

The Marauder

By Nat Kalish

“Stop! In the name of the law!”

Tragic. Had I known this town’s sheriff was a centaur, I would’ve been a little more careful about showing off my weapon in the middle of the square. It’s a real state of the art piece of equipment by the way. A rifle. I designed it myself, with some help from The Mechanic. Unfortunately, a weapon like this is Illegal. My bad.

Anyway, running should be happening. I should be running.

I whistle loudly. As my ostrich comes running toward me, I grab onto the saddle and swing myself on top. The centaur is close behind. I duck as a bullet flies over my head. I weave between buildings, using my mount’s smaller size to my advantage until I get to the edge of town. It’s just desert out there, but I pat my ostrich keep running. I look behind me through the haze and my own sweat to see the town getting smaller. I see the centaur, but he’s just standing at the edge of town. Thank god. I must be past his jurisdiction. I face back front and suddenly BOOM! The sand right next to me erupts, leaving a massive crater. I whip my head around again.

“God damn it!”

The centaur has a mounted canon.

He’s reloading. I don’t know what to do. There’s nowhere to hide out here. He missed me the first time, but I can’t bet on that again.

“God *damn* it!”

I turn fully around in my saddle. Riding backwards now, I bring my rifle up to my eye. I see the centaur through the scope. I wonder if he has any kids. I pull the trigger.

I turn back around and rest my head against my ostrich's neck as she runs.

"Let's go see The Mechanic," I say before I close my eyes.

When I open them again, they are met with a refined looking man in a top hat, equipped with goggles and two belts of bullets draped across each shoulder. The Mechanic.

"Get down from there," he says in a gruff voice.

I'm still slumped on my ostrich. I slide off, landing on the dry earth. The Mechanic looks me up and down, sternly. I look at the ground.

"You grew your hair out," he says.

Before I can respond, he steps forward and hugs me. I put my head on his chest.

"Now tell me," He says with a smile, "What trouble have you gotten yourself into this time?"