

# Scarlet: The Cave

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“How close are we to screwtape?” asked one of them, nervously.

“Oh, don’t worry,” another said. “All it is is an old helicopter crash, Screwtape’s old cave isn’t *that* close”

The three demon kids, each younger than 30, were traveling in the wasteland. They traveled in the late afternoon, because during the middle of the day, the sands were the hottest and would sometimes start to melt their cheap shoes. They reached a steep decline where the sand abruptly stopped, which gave way to death paste. They looked down and saw what used to be a large torture camp that was now destroyed and abandoned in favor of a large cave, and all that remained was the liquified essence of decaying flesh and bone, which was called death paste.

They approached the helicopter wreck. The windshield was shattered, the door was ripped off, the helicopter blades had fallen off, and some of the bulletproof metal scales had shattered completely, yet some still showed their reflection in the dimming light of the wastes. They were about ten miles away from their hometown, and it was starting to get late.

“Where’s Jack?” one of them asked. The other turned around.

“JAAAACK!!!” he called.

Jack, which was short for Jackson, was straggling about 50 feet behind his friends, Tom and Adam, hands in his pockets and looking at the sky. He looked down, saw his two friends up ahead, and started jogging toward them. When he arrived, they opened up the chopper.

Light flooded into the crashed helicopter, and dust flew out. Inside were skeletons of the demons that were in the crash. A pilot, a copilot, and 2 passengers. There was a human skeleton in the back, most likely that of a prisoner being transported to the torture camp that was now deconstructed. They took a key off of the pilot’s seat and used it to open up the chest of arms in the back of the helicopter.

Tom opened the crate, and the shotglass that sat atop it fell off and smashed into the floor into a pile of shattered glass

“Tom, be careful!” whispered Jack.

“Yeah, yeah,” replied Tom.

Inside the crate was tons of ammunition, as well as a revolver.

“That’s all?” said Adam.

“Check under the seats,” said the third one. “There might be more weapons under.”

Jack got on his hands and knees and looked under the seats. He saw something, reached under, and scraped his hand on a rusty nail. He yelped and pulled his hand out quickly.

He looked at his left hand. A cut was straight across. “What happened?”

“Cut my hand on a nail or something,” Jackson replied.

He reached back under the seat, being careful not to cut his hand again, and grabbed the stock of a 16-gauge shotgun.

“Adam, we hit the jackpot!” said Jackson, lifting up the shotgun.

They stood outside, and Tom held the shotgun. He pulled the trigger and a crunching sound was heard.

“Well DAMMIT!” he yelled and threw the shotgun on the ground.

The shotgun fired with a loud explosion, and they all jumped.

“It was jammed or something,” said Tom.

“Well, since the guns failed,” said Adam, “let's go cave exploring!”

“...what?!” said Jackson.

“Yeah,” said Tom. “We could take the revolver, and if anything decides to attack us, then we could just shoot ‘em.”

“Uh, sure, but we're close to Screwtape's cave...”

“Don't be a killjoy!” Adam said back

“Fine. Go get the revolver.” Jackson said disappointedly.

They stepped through the cave, Tom gripping the revolver tightly.

The cave was dark, big, and every footstep echoed.

Through the cavern came a noise. a dry gasp. A choking sound. Like something, or someone, dying.

“*Get the flashlight!*” Adam whispered. Jackson searched his pockets for the flashlight and pulled it out.

*Click.* The flashlight illuminated the cave. He moved the beam around until it found its way to a human, lying chest down on the floor, in a puddle of blood. The human looked up with nothing but fear in his eyes. All three of them ducked behind a boulder and silently debated.

“*What do we do?*” whispered Tom

“*I don't know! I've never seen a human before!*” Jackson said back.

“*Should I shoot it?*” asked Tom.

“*I- I'll talk to it...*” said Jackson.

Jackson stepped out from behind the boulder and began to speak to the human.

*Splat.* A large... thing stepped on the human's head, making blood gush up into the air, painting its pointed claw red, and pouring out of the mouth of the human's hollowed head, spilling onto the ground.

Jackson looked up in horror. A walker stood there, on its three legs that ended in points, and a huge body that had no mouth, nose, or even hair. All that was there was an eye, constantly fluxing in color. A spear laid on its top, used for impaling those that it wanted to transport. At least 30 bodies were piled on top of each other, only staying in place because of the spear through their bodies. Blood dripped down from the spear and spilled over the eye. But the eye still stared at Jackson. The walker leaned to one side and retracted the spear, letting the body lifelessly roll off its head into a pile. One body hit the floor with a smack. Then another, until there was a pile of them. It lowered itself to the ground and stared straight at Jackson

Its eye brought Jackson into a trance. He fell to his knees at the sounds and sights of humans being tortured, the screams. He saw the humans die and wake up again and die and wake up again and die and wake up again and die and wake up again and die and wake up again and die and...

Tom pulled Jackson behind the boulder.

"Are you ok!?"

"I... I... I don't know..." Jackson stammered

"Hey! Kids!" yelled a raspy voice.

They went silent.

"I'M TALKING TO YOU THREE BEHIND THE BOULDER!"

Tom turned his head slowly to look at Jackson and whispered,

*"I forgot where the entrance was."*

Fear shot through Jackson

*"Lost the exit? HOW!? We didn't go that far into the cave, did we?"*

Adam stepped out from behind the boulder and walked toward the man.

He seemed to be the pilot of the walker. He had a big black coat, with sleeves that were a little too long, so that it hid his gloved hands. He wore a yellow mask with a sideways smile, which was the mask that all walker pilots wore. Pilots don't *drive* the walkers, they just sit in a small cabin that is accessed by opening the eye like a door.

"You shouldn't be exploring these caves," said the pilot. "It's dangerous. I almost mistook your friend for a human. The others behind that boulder can come out now. I won't hurt you."

Jackson and Tom walked out from behind the boulder.

“So... you kids are lost?” the pilot asked

“Uuh, yeah,” Jackson said.

“Well, I can help you kids get back to the entrance.”

The pilot rolled up his sleeve and stretched out his arm to shake Tom's hand. Tom stood there, staring at his hand.

“Well, are you gonna shake or not?” barked the pilot, annoyed.

Tom grabbed the pilot's hand, but as soon as he did, the pilot put his other hand on Tom's outstretched hand and pulled as hard as he could, and Tom's arm went straight out of its socket. It made a ripping sound as his arm flew out of his arm, and blood spilled over the boulder like a stroke of paint, as the pilot tossed the arm to the floor. Tom fell to the ground and screamed. Adam stepped back, eyes wide and full of terror. He spun around and ran.

Before Adam could even run 10 feet, the Pilot shot Adam in the foot with Tom's revolver. Adam hit the floor face first and became completely unconscious, but not dead. Tom's screaming subsided to nothingness, as he took heavy, dry breaths on the ground, twitching in a puddle of blood.

Jackson stood in shock. The pilot started to walk towards him. He pulled the hammer back on the revolver. Jackson saw the pilot's eyes behind the wooden mask. A yellow circular mask with a smile, which was sideways. The eyes shone like silver dots behind his mask. The pilot pushed Jackson against the boulder

“Stay here or you're next,” he muttered, “and believe me, you **won't** survive if you move.”

Jackson sat with his back against the jagged rock, which was wet with the blood of his friend. He sat and watched Tom bleed out. He heard Adam's body drag against the floor of the cave, as his flesh scraped against the rock. The pilot laid Adam's body next to Tom's and rolled it over. Tom gave a weak smile to Jackson

“It's gonna be ok” Adam reassured him weakly.

At that instant, the walker stabbed its leg into his chest. Adam coughed up blood and died. Both his friends lay there dead. Exploring the cave was a mistake. They all knew it. They were too close to Screwtape's cave and they knew it. They had walked right into the entrance of Screwtape's torture camp.

The pilot turned to Jackson, but Jackson had other plans. He rose and ran towards the Pilot. The Pilot drew his revolver, but it was too late. Jackson tackled the Pilot. He fell, and the Pilot fired the revolver straight into the air.

Jackson was nearly deafened, but it didn't stop him from laying punch after punch onto the pilot's mask. The wood cut and bruised and splintered his hands as it broke, but he didn't stop. Not until the pilot stopped struggling did he cease. The shattered wooden mask ripped and destroyed the pilot's face. Jackson's knuckles were scarred to bare flesh and full of splinters.

A device in the pilot's neck observed that the pilot had been killed, calculated it's location, and transmitted this to the main headquarters of the torture camp:

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Jackson sat with his back on the boulder, not crying, only thinking. He was too shocked at what he had done and what the pilot had done to Tom and Adam to cry. He was only shocked.

Another pilot and 3 armed demons approached the location of the transmission. The 3 demons took cover silently, and the other pilot called out

“Hello!?” Jackson was startled. *They were here. More. they were going to kill him just as brutally as the pilot killed his friends*

“I KNOW YOU'RE HERE SOMEWHERE!!! WE KNOW WHAT YOU DID AND YOU CANNOT EVADE PUNISHMENT!!!”

The other pilot turned on a headlamp. He saw a walker, asleep. He looked down and saw that the walker's claw was lodged into a demon's stomach, and another demon lay in a puddle of blood, missing an arm. He looked to the side and saw the dead pilot lying on the ground with its shattered yellow mask. Then he saw Jackson.

“Oh no” the other pilot said, walking towards Jackson

Jackson stood up and pointed the revolver at the pilot

“DON'T COME ANY CLOSER!!!” Jackson yelled.

The pilot reached into its coat and pulled out a handgun. Jackson tightened his grip on the revolver. The pilot tossed the handgun onto the ground and took off its mask

“I'm not here to hurt you,” it said calmly “This was a misunderstanding. All we knew was that a pilot was killed and where, but I see what happened now. I'm Paul, a pilot for Screwtape. That pilot that you killed went mad from his job of transporting bodies all day and killed who I assume are your friends, correct?”

Jackson nodded.

“I don’t know why you’re down here,” Paul continued, “But right now all we need to worry about is getting you medical attention and back to your family. Would you please give me that gun and follow me?”

“Yes sir” Jackson said, and handed over the gun

“Just call me Paul please,” He responded, “And I have 3 soldiers behind here but they won't hurt you either.”

Jackson followed Paul further into the cave and through a door that was labeled **SECTOR 3 ENTRANCE**. Jackson heard many sounds too muffled to make out that he assumed were the humans being tortured here. It was awful, yes, but the demons would all be dead if they didn’t.

Paul brought Jackson to a door with a sign hung over it that said **MEDICAL BAY**.

“Listen kid,” said Paul, leaning down to reach his height. “The punishments for trespassing here and killing a pilot are extreme, and they could mean that you’ll be back here again soon, receiving what the humans are getting.” Jackson’s eyes widened. “However,” Paul continued “You can pass off the murder under self-defense, which wouldn’t mean a lifetime of torture, but won’t mean you’re innocent. You still very much shouldn’t be here.”

The pilot opened the door to the medical bay and ushered Jackson in. Inside, he got a strange look from a medic, who looked younger than Jackson, who wore a white cap with a red plus on it and was putting pill bottles away on a shelf.

“What happened here?” she asked Paul

“This kid punched a pilot to death. His hands got really messed up and are full of splinters. He’ll tell you everything. It’s not what it seems, I promise”

Paul left, and the medic got out tweezers and bandages.

“Put your hands out on the table and tell me everything that happened.” she requested, putting the bandages in a pile on the table.

As she plucked the splinters out of his knuckles, he explained what had happened in the cave. Not soon after, Paul came back into the room and led him to the headquarters. A man with headphones on spun his chair around and took off the headphones

“Why, get back to work, Paul. We’ll sort it out with Jackson.”

The man stood up and walked across the room to a phone on the wall.

“I’m gonna make some calls to get back home. Just sit in my chair and wait, and *don't touch anything*”

After about an hour, Paul lead Jackson back to the entrance of the cave  
“Get back home,” he said. “And don’t come back.”