

The Alternate Bios

Casey Fuller

Alternate Bio 4

Casey Fuller once met a homeless boy in the forest. His name was Brandon, and he was from one trailer park over. Not a word about why he was there, no one thought about being all alone. He asked for one thing: could Casey Fuller get him a can of soup? Then another: could he stay in the fort Stacy Mullner made with Johnny Perez? It had a fake chimney. Casey Fuller said yes and yes and went to look through all the cupboards back home. All Casey Fuller remembers about Brandon is his face, his hair, the color of his eyes. (They appear now with secret depths, one surface sliding into the background as another becomes the focus.) It was summer. There were thousands of brown birds. The woods were a blaze of bright green. Casey Fuller has never asked this of anyone but pause here and picture his 11-year-old hands: carrying a can he found through the worn paths behind the trailers, flipping it in the air like it was a game, tucking it like a football, when, in truth, it was the earliest part of his work.

Alternate Bio 6

Casey Fuller once took two weeks off from school. He was a junior,

he'd just quit wrestling, and his Volkswagen Rabbit was being fixed out by Skateland toward the end of South Bay Road. The arrangement he worked out with his mom was this: he'd drive her early to work, drop her off at a building with underground parking, and come back at 4:30 to pick her up. He'd use her car, a coppery 4-door Toyota Corolla with a light brown interior. What Casey Fuller remembers about these two weeks is the time. How he went out to bodies of water to skip rocks. How he sat at a rest stop and thought about nothing. How one road kept turning into another, then another, and then another. When his car was ready, he went back to school. He forged a note saying his dad was sick in Idaho. His teachers, of course, dismissed him as lost. When he asked what he could do to pass, one repeated the word from the rest stop: nothing. He can't remember what happened to the Volkswagen. He still has dreams about his missed assignments. His mom went back to driving to her job and never noticed the miles on her car. His work has appeared in food people have eaten, clean hubcaps, stacks of blank paper, cardboard boxes raised 40 feet in the air.

Alternate Bio 7

Casey Fuller used to cut weight for wrestling. He'd put on thick clothes, dark blues made of cotton and sit by a fire. He'd buy tart pink and green candies that would bring up his spit. He'd go to Kmart, buy silver suits made of plastic, and run in places like he just landed on the moon. He'd deny himself food and walk out by the corn-colored portables while his friends received ice cream scoops of spiced meat for lunch. On match days he'd deny himself water and lay outside weight training class covered with a safety mat he would unbutton from the wall. *Piss*, he'd welcome; *shit*, he cherished; vomit came naturally, and he was happy to run less laps. Dark blues, tart pinks, yellows, greens—the time seems special now for Casey Fuller. What he remembers is a parade of bright colors and the eyes of his opponents. A week after state, on a whim, at the yearly banquet, he got on a scale to see how much he weighed. The coach was watching and decided to turn it into a game. Whoever gained the most from their wrestling weight got a free pizza and was declared the winner. Casey Fuller gained 23 pounds. He came in second to his practice partner, who won state, and went undefeated.

Alternate Bio 9

Out on Carpenter Road, toward the hills where it ends at Hawk's Prairie, where Casey Fuller once saw a cougar crouched low and disappear into a field owned by the Whitakers, where the speed limit was 50 but there was notoriously never a cop in sight, when the clouds were out and the night was either deep slate or double black, with someone in the passenger side who wasn't used to it, going 80, on the descent of the second hill (not the first where cows grazed and hang gliders practiced during summer), Casey Fuller liked to cut the lights, shift it into neutral, click off the ignition, and because he liked to hear the sound of knowing these roads like the back of his hands, roll down the window, feel his body rise up, and coast.

Alternate Bio 10

The Ford Pinto has a rear mounted gas tank. If the Pinto is hit from the rear at 30 miles per hour, the rear end of the car buckles into the back seat. In such a collision the gas tank bashes against the differential housing which, with four sharp protruding points, gashes the gas tank and spills out gas. With a spark from anything (including the buckled rear end), the gas bursts in flame. This is 30 miles per hour. If the car is hit at 40 miles per hour, there is a very good chance the doors will be jammed, and the passengers will burn to death inside. Manufactured between 1971 and 1984, the Pinto was thought of as "Lee's Car." Iacocca's specifications were clear: the car was not to weigh an ounce over 2,000 pounds or cost a cent over 2,000 dollars. It takes 43 months to put a car in production. Ford took 25 months to design the Pinto car. There were, of course, ways to modify the Pinto to avoid the collision problem. Ford knew they could provide a fire prevention device in the gas tank. It would have cost 11 dollars per car. But that threatened the goal of 2,000 pounds and 2,000 dollars. At least 500 burn deaths resulted from the Pinto's gas tank placement. In preproduction planning there was a different location for the gas tank. This is the same location as the Ford Capri. The Capri can withstand rear impacts of 60 miles an hour because the

tank was mounted above the differential. "You miss the point entirely," said an engineer testifying to the Senate, "safety is not the issue. Trunk space is. You have no idea how stiff the competition is over trunk space. You can only fit one set of golf clubs in the Capri." The expected recovery of installing the device was 49.5 million dollars. The cost of putting those devices in, spread over the whole run, came to 133 million dollars. Ford valued each human life at just over 200,000 dollars. So, the device was never installed. That was the reasoning involved. That was the world Casey Fuller was born into. And that is where his work first appeared in these words.

Alternate Bio 22

Casey Fuller was once walking in a field. This was his habit: he'd ride his mountain bike out past the lakes, off the worn paths where it was easy to ride, into a field of scotch broom and heather. The time was after the shooting and there were suddenly books and authors. He was out there trying to find a place to have some coffee and Faulkner. Then he heard a deep crack and some snapping. Casey Fuller looked around. He expected a big elk or a bear smashing a branch. What he felt was a wider rumble. He looked up. He expected another jet, or something attached to a giant motor. What he saw was waving toward him. From a far distance then rolling closer and closer. Casey Fuller looked around one last time. Nothing that could fall on him was close. His work was to stand there in that appearance, in the field past the lakes, and feel it completely: the entire earth moving under his feet.

Alternate Bio 24

Here is the last thing Casey Fuller will say about his life lived in these words. Remember how Casey Fuller used to drop his mom off and tell her he was going to school, then drive off into the world without a destination at all? One day he wanted to go to the ocean. In anticipation, as if by looking back it was all part of a plan, he saved his lunch money for three days, so he would have enough gas. It was still cold, and early spring, the camera zoomed out as wide as it would go to take in what he

was seeing. The horizon was silver tinged with wisps of blue behind light brown clouds. He was there. All the earth before him was sand. Then, without knowing why, without wondering who was there to see, without regard for what he was wearing, without a strategy, after looking at the waves rolling green on green on green, Casey Fuller did what you hoped he'd do and walked out into the entire ocean.

Casey Fuller has always felt a little shock of disappointment when asked to write a third-person bio.