

Rust Cohle

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Rust Cohle

True Detective character



First appearance "[The Long Bright Dark](#)"

Last appearance "Form and Void"

Created by [Nic Pizzolatto](#)

Portrayed by [Matthew McConaughey](#)

Information

Nickname(s)	Crash (by Iron Crusaders) The Taxman
Gender	Male
Occupation	Detective Bartender
Family	Travis Cohle (father; deceased) Sophia Cohle (daughter; deceased)
<u>Significant other(s)</u>	Claire Cohle (ex-wife; deceased) Laurie Spencer (ex-girlfriend)

Rustin Spencer "Rust" Cohle is a [fictional character](#) in the [first season](#) of the anthology crime drama television series *[True Detective](#)* on [HBO](#). He was created by series creator [Nic Pizzolatto](#) and is portrayed by [Matthew McConaughey](#). Cohle works as a detective for the Louisiana State Homicide Unit, alongside his partner Martin "Marty" Hart ([Woody Harrelson](#)). The season follows Cohle and Hart's hunt for a [serial killer](#) in Louisiana, across 17 years.

Both the character of Rust Cohle and Matthew McConaughey's performance have received critical acclaim. McConaughey won the [Critics' Choice Television Award for Best Actor in a Drama Series](#), and was nominated for a [Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Drama Series](#) and a [Golden Globe Award for Best Actor – Miniseries or Television Film](#).^[1]

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Character overview[\[edit\]](#)

Cohle is introduced as a gifted, but deeply troubled, homicide detective from [Texas](#) who is transferred to a [Louisiana](#) state police department in 1995. After three months with the

department, he and his partner are tasked with investigating a series of brutal, bizarre murders. A haunted, solitary man, Cohle believes that life is meaningless, human beings are merely "sentient meat", and hope is self-delusion.^[2] Cohle spends his free time obsessing over every detail of the crime, hoarding evidence in a storage locker and keeping extensive notes in a ledger, which earns him the derisive nickname "The Taxman" among his colleagues.^[3]

The series gradually reveals Cohle's backstory. He was born in [South Texas](#) but raised in [Alaska](#) by his father after his parents divorced. He became a police detective in his 20s. Years before the main story arc, his two-year-old daughter, Sophia, was killed in a car accident, a tragedy that destroyed his marriage. Devastated by the loss, Cohle grew ever more unstable and unpredictable in his work, eventually killing a [crystal meth](#) addict who had injected his own child with the drug. His superiors offered him a chance to avoid prison by working as an undercover narcotics detective, which he did for four years; Cohle notes that this was twice as long as most undercover detectives are kept in rotation. During this assignment, Cohle became addicted to drugs, and eventually killed three cartel members in a shootout, while being shot multiple times himself.^[3]

During his recovery, he was committed to a mental hospital in [Lubbock, Texas](#). Upon his release, he was offered retirement with full pension, but he declined that offer in favor of transferring to a homicide division. His superiors then transferred him to Louisiana. In Louisiana, he lives alone and has no friends, living only for his work. He tries to remain sober, but he occasionally falls off the wagon because of the stress of his job and his grief for his daughter. Cohle also has [Synesthesia](#) and suffers from [flashbacks](#) from his drug-using years as an undercover cop.^[3]

The series takes place in two time periods: 1995–2002, in which Cohle and Hart work together to find the killer; and 2012, when Cohle, who has by now quit the police force and become an [alcoholic](#), submits to an interview with Louisiana State Police Department detectives Maynard Gilbough ([Michael Potts](#)) and Thomas Papania ([Tory Kittles](#)) regarding the murders. Cohle sees through the detectives, and realizes that they think he is the killer.^[4]

Character arc^[edit]

Cohle and Hart are assigned to investigate a murder in which the killer [raped](#) and [tortured](#) the victim, Dora Lange, and attached a pair of antlers to her head after killing her.^[2] They find Lange's diary, which contains repeated references to "[Carcosa](#)" and a "Yellow King". In the wreckage of a burnt-out church Lange attended, they find a wall painting depicting a human figure wearing deer antlers.^[3]

Cohle and Hart work the case for three months, during which they trace the murder to Reggie Ledoux ([Charles Halford](#)), a former cellmate of Lange's ex-husband.^[4] To find more information, Cohle infiltrates a biker gang with ties to Ledoux, posing as a drug dealer representing a cartel in Mexico. He assists the gang in a home invasion so he can arrest the ringleader, Ginger ([Joseph Sikora](#)), and force him to lead them to Ledoux, who cooks meth for the biker gang. During the home invasion, a shootout ensues in which several people are killed.^[5] Ginger takes Cohle to meet Ledoux's cousin and "cook partner", Dewall ([Ólafur Darri Ólafsson](#)). The meeting does not

go well, but Hart follows Dewall to Ledoux's [meth lab](#) and calls Cohle to tell him where it is. There, Hart and Cohle discover that Ledoux has kidnapped and tortured two children, and Hart kills Ledoux in a fit of rage as Cohle looks on. Dewall, meanwhile, is killed after he runs off and blows up on one of his own homemade mines. Cohle stages evidence to support Hart's story that Ledoux opened fire on them, forcing Hart to kill him in self-defense. The two are hailed as heroes, and receive commendations and promotions.^[6]

In 2002, Cohle interrogates a suspect who reveals that Ledoux and Dewall did not act alone.^[6] He tells Cohle that he will give them information about the "Yellow King" in return for a plea deal. Cohle wants to investigate this lead further, but the suspect kills himself in his cell that night, after receiving a phone call. Cohle becomes obsessed with reopening the case, and pursues several leads, including a private Christian school run by Rev. Billy Lee Tuttle ([Jay O. Sanders](#)) that had been closed amid rumors of [child molestation](#). Tuttle complains to Cohle's superiors, who suspend Cohle without pay and order him to leave the case closed. That night, Hart's wife Maggie ([Michelle Monaghan](#)) shows up at Cohle's apartment and seduces him in order to get back at Hart for repeatedly cheating on her. Hart finds out and gets into a fistfight with Cohle in front of the entire department. Cohle quits the force the same day, and becomes a drifter and an alcoholic, supporting himself as a part-time bartender.^[7]



Cohle in 2012

In 2012, murders similar to those from 1995 begin again, Cohle is seen in the vicinity of the body, arousing the suspicion of Louisiana State Police Department detectives Maynard Gilbough and Thomas Papania. They believe that Cohle was the killer in 1995, because he led Hart to every lead they had and seemed to know everything about the killer's frame of mind. Gilbough and Papania now believe that Cohle is committing the new murders as well. They interview Cohle and Hart, who both refuse to cooperate once the purpose of the interview becomes clear.^[7]

Cohle meets with Hart and tells him that he has found evidence leading to the killer. Hart is skeptical, and still resentful of Cohle for sleeping with Maggie, but Cohle convinces him to help with the investigation by showing him a videotape he stole from Rev. Tuttle's home. The video is over 20 years old, and shows numerous masked men raping and torturing Marie Fontenot, a missing child whose name had come up in their investigation 17 years earlier. Cohle and Hart track down the original case's chief investigating officer, Steve Geraci ([Michael Harney](#)), and interrogate him at gunpoint. Geraci tells them that his superior, the late Sheriff Ted Childress, ordered him to halt the investigation; Childress was one of Tuttle's relatives.^[8] They soon

discover that the Tuttle and Childress families — to whom both Reggie and Dewall Ledoux belong — are related, and have long histories of child abuse and murder. They ultimately discover that the killer is a Childress, and go to the late sheriff's home to investigate.^[9]

Cohle and Hart go to the Childress house, where they find that the sheriff's son, Errol ([Glenn Fleshler](#)), is the killer, and discover the remains of his father tied up in a shed. They also encounter Betty Childress ([Ann Dowd](#)), his mentally disabled half-sister, with whom he is having an [incestuous](#) relationship. Cohle pursues Childress into the catacombs behind the house, which Childress identifies as Carcosa. Cohle discovers an idol draped in yellow and covered in skulls — the "Yellow King" — and has a hallucination of a spiraling vortex, the same vortex that had been drawn on many of the victims over the past 17 years. Childress stabs Cohle in the gut and also attacks Hart, but Cohle saves his partner by shooting Childress in the head, killing him. Gilborough and Papania, whom Hart had called, arrive at the scene. With the evidence Hart and Cohle collected, they connect Childress to dozens of murders, including Dora Lange's.^[9]

Cohle falls into a coma, during which he feels the loving presence of his father and daughter. He later wakes up in hospital and leaves with Hart, and tells him that, "Once there was only dark. If you ask me, the light's winning."^[9]

Awards and nominations[[edit](#)]

McConaughey received critical acclaim for his portrayal of Cohle, and has won and been nominated for several awards,^{[\[10\]](#)} including:

- TCA Award for Individual Achievement in Drama (**won**)
- Critics' Choice Television Award for Best Actor in a Drama Series (**won**)
- Golden Globe Award for Best Actor – Miniseries or Television Film (nominated)
- Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Drama Series (nominated)
- Screen Actors Guild Award for Outstanding Performance by a Male Actor in a Drama Series (nominated)

See also[\[edit\]](#)

- "[An Inhabitant of Carcosa](#)", a 1886 short story by [Ambrose Bierce](#).
- [Carcosa](#), a fictional city invented by Ambrose Bierce.
- [The King in Yellow](#), a 1895 book of short stories by [Robert W. Chambers](#).
- [Yellow Sign](#), a fictional glyph described in *The King in Yellow*.

References[edit]

1. [Jump up](#) ^ Vincent, Alice (March 5, 2014). ["True Detective: Matthew McConaughey wrote a 450-page deconstruction of Rust Cohle's life"](#). *The Telegraph*.
2. [Jump up to: ^a ^b](#) ["The Long Bright Dark"](#). [True Detective \(TV series\)](#). Season 1. Episode 1. January 12, 2014. HBO.
3. [Jump up to: ^a ^b ^c ^d](#) ["Seeing Things"](#). [True Detective \(TV series\)](#). Season 1. Episode 2. January 19, 2014. HBO.

4. ^ [Jump up to:](#) ^a ^b *"The Locked Room"*. *True Detective (TV series)*. Season 1. Episode 3. January 26, 2014. HBO.
5. [Jump up](#) ^ *"Who Goes There"*. *True Detective (TV series)*. Season 1. Episode 4. February 9, 2014. HBO.
6. ^ [Jump up to:](#) ^a ^b *"The Secret Fate of All Life"*. *True Detective (TV series)*. Season 1. Episode 5. February 16, 2014. HBO.
7. ^ [Jump up to:](#) ^a ^b *"Haunted Houses"*. *True Detective (TV series)*. Season 1. Episode 6. February 23, 2014. HBO.
8. [Jump up](#) ^ *"After You've Gone"*. *True Detective (TV series)*. Season 1. Episode 7. March 2, 2014. HBO.
9. ^ [Jump up to:](#) ^a ^b ^c *"Form and Void"*. *True Detective (TV series)*. Season 1. Episode 8. March 9, 2014. HBO.
10. [Jump up](#) ^ [Matthew McConaughey - Awards](#) www.imdb.com.

External links^{[\[edit\]](#)}



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
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