



The Legend of Colton H. Bryant

By Alexandra Fuller

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From the bestselling author of *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight* and *Scribbling the Cat*, the unforgettable true story of a boy who comes of age in the oil-fields and open plains of Wyoming; a heartrending story of the human spirit that lays bare where it is that wisdom truly resides

Colton H. Bryant was one of Wyoming's native sons and grown by that high, dry place, he never once wanted to leave it. "Wyoming loves me," he said, and it was true. Wyoming—roughneck, wild, open, and searingly beautiful—loved him, and Colton loved it back. As a child in school, Colton never could force himself to focus on his lessons. Instead, he'd plan where he'd go fishing later, or he'd wonder how many jackrabbits he might find on his favorite hunting patch, or he'd dream about the rides he would take on the wild mare he was breaking. "At my funeral, you'll all feel sorry for making me waste so much time in school," he said to his best friend Jake—and it was true.

Two things got Colton through the boredom of school and the neighborhood "K-mart cowboys" who bullied him: His best friend Jake and his favorite mantra, a snatch of a saying he heard on TV: *Mind over matter*—which meant to him: If you don't mind, it don't matter. Colton and Jake grew up wanting nothing more than the freedom to sleep out under the great Wyoming night sky, to hunt and fish and chase the horizon and to be just like Colton's dad, a strong and gentle man of few words. When it was time for Colton to marry and make money on his own, he took up as a hand on an oil rig. It was dangerous work, but Colton was the third generation in his family to work on the oil patch and he claimed it was in his blood. And anyway, he joked, he always knew he'd die young.

Colton did die young, and he died on the rig—falling to his death because the drilling company had neglected to spend two thousand dollars on the mandated safety rails that would have saved his life. His family received no compensation. But they didn't expect to—they knew the company's ways, and after all as Colton would have said: *Mind over matter*.

In *Scribbling the Cat*, Alexandra Fuller brought us the examined life of a Rhodesian soldier; now—in her inimitable poetic voice and with her pitch-perfect ear for dialogue—she brings before us the life of someone much closer to home, as unexpected as he is iconic. The moving, tough, and in many ways quintessentially American story of Colton H. Bryant's life could not be told

without also telling the story of the land that grew him—the beautiful and somehow tragic Wyoming; the land where there are still such things as cowboys roaming the plains, where it's relationships that get you through, and where a just, soulful, passionate man named Colton H. Bryant lived and died.

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The Legend of Colton H. Bryant By Alexandra Fuller Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #13459241 in Books
- Published on: 2008
- Original language: English
- Binding: Paperback

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Fuller, author of the bestselling *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight*, narrates the tragically short life of Colton H. Bryant, a Wyoming roughneck in his mid-20s who in 2006 fell to his death on an oil rig owned by Patterson-UTI Energy. A Wyoming resident herself since 1994, Fuller is expert in evoking the stark landscape and recreating the speech and mentality of her adopted state's native sons. Along the way, she sheds light on the tough, unpredictable lives of Wyoming's oilmen and the toll exacted on their families. Though the book is wonderfully poignant and poetic and reads more like a novel than biography, Fuller acknowledges that she has taken narrative liberties, composed dialogue, disregarded certain aspects of Colton's life and occasionally juggled chronology to create a smoother story line, leading readers to wonder what is true and what invented for dramatic purposes. As such, it is difficult to assess Fuller's simplistic conclusion that the company's drive to cut costs killed the young man, though she is right to highlight the strikingly high number of fatalities in the industry. As a touching portrait of a life cut short and a perceptive immersion in the environment that nurtures such men, Fuller's volume excels, but in terms of absolute veracity it should be read with caution. (May 6)

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From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review Fuller's re-creation of the brief life of Colton H. Bryant is the story of a third-generation oil-patch worker in Wyoming. Spotlessly capturing the distinctive scenes from his life, Fuller takes readers into the Bryant family and the small-town community and oil rigs they inhabited. To know Colton, who "has a way of tearing out of the chute, firing with all hooves at once," one must experience him, and Fuller, with pinpoint detailing and a deadeye aim on Wyoming dialect, teases out a portrait of a young man that is staggering in its spareness, and heartbreaking in its tenderness. But, "like all westerns, this story is a tragedy before it even starts because there was never a way for anyone to win against all the odds out here." The stacked deck belongs to the oil companies, of course, and the lesson learned from Colton's life and death is that human life is small change and protecting it isn't in the best interest of profit. Although it's little consolation, Fuller's deeply moving celebration of Colton's life is bursting with humor, love, and tragedy, like all that is best in life, and without ever having met him, you won't soon forget Colton H. Bryant. --Ian Chipman

Review

" [Fuller's] book-set in her new home, the high plains of Wyoming-hangs so faultlessly on its high-altitude, big-sky, oildrilling bones that it seems not so much to have been written as uncovered by the wind and weather of the American north-west."

-*The Economist*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Cheryl Estrella:

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Norman Fuentes:

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Helen Butts:

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