

EXT. FOREST - DAWN

Bare as all hell. The trees stripped of their bark and white like ghosts. Some torn violently from their roots and felled. STARK GRAY SUNLIGHT shafts between the trees, clouded by a creeping fog that obscures the true color of everything. A LIGHT SNOW flutters. The world monochrome, lifeless and cold. A CAT prowls across the dead earth. Barely recognizable as the domestic breed it might once have been. Its fur mangy and rank, body rib-thin from starvation. Entirely feral. It moves slowly, cautiously. Sniffing the air, scanning the forest, alert. Trusting nothing of its surroundings. It paces across a leaf-strewn clearing, closing stealthily on: A DEAD MAN, splayed face-down in the earth. His feet bare. Face frozen in a grim death mask. A GAPING GUNSHOT WOUND in his head, the dried blood caked around it matting his hair. As the cat moves closer, approaching warily:

P.O.V. FROM ACROSS THE CLEARING

About thirty yards away. Someone is watching. Waiting. SLOW, DEEP BREATHS, heard through a GASMASK RESPIRATOR.

CLOSE ON A PAIR OF INDUSTRIAL GOGGLES

The MIRRORED LENSES reflecting the forest clearing, locked onto the cat. The slow, metered breathing continues.

THE CAT slows, but continues pacing toward the corpse. More cautious than ever. It inches forward, sniffing at the body.

ON THE WATCHER. Crouched behind the mangled stump of a felled tree. Concealed beneath a camouflaging mesh of leaves, twigs and bracken. A "ghillie suit" of the kind used by snipers.

THE CAT sniffs at the dead man's hand, frozen by death in a grotesquely contorted claw. The animal still unsure. Looks around again, checking its surroundings for predators.

THE WATCHER moves almost imperceptibly. The leaves covering him rustle ever so slightly as we hear - just barely - the familiar creaking sound of a BOW STRING BEING DRAWN TAUT.

THE CAT hears it. Looks up, alert. Staring right at the watcher, but he is too well camouflaged to be seen. An interminable, tense BEAT - is the prey going to flee?

Finally, the cat turns its attention back to the carcass, nibbling gingerly at the flesh of the man's fingers.

2.

THE WATCHER looses the arrow. It sails across the clearing and SKEWERS THE CAT clean through. It drops to the ground.

THE WATCHER STANDS, shaking off the ghillie suit, revealing him to us for the first time. He wears a weather-beaten knee-length duster. Hooded sweater with more layers beneath that. Torn pants and scuffed work boots. Everything filthy and battered from years of wear.

Along with the goggles, his face remains obscured by a DISPOSABLE PAPER DUST MASK and a CRUDELY-FASHIONED FUR HAT with dangling ear flaps that may once itself have been a cat.

Around his neck he wears a silver SAINT CHRISTOPHER PENDANT hanging from a frayed twine cord.

His name is ELI.

He shoulders the bow and walks across the clearing. Crouches beside the dead cat and pulls out the arrow. Wipes the blood from the shaft, then reaches down to collect the body.