

True Detective

THE LONG BRIGHT DARK

Chapter One: "Long Red Dark"

by

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TRUE DETECTIVE
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TITLE CREDITS.

FADE IN:

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

OPEN ON MARTIN HART staring directly at us, seated at a TABLE. He's 56, tall, broad. He has thick gray hair, close-cropped, a hard face. He wears a well-made suit, and there's a kind of physical intensity in his bearing. He simmers--

Cigarette burns and gouges pock the table's linoleum surface, and behind Hart is only a green plaster WALL, empty except for its upper right side, in which half a BULLETIN BOARD is in frame, and on it, half of a WANTED POSTER can be seen--

As Martin stares at us, WORDS are typed into the bottom of the screen, courier typeface, to the SOUND of keys punching--

CHYRON: 'Arkansas State Police CID, Company D / Statement of Hart, Martin Eric. / Present: Sgt. Thomas F. Papania, Sgt. Maynard Gilbough / May, 2010'

HART

(into camera)

What'd I think? ...You know they called him 'The Banker' for a while?..

Department opened up some new positions in CID that year. Cocaine was on the rise, and meth was getting big. So I partnered up.

A beat, then he seems to speak as if in response to a question--

HART (CONT'D)

Seemed a little raw-boned to me. A little edgy. Finally get him over for dinner, around the time of our first female 419- the 'Pine Angel' in Benton County... That's what you all really want to talk about, right? Dora Lange?

Another beat as he seems to listen--

HART (CONT'D)

Alright. Rust- Well, as a 'for instance,' I finally got him over for dinner. The case was still hot, and I had a bit of respect for him by then, seeing how he ran out front with it. So one evening, a Tuesday maybe-?

INT. HART HOME - NIGHT (CHYRON- typed: '1990')

MARTIN HART, 36, in better shape and with darker hair, answers his front door. It opens onto RUSTIN COHLE, 31, smaller, handsome but hard-worn, his shirt and suit disheveled. Bleary-eyed and frightened, he stands on the porch with a cheap BOUQUET in hand, as the 2010 Hart speaks-

HART (V.O.)

Poor bastard looked like he was on his way to a firing squad. Then I see it-

His dark hair mussed, Rust shakily holds out the bouquet. CLOSE ON his face- wet, red eyes, red nose-

HART (V.O.) (CONT'D)

He's blind drunk.

MAGGIE (O.S.)

Bring him in, Marty! Let's get a look at him!

PULL BACK onto the house and see that it is the modest, well-maintained home of a middle-class family with small children--

Hart and Cohle look back and forth at one another, Cohle's look apologetic and helpless, both understanding that he's in no shape to have dinner with Hart's family. Hart puts a hand on his shoulder, takes the flowers and leads Cohle in-

HART

Just smile and you'll be fine. I'll put coffee on. We'll get somebody to call up here with an excuse for you to leave.

Cohle looks like he might cry, either from gratitude or terror--

Then TWO LITTLE GIRLS come hopping in- AUDREY, 10, and MACIE, 7. They surround the two men, giddy at the new visitor. For a moment, these two stern men look absolutely baffled by the little girls jumping at their calves, the wilted flowers hanging between them-

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

The same interrogation room, but the chair is EMPTY. A NEW MAN steps into frame, sits down. Recognize RUSTIN COHLE, 51, twenty years older, taking Hart's place across the table, staring at us. Same wall with a corner of the BULLETIN BOARD behind him, same piece of a WANTED POSTER--

He hasn't lost any hair, but it's streaked with steel gray, wild, unkempt and in need of a trim. He's leaner. In the intervening years he's shed pounds, and now his cheeks are sunken. He almost looks emaciated, lupine. He's unshaven, wearing rumpled clothes. NOTICE covering Cohle's left inner forearm, a colorful, slightly-faded TATTOO of FLAMES with a PAIR OF DICE at their apex--

CHYRON (typed): 'Arkansas State Police CID / Company D / Statement of Cohle, Rustin Spencer. / Present: Sgt. Thomas F. Papania, Sgt. Maynard Gilbough / May, 2010'

Cohle clears his throat, his voice gravelly, when he finally speaks it's as if in answer to a question-

COHLE
(into camera)
Yeah. Of course. 'The Pine Angel.'
Thank the Democrat-Gazette for that
one.

Cohle pauses and lights a CIGARETTE. Then suddenly looks between it and the camera, as though he's being admonished. He deliberates the lit cigarette. Then keeps smoking-

COHLE (CONT'D)
Don't be a dick about it...
You want to hear this or not?
(smokes)
Benton County Sheriff requested
assistance with a 419 at the edge
of the woods off Highway 20. South
of Eureka Springs. This our first
real heater. I'd been around about
three months at the time. Had just
observed Marty, till then.

Cohle ashes on the table, staring belligerently -

EXT. WOODS NEAR HWY 20, ARKANSAS - MORNING

Red clouds and a red sunrise. A heavily wooded VALLEY surrounded with denser FOREST, the OZARKS fencing the horizon in dun-colored spikes. Blobs of GRAY SNOW litter the dark soil. A crisp, ruby light--

FOLLOWING THREE MEN across this valley: a uniformed SHERIFF'S DEPUTY walking point, leading TWO MEN IN TRENCHCOATS and suits, MARTIN HART and RUSTIN COHLE, c.1990. Hart's hands are stuffed in his pockets, and Cohle carries a CRIME SCENE KIT and a LEGAL-SIZED PORTFOLIO--

We watch the deputy leading them toward deeper woods. NOTICE all the birds roosting outside the forest, and 2010 Cohle speaks in V.O.--

COHLE (V.O.)

Last gasp of winter. It was about seven a.m., March 3, 1990. My daughter's birthday, I remember.

Walking, Rustin sees a BLACK SNAKE winding through the grass, away from the direction they're traveling--

ANGLE AHEAD- where the TREE LINE breaks. SHERIFF'S DEPUTIES stand a couple dozen yards from a DARK SHAPE hunched at the base of a LARGE PINE TREE. The men talk between themselves, their backs turned away from the shape, breath visible in the crisp air--

EXT. FOREST, ARKANSAS - MORNING

Without saying anything, the deputy leads Hart and Cohle to the dark, slumped shape. The deputy tries not to look at it, but can't help himself--

ON HART and COHLE'S FACES as the deputy steps aside. Hart looks vaguely horrified. Cohle's face simply tenses and his eyes sharpen. Behind them, birds shriek from the trees--

Cohle moves past Hart to get closer--

ANGLE ON BODY- (depicted as mercifully as possible) -A white FEMALE, naked, posed kneeling over a LARGE TREE ROOT, her HANDS folded as if in prayer. Head down, a CROWN of ROOTS and THORNS is set on her scalp. A PAIR OF LARGE, DARK WINGS have been attached to her back. The WINGS drape over her ribs, their feather-tips sunken into a small patch of dirty snow--

Cohle puts on a pair of latex gloves and looks from the body to the TREES around it- NOTICE a PENTAGRAM freshly carved into the pine tree beside the body--

HART

Holy God.

Cohle crouches to examine the WINGS. ANGLE ON his hands shifting the feathers.

NOTICE the wings are bonded at their axillars with some kind of industrial adhesive which has scoured the flesh around them with CHEMICAL BURNS. Cohle gently grasps her head and lifts her FACE-

Her face is intact, her eyes gray and dull. It's not an unattractive face, but white, and something subtle in it- a parting of the lips -almost suggests a rapture--

COHLE
(to deputies)
You guys touch anything?

One of the uniformed men steps out. SHERIFF TATE, 49, soft and booze-reddened-

TATE
They know all about crime scenes.
You think anybody wants to touch
this?

COHLE
Who found her?

TATE
Hospital chopper on its way to St.
Jude's spotted her. Phoned us.

COHLE
(stands)
M.E.?

TATE
County's on his way. Wade Davis.
Good man.

Cohle looks back at the body, the crown, the wings-

COHLE
Bullshit. Call state's. Tell them
to send Gordon DiCillo.

Tate flares his nostrils, shares a pissed-off glance with the deputies. Marty sighs- this rude android for a partner--

Again crouching, Cohle examines the body. FOLLOW his hands, which move gently in feathery touches and grips, disturbing as little as possible, while his V.O. speaks-

COHLE[V.O.]
It was pretty fresh. Animals hadn't
been at it. She still had her eyes.

He moves his hands down her body, noting bruises-

COHLE (V.O.)
Lividness at her shoulders, thighs
and anterior torso. She was on her
stomach a while before he moved her
here.

ANGLE ON a BLACK MINI-SKIRT hanging above the body on
branches, the skirt cut down the middle and spread open like
a bat's wings--

TATE
You ever seen anything like this?

HART
No. Eleven years CID.

TATE
Satanic. That's the word for it.
They had a 20/20 on it last year.

The SUN has risen higher, and now a SUNBEAM has come down,
lighting the tableau as if by spotlight. ALL the men notice--

Cohle looks up, and sees that the killer positioned the body
directly beneath a break in the trees, so that sun would
purposefully light her figure--

TATE (CONT'D)
She looks like some kind of
religious statue.

Cohle looks at her in the sunbeam with new eyes, halted as if
seeing things differently--

COHLE
I.D.?

Tate shakes his head. Cohle looks toward the shadows of the
Ozarks, the low valley between them a desolate flatness. He
turns to Hart-- a glance gives Cohle permission to take lead--

COHLE (CONT'D)
(to Sheriff's)
We need more men for a grid search.
We'll get troopers out here, but we
could use more deputies. I need you
guys to set up a perimeter--

He points back through the fields, at the far convergence of
rural highways--

COHLE (CONT'D)

-wide as possible on those three roads. One of you post up. Take license plates of anything that passes, too.

The deputies just stare at Cohle until he eyes Sheriff Tate. Sheriff Tate nods to his men, and they disperse to take positions. Hart pulls out a LARGE RADIO from his trenchcoat--

HART

A23. We need trooper assist on that 419. All you can spare for canvass.

RADIO

Roger, A23.

When he's done, he puts on latex gloves and crouches beside Cohle, who's already kneeling beside the body. Notice Cohle doesn't care about his pant knees as he writes on that big LEGAL PAD he's brought--

COHLE

(writing)

Ligature marks at wrists and ankles. Hemorrhaging around the throat.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

The 2010 frame, and 56-year old Martin Hart--

HART

(into camera)

That's why they called him 'The Banker'. Most of us, you know, used a little notepad you'd have in a pocket. Rust carried this big portfolio. Wrote down everything. And his first couple months, he had to do a lot of canvassing. So it looked funny. Him going door to door with that big ledger, like the census taker. Thus, The Banker. Not so bad, far as nick-names go.

As Martin speaks toward the camera, there is a withheld affection in his remembrance. Clearly, he has a complexity of feelings about Rustin Cohle, but 'respect' is part of that.

HART (CONT'D)

I mean, I'd seen the different types. We all fit categories. The bully. The charmer.

(MORE)

HART (CONT'D)

The father-figure. The man possessed by ungovernable rage. The eyes. The brain... And any of those types can be a good detective. And any of those types can be an incompetent shitheel. It's how they manage the burden of authority, yeah?

He thinks a moment, perhaps listens to a comment from his interviewer--

HART (CONT'D)

It's like a father's authority. A father's burden. It's too much for some people... Same thing I look for when I hire guys for the agency now. You want a certain toughness. But the kind that doesn't veer toward callous. Because that's a dangerous road. Aggression is necessary. It is. So's compassion, a sense of fairness-

EXT. FOREST, ARKANSAS - DAY

CRIME SCENE- Cohle and Hart continue examining the body, Cohle taking furious notes. We cannot hear what they say, only Hart's 2010 testimony--

HART (V.O.)

You want them to be thorough. To have good eyes, ask the right questions. To have steady habits.

ON Cohle's face as he studies the body, takes notes--

HART (V.O.) (CONT'D)

A smart guy who's steady is hard to find. I mean, I admit, I wasn't the most brilliant case man the division ever saw. I got lucky a few times. I was alright. Better than some. But I knew how to talk to people. And I was steady.

Cohle writes furiously, scans the environment around the body-

HART (CONT'D)

Rust was *smart*.

EXT. 'RAINBOW APARTMENTS', NORTHWEST ARKANSAS - DAY

A seedy BRICK line of APARTMENTS the size of motel rooms, in the middle of nowhere- fields and desolation around.

HART (V.O.)

Second week we were together I saw where he was living, and I felt for the guy.

ANGLE ON an UNMARKED CID CAR, as Cohle and Hart step out, and Hart follows his partner to a door--

INT. COHLE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Cohle opens the door, and from Hart's POV, we take in the ROOM. It's empty except for a couple BOXES. Depressingly bleak and completely unadorned. A MATTRESS on the floor. A CRUCIFIX above the mattress. No TV. STACKS OF THICK BOOKS in various spots on the floor-

HART (V.O.)

I thought of some Quasimodo character living in a belfry, like. He had these textbooks stacked on the floor--

ANGLE ON the BOOKS. NOTICE the TITLES: Advanced Crime Scene Analysis. Offender Profiling. Sex Crime Investigation. Advanced Homicide Investigation--

Hart looks at Cohle, a little weirded-out-

COHLE

I'd offer you a seat.

HART

Don't mention it.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Martin Hart, 56-

HART

You know the photos in those books. Not the sort of thing you'd leave lying around, at least if you expected anybody else to ever walk in your place... One of those moments I was glad I'd made a family.

EXT. FOREST, ARKANSAS - DAY

CRIME SCENE- Detectives Cohle and Hart are alone beside the body, having finished their examination. Cohle sits on a log and continues writing on his tablet, looking around. Hart stands and talks on the radio. We can't hear his 1988 voice, only the 2010-

HART (V.O.)

I didn't really mind he was quiet.
Mainly nobody understood what he
was doing here. Brought in from
Louisiana, and he wasn't interested
in making buddies.

Hart puts down the radio, moves to where Cohle sits writing. The body nearby, like a dark angel on the periphery of the frame-

HART.

DiCillo said he'll be here in
twenty.

Cohle doesn't respond, keeps writing. Hart takes out a can of smokeless tobacco and fills his bottom lip. Then they both wait, with the silence between them--

ANGLE ON Cohle's tablet- he's moved to drawing sketches of the crime scene and body-

HART (V.O.)

Bobby and Steve and the other guys
thought he was stuck up, like he
thought he's better than other
people. But up close it was more
complicated. More like a paranoia.

EXT. FOREST, ARKANSAS - DAY

COHLE directs one section of the grid search, and MARTY another--

ON COHLE as he gives orders--

HART (V.O.)

We didn't know what he'd been
doing. Before CID... I didn't know
about all that undercover work
until later.

A tinge of sympathy is evident in Hart's voice--

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Rustin Cohle, age 51, disheveled, smoking. Somebody brought him an old coffee MUG to use as an ashtray-

COHLE

Yeah, well. Devil's in the details, yeah? I wrote everything I could. Try to capture the moment, its essence. Because you never know what the thing's going to be, do you? The essential, unlikely clue. Thing that, way down the line, maybe months or years later, makes you say, 'Ah.' Breaks the case wide.

He pauses, remembering, smokes--

COHLE (CONT'D)

So we're sitting there waiting on DiCillo. This scene. I mean, we'd encountered a full-fledged meta-psychotic. I had to explain to Marty what that was-

EXT. FOREST, ARKANSAS - DAY

CRIME SCENE: In the distance we can see DEPUTIES spreading out across the fields. The detectives are still the only two near the body. Cohle gestures to it as he speaks to Hart, his portfolio laid down-

COHLE

This is going to happen again.

HART

What do you think you know?

COHLE

This is fantasy enactment. There's fetishization, something like... iconography.

HART

Satanist shit.

COHLE

No. But it's a religious vision. Her body is a paraphilic lovemap.

HART

A what?

Cohle's eyes trawl over the body--

COHLE

An attachment of physical lust to fantasies and practices forbidden by society.

HART

You learn that in your books?

COHLE

I did. You see how short that skirt was? Decent odds she's a prost. Maybe a hitchhiker. But the guy's been thinking about this a long time.

HART

Just don't want us jumping to any conclusions.

COHLE

I bet we get ID off her prints.

Hart, as senior detective, probes Cohle to test his judgment--

HART

What else?

COHLE

Missing persons, obviously. We need to look into any reports of unrelated sexual events, like flashing or fetish burglaries. Check all prior arrests going back the last several years for the northwest counties. Any B&E with a fetish component. Sexual offenders paroled to the state.

Hart is impressed by the rookie detective's assessment.

COHLE (CONT'D)

These things don't occur in a vacuum.

Hart nods, and Cohle returns to sitting on his log, watching the body. Hart watches him--

Silence for several beats- this dark assemblage flirts with absurdity- the two suited men sitting near that horrible corpse, being quiet like schoolboys or nervous suitors--

Hart seems perturbed, finally speaks-

HART

This is a stupid time to mention it. But you have to come over to the house for dinner. I can't put Maggie off any more, and it's shitty and rude for you not to.

Cohle thinks--

COHLE

Alright.

Cohle looks slightly on edge now, grips his portfolio on his lap, stares at the girl. STAY ON Cohle's face, a dull dread in it, his eyes looking trapped as he sits with Hart--

COHLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I get this stone in my gut, see, because I think about Marty's wife and his two girls, sitting down to dinner with *this family*, and I'm thinking about Sofia, my daughter, and how it's her birthday. And how she's been gone almost five years...

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Older, haunted, Cohle continues his story--

COHLE

And I know right then that I'm going to have a drink.

EXT. FOREST, ARKANSAS - DAY

CRIME SCENE: Later. M.E. GORDON DICILLO has arrived, mid-40s/50s. He squats by the BODY while an ASSISTANT takes photos under his direction--

In the FIELDS beyond, NOTICE STATE PATROLMEN and SHERIFF'S DEPUTIES walking a slow grid formation through the fields, while a few other DEPUTIES hold off a PRESS VAN on the county road. COHLE and HART stand near DiCillo, Cohle almost looking over his shoulder--

ANGLE ON PRUNING SHEARS- DiCillo uses them to cut the WINGS at their base with a wet, crunching sound--

DICILLO

Bagging these separate.

COHLE

See if you can find out what type
of bird those belong to.

HART

Looks like maybe a turkey vulture.

A TROOPER approaches the detectives-

TROOPER

Sir? We got drag marks-

EXT. FIELD, ARKANSAS - DAY

ANGLE ON slight STREAKS OF BLOOD on the HIGH GRASS, almost
imperceptible, as is the wave of mashed-down GRASS leading
between the forest and the road--

Cohle studies them, looks to the road--

COHLE

There's going to be some tire
tracks on the shoulder of the road
there. Can you make tread casts?

TROOPER

Yes, sir.

COHLE

Alright. Get casts. Check the
opposite shoulder. Cast anything
over there, too. I got mold kits in
my bag at the scene, if you need
them.

The trooper nods, hustles off, and Cohle looks at the drag
trail, the dark trees and cold, bright sky. He sees SHERIFF
TATE talking to NEWS REPORTERS by TWO NEWS VANS on the road.
Cohle's face scowls--

EXT. ROADSIDE, ARKANSAS - DAY

Cohle whistles with two fingers, waves the sheriff over. The
sheriff takes his time--

COHLE

We need as much of this bend sealed
off as possible. Tell the
journalists they're violating the
scene.

TATE

They're in the road.

COHLE

Get them out. You realize what we just caught here?

TATE

Realize it's my jurisdiction.

COHLE

It was. But then you called us. I don't know how they got here so quick, 'less you called em, feeling left out. But get those jackasses gone. They're parked on evidence.

Tate's face goes red. A staring contest, and he sees bad things in Cohle's. The sheriff returns to the reporters--

I./EXT. CID CAR / ARKANSAS HIGHWAY - DAY

HOURS LATER. Toward evening, Cohle and Hart drive in their UNMARKED CID SEDAN, Hart behind the wheel. They pass VACANT PRAIRIE, ROLLING HILLS, ISOLATED FARMHOUSES--

Cohle goes through a stack of CANVASS REPORTS and FIELD STATEMENT FORMS on his lap, all filled with Cohle's meticulous script-- the day's work--

COHLE

(re field reports)
That's six hours wasted.

HART

Just that there's not much around here.

COHLE

These people out here. Like they got no idea the outside world exists. They might as well live on the moon.

HART

You called her in to Missing Persons?

COHLE

Yeah. First thing. See what DiCillo says, wait for I.D.?

HART

I want to start a board.

Cohle nods. Silence awhile, and Hart glances to him--

HART (CONT'D)
Ask you something. That pentagram
up there and stuff... You're
Christian, yeah?

COHLE
What? Not on your life.

This confuses Hart--

HART
Saw that crucifix in your
apartment...

COHLE
Oh. That's more like meditation.

Hart is knee-jerk offended at Cohle's nonchalance about The
Son of Man--

HART
How's that?

COHLE
I like to contemplate Christ's
life. As an existential statement.
The idea of allowing your own
crucifixion.

HART
But you don't believe He's the Lord
and Savior?

COHLE
Not at all.

HART
(appalled)
What do you believe?

Cohle glances at Hart with a tired expression, doesn't
answer. It's clear he doesn't want to, but Hart keeps looking
at him in expectation--

COHLE
You don't want to know.

HART
Three months. I get nothing out of
you. And today? After what we're
into now? Do me the simple courtesy
of answering the question. I'm not
trying to convert you.

Cohle sighs--

COHLE
 ...In philosophical terms, I'm
 what's called a pessimist.

HART
 'In philosophical terms,' what's
 that mean?

COHLE
 Means I'm bad at parties.

Hart scowls at Cohle, prodding him on. Cohle continues,
 reluctant-

COHLE (CONT'D)
 I think that human consciousness is
 a tragic evolutionary misstep. I
 think that nature fabricated an
 aspect of nature that's forever
 separated from it. A creature that
 by natural law should not exist.

Outside, the car passes a cheap, OLD BILLBOARD with a WOMAN'S
 PORTRAIT on it and the legend '10/11/80: DO YOU KNOW WHO
 KILLED ME? CALL 800-976-5236 REWARD'--

COHLE (CONT'D)
 ...I think we are things that labor
 under the illusion of having a
 'self', each of us programmed with
 total assurance that we're each a
 somebody. But everybody's nobody.

Cohle gets on a roll now--

COHLE (CONT'D)
 See, we fabricate meaning in order
 to deny what we are, so that we can
 keep on going. Family, god,
 country, art- these are the
 materials of our fabrications.
 We're uncanny puppets on a lonely
 planet, in cold space, living and
 replicating and sending unborn
 generations into suffering and
 death because that's our
 programming.

Hart's eyes have gone wide with disbelief and frustration--

HART
 Jesus Christ.

COHLE

No thanks.

And Cohle's a little enervated, as if, you asked for it--

COHLE (CONT'D)

What I think? The only honorable thing for our species to do is deny our programming, stop reproducing and march hand-in-hand into extinction.

A beat where Cohle seems almost wistful--

COHLE (CONT'D)

A last sunset. Cosmic midnight.

Hart's deeply offended, angry-

HART

So what's the point of life, huh?

COHLE

There is no point. Nowhere to go, no one to see, nothing to do, nothing to be.

HART

(enraged)

Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ. You bleeding asshole. Most you've said in three months and it's gotta be-- what's the matter with -Why're you on the job, anyway?

COHLE

The only real answer is that it's obviously my programming. Just like it's yours.

He looks out the window as he speaks, almost to himself--

COHLE (CONT'D)

The reason I tell myself? I'm a human being. I speak for the dead. I bear witness. It keeps me part of things. But mostly I lack the courage for suicide... Look, if you want, I could lend you some Schopenhauer. Start there.

HART

Stop. Stop talking. Shit. Shit.

Back to silence. As Hart grinds his teeth, Cohle stares out the windows at the ISOLATED FIELDS and RAMSHACKLE HOMES, the ELECTRICAL LINES against the DESOLATE VALLEY, BROKEN FENCES-- several tense beats--

COHLE

I get poor vibrations from this place. You can feel the psycho-field in the air. Like aluminum on your teeth.

Hart doesn't reply, drives on, disturbed, hoping Cohle won't talk anymore--

COHLE (CONT'D)

Should I bring anything, for dinner?

Horrified to be reminded of the dinner invitation, Hart recomposes himself--

HART

Bottle of wine, be nice. I guess.

COHLE

I don't really drink.

This a final straw of disappointment for Hart--

HART

Of course you don't, Rust...
And listen, at my house? Don't mention any of that shit you just said to me. You asshole...
'Extinction.'

COHLE

Of course not, Marty. I'm not some maniac. Fuck's sake.

They drive in silence the rest of the way, as Hart's 2010 V.O. resumes and the CAR passes down the road, into the green hills--

HART (V.O.)

I mean, most of us are pretty hard right, you know? Christians. Good Republicans. We had pictures of Reagan, Bush and Nixon in the CID squad room. And at this point, no lie--

The CAR shrinks into the dark FOOTHILLS that bound the country road, vanishing into a red darkness--

HART (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 -I just really, really don't like
 the guy.

EXT. ARKANSAS STATE POLICE HQ, FORT SMITH - DAY

ESTABLISHING the state police headquarters in Fort Smith. A four-story administrative building with FLAGS out front, lots of PATROL and UNMARKED CARS, all late-80s TAURUSES. Hart and Cohle's pulls into the lot as the afternoon reddens toward sunset--

INT. ARKANSAS STATE POLICE HQ, FORT SMITH - DAY

CID is located on the third floor, and Cohle and Hart enter. The division is a large, open floor with CUBICLES, TYPEWRITERS, a RECEPTIONIST, and a FEW PLAINCLOTHES DETECTIVES at their desks, using the phones. A FLAG, slogan posters, no computers. The receptionist flags Cohle-

RECEPTIONIST
 Lieutenant wants you both. Soon as
 you got back, he told me.

Cohle glances at Hart, who shrugs, walks away from him. Hart is quickly mobbed by the DETECTIVES in the room, all of whom want to know about the red-ball he and Cohle have caught- Snatches of their conversation: 'Said she had wings?' '-that Heavy Metal music-' 'You need extra hands?' 'A 20/20 special' Etc.

INT. LT. QUESADA'S OFFICE, CID - LATE AFTERNOON

A boss's OFFICE. Cohle and Hart are sitting in two chairs that face the DESK and, behind it, LT. KEN QUESADA, 3rd Squad Homicide Commander, Company D, late 40s, chubby, wears a Knights of Columbus RING he likes to rub--

HART
 Mid-twenties to late-forties. Looks
 like strangulation. She had- I
 mean, you never even heard of
 anything like this--

RUST
 She had wings attached to her back.

QUESADA
 What, like a costume?

RUST
 Like a real bird's wings. Big
 wings, soldered onto her skin.

QUESADA

Jesus.

RUST

This is the real thing, Loo. This is way out there.

QUESADA

That explains why the AP woman asked me about birds. And Satan worship. Goddamnit. I had to yell in the sheriff's ear how it's not a good idea to spout hysterical bullshit to local news. I chewed him up, but I might have to do a press conference tomorrow. Right now, keep it close. Get with me on DiCillo's report. I'm first to know when you got an ID.

HART

I's going to get a board going.

QUESADA

You got anything for it?

Hart shakes his head.

QUESADA (CONT'D)

Do it anyway. Incident room's yours. Lead a briefing tomorrow. Tate wanted to liaise a couple men to us. We might need them, I guess. Scene gonna stay secured?

HART

What good it'll do. Supposed to snow tonight.

A KNOCK on the office window: a SUIT stands there, and Quesada nods to him. Cohle and Hart rise, but--

QUESADA

Rust- stay here a minute, huh?

Cohle and Hart share a glance as Hart exits, and the SUIT enters. This is Assistant State Attorney LEN SALTER, 40, carries a briefcase and closes the door behind him. Sits down in Hart's vacant chair--

Cohle looks back and forth at the two men, who study him openly. As they speak, they are each obviously probing and gauging his reactions--

QUESADA (CONT'D)

Rustin Cohle. Detective. Eight years with Baton Rouge PD. Four of those with the State Police Intra-agency Task Force... Front lines in the war on drugs.

SALTER

Hard chargers. Took down some major busts. They called you 'Crash', right?

QUESADA

I heard that, too. 'Crash' Cohle.

SALTER

They call you that because you bust things up?

COHLE

It was a joke with the ITTF. Short for Crash Test Dummy.

SALTER

Hear now they call you 'The Banker.'

A beat as the two bosses examine Cohle, whose eyes have gone hard, flinty--

SALTER (CONT'D)

Your op details are redacted. Four years of duty sealed on the Louisiana AG's orders or classified with DEA. No details.

Quesada watches Cohle's reaction, twists his KofC ring. Cohle becomes indignant--

COHLE

You realize what we just caught out there?

QUESADA

Rust. It's a few minutes.

Cohle twitches at Quesada's statement, as though the man's never used his first name before--

SALTER

Few minutes won't make a difference... How's it working out for you here, detective? In CID?

Cohle shrugs, doesn't answer. Eye-locked to Salter--

QUESADA

Rust. Do something. See if you can guess why the ASA wanted to meet you. Why are we talking?

Cohle looks between the two men, studying their expressions--

COHLE

In general I'm not trusted, because I moved in under the aegis of former Superintendent Willey, and at the behest of the DEA. Maybe you got word about Northshore. I don't know. Half the guys think I haven't earned the shield- which is bullshit, by the way. Check my record with robbery.

A beat, as the two bosses are impressed by the precision of his analysis. Rust seems vaguely angered--

COHLE (CONT'D)

Beyond that, the department's concerned that I may have been inserted as part of an outside investigation. Into what, who knows? But given that the ASA is here, State Attorney Laughlin could be worried about something. So, if Willey's out, and at three months I'm still here, it's time to ask your questions.

QUESADA

See there, Len? I told you.

SALTER

Alright, then, detective. Given your considerable ability to ascertain a situation, let's be frank. Why are you here?

COHLE

I want to work murders. That's it. I had to get out of Louisiana. Special Agent Willis Bokum owed me a favor. More than one. I asked for something like this. This is what he offered.

QUESADA
Arkansas State Police, though? Just
like that?

COHLE
I passed my forensics lab. Aced
Practical Homicide Investigation.

SALTER
...Is this convincing, Ken?

COHLE
Convincing for what? Is the idea
that I'm secretly running a DEA op?

Quesada and Salter look between one another, then back to
Cohle.

COHLE (CONT'D)
For fuck's-- I have no connections
with any outside agency. My
transfer was a favor owed. That's
it.

They continue to study him, silent, and Cohle realizes the
other question they've been sitting on-

COHLE (CONT'D)
SA Laughlin's running for governor,
rumor has it. Your big question is,
am I able to provide any kind of
information about potential or
ongoing fed investigations. Can I
keep in the loop, make sure state
gets its credit if the feds pull
down any winners. A bump around
election season... You're asking me
about leverage.

Quesada and Salter look to one another. Grins.

COHLE (CONT'D)
I want to work murders. That's all
I can do.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Rustin Cohle, 51, facing the camera, smoking yet another
cigarette. As if in answer to a question-

COHLE
Northshore? Psychiatric hospital in
Slidell. I spent four months there
in '88.

Cohle smokes a few beats, lets his interviewers digest this knowledge--

INT. ARKANSAS STATE POLICE HQ, CID - NIGHT

Cohle *exits* Quesada's office, frustrated, on edge. He looks around at the squad room. Besides Hart, there are four other detectives there- DEMMA, LUTZ, GERACI and HAYS -all white, late-30s/40s. The other detectives eyeball Cohle with no love-

COHLE (V.O.)

Anyway, I get out Quesada's office, Marty's got a board going, and he's already typing our DL. And like I said before- I'm feeling a lot of stuff hit me at once. My daughter's birthday. This murder. I'm a stranger to myself, man. And I want to drink... Figured to work the case. Keep me out the house while we waited on DiCillo's report or an I.D. to come in.

ANGLE ON Hart typing up the partners' DAILY LOG. Cohle notices the dry-erase BOARD up at the head of the room, with headings that read: CANVASS REPORTS / TIMELINE / BACKGROUND. All blank underneath. Cohle walks swiftly to Hart's desk--

COHLE (CONT'D)

Hey, you mind if I skate? I'm going to get some names from Vice, local prost hang-outs. Ask around about our DB.

HART

You want me to come?

COHLE

Nah. It's just something to do. Go be with your family.

Hart nods, without warmth, goes back to typing. Cohle walks out the squad room like he's making a jail break--

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Cohle, 51, speaking into camera. His mood has become less belligerent, more open, as if in recounting these memories he's discovered a kind of release through the telling-

COHLE

At the time, I kind of struggled with my nights... I mean, I didn't sleep. Ever.

Cohle stares at the camera, and by his eyes we believe this claim--

I./EXT. COHLE'S TRUCK, ROADS - NIGHT

Rustin Cohle drives his mid-80s FORD RANGER, north on HWY 71, toward Fayetteville, Springdale and Rogers. As he drives, he smokes--

He opens a bottle of ROBITUSSIN and guzzles the whole thing, grimaces, tosses the bottle out the window. His eyes are furious--

AUDIO PRELAP: SOUND of BRAKES SQUEALING, TIRES SPINNING--

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

FLASHBACK: Rustin Cohle, 26, runs into the street, a look of pure terror on his face, a toddler's THREE-WHEELER bent and twisted at the edge of the frame. Behind him, his WIFE drops to her knees, screaming. Blood on the road around the bike--

I./EXT. COHLE'S TRUCK, ROADS - NIGHT

Cohle driving, smoking. A 2010 V.O.--

COHLE (V.O.)

State Vice gave me some addresses
to look at. So far nobody talked to
me.

EXT. JET-24 TRUCK STOP, ARKANSAS - NIGHT

ESTABLISHING-- partially obscured by the interstate, black country darkness around it, the TRUCK STOP'S LIGHTS sparkle out the night, its lot full of BIG RIGS, a well-lit depression of heavy machinery. It could be a mining outpost on a distant asteroid--

Cohle's truck pulls in--

NOTICE a SMALL BAR called Jenny O's adjacent to the truck-stop, in the same oasis. Cohle parks, watches the place. He finds George Strait on the radio, "He Stopped Loving Her Today"--

Cohle watches a WOMAN climb out the CAB of a PARKED TRUCK, wiping her mouth. He sees ANOTHER WOMAN climb from ANOTHER TRUCK, and then watches both women walk into Jenny O's-

NOTICE, with Cohle, a small PLAYGROUND AREA off to the side of the truck stop, its slides and swings looking lonely in the darkness--

SFX: A child's delighted LAUGHTER, an aural hallucination--

Cohle wipes tears out his eyes, shuts off the truck and starts walking toward Jenny O's--

INT. HART HOME - NIGHT

Martin Hart (36) enters a darkened house, obviously late at night. He shuffles to the kitchen, pours a tall glass of Jamesons, and a sloppiness in his gestures suggests this is not his first drink of the night--

He walks to the hallway, sipping his drink, still wearing his trenchcoat, which perhaps overtly suggests his role as investigator. He pauses in the DOORWAY of his GIRLS' ROOM--

Martin's POV, watching his two girls sleep in the blue darkness. On his face, sipping his drink, something unsettled in his gaze, perhaps connected to the woman's body found that day, perhaps connected to Rust's philosophies--

INT. LIVING ROOM, HART HOME - LATE NIGHT

Hart has a fresh drink and is looking through the slim contents of a bookcase. He picks out the one he was looking for 'National Audubon Society Field Guide to the Southeastern States'--

He takes the drink and book to an armchair, starts reading under lamp light. A lonely image, a man drinking alone in the dark, studying the detritus of murder--

INT. JENNY O'S TAVERN, ARKANSAS - LATE NIGHT

A smoky, cramped BAR. TRUCKERS inside, hard-worn men watching basketball on the television, scraps of neon, tinsel, Razorbacks football posters. NOTICE the TWO WOMEN Cohle saw exiting big rigs, now seated together at a narrow table in a back corner. One or two other WOMEN, similarly hard-worn, are scattered inside--

ANGLE ON Cohle, approaching the back corner table. He smiles and addresses the women. One thin and blonde, the other pear-shaped, a brunette--

COHLE

Ladies.

BLONDE

(cop alert)

Oh, come on, man-

COHLE

I's hoping I could ask y'all a few questions. I got the next round.

BLONDE

You making trouble? Sir?

COHLE

No ma'am. I'm just looking for info about a woman, might be you know her.

BRUNETTE

Who's that?

BLONDE

Hold on.

The blonde (Lucy- 20s), upends her beer, draining it. She slides the empty pint glass to Cohle, includes the brunette (Annette) in her gesture--

LUCY

Two Long Island Teas, please.

INT. JENNY O'S TAVERN, ARKANSAS - LATE NIGHT

ANGLE ON Cohle returning to the table with two large drinks--

COHLE

My name's Rust, by the way.

ANNETTE

I'm Annette. She's Lucy.

Lucy shoots her daggers for saying names. Cohle sits down as they each start drinking--

COHLE

Either of you maybe know a woman, could be about your ages, might work around the same places. About five' five, shortish hair, dyed blonde, thin.

LUCY

What kind of tits she have?

COHLE

Just about medium, I guess. Maybe a little small.

ANNETTE

Jeez. I don't know. I mean, I know a couple girls like that.

COHLE

Any of them missing? Like any you haven't seen around lately?

LUCY

What you want them for? You busting somebody?

COHLE

I would never bust a person for prostitution. Or drugs.

At the word 'drugs', Lucy's eyes dart to her purse, and Cohle clocks the tell--

COHLE (CONT'D)

I'm murder police.

ANNETTE

Somebody got killed.

LUCY

There's a girl named Liza, and one calls herself Precious. But I seen Precious yesterday at McDonald's.

COHLE

What about Liza?

LUCY

She's here.

Lucy points across the bar to a thin, haggard BLONDE chatting up a TRUCKER--

LUCY (CONT'D)

What happened, this girl you're looking for?

Rust studies the TRUCKERS along the bar, their faces, clearly pondering the possibility of the killer being a trucker--

He turns back to the women, stands, and hands them each a business card--

COHLE

That's me. Detective Sergeant. You help me out of this, maybe I can help you some time.

(MORE)

COHLE (CONT'D)
I'm looking for a girl by that
description, shoulda been missing a
couple days, at least.

He hands Annette a ten-dollar bill--

COHLE (CONT'D)
Could you grab a couple more
drinks, Annette?

She glances to Lucy, who nods, then walks to the bar. Cohle
leans toward Lucy, hushed--

COHLE (CONT'D)
You get pills pretty easy?

Lucy's face twists in panic--

COHLE (CONT'D)
Relax. I want some.

LUCY
Speed?

COHLE
No. Quaalude. Anything-barbital.

LUCY
Uppers are easier to get. Last
longer, too.

COHLE
It's not like that.

LUCY
What's it like?

COHLE
I don't sleep.

ON Lucy's face, confused--

INT. LIVING ROOM, HART HOME - EARLY MORNING

The following morning, pale pink and blue light flushes the
windows. Martin Hart sleeps in T-shirt and work slacks on the
recliner, the Audubon Guide open on his chest, an empty GLASS
turned over on the carpet beside the chair--

ANGLE ON Maggie Hart, 35, entering the living room from
hallway, still wearing Martin's old FOOTBALL JERSEY, which
she sleeps in. She goes to the KITCHEN NOOK, starts coffee.
As she waits for it to brew, she watches her husband, a
sadness in her eyes--

She moves to him. Nudges him awake--

MAGGIE
Hey. Hey, Baretta.

Hart's eyes flutter, and he shoots up in the chair, as if in the middle of a nightmare--

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Hey. Hey. Why're you out here?..
Why didn't you come to bed?

He's still groggy, coming out of sleep, and doesn't pick up on her dejection--

HART
...Didn't- I couldn't sleep. Caught
a bad one yesterday.
(re Audubon Guide)
I fell asleep doing some research.

MAGGIE
On birds?

Her eyes search for his. He simply nods--

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Girls'll be up soon. Missed you the
last couple days.

HART
(checks watch)
Shit. I gotta shower. I'm
debriefing today.

He jumps out the chair, gives Maggie a peck on the cheek and walks down the hallway--

On Maggie, trying not to be hurt, trying to understand by now that it's not personal, that her husband's job changes people. She moves back to the kitchen and begins preparing breakfast--

INT. ARKANSAS STATE POLICE HQ, CID - MORNING

FOLLOWING Hart as he enters CID, nods to the RECEPTIONIST. THREE OTHER DETECTIVES milling around the coffee pot. They nod hellos. Hart reaches his cubicle and sees that COHLE, across from him, has already arrived, bags under his eyes--

COHLE
R&I came back early this morning.
Dora Kelly Lange, 28.
(MORE)

COHLE (CONT'D)

Priors for shoplifting and, can you believe it, solicitation.

HART

Little early for your sort of self-satisfaction.

COHLE

I've never been satisfied with myself, Marty.

HART

I got something too.

He pulls the Audubon Guide from his jacket-

HART (CONT'D)

I think the wings were *Cathartes aura*. That's a turkey vulture, son.

COHLE

A big one.

He hands Lange's FILE to Hart, who begins perusing it-

COHLE (CONT'D)

Her address lists as Fayetteville, but landlord says she hasn't lived there in over a year. Has an ex, Charlie Lange, doing eight in Pine Bluff for burglary and possession. Mother outside of Rogers. Line's disconnected. DMV license expired.

HART

What else?

COHLE

DiCillo called.

Immediately grabs Hart's attention--

INT. MORGUE, CORONER'S OFFICE - MORNING

Inside an AUTOPSY ROOM, standard-issue, TILED WALLS and FLOORS, STEEL TABLES, SURGICAL EQUIPMENT, SINKS, etc. Cohle and Hart stand with GORDON DICILLO, all facing TWO TABLES. On one table lies the woman's BODY, clean and intact except for the Y-INCISION. On the other table sit the WINGS, positioned as they were on her back, and the CROWN of roots. DiCillo reads from his report, inside a MANILA FOLDER thick with papers--

DICILLO
R&I get you anything?

HART
Her name's Dora Lange. She's 28.

DiCillo looks through his papers. As he reads, NOTICE the separate reactions of each detective. Hart more visibly wears his emotions, not looking at the body, his face flexing with rage as he listens. Cohle stares at the body, following along with DiCillo's descriptions, his face cold, intense--

DICILLO
Weather in the forest treated us pretty well. Time of death between one and two a.m., March 3rd, 1988. COD was manual strangulation. Fingernail marks and hemorrhaging around the throat, fractured hyoid and presence of thyroid cartilage. Petechial hemorrhaging... She was washed clean, too. Not a print. Ligature marks around her wrists and ankles, bound with quarter-inch rope. Judging by the marks, she was tied up for maybe ten to twenty hours...

Cohle moves closer to the table, begins slowly walking around it, eyes devouring-

DICILLO (CONT'D)
Evidence of vaginal and anal intercourse. Appears consensual. Traces of spermicidal lubricant. He used a condom.

COHLE
Surprising.

DICILLO
Why?

COHLE
I figured him for impotent.

DICILLO
...Possible object insertion, as well.

Each man has something like a personal moment of silence. This entire scene is intense, sad and emblematic of the detective's role in the life of his species--

DICILLO (CONT'D)
She was bound upright.

COHLE
Stomach contents?

DICILLO
Hadn't eaten in a day, maybe more.
Toxicology's positive for cocaine,
Lysergic acid and Diazepam.

HART
Valium?

COHLE
And LSD.

DICILLO
Might be enough to put even you
down a rabbit hole, Detective
Cohle.

DiCillo hinting that he's heard stories--

COHLE
Piss in my ear a little more,
Gordon. Let's kill some more time.

HART
How much LSD?

DICILLO
Maybe a couple-thousand micrograms.
You know how much that is?

COHLE
Enough to see dancing bears for a
few weeks.

DICILLO
It's a lot.

COHLE
And if she didn't know she'd taken
it, it'd be like hell's carnival.

HART
So she was drugged, bound. Then
strangled. And left out there like
that. Posed.

COHLE
What about the wings?

HART
Turkey vulture?

DICILLO
That's right. Three or four years old. An adult male. The wings were taxidermied, held together with wire, rubber cement, clear epoxy spray. They were removed with a sharp, straight blade, maybe a box cutter. Held on to her with thermoplastic adhesive. Industrial hot-glue. A lot of it. Burned through the top layers of her skin.

COHLE
She alive for that?

All three men look at one another--

DICILLO
I really can't say... Her fingernails are cracked, but the only blood is hers. Found fiberboard splinters in the scrapings you took.

COHLE
Like she tried to scratch through a door. Tripping. Locked up somewhere.

Cohle looks at her FACE-- not exactly pretty, but once cute, somehow malnourished, obviously poor--

Hart moves to the table with the WINGS and CROWN

DICILLO
The crown. For want of a better word. Switchgrass, ivy, and rose stems. Tied together with common twine. No prints.

The men stand there, almost breathless after this cataloging--

HART
Anything else?

DiCillo shakes his head--

DICILLO
I've been an M.E. for nineteen years. Not a lot you don't see in that time.

He hands Hart the REPORT, and doesn't let go of it right away, so that they both grip it, and their eyes meet, as though DiCillo is tasking him to find justice--

EXT. CORONER'S OFFICE, FORT SMITH, AR - DAY

Cohle and Hart step out the office, both badly needing fresh air. The BUILDING is an old brick and limestone cube, and around it are the tatters of an ABANDONED COMMERCIAL NEIGHBORHOOD. They each walk several feet away from the entrance, then stand and, in a mental sense, catch their breath--

HART

All this trouble. This is real personal.

COHLE

No. Not personal. The enactment was the thing. Not the victim.

HART

You know this how?

COHLE

This isn't an opportunity killing. It's a fetish enactment. In a way, it's almost impersonal--

Cohle and Hart start walking back to their car, passing a small strip of STORES with BROKEN WINDOWS, CARDBOARD patches, KUDZU and IVY growing wildly all over everything, HIGH GRASS breaking through the sidewalks--

COHLE (CONT'D)

(re neighborhood)

It's like walking in somebody's memory of a real town. And the memory's fading. And it turns out there was really never anything there but jungle.

Hart stops walking--

COHLE (CONT'D)

What?

HART

I want you to stop saying shit like that. It's unprofessional.

COHLE

You want me to be someone else?

HART

I want you to stop saying odd shit. Like you sense a 'psycho-field', or whatever. Or that you're walking in somebody's memory.

COHLE

Well, Marty, given how long it's taken me to understand and reconcile my own nature, I can't hardly imagine I'd forgo it on your account.

The two men stare at each other, the potential for violence humming in the air, placed there by the horror they just toured. That is, unable to discuss feelings, both men veer toward anger--

Then, as if remembering their actual purpose, they deflate. They reach the car and open the doors--

HART

You get any sleep last night?

COHLE

I don't sleep. I just dream.

They get in--

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Back to 2010, Martin Hart addressing us across the table-

HART

That dinner? What I started to- yeah. That was later... Well, I thought the flowers were funny. I guess he'd read somewhere you should bring flowers when somebody invites you to dinner.

He pauses, remembering, almost annoyed--

HART (CONT'D)

I told him to bring wine. And him having told me he don't drink. Showing up in that condition.

EXT. BACK DECK, HART HOME - NIGHT

CONTINUING the opening dinner scene. Hart and Cohle now stand on Hart's back deck, Hart drinking a beer and Cohle smokes, holding a cop of coffee.

We can see inside through the doors, into the KITCHEN, where Hart's wife MAGGIE and his TWO GIRLS set the table-

HART

What the hell? I invite you over to dinner. Once. You can barely stand up. You don't drink with me or Demma or Lutz after work. But you gotta get a load on before you visit my family?

Cohle shakes his head, slugs coffee and sucks a cigarette like it contains an antidote, his voice a little slurred--

COHLE

It wasn't like that, Marty. I didn't mean to... I don't drink... Because it's given me problems before. Yeah? Nothing we need to discuss. I didn't mean to have so many.

Hart waits further explanation, still insulted-

COHLE (CONT'D)

I was checking on a CI. She was late and I ended up hanging around a bar for an hour. I was sitting there and couldn't really think of a good reason not to have one. Usually I can.

Hart looks him over. He slaps Cohle's shoulder, relieved at this show of fallible humanity from Cohle--

HART.

Don't worry about it. Have some more coffee. Try to make ten minutes of conversation. I'll call Chris or somebody and have them call up here for you. Say one of your old cases caught a break.

COHLE

I'm sorry.

HART

Forget it. We'll do it another time.

Cohle puts out his cigarette and Hart lets him walk in first. Hart watches him with *apprehension*-

INT. HART HOME - NIGHT

A short time later. Dinner with the Hart family, everyone at the table now, Cohle still ruffled, drinking coffee and looking at least a little more sober. MACIE and AUDREY pick their food while making faces at one another. Hart cuts his steak quietly, letting MAGGIE carry the conversation-

MAGGIE

I said, 'Your life's in this man's hands? Am I wrong?' Of course he should meet the family.

HART

You know it's not that dramatic.
(to Rust)
Never used my gun.

MAGGIE

(to Rust)
Have you? Used your gun?

Cohle pauses, looks at the table and the girls who've turned their attention to him--

COHLE

Yeah.

MACIE

Have you shot people?!

MAGGIE

Macie-

MACIE

Daddy's never shot anybody.

COHLE

That's good. You don't want to have to shoot people.

AUDREY

But you have, huh?

A beat as Cohle considers lying--

COHLE

Yeah.

MAGGIE

Marty says you're from Louisiana?

COHLE
Southwest Louisiana. Yeah. But I's
working in Texas too, before here.

MAGGIE
What kind of work?

COHLE
Narcotics, mostly. I was on robbery
squad in Baton Rouge till '85.

At the word 'narcotics', Hart's eyes jump to Cohle's arm, where his rolled sleeve depicts the edge of his FLAME AND DICE TATTOO. In the house, the PHONE RINGS--

HART
I'll get it. Keep eating.

He rises--

INT. BEDROOM, HART HOUSE - NIGHT

Hart stands beside he and Maggie's bed, talking on a PHONE that rests on a nightstand--

HART
(into phone)
Thanks for calling. He'll
appreciate it... Then I appreciate
it.

Hart sets the phone on a pillow. FOLLOW as he walks down the short hallway, back to the dining area adjoining the kitchen. He pauses a moment, as he sees Maggie and Cohle talking between one another, with lowered voices--

As he approaches, he can hear Cohle's hushed voice--

COHLE
(to Maggie)
--in the street. We didn't last
long after that. Transferred to
narco. 24/7.

When Hart reaches the table, Cohle stops talking, and Hart sees that his eyes are a little wet--

HART
Chris Demma's on the phone for you.
Something about one of your opens.

Cohle nods, excuses himself and walks to the back bedroom--

Hart notices that Maggie seems newly quiet, suddenly sad--

HART (CONT'D)
What was that? What were you talking about?

MAGGIE
How he got here. Marty, what do you know about him?

HART
Not much. Could be a good detective. He's running with the new one.

She dabs her eyes with her napkin, emotionally affected by something--

MAGGIE
You notice how he looks like he lost his wife, his dog, and his best friend all on the same day?

Hart shrugs--

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
You ever ask him about that?

HART
Baby, trust me. You do not want to pick this guy's brain.

Cohle re-appears, and they both turn abruptly.

HART (CONT'D)
(re phone call)
You need to go?

COHLE
Nah. It's nothing can't wait.

Hart is slightly taken aback. Cohle's not going through with the escape plan, but instead sits back down to finish his meal--

MAGGIE
You were saying, Rust? About the marriage?

COHLE
Aw, you know, we can find something nicer to talk about. Marty- I saw your tying table. You fly-fish?

HART
Little bit.

Marty doesn't respond further, bothered, shovels food in his mouth--

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Martin Hart, 56--

HART

I don't know why I resented it. Maybe I didn't like that he stayed, when he could have left in all politeness. Or I resented that Maggie was getting him to talk so much.

Some point of recollection catches him, and he digresses slightly--

INT. HART HOME - NIGHT

At the dinner table, Hart eats in silence while Cohle and Maggie talk and the girls laugh with one another. The only dialogue Hart's 2010 V.O.--

HART (V.O.)

She did love to talk. Loved sitting around a table, gabbing. Everybody in her family did. I wasn't much for that. Never had been, but especially when I'm off work...

Cohle says something and Maggie laughs--

HART (V.O.) (CONT'D)

One of those consequences of the job, huh? Silence, monotony. These were the friends of my home.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Martin Hart, 56--

HART

So why'm I telling you about dinner? We oughta talk about Dora Lange. Yeah?..

We stay on Martin Hart's face as it suspiciously studies the camera--

INT. INCIDENT ROOM, CID HQ, ARKANSAS - DAY

Hart and Cohle stand in front a room of TEN OTHER DETECTIVES, with LT. QUESADA standing to their right, a large DRY-ERASE BOARD between them. Squad debrief--

Quesada holds up a copy of the ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE. Its HEADLINE: Angel Murdered in Pines of Benton--

Cohle has tacked on the board several of the M.E.'S PHOTOS from the scene. Hart writes the name DORA LANGE across the top of the board--

COHLE

She look like an angel to any of you guys?

No one answers, but they eye-fuck Cohle enough that he steps back--

HART

(re board)

This is what we have right now.

The detectives listen--

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Martin Hart, 56, speaking in response to his interviewer--

HART

Me? I joined in '75, when I's 24. BA in criminal justice from U of Ark. One semester of law school.

He looks over his big knuckles, his COLLEGE RING--

HART (CONT'D)

Wasn't for me. Desks. I was always an athlete, see, and I think that's key to something. Like it has to do with the need to not be stabled. Same sort of thing maybe makes someone right for certain sports. That urge to run out front.

Reflecting, he shrugs, not really caring to analyze himself too deeply--

HART (CONT'D)

I wanted action. I wanted to be there, at the places behind our lives. I wanted to walk past the yellow tape... And to protect.

(MORE)

HART (CONT'D)

Do good. Same stuff that led to me opening up the agency after I took my pension. Why I doubt I'll ever stop.

Almost congratulating himself--

HART (CONT'D)

I just need to be out there. Making moves. Digging... It's what Rust called 'the narcotic of *knowing*.'

A long pause, where it appears Hart is receiving a question--

HART (CONT'D)

Met Margaret my senior year. She was a freshman. Eighteen and straight off the tree. Small, with freckled skin. A big pile of thick, black hair. Green eyes. Irish. This ass. Tits like softballs. I'll say it. We should celebrate those memories, if we got em, yeah?

His tone drops a little--

HART (CONT'D)

Gets difficult to remember her like that, like back then. I thought Audrey or Macie would look like her as they grew, but they look like me. I don't even have pictures of Maggie from back then... Burned them all one night. Shit-hammered. Wish I hadn't done that, now.

He straightens, dispels the nostalgia and speaks directly--

HART (CONT'D)

Anyway- we were married for twenty-five years. And for the last fourteen I worked with Rust Cohle. I mean, that long a time, a relationship becomes lots of different things. Different incarnations... Rust changed a lot, back and forth. We both did. And yeah, we left it bad. But, you know, I can say this: he was a great detective. Things I saw Rust do--

A beat. Oddly, he grins--

HART (CONT'D)

Look. I try not to hold grudges...
I believe that kind of thinking can
lead to cancer.

INT. INCIDENT ROOM, CID HQ, ARKANSAS - DAY

The long briefing obviously ending, Hart is giving assignments to the DETECTIVES who aren't otherwise occupied. As he says their NAMES, they move out. NOTICE who's-who among them. While he talks, Cohle hands out flyers with Dora's old MUG SHOT and a list of her known associates--

HART

Lutz and Farvre, get you to do the
hooker questioning.

Lutz and Farvre groan--

HART (CONT'D)

Demma, Geraci, if you guys can talk
to old neighbors, the former
landlord... Emmett, Will, you guys
can free-float, work your CIs, take
her flyer around to the truck
stops, prost rousts. Visit with the
Springfield cops who busted her in
'87.

THOMPSON (EMMETT)

Sure you guys got enough to do?

COHLE

I put some troopers checking
northwest crime reports for
flashing, fetish burglaries.
Anything with a lust component,
going back ten years. You want
that?

Thompson's silent, resentful-

HART

We're going to start with her ex-
husband. Pine Bluff State Pen.
We're handling her mom and ex, but
find some KAs. Everybody check back
at five, yeah? You get anything,
put in on the board.

The detectives disperse. Quesada nods approvingly to Hart,
ignores Cohle, and walks to his office--

COHLE

Ready?

HART

(re lieutenant)

What was that about? With Quesada,
yesterday?

COHLE

Nothing. The State Attorney just
thought I had flex. Which I don't.
Come on, let's hit it.

Hart follows Cohle to the EXIT, suspicious and further unsure
of his partner--

EXT. ARKANSAS HWY - DAY

The unmarked CID CAR travels southeast along I-40, traveling
through Foothills, Forest, Lakes, natural beauty, all frosted
with the last vestiges of a clingy winter. NOTICE rising
above the trees, the ENORMOUS FUSION TOWERS of ARKANSAS
NUCLEAR ONE, a nuclear plant in the middle of otherwise
picturesque surroundings. The car seems to take forever to
pass the structure, it's so immense--

COHLE

So... dinner next week?

HART

...Yeah.

More silence, as the shadow of the NUKE TOWERS passes--

COHLE

(re nuke plant)

How many of those things you think
the Russians got?

HART

I don't know.

COHLE

I oughta look that up.

Hart, tense, remains silent, and we are reminded that we're
barely out of the COLD WAR at this point. Cohle stares out
the windows--

The car passes a LITTLE GIRL standing by the side of the
road. She waves to the men--

COHLE (CONT'D)

You believe in ghosts?

HART

That's it. Stop. Just stop. Please.
Please don't talk anymore. Till we
get there. Turn on the radio or
something. It's yours.

Cohle doesn't react to this, doesn't even turn from the
window--

HART (CONT'D)

Why'd you ask that?

COHLE

No reason.

Cohle keeps staring out the window as the car accelerates out
of frame--

EXT. PINE BLUFF PENITENTIARY - AFTERNOON

ESTABLISHING- an imposing, concrete PRISON, its walls flat
and forboding, a fortress. FOLLOW the detectives' CAR as the
GATES PART for it, and it seems diminished against the HIGH
WALLS and BATTLEMENTS--

ANGLE ON Cohle and Hart exiting the car, looking up at the
MAIN PRISON in such a way that it seems impossibly large, and
they pause, as if standing before their own futures. Then
they start walking toward it--

INT. PINE BLUFF PENITENTIARY - AFTERNOON

A VISITING ROOM, GUARD posted by the door. Cohle and Hart sit
at a table, across from which is CHARLIE LANGE, head shaved,
in orange prison jumpsuit, ARYAN TATTOOS curling up beyond
his sleeve and neckline. He's thin, hollow-eyed--

HART

We want to talk about your ex-wife.
Dora.

Lange is put-off by the topic--

LANGE

Man, what she said I done now?
Can't get 'way from the bitch fer
nothing.

COHLE

You know what she's up to nowadays?
Where's she living?

LANGE

Nope. She got the papers pushed through when they locked me in here. Ain't heard from her. Prolly smoking pole for rent.

As they talk, the detectives scrutinize Lange's face for any cues or obfuscations. NOTICE the visual echoes of Hart and Cohle's own interrogations, twenty years later--

COHLE

She got any drug habits, you know of?

LANGE

Had a couple. Last I saw.

HART

How'd you two meet?

LANGE

Grew up in the same parts, didn't we? Mena. Dropped out high school together. Hitched up.

HART

What happened?

LANGE

Man, what always happens? Men and women, yeah? You want a wife but only 'bout half the time.

COHLE

I hear you, Charlie. Let me ask you something. If you're telling us you haven't talked to Dora since the divorce, why do prison phone records show a different story?

A gutsy bluff on Cohle's part, having read something in Lange's bearing, and now he's unsettled--

LANGE

Uh. That's right. Talked to her a little bit a couple weeks back. I's trying to get her to float me some scratch. My store was empty.

HART

What did she say?

LANGE

I don't know. She wasn't no help.
Sounded blotto. Nonsense jabber...
Man, y'all axing me a lot of
questions. What I get?

HART

A healthy endorsement to the parole
board.

LANGE

Ain't worth a snitch jacket.

COHLE

Who you snitching on?

LANGE

Appearances, brah.

COHLE

Give me a break. This is Pine
Bluff. It's a goddamn day camp.
Spend some time in Angola. Or
Huntsville. I'm surprised they even
got aryan nation in here.

HART

Where was she staying, when you
called her?

LANGE

Had a number for her friend, Carla.
Carla got her to call me back.

Hart takes out a small notepad and pen--

HART

Carla's full name and phone number.

He passes the pad to Lange, who writes awkwardly, slides it
back--

LANGE

Don't know her full name. Works at
the Conoco.

COHLE

You said Dora was talking nonsense
or something?

LANGE

Uh, yeah. Just stupid shit. Didn't
even make sense. Pissed me off.

(MORE)

LANGE (CONT'D)

Like, how I'm gonna talk to you,
you this in the bag? Right?

COHLE

What did she say. Seriously.

LANGE

Uh, shit. Crank talk, like. Talking
she'd been saved and she wanted me
to be saved. Said some... Slurred.
I don't know. It didn't make sense.

Cohle and Hart glance at one another--

COHLE

Let me ask you this. You know where
her mama lives? She still in
Rogers?

LANGE

Far as I know.

COHLE

You got a phone number?

LANGE

Miss Bernie don't use no phone.

COHLE

Where's she live, in Rogers?

LANGE

Sycamore Street. Less she died.
Say, look- what'd Dori do? She in
trouble? Girl could use a stay in
here, ask me.

COHLE

In '87, she's busted for
soliciting.

LANGE

Got thrown out. Acquitted.

COHLE

You pimped for her, Charlie?

Charlie is proud when he lies--

LANGE

Naw, man.

COHLE

You ran scams together, yeah? What else two heads gonna do?

HART

Try this. Is she still tricking, far as you know?

LANGE

Maybe. I don't know. Listen. Couple weeks ago's the first time I talked to her in more'n a year. And she's gone batshit. All I know... What's up y'all? What'd she do?

Hart and Cohle look at Lange, whose expression says he's starting to figure out why they're here--

Lange begins to sink into the realization--

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Rustin Cohle, 51, looking like he's ready to leave, in the middle of speaking to his interviewers--

COHLE

-Why not? This isn't official. You all asked to pick my brains. This isn't evidence. You ever work a room? You ever buy a suspect a cheeseburger and coke?

He pauses for an answer, indicates he's looking between two people--

COHLE (CONT'D)

Great. Take five bucks and have somebody go out and grab me a six-pack. Pabst or Lone Star's fine. Nothing fancy.

Another pause as he receives a question--

COHLE (CONT'D)

Because it's Thursday and it's past noon. Thursday's one of my off-days. On my off-days I start drinking at noon.

He looks very serious, and as though this were a life-and-death matter--

JUMP CUT: as though on a badly-spliced video-

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

A few minutes later. Cohle has a SIX-PACK of PABST in front of him, along with his ash-mug and cigarettes. He pops a can and guzzles half of it with relish. Lights a cigarette--

COHLE

Thank you, boys. Thank you...
Now maybe we can get to brass
tacks. Cause I know why I'm here.

He sits back a little, drags on the cigarette--

COHLE (CONT'D)

It's started again, hasn't it? The
killing. Him. And how can that be
possible, when we got the bastard
in 2000?

He sips the beer, smokes--

COHLE (CONT'D)

How indeed, gentlemen. How indeed.

CLOSING IN on Cohle's eyes, haunted, intense, as he drinks,
hits his cigarette, stares into the camera--

BLACK.

THE END