was completed, and again, we spent the morning practicing. I wanted the travel team to have a solid understanding of riding before we left the safety of our walls.

We also decided who would stay behind, with Joseph taking the lead and Andrew and Stewart volunteering to stay back, while Johnson selected three from his group. Originally, I had

mentioned only four staying behind, and I honestly would have preferred that number, but we were limited by the number of camels we had.

We spent most of the afternoon preparing to leave, printing out and packing up our goods, including eight bags of guns, three more of ammo, as well as four bags of medical supplies. It looked like a lot all piled together, but distributed among twelve camels, it seemed significantly less.

Of course, that's not all we needed to bring. We also needed water and food, both of which would take a considerable amount of weight. In fact, it was enough that we needed to have a serious talk about what we would be doing about it. It was Carlos who came up with a solution.

"We should focus on bringing enough water, even if we have to go a bit light," he suggested. "We can buy a bit more at Rivet City, where they will likely have a source of clean water, even if we have to spend a few hundred caps to get access to it."

"Are you suggesting we starve ourselves?" I asked with a raised eyebrow.

"Hell no, I'm suggesting we scavenge," He said. "If we travel fourteen hours a day, the camels have to recharge for ten. We need to sleep for eight hours, so while some people focus on setting up camp, others can search the surrounding area for food. Sure, we might go light, but it should be enough to reach Rivet City and get back."

"And what about radiation?" I asked with a frown. "Most of the food here is contaminated at least a little."

"We have clear evidence radiation here doesn't work like it does in other places," he pointed out. "If it did, nobody here would live past twenty, and everyone would be bald. Hell, they would all look like ghouls. They are obviously successfully treating themselves. When we get back, we can take some Radaway and deal with the side effects."

I let out a long breath, considering what he was saying. Being able to pack a bit lighter would likely significantly speed up our trip and drastically increase our range for other missions. On top of that, he was right, we did have clear evidence that radiation here was fundamentally different from what I knew from my original life. It was my fear of that original concept that was holding me back. We would likely need to deal with it eventually, but we had been shockingly lucky with the lack of radiation around the HQ.

"Fine, but with one caveat. We keep non-HQ food to a minimum until we reach Rivet City. There are scientists there who we can pay to explain the difference to us, and we can frame it as the home-based scientists not being able to find information on how Radaway and RadX work. Beyond that, we can pretend to just be curious. If it's truly something we can just fix with some Radaway, then we can lighten the restrictions even further."

With a reasonable plan for hauling our food and water set up, we got back to work. When everything was packed, Johnson, Carlos, Joseph, and I all sat down, with anyone else

who wanted to listen in sitting around the main hall. We would be traveling quite a distance starting the following day, and we needed a game plan.

"So, there are a lot of things we could run into on the way there," I explained. "A few raider bases, and a few other points of interest. It's also likely that we will run into Super Mutants."

"Big green fuckers you keep mentioning?" Johnson asked. "You think we can beat them?"

"In small groups? Yes. If the numbers are even, or god forbid, they outnumber us, I do not know," I admitted. "If we run into a group of more than eight or nine, I will likely be calling a retreat. We also have to look out for ghouls hordes, as I've been told they exist inside and around the city, and we will be doing some portion of this trip close to the city limits."

"Not going to be easy, even with the robo-camels," Johnson said, pausing to shake his head. "God damn, what kind of crazy shit is this, gonna ride robo camels across blown out DC."

"Worse ways to spend a week," I said with a smirk.

"Ha! You're god damn right!" he said, laughing loudly. "Always ready to check something off my bucket list. Even if I have to add it on to the list first."

We spent the rest of the day and the afternoon going over the various threats we might face. One of the few big points I brought up was that I wanted to do our best to avoid going near the Brotherhood of Steel. This was one of the friendlier chapters, but even that would only go so far when presented with advanced robotics like the camels. I wanted more time before we shook hands with them, more time to establish ourselves and settle in.

"Unfortunately, there is no way to know what else we could run into," I admitted with a frown. "I can predict most of the major things, but this world has proven to be too different from the game I played, enough that relying on just what I know is dangerous. We need to be prepared for everything."

"Is our go-to plan just to retreat?" Carlos asked.

"No, we can push through some threats," I admitted. "But sitting on top of a camel is far from the optimal place to engage dangerous enemies from. A tactical retreat, followed by strategic moves to flank or circumnavigate, would likely make things easier."

"And what about loot?" Joseph asked. "Are you going to just leave anything valuable you see behind?"

"Anything valuable we want to sell could be added to our wares," I countered. "If there are things we don't wish to add, we will form hidden caches along the path for us to recover on the way back."

We continued discussing the trip for a while longer before heading to bed early. I wanted to get going as early as possible the following morning, so getting as much sleep as we could now was important.