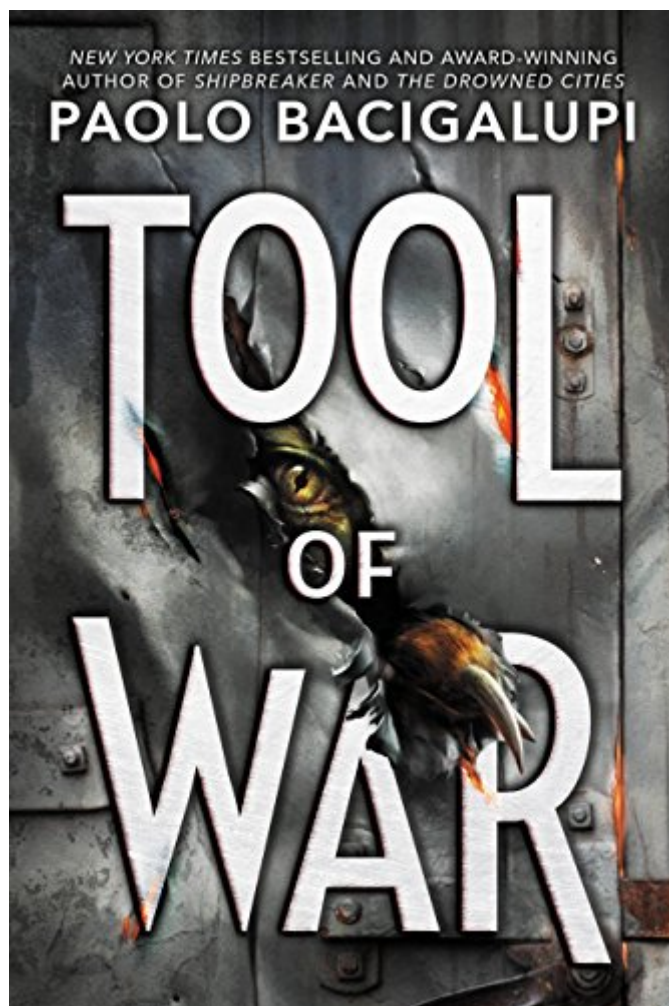


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Tool Of War



Synopsis

This third book in a major series by a bestselling science fiction author, Printz Award winner, and National Book Award finalist is the gripping story of the most provocative character from his acclaimed novels *Ship Breaker* and *The Drowned Cities*. Tool, a half-man/half-beast designed for combat, is capable of so much more than his creators had ever dreamed. He has gone rogue from his pack of bioengineered "augments" and emerged a victorious leader of a pack of human soldier boys. But he is hunted relentlessly by someone determined to destroy him, who knows an alarming secret: Tool has found the way to resist his genetically ingrained impulses of submission and loyalty toward his masters... The time is coming when Tool will embark on an all-out war against those who have enslaved him. From one of science fiction's undisputed masters comes a riveting page-turner that pulls no punches. "Suzanne Collins may have put dystopian literature on the YA map with 'The Hunger Games'...but Bacigalupi is one of the genre's masters, employing inventively terrifying details in equally imaginative story lines." --Los Angeles Times

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

When reading *Ship Breaker* I stopped and realized that I hadn't felt this way since the first time I read *The Hobbit*. I greedily finished *Ship Breaker* then moved onto *The Drowned Cities* then *The Windup Girl*.

I couldn't wait for *Tool*. First a thank you to the author who could easily have split this into two or three instead of keeping it to a single book. Thank you from a fan. *Tool* in this novel still has a lot of growth to go through and needs to face his past in order to survive and move forward. Excellent book, I'll be preordering the next one.

Though not as strong as the previous 2 books, *Shipbreaker* and *Drowned Cities*, Bacigalupi continues his excellent work in this fairly mature YA series. I always referred to Bacigalupi as the best author you aren't reading and I'm glad he is breaking out. We continue the tale of the augmented creature *Tool* who appeared in the previous books along with some of the characters from both *Shipbreaker* and *Drowned Cities* making an appearance. Bacigalupi pulls no punches in showing the ugliness and brutality of the post fossil fuel world and there are many casualties and a lot of carnage. The story is primarily about *Tool* throwing off his inbred and conditioned loyalty. Raising the questions of what is a "human", how should we treat sentient creatures that we may have created in a lab? These questions are enveloped by a reasonably fast paced tale of both action as well as corporate intrigue. There are no real good or bad people here. There are people who have done bad things because of circumstance who are trying to be good, there are good people who because of circumstance have to do bad things to play the corporate game while covering up their basic human decency and hiding the decent acts they do. As always Bacigalupi does not disappoint and has become my favorite modern author. I wish he'd write more adult works but in all honesty this "YA" series is just as suitable for adults. The only real difference between this series and *The Water Knife* is he sweetens the ending a little in the "YA" series. Seriously, his work is so strong and I enjoy it so much that I buy hardcover editions even after getting review copies. I feel he is that good and that important of an author.

Tool of War, much like *Ship Breaker* and *The Drowned Cities* before it, is a book that pulls no punches--and that's a good thing. The world the characters inhabit is violent and merciless, and the characters react to that world accordingly. That's not to say that dystopia need be graphic or ultra-violent, but the problem with many YA dystopian novels is they tend to tiptoe around things, using the dystopia as window dressing, as if afraid to tackle larger, darker, unseemly issues. This series shows no such fear, which means it is not for the faint of heart--and that's especially true for this book. Some spoilers to follow, so continue reading at your own risk. I've been a fan of this series for years, the downside to that being that when I first started reading this book, it took me quite a while to remember what had happened in the previous books, and even then I'm sure I've forgotten

many of the details. I did remember enough to know that this book reunites the characters from the previous novels, many of whom ended up scattered around this post-apocalyptic version of the U.S., and while this sounds like a happy occurrence, it isn't, not necessarily. This is because many of the characters won't make it to the end of the novel, and though I didn't think the author dispatched with any of them unnecessarily, it does make it hard to take that, after having survived a lot, the young characters end up meeting an untimely end. To the novel's credit, though, this proves that the stakes of Bacigalupi's world actually *are* high, rather than being proclaimed high without any proof, as often happens with YA dystopians. Tool has long been one of my favorite characters, and it was interesting to finally get a book mainly from his perspective, disturbing as the perspective could sometimes be. This, though, is another asset of the book, as far too many YA books waste time trying to make characters "likable"--whatever that means. Even if you can't buy the idea of a genetic augment like Tool, he's really more of a symbol of man's potential for brutality, a potential that's hard to argue against if you take a good look at history and current events. Yet at Tool's central core, he's fighting hard against becoming what he was meant to be: the ultimate tool of destruction. It's possible to draw a lot of parallels between his struggles and those of slaves and/or people conscripted to fight in wars they didn't start and of which they want no part. His very existence brings up important questions about slavery, brain-washing, the cost of war, the effects wars have on combatants, and a long list of other deep issues of great significance. This book's biggest problem? It brings massive issues like this up and then doesn't do a whole lot with them. A really good case in point, for me, was how Nita and Nailor deal with Tool. Nita and Nailor definitely have a point, one that Tool isn't always able to acknowledge, but Tool makes equally important points that Nita and Nailor don't deal with in any more than a fairly superficial way. Nita in particular will acknowledge her discomfort and spend some time thinking about what Tool has said, but it never seems to change her behavior, and while I understand her single-mindedness, she's missing a chance to experience a profound perspective shift that could serve her well in the future. Yes, these characters are all primarily concerned with survival, and yes many of them think often about the cost of that fight for survival, but it's disappointing how few of them try to find another way of doing things. I really wanted Nita to fully acknowledge what Tool was saying, to feel the full guilt of her complicity in the creation of Tool and others like him, but I ended up feeling like she brushed those misgivings aside because she didn't feel like dealing with them at the time. I feel like the book could have had even more impact if she had dealt with them, because one of the most difficult ways of changing oneself is when that change occurs at a time that's particularly inconvenient or dangerous. Tool reevaluates and changes his behavior quite frequently (and often to his own

detriment and further peril), but the others, not so much. I also have to say that I didn't care for the ending all that much. I don't want to get into details and give too much away, but I found it rather unsatisfying. There's a bleakness to it that I understand, but that bleakness smacks a bit of cynicism and I guess I like to think humans can be better than that. Plus, so much happens in this book that it feels like it crashes along until it reaches a ending that's just a bit too neat, and that disappointed me. Still, I wouldn't hesitate to recommend this series to mature teenagers and adults. It's excellent food for thought about humanity's impact on the planet, and the lengths to which people are willing to go when it comes to protecting their own. Given the current situation in the U.S., a book that delves a lot into the "us versus them" mentality, and how it drives justification for all sorts of acts that should never, ever be justified, is particularly relevant.

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