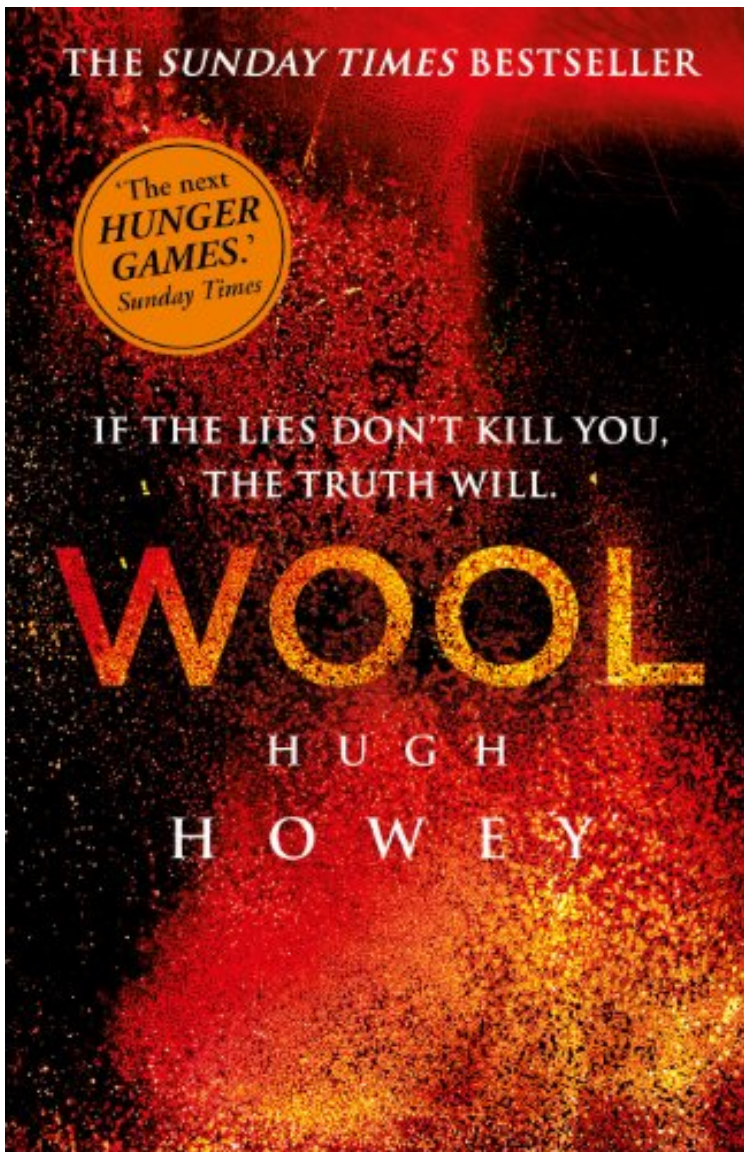


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Wool



Par Hugh Howey
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurWOOL is the story of mankind clawing for survival, of mankind on the edge. The world outside has grown unkind, the view of it limited, talk of it forbidden. But there are always those who hope, who dream. These are the dangerous people, the people who infect others with their optimism. Their punishment is simple. They are given the very thing they profess to want: They are allowed outside.WOOL has captivated readers across the globe since its first release and has become one of the most talked about and best reviewed books of this year. It has drawn comparisons to the likes of The Road, The Passage and The Hunger Games, with Ridley Scott acquiring film rights earlier this year. Enter this unique world and experience the phenomenon.ExtraitOne The children were playing while Holston climbed to his death; he

could hear them squealing as only happy children do. While they thundered about frantically above, Holston took his time, each step methodical and ponderous, as he wound his way around and around the spiral staircase, old boots ringing out on metal treads. The treads, like his fathers boots, showed signs of wear.

Paint clung to them in feeble chips, mostly in the corners and undersides, where they were safe. Traffic elsewhere on the staircase sent dust shivering off in small clouds. Holston could feel the vibrations in the railing, which was worn down to the gleaming metal. That always amazed him: how centuries of bare palms and shuffling feet could wear down solid steel. One molecule at a time, he supposed. Each life might wear away a single layer, even as the silo wore away that life. Each step was slightly bowed from generations of traffic, the edge rounded down like a pouting lip. In the center, there was almost no trace of the small diamonds that once gave the treads their grip. Their absence could only be inferred from the pattern to either side, the small pyramidal bumps rising from the flat steel with their crisp edges and flecks of paint. Holston lifted an old boot to an old step, pressed down, and did it again. He lost himself in what the untold years had done, the ablation of molecules and lives, layers and layers ground to fine dust. And he thought, not for the first time, that neither life nor staircase had been meant for such an existence. The tight confines of that long spiral, threading through the buried silo like a straw in a glass, had not been built for such abuse. Like much of their cylindrical home, it seemed to have been made for other purposes, for functions long since forgotten.

What was now used as a thoroughfare for thousands of people, moving up and down in repetitious daily cycles, seemed more apt in Holstons view to be used only in emergencies and perhaps by mere dozens. Another floor went by—a pie-shaped division of dormitories. As Holston ascended the last few levels, this last climb he would ever take, the sounds of childlike delight rained down even louder from above. This was the laughter of youth, of souls who had not yet come to grips with where they lived, who did not yet feel the press of the earth on all sides, who in their minds were not buried at all, but alive. Alive and unworn, dripping happy sounds down the stairwell, trills that were incongruous with Holstons actions, his decision and determination to go outside. As he neared the upper level, one young voice rang out above the others, and Holston remembered being a child in the silo—all the schooling and the games. Back then, the stuffy concrete cylinder had felt, with its floors and floors of apartments and workshops and hydroponic gardens and purification rooms with their tangles of pipes, like a vast universe, a wide expanse one could never fully explore, a labyrinth he and his friends could get lost in forever. But those days were more than thirty years distant. Holstons childhood now felt like something two or three lifetimes ago, something someone else had enjoyed. Not him. He had an entire lifetime as sheriff weighing heavy, blocking off that past. And more recently, there was this third stage of his life—a secret life beyond childhood and being sheriff. It was the last layers of himself ground to dust; three years spent silently waiting for what would never come, each day longer than any month from his happier lifetimes. At the top of the spiral stairway, Holstons hand ran out of railing. The curvy bar of worn steel ended as the stairwell emptied into the widest rooms of the entire silo complex: the cafeteria and the adjoining lounge. The playful squeals were level with him now. Darting bright shapes zagged between scattered chairs, playing chase. A handful of adults tried to contain the chaos. Holston saw Emma picking up scattered chalk and crayon from the stained tiles. Her husband, Clarke, sat behind a table arranged with cups of juice and bowls of cornflour cookies. He waved at Holston from across the room. Holston didnt think to wave back, didnt have the energy or the desire. He looked past the adults and playing children to the blurry view beyond, projected on the cafeteria wall. It was the largest uninterrupted vista of their inhospitable world. A morning scene. Dawns dim light coated lifeless hills that had hardly changed since Holston was a boy. They sat, just as they always had, while he had gone from playing chase among the cafeteria tables to whatever empty thing he was now. And beyond the stately rolling crests of these hills, the top of a familiar and rotting skyline caught the morning rays in feeble glints. Ancient glass and steel stood distantly where people, it was suspected, had once lived aboveground. A child, ejected from the group like a comet, bumped into Holstons knees. He looked down and moved to touch the kid—Susans boy—but just like a comet the child was gone again, pulled back into the orbit of the others. Holston thought suddenly of the lottery he and Allison had won the year of her death. He still had the ticket; he carried it everywhere. One of these kids—maybe he or she would be two by now and tottering after the older children—couldve been theirs. They had dreamed, like all parents do, of the double fortune of twins. They had tried, of course. After her implant was removed, they had spent night after glorious night trying to redeem that ticket, other parents wishing them luck, other lottery hopefuls silently praying for an empty year to pass. Knowing they only had a year, he and Allison had invited superstition into their lives, looking to anything for help. Tricks, like hanging garlic over the bed, that supposedly increased fertility; two dimes

under the mattress for twins; a pink ribbon in Allison's hair; smudges of blue dye under Holston's eyes—all of it ridiculous and desperate and fun. The only thing crazier would have been to not try everything, to leave some silly sance or tale untested. But it wasn't to be. Before their year was even out, the lottery had passed to another couple. It hadn't been for a lack of trying; it had been a lack of time. A sudden lack of wife. Holston turned away from the games and the blurry view and walked toward his office, situated between the cafeteria and the silos airlock. As he covered that ground, his thoughts went to the struggle that once took place there, a struggle of ghosts he'd had to walk through every day for the last three years. And he knew, if he turned and hunted that expansive view on the wall, if he squinted past the ever-worsening blur of cloudy camera lenses and airborne grime, if he followed that dark crease up the hill, that wrinkle that worked its way over the muddy dune toward the city beyond, he could pick out her quiet form. There, on that hill, his wife could be seen. She lay like a sleeping boulder, the air and toxins wearing away at her, her arms curled under her head. Maybe. It was difficult to see, hard to make out clearly even back before the blurring had begun anew.

And besides, there was little to trust in that sight. There was much, in fact, to doubt. So Holston simply chose not to look. He walked through that place of his wife's ghostly struggle, where bad memories lay eternal, that scene of her sudden madness, and entered his office. Well, look who's up early, Marnes said, smiling. Holston's deputy closed a metal drawer on the filing cabinet, a lifeless cry singing from its ancient joints. He picked up a steaming mug, then noted Holston's solemn demeanor. You feeling okay, boss?

Holston nodded. He pointed to the rack of keys behind the desk. Holding cell, he said. The deputy's smile drooped into a confused frown. He set down the mug and turned to retrieve the key. While his back was turned, Holston rubbed the sharp, cool steel in his palm one last time, then placed the star flat on the desk. Marnes turned and held out the key. Holston took it. You need me to grab the mop? Deputy Marnes jabbed a thumb back toward the cafeteria. Unless someone was in cuffs, they only went into the cell to clean it. No,

Holston said. He jerked his head toward the holding cell, beckoning his deputy to follow. He turned, the chair behind the desk squeaking as Marnes rose to join him, and Holston completed his march. The key slid in with ease. There was a sharp clack from the well-built and well-maintained inner organs of the door, the barest squeak from the hinges, a determined step, a shove and a clank, and the ordeal was over. Boss?

Holston held the key between the bars. Marnes looked down at it, unsure, but his palm came up to accept. What's going on, boss? Get the mayor, Holston said. He let out a sigh, that heavy breath he'd been holding for three years. Tell her I want to go outside. Two The view from the holding cell wasn't as blurry as it had been in the cafeteria, and Holston spent his final day in the silo puzzling over this. Could it be that the camera on that side was shielded against the toxic wind? Did each cleaner, condemned to death, put more care into preserving the view they'd enjoyed on their last day? Or was the extra effort a gift to the next cleaner, who would spend their final day in that same cell? Holston preferred this last explanation. It made him think longingly of his wife. It reminded him why he was there, on the wrong side of those bars, and willingly. As his thoughts drifted to Allison, he sat and stared out at the dead world some ancient peoples had left behind.

It wasn't the best view of the landscape around their buried bunker, but it wasn't the worst, either. In the distance, low rolling hills stood, a pretty shade of brown, like coffee mash with just the right amount of pig's milk in it. The sky above the hills was the same dull gray of his childhood and his father's childhood and his grandfather's childhood. The only moving feature on the landscape was the clouds. They hung full and dark over the hills. They roamed free like the herded beasts from the picture books. The view of the dead world filled up the entire wall of his cell, just like all the walls on the silos upper level, each one full of a different slice of the blurry and ever-blurrer wasteland beyond. Holston's little piece of that view reached from the corner by his cot, up to the ceiling, to the other wall, and down to the toilet. And despite the soft blur-like oil rubbed on a lens—it looked like a scene one could stroll out into, like a gaping and inviting hole oddly positioned across from forbidding prison bars. The illusion, however, convinced only from a distance.

Leaning closer, Holston could see a handful of dead pixels on the massive display. They stood stark white against all the brown and gray hues. Shining with ferocious intensity, each pixel (Allison had called them stuck pixels) was like a square window to some brighter place, a hole the width of a human hair that seemed to beckon toward some better reality. There were dozens of them, now that he looked closer. Holston wondered if anyone in the silo knew how to fix them, or if they had the tools required for such a delicate job.

Were they dead forever, like Allison? Would all of the pixels be dead eventually? Holston imagined a day when half of the pixels would be stark white, and then generations later when only a few gray and brown ones remained, then a mere dozen, the world having flipped to a new state, the people of the silo thinking the outside world was on fire, the only true pixels now mistaken for malfunctioning ones. Or was that what

Holston and his people were doing even now? Someone cleared their throat behind him. Holston turned and saw Mayor Jahns standing on the other side of the bars, her hands resting in the belly of her overalls. She nodded gravely toward the cot. When the cells empty, at night when you and Deputy Marnes are off duty, I sometimes sit right there and enjoy that very view. Holston turned back to survey the muddy, lifeless landscape. It only looked depressing compared to scenes from the childrens books-the only books to survive the uprising. Most people doubted those colors in the books, just as they doubted purple elephants and pink birds ever existed, but Holston felt that they were truer than the scene before him. He, like some others, felt something primal and deep when he looked at those worn pages splashed green and blue. Even so, when compared to the stifling silo, that muddy gray view outside looked like some kind of salvation, just the sort of open air men were born to breathe. Always seems a little clearer in here, Jahns said. The view, I mean. Holston remained silent. He watched a curling piece of cloud break off and move in a new direction, blacks and grays swirling together. You get your pick for dinner, the mayor said. Its tradition- You dont need to tell me how this works, Holston said, cutting Jahns off. Its only been three years since I served Allison her last meal right here. He reached to spin the copper ring on his finger out of habit, forgetting he had left it on his dresser hours ago. Cant believe its been that long, Jahns murmured to herself. Holston turned to see her squinting at the clouds displayed on the wall. Do you miss her? Holston asked venomously. Or do you just hate that the blur has had so much time to build? Jahns eyes flashed his way a moment, then dropped to the floor. You know I dont want this, not for any view. But rules are the rules- Its not to be blamed, Holston said, trying to let the anger go. I know the rules better than most. His hand moved, just a little, toward the missing badge, left behind like his ring. Hell, I enforced those rules for most of my life, even after I realized they were bullshit. Jahns cleared her throat. Well, I wont ask why you chose this. Ill just assume its because youd be unhappier here. Holston met her gaze, saw the film on her eyes before she was able to blink it away. Jahns looked thinner than usual, comical in her gaping overalls. The lines in her neck and radiating from her eyes were deeper than he remembered. Darker. And he thought the crack in her voice was genuine regret, not just age or her ration of tobacco. Suddenly, Holston saw himself through Jahns eyes, a broken man sitting on a worn bench, his skin gray from the pale glow of the dead world beyond, and the sight made him dizzy. His head spun as it groped for something reasonable to latch onto, something that made sense. It seemed a dream, the predicament his life had become. None of the last three years seemed true. Nothing seemed true anymore. He turned back to the tan hills. In the corner of his eye, he thought he saw another pixel die, turning stark white. Another tiny window had opened, another clear view through an illusion he had grown to doubt. Tomorrow will be my salvation, Holston thought savagely, even if I die out there. Ive been mayor too long, Jahns said. Holston glanced back and saw that her wrinkled hands were wrapped around the cold steel bars. Our records dont go back to the beginning, you know. They dont go back before the uprising a century and a half ago, but since then no mayor has sent more people to cleaning than I have. Im sorry to burden you, Holston said dryly. I take no pleasure in it. Thats all Im saying. No pleasure at all. Holston swept his hand at the massive screen. But youll be the first to watch a clear sunset tomorrow night, wont you? He hated the way he sounded. Holston wasnt angry about his death, or life, or whatever came after tomorrow, but resentment over Allisons fate still lingered. He continued to see inevitable events from the past as avoidable, long after theyd taken their course. Youll all love the view tomorrow, he said, more to himself than the mayor. Thats not fair at all, Jahns said. The law is the law. You broke it. You knew you were breaking it. Holston looked at his feet. The two of them allowed a silence to form. Mayor Jahns was the one who eventually spoke. You havent threatened yet to not go through with it. Some of the others are nervous that you might not do the cleaning because you arent saying you wont. Holston laughed. Theyd feel better if I said I wouldnt clean the sensors? He shook his head at the mad logic. Everyone who sits there says they arent gonna do it, Jahns told him, but then they do. Its what weve all come to expect- Allison never threatened that she wouldnt do it, Holston reminded her, but he knew what Jahns meant. He himself had been sure Allison wouldnt wipe the lenses. And now he thought he understood what shed been going through as she sat on that very bench. There were larger things to consider than the act of cleaning. Most who were sent outside were caught at something, were surprised to find themselves in that cell, their fate mere hours away. Revenge was on their mind when they said they wouldnt do it. But Allison and now Holston had bigger worries. Whether or not theyd clean was inconsequential; they had arrived here because they wanted, on some insane level, to be here. All that remained was the curiosity of it all. The wonder of the outside world beyond the projected veil of the wallscreens. So, are you planning on going through with it or not? Jahns asked directly, her desperation evident. You said it yourself. Holston shrugged. Everyone does it.

There must be some reason, right? He pretended not to care, to be disinterested in the why of the cleaning, but he had spent most of his life, the past three years especially, agonizing over the why. The question drove him nuts. And if his refusing to answer Jahns caused pain to those who had murdered his wife, he wouldn't be upset. Jahns rubbed her hands up and down the bars, anxious. Can I tell them you'll do it? she asked. Or tell them I won't. I don't care. It sounds like either answer will mean the same to them. Jahns didn't reply.

Holston looked up at her, and the mayor nodded. If you change your mind about the meal, let Deputy Marnes know. He'll be at the desk all night, as is tradition . . . She didn't need to say. Tears came to Holston's eyes as he remembered that part of his former duties. He had manned that desk twelve years ago when Donna Parkins was put to cleaning, eight years ago when it was Jack Brent's time. And he had spent a night clinging to the bars, lying on the floor, a complete wreck, three years ago when it was his wife's turn. Mayor Jahns turned to go. Sheriff, Holston muttered before she got out of earshot. I'm sorry? Jahns lingered on the other side of the bars, her gray, bushy brows hanging over her eyes. It's Sheriff Marnes now, Holston reminded her. Not Deputy. Jahns rapped a steel bar with her knuckles. Eat something, she said. And I won't insult you by suggesting you get some sleep. *Revue de presse* "Wool is ace and YAY it's a trilogy." (Stuff magazine) "I picked the series up after the publication of *Wool and Shift*, and found myself counting the days until *Dust* came out in October." (Observer) "A thrilling sci-fi novel, equally adept at world-building, pulling the rug out from under its readers, and commenting in classic sci-fi fashion on our own present day." (The Slate) "Spoken about in the same breath as *The Hunger Games* and *The Passage*." (Independent on Sunday) "Howey can really write ... frightening, intriguing, and mysterious ... it's easy to see why *Wool* captured readers so quickly." (Guardian) "The massive underground hit ... Just don't read it in the dark." (Sunday Telegraph) "Frightening yet completely believable ... I can't wait to see how Howey develops *Wool* into his prequel and sequel." (Sunday Express) "Exhilarating, intense, addictive. A novel you will never forget." (SJ Watson, author of *Before I Go to Sleep*) "A small and zippy vehicle with impressive narrative force...[Howey's] plot twists like a thrashing serpent in a fisherman's net." (Sunday Business Post) "With *Wool* Hugh Howey has created a new science fiction classic! The riveting storyline and detailed prose sucks you in immediately and makes you feel like you're right there in the silo with his characters. But unlike them, you'll be in no hurry to leave." (Ernie Cline, bestselling author of *Ready Player One*) "The characters are well-drawn, and even the villains have a sympathetic side. Secrets unfold with just the right pacing, and I had to set the book down several times and say, Wow, when a major twist was revealed ... If you're looking for a good read, you can't do much better than *Wool*." (Rick Riordan, #1 New York Times bestselling author) "In *Wool*, Hugh Howey delivers the key elements of great science fiction: an authentic and detailed future-world; realistic, relatable characters to live in it; and a taut, thoughtful story. Howey's supple, muscular writing is the icing on the cake." (Jonathan Hayes, author of *Precious Blood*) "Written in a warm style that never attempts to get too clever, this is the kind of terrific read that's both respectful towards and transcendent of its own genre." (Sydney Morning Herald) "The other reason to have an early night. A must-read." (Glamour) "If I read anything better in 2013 in any genre I'll be very, very surprised." (Rick O'Shea) "Wool is incredible ... the best science fiction series I've read in years." (Douglas Preston) "Perhaps the biggest commercial hit so far to have started life as a self-published e-book." (A N Wilson, Reader's Digest) "A compulsive, accessible journey into a sharply realised and well-crafted dystopian world." (SFX) "A warm old-fashioned sort of yarn" (The Sunday Times) "I took a chance on *Wool*, and found myself engrossed." (Huffington Post) "This is one of those rare occasions where not only does the book live up to the hype, it exceeds it." (Bit the Book Blog, Australia) "One of the most hotly-anticipated books of 2013." (Irish Times) "Thrilling, thought-provoking and memorable ... one of dystopian fiction's masterpieces alongside the likes of 1984 and *Brave New World*." (Daily Express)