

CHAPTER I THE RISE OF A MONSTER

I rise up as quickly as physically possible, grasping my chest in my left hand as I gasp in my first breath of air. It feels like a hot knife had been driven into the center of my temple and my head starts throbbing with a migraine. *What is wrong with my eyes?* I can't even open them; the light that shined intensely from wherever I am pierced through my eyelids. The after burn from lying on an ice cold slab tingles in my back. I swing my legs over whatever it is that I was laying on and reached around for something to help me walk. I feel many wires pulling at my skin as I try to get off the slab. I reach down with both hands and tear out the wires and needles from my body and howl in pain. There is one more attached to the back of my skull. I reach back and feel a much larger wire pulling my head back. I take a deep breath and slowly pull the wire out of my skull as I bite down hard on my lip from the pain. I give it one last yank and a stud as long as my index finger rips out of the back of my skull and it nearly takes the breath out of me. I reach out to grab the edge of what I think is some type of chair. I push my weight onto it, but it quickly slides from under me and my face hits the floor, knocking over a bunch of beeping equipment around the slab that was connected to the wires. I lay there for a moment and I try to think, pain all over. Some kind of liquid oozes out of something I knocked over and slowly found its way to my face. Wait a minute; I have no

memory. Where am I? *What* am I? I try to get my eyes to open and focus. That's it; just a moment more and I may be able to use my eyes.

As I'm trying to get my eyes to work, I flip over onto my back and began to run the tips of my fingers up and down my body to study texture. Am I a boy or a girl? I reach down. Well I'm definitely a male. In all of my confusion and worry, a strange pinch of pride runs through my body; *very nice*, I thought to myself. I run my fingertips up and down my torso again but this time much slower to observe texture better. I'm not wearing any clothes. My skin feels rough and cold. Everything seems to be in working condition except my eyes. I strain again to move them. I can finally make out shapes and lights through the blur. As my eye site finally gains focus I look over to where I once lay and I feel a little anxious as I realize that it's a cadaver slab. A little more in a panic I sit up once again this time on the ground and look down at my body. My body...it's all stitched up. My head slightly aches from hitting the ground as hard as I did. I'm so confused; I don't look human. I have human features and muscle structure. I reach up to touch my face. I slowly run it up my jaw bone, then slowly up to my cheek bone. It feels like an average human skull. I open my mouth to see what I have for crunch-ware. Wait...not crunch-ware...what are those called...teeth. I feel two very sharp canine fangs on top, but the rest feel like normal teeth. I look up a little where my head once rested on the cadaver bed and I

see a reflective surface hanging on the wall next to it. A mirror! I become so excited that I stand straight up and nearly trip as I dashed towards it. I'm still a little out of it, but I made it to the mirror.

Oh my. I take a step back in shock at what I see in the mirror. Then, filled with horror, I crept up a little closer to check out the fine print. I pry my mouth open a bit to look at the inside of my mouth. I have many teeth and just as I had thought, my two canines were large and I had a long, purple tongue. I have dark blue skin, almost metallic, or glossy and an almost turquoise hue from the light reflecting off my skin. I have a normal looking nose, but my eyes...my eyes are quite large. Vibrant, piercing neon green eyes and they almost look like they glow. My neck as well is stitched up. I reach out to tap the mirror to then reveal my long, black nails that I hadn't noticed before. I slowly run my hand down the mirror and create a high pitch screech as I drag my nail down the mirror, leaving a deep cut in its surface. I feel a little sick to my stomach as I register that at sometime in the past I didn't have a head; perhaps a different head? Taking this all in started to make me light headed. My stomach turns some more as I become overwhelmed with all of this.

I reach up and run my fingers through my long, black hair that reached to the middle of my back. As I run my hands towards the back of my head, I stumble upon something sprouting from the

back of it. Again, my stomach jumps in its place. What is coming out of the back of my head? I pull my hair aside and turn slightly to the left as I see a long, third arm looking device zigzagging its way out from my skull. On the very end there is a sphere. Is there a damn antennae sprouting from my cranium? I step back from the mirror; it's all too much for me. I feel sick and overwhelmed. Even at this very moment, I'm pondering how I know how to even think, or speak any language or use basic logic. I sit down on the end of the cadaver bed once more and stare into space. I think I'm slightly in shock. Everything kind of tunneled out and I become unresponsive.

I think I'm ok now. I don't know how long it's been, but I seemed to of spaced out for quite some time. Is time even relevant where I am? I then think about that for a minute, then shake my head to snap out of it, then roll my head down into my arms and feel a heavy wave of sadness come over me. It just occurred to me; I don't know who I am. I don't know where I come from, or why I'm even here. All I know is that I look like a monster and someone at some point in time put me together. The only thoughts that I had left were; what was the motive behind all this? Was I assembled just for hobby? Do I even have a purpose? As I continue to bury myself in misery, I tilted my head up to the roof and stare at it. It's a very tall ceiling, about sixty feet high. The sound of water drops falling far into a puddle in the middle of the room, which then found its way in

the crevice of the side of the wall where it was clear to me that the floor is slightly leaned and off balance. *Interesting.* I just realized that I've been so into observing myself that I haven't even taken a look around. I take my attention across the floor which is made up of old waterlogged wood of sort. I then take my focus up the walls, where I am overwhelmed by the mass amounts of highly stacked books, gadgets, doo-dads, tools, and scraps from mechanical pieces and parts. A spider slowly comes down from a massive spider web that looked very intricate, which hung from the lower part of the ceiling. It looked like it could catch your fall if you fell from the very top. The spider was rather large, probably as big as my clenched fist.

As I continue to look around, I notice a small red light blipping on and off behind some books and junk. I take to the floor and walk over to it. The wood was cool under my feet and loud cracks and squeaks from the old wood were made with every step. The red light had full hold of my curiosity. *Odd;* the light didn't seem to catch my attention before. Maybe it was because I was still in shock from all of this. I throw the books aside as well as the rest of the junk. To my surprise there seems to be a computer device. On the monitor was a disk that was labeled, "*watch me.*" My heart raced and I became so excited that I grabbed the disk as quickly as I could with both hands and scoped the device out for somewhere to fit it, nearly slipping on the puddle on the floor caused by the leak in the ceiling. After pushing a bunch of buttons I finally found one that

opened up the device, where there was a slot that ejected and looked like it would fit perfectly. I stuck it in and shut it, waiting eagerly for something to happen. For a moment all I could see was my figure in the black screen and my face, which looked so hungry for answers.

The monitor then blipped on and showed nothing but white noise for a minute. Right before I nearly destroyed it in total frustration, it changed. My eyes became glued to the screen for I didn't want to miss a single noise. I was so enticed that I had to even remember to breathe.

It was black, and then a man walked into screen from the darkness. He wore a long, white lab coat with big black buttons that ran from the collar down. He was a middle aged fellow. He had long, withering grayish hair in the back and was completely bald in the front, and very polished looking. His face was long and his chin very thin and pointy. Big, shiny goggles covered his eyes, and the wrinkles in his forehead represented that he was at ease. He looked so miraculous and mad, but he had a long wide smile and he looked soft and caring. Finally, he cleared his throat and spoke in such a soft way.

“Hello there. You are probably wondering where you are. In fact, your probably wondering *who* you are, *why* you're here; many things are running through that ticking mind of yours. I apologize for such an overwhelming display of birth. Allow me to explain, but

before I do I must properly introduce myself. I am Professor Tinkarius, mastermind in all levels of Biology, Mechanics, and Alchemy. You, my gifted child-your name is Darkus,”

“Darkus,” I said out loud. It just came out, probably in relief as to at least knowing my name.

“Yes,” he replied, “your name is Darkus.”

Wait a minute, is this live?

“Can you understand me?” I said eagerly.

He continued, completely ignoring my question.

“You are a creation of mine-no, a *masterpiece*. I invented you. You are the very first of your kind. You see, I am the first to create synthetic life. I’ve mastered all types of life, through all kinds of science and magic, infusing them together for unseen and extraordinary formulas. But *you* are the first to be successfully infused with all three; Biological, alchemical, and mechanical parts. Your outer flesh is real flesh, and deep inside your core are strong bones that are purely mechanical, making you very indestructible, also a fierce line of defense. They are made of the hardest metals

throughout the lands. Now to keep that all together takes some very potent, ancient alchemy. The three formulated properly together has made you one *hell* of a monster.

Now, why would I make such living creatures for lines of defenses, you're probably wondering? You have most likely not stepped outside yet. This is a good thing. You see, you were born in a world full of much bigger, darker, hungrier creatures as yourself. Have you looked into the mirror yet? Though you may be a monster, you are of lifted heart and spirit, metaphorically of course. You may not have a soul but you represent the very meaning and are well conditioned in morality. There are monsters outside that door that can take souls from the living and use them against you or merely feed on them, killing you. You will learn that having no soul is just another way to survive out there. In your brain I gave you I have programmed the deadliest fighting techniques ever recorded, as well as everything else you know, such as thinking, language, movement, and so on. It also bares the tissue from an ancient race that hones curious and powerful techniques that you will later find to be quite useful. Lastly, your ability to charge your alchemy is higher than ever recorded. You are capable of summoning deadly amounts of ancient alchemical powers that will both be founded in a time of need or be subconsciously triggered. But beware, for triggering that

much alchemy can make you easily detectable by certain tribes out there.

Now, outside of your shelter that I left you, the world is against me and my inventions. My ideas are an abomination, and the cultures and tribes that thrive on our planet find what I do very impure and disturbing; so disturbing that they have banned me and anyone else to do anything as such ever again including those close to me, but I find their ignorance wrongly accused and misguided. Of all the horror and fear out there, they fear my work the most. I still to this day don't understand it, but I believe deeply in my work and I refuse to stop. So they've all decided to *kill* me. That's right; they want to murder me for creating you. Though you may be the only one with such remarkable infusions, there are many other creations out there that know that I am their creator and will do whatever they must to protect them, their comrades and I. Now I lie in hiding while I travel from location to location creating your monster brethren. You must find your allies and rid of the evil in this wretched planet. They will be easy to find once you see them. Each creation bares The Mark of Tinkarius, which is a swirly, twirling shape that comes out of each of my monsters left eye in a holographic form. It's only visible to other creations of mine for stealth purposes. Only you and the others can see it. I'm counting on you Darkus. You will be the one that conquers. You are and always will be my masterpiece. Be safe Darkus, and watch your every move. They will be watching.

Oh, and one more thing. This is most dire so you must listen. You still have mechanical parts in your system. Meaning, you must find fuel. This is your one and only defect. There is a very dangerous breed of plant life called a Creeple Tree. These plants are very hostile and look like any other ordinary tree but feed on flesh. You must destroy one and drink the sap that it contains. This sap acts as machine oil to your system. Now, you only have to drink it if you find yourself trying to recover from a battle. The sap will act as a powerful elixir to you and you will be full of strength once again. Go without, and you could eventually shut down. The signs of a low amount of Creeple Tree sap will be ridged, stiff movement, which will soon turn to paralysis, and then lastly your system will completely shut down until more of the sap is digested. This is why it's very important that you find one of the allies that I've made for you. Do not try to locate me for it could endanger you, me and our whole operation. Besides, I am a mastermind at hiding; all of the best hunters have failed to find me. It is your job to focus on the mission, for that is all you need to know. Good luck Darkus. It's a twisted world out there."

The monitor starts to fade out. I grab it and hold my face close, "Wait! Where are you?" I pleaded. But it was too late. My creator was gone. I throw the monitor into the wall in a fit of rage, and it falls to pieces. How can this be? Why would they want to kill

my creator? Why were the creatures outside so ignorant and so selfish? *Curious*; just a second ago I knew nothing about anything, now I know all and I call Professor Tinkarius '*My Creator*' like some type of father figure. But he was; he gave me life and in an odd way, I was thankful to be alive because this humanoid follows his heart. It was quite admirable. But I'm far from pleased; he may be able to get his other creations out to the battlefield, but I want more than that. I want to know where he is, I have plenty more questions to ask. I want to know more about me, this world, and these beings that resent my creator and how I could possibly assist in any way other than fighting. I want to know more about what makes me tick, other than this Creeple Tree sap, which sounds like quite the pain in my ass. Hopefully I won't have to run into any of those anytime soon.

I rummaged the building from where I was created for anything I may need. I gathered some clothing, a couple small pouches that I tied to my trousers, an odd shaped pistol of a sort with little amounts of bullets, some books about Alchemy, Biology and Mechanics, and a diary of my creators that I found. I walked to the door and grabbed the chilled door handle and turned it slowly, but before I opened it I looked back at the cadaver table, the room that I learned and grew so much in such little time, and even admired the massive net-like spider web and its owner one last time, turned the door knob, opened it, and entered the vast, dark, hungry world that my creator spoke about, shut the door, and never looked back.

There was a chilly, agitated wind blowing. I looked out far in the distance and there were nothing but miles of grey grass and some hills. The shelter I came out of grew distant in sight as I walked slowly down the hill it sat on, where a couple trees sat clustered together. I stopped and looked around. All was silent, except for the sound of the wind whistling through the trees. I looked up into the sky and it was twilight. Dark oranges and purples shimmered in the distance, piercing through the darkness. For a world so dark and angry, it was beautiful. The grass crunched under my feet and the smell of the trees stayed with me for a little bit until I was far from my shelter.

I reached a massive meadow that was flat and lifeless. I couldn't help but to feel like I was suddenly being watched. Perhaps it was because I was out in an open field and I felt exposed. *Maybe I should find some woods.* My creator did say they were watching, and everything was out to get me. But how would they know what I am? They can't see my stealth hologram unless they are an ally so perhaps I have nothing to fear. Or maybe they could smell me? Or maybe they saw me come out of the shelter? I started getting a little paranoid so I walked to the edge of the field where there were plenty of trees.

I made it into the woods, slowly entered and gave a look around. The sound of the wind grew quiet as it beat against the

branches that were exposed towards the meadow. I stepped on a branch and it cracked and nearly startled the crud out of me. The crack echoed loud throughout the woods. Just great, if anything were out there they know I'm here now. *Way to go Darkus, real genius work.* I stood still for a few minutes hoping it would direct possible listeners elsewhere and continued to walk, this time more careful of where I walked. I have not a clue as to why I'm heading the way I am; I have no idea where to go, no lead whatsoever. All I have is a massive world full of haters and a hunch. But at least I know I'm a bit safer in the woods.

As I continue my way through the forest I came across an opening. I must have been walking for quite some time. It felt like I was in auto-pilot. *Just keep walking,* I told myself. But as I walked closer to the opening I could hear loud, violent sounds. Massive thud sounds, yelling, roaring. Something told me that I probably shouldn't go that way, but I couldn't help but to be ruled by my curiosity. I focused in on the loud noises cautiously, moving closer and closer.

Whack!

I hit the ground harder than I did when I fell from the cadaver table at the shelter. My face was now bleeding and I was a bit out of it from the surprise of blunt force to the back of my head. I got up

and looked around. Nothing. I felt a rage within and all I wanted was to rip apart whatever hit me.

“Show yourself, you coward!”

Whack!

I was sent hurtling into a tree upside down, this time the attack was to my back. The force knocked the wind out of me and I felt long, dry twigs become tight around my ankles. The twigs pulled at me and held me upside down. From what I could see I was staring at an upside down face in the tree. *This must be a Creeple Tree*, I thought. It shook me around for a minute then lifted me above itself as it contorted its whole upper part of its stalk back like someone lifting their head back with their mouth wide open, cracking and shattering the sides of its mouth to open it wide. It was going to eat me!

I reached for my pistol but it slipped from my trousers and right into the Creeple Tree’s mouth. It lowered me down to its mouth as I reached for the branches that were holding me by the ankles. I grabbed one of them, snapping it from my ankle. It shrieked in pain and I hung from the one branch, but then it threw me out of its grasp. I flew in the air and landed in the branches of another tree.

Right when I was about to think I was safe the tree I landed in started shifting and animating to life. Its face appeared beside me and the branches I landed in started turning into ridged, cracking arms and hands. Before it could get a bite out of me I grabbed its upper jaw and with surprising force I lifted my arms above my head and pulled its jaw wide open and started ripping it from the corners of its large mouth. It shrieked in pain as it tried to resist until both sides of its mouth tore all the way around its back and met. The tree's top tumbled to the ground. I still hung in the branches of its lower stump and watched the tree's upper half twitch and die as its last breath was given, and just like that it stopped moving and turned back into a normal looking tree once more. The other Creeple Tree reached for me as I tried to climb my way down the stump of the deceased Creeple Tree. I broke off a branch of the deceased Creeple Tree and started swinging it at the other Creeple Trees long, extending arms. The closer I got to the ground the faster its arms extended and tried to grab me.

With this new found strength I had, I decided that I would run up the tree's face and grab the top of its jaw and lift up as hard as I could to rip its top off like I did before. But it was as if it could read my mind because at this very moment it started shooting its roots up from the ground like jagged spikes my way. I ran to the nearest normal tree and started climbing it. The Creeple Tree's roots started wrapping around the tree I was climbing, much quicker than I was

climbing. My foot slipped on a branch and the roots stop climbing up. They shot down to grab my ankle and caught me in mid air, face length of the massive Creeple Tree. It shrieked into my face as loudly as possible, covering me in some kind of saliva. I took a look up to see that the Creeple Tree's root that caught me was caught around a branch from the normal tree, enabling me to pivot back and forth.

I continued rocking back and forth to build momentum so I could grab the normal tree I was climbing before, but to climb down towards the ground so I could pull the twig nice and tight. If I could pull hard enough, I could shoot upwards from the momentum, giving me only one shot at grabbing its upper jaw on the way up. Its either that or I become Creeple treats.

I sway towards the normal tree, and then swing back towards the Creeple Tree. The Creeple Tree gets ready to take a bite out of me on the way back, but I twist and lean my weight towards its side and successfully miss and start swaying back towards the normal tree. I reach out, but it barely touches my finger tips. I come back at the Creeple Tree once again, and it opens its mouth wide hoping to catch me this time but I have just that much more time to twist and swing to its side once again. This time I can feel the momentum is strong enough to get me to the other tree. I'm sent flying towards the normal tree and wrap myself around it. I got it! I start crawling down the tree as the Creeple Tree tries to pull me closer with its roots; just

what I was hoping for. If I pull down and it pulls me towards itself I will swing high up like a rubber band. I crawl as far as I can and hold onto a lower branch as the Creeple Tree pulls with all its might. Finally, the branches I was holding onto snap, and I go flying right up the Creeple Tree's face. I turned to face it, reached out for its jaw and grabbed it. The branch that snapped flew out of my hands and stuck straight into the Creeple Tree's right eye and it screams in pain. The force is just enough to crack its jaw wide, and its top is cracks sideways. I go flying into the air, and down into the top of another tree.

Crashing down through branches that barely catch my fall, I hit the ground with a good thud. The pain spreads throughout my legs, my feet and back up to my arms and head. I lay there, motionless. I'm conscious, just hard of breathing. I look up where the Creeple Tree and I once fought. A wave of relief and accomplishment tend to my wounds as I witness the Creeple tree continuing to fall backwards as it gives out its last shriek. The weight of its top is too much, and the remaining threads that held its top up crackle and give out. Its top falls to the ground with a finishing thud. I put my head back down into the ground in exhaustion, and black out.

I lift my head up. It's covered in soot. I spit it out, wipe my face off and get up to my feet; a little off balanced, but quite alright. My first victory with a Creeple Tree, and I took two of them on. I look over at the stumps that once held flesh eating trees to find my pistol lying near one of the stumps, and tons of black liquid gushing out of both of the stumps. That must be the sap my creator was talking about. I begin to walk towards the trees, but my legs won't function. The bottom of my feet become as heavy as led, and my legs are stiff as a branch. *Uh-oh*, I must have been out long enough to have the battle take advantage of my exhaustion and stiffen me up. I lift one foot like a sack of rocks and it slumps to the ground. I lift the other and the same tiring, ridged movement takes hold. This must be how the Creeple Tree's feel, quite ironic. I lift and lift as fast as I can. Closer and closer to the stumps I get. It gets harder and heavier to lift my limbs and right as I am in reach of the black substance, my legs become completely still. Stage two; paralysis; *Crud*. I bend down past my waist to reach the black substance, and its just fingertips away. I barely get the end of my middle finger covered and I reach up and stick the cold, greasy black ooze in my mouth. To my surprise, it tastes delicious. I reach down to try and get more, and after a few reaches and a few tastes, I can't reach no more.

Nothing seems to be happening with my body. It must not be enough. Drat! I look around for some assistance and I see that the pistol is just an arm stretch away. I reach as hard as I can but

nothing. At that moment a small orange ball enters my location from the opening in the distance where the loud noises were coming from. It's glowing and it looks like it's got a face of some sort. The red light illuminating from the face gets brighter and brighter. That's when I realize that it's a bomb of some sort. Before I can even react it blows up and sends me back into another tree. Exhausted and tired, my body starts climbing up to stage three; I was shutting down. I started getting tunnel vision and started blacking out. This was it. I won't ever get to see my creator, or even defend for his honor. I was supposed to be the best, but I couldn't even get out of these woods. Without this liquid I was useless.

I accepted my fate, and as I saw a bright glowing blue silhouette coming towards me in my blurred vision, I closed my eyes and entered the darkness.

