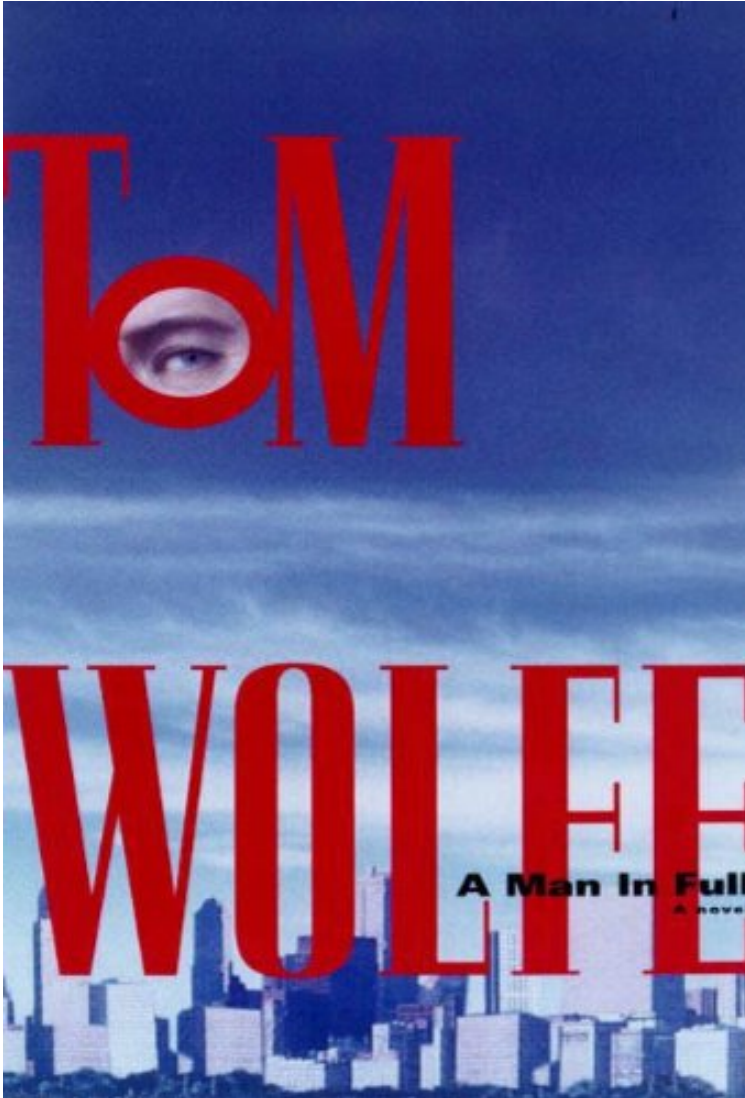


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# A Man in Full: A Novel



*Par Tom Wolfe*  
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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurBig men. Big money. Big games. Big libidos. Big trouble.A decade ago, The Bonfire of the Vanities defined an era--and established Tom Wolfe as our prime fictional chronicler of America at its most outrageous and alive. This time the setting is Atlanta, Georgia--a racially mixed late-century boomtown full of fresh wealth, avid speculators, and worldly-wise politicians. The protagonist is Charles Croker, once a college football star, now a late-middle-aged Atlanta real-estate entrepreneur turned conglomerate king, whose expansionist ambitions and outsize ego have at last hit up against reality. Charlie has a 28,000-acre quail-shooting plantation, a young and demanding second wife--and a half-empty office tower with a staggering load of debt. When star running back Fareek Fanon--the pride of one of Atlanta's grimmest slums--is accused of raping an Atlanta blueblood's daughter, the city's delicate racial balance is shattered overnight. Networks of illegal Asian immigrants crisscrossing the continent, daily life behind bars, shady

real-estate syndicates, cast-off first wives of the corporate elite, the racially charged politics of college sports--Wolfe shows us the disparate worlds of contemporary America with all the verve, wit, and insight that have made him our most phenomenal, most admired contemporary novelist. *A Man in Full* is a 1998 National Book Award Finalist for Fiction. Ever since he published his classic 1972 essay "Why They Aren't Writing the Great American Novel Anymore," Tom Wolfe has made his fictional preferences loud and clear. For New Journalism's poster boy, minimalism is a wash, not to mention a failure of nerve. The real mission of the American writer is to produce fat novels of social observation--the sort of thing Balzac would be dishing up if he had made it into the Viagra era. Wolfe's manifesto would have had a hubristic ring if he hadn't actually delivered the goods in 1987 with *The Bonfire of the Vanities*. Now, more than a decade later, he's back with a second novel. Has the *Man in White* lived up to his own mission? On many counts, the answer would have to be yes. Like its predecessor, *A Man in Full* is a big-canvas work, in which a multitude of characters seems to be ascending or (rapidly) descending the greasy pole of social life: "In an era like this one," a character reminds us, "the twentieth century's fin de siècle position was everything, and it was the hardest thing to get." Wolfe has changed terrain on us, to be sure. Instead of New York, the focus here is Atlanta, Georgia, where the struggle for turf and power is at least slightly patinated with Deep South gentility. The plot revolves around Charlie Croker, an egomaniacal good ol' boy with a crumbling real-estate empire on his hands. But Wolfe is no less attentive to a pair of supporting players: a downwardly mobile family man, Conrad Hensley, and Roger White II, an African American attorney at a white-shoe firm. What ultimately causes these subplots to converge--and threatens to ignite a racial firestorm in Atlanta--is the alleged rape of a society deb by Georgia Tech football star Fareek "The Cannon" Fanon. Of course, a detailed plot summary would be about as long as your average minimalist novel. Suffice it to say that *A Man in Full* is packed with the sort of splendid set pieces we've come to expect from Wolfe. A quail hunt on Charlie's 29,000-acre plantation, a stuffed-shirt evening at the symphony, a politically loaded press conference--the author assembles these scenes with contagious delight. The book is also very, very funny. The law firms, like upper-crust powerhouse Fogg Nackers Rendering Lean, are straight out of Dickens, and Wolfe brings even his minor characters, like professional hick Opey McCorkle, to vivid life: In true Opey McCorkle fashion he had turned up for dinner wearing a plaid shirt, a plaid necktie, red felt suspenders, and a big old leather belt that went around his potbelly like something could hitch up a mule with, but for now he had cut off his usual torrent of orotund rhetoric mixed with Baker Countyisms. Readers in search of a kinder, gentler Wolfe may well be disappointed. Retaining the satirist's (necessary) superiority to his subject, he tends to lose his edge precisely when he's trying to move us. Still, when it comes to maximalist portraiture of the American scene--and to sheer, sentence-by-sentence amusement--1998 looks to be the year of the Wolfe, indeed. --James Marcus.com Audiobook review

Choosing David Ogden Stiers (M\*A\*S\*H, *The Accidental Tourist*) to narrate this sprawling tale of contemporary American society was an act of inspired audio casting. The familiar, snobbish qualities of his warm yet condescending voice perfectly match author Tom Wolfe's own carefully sculpted persona of haughty disdain and color the recording with an interesting sense of authenticity. Without indulging in overwrought characterizations, Stiers manages to create enough distinction between players to keep this sweeping epic coherent. There are moments that find him overreaching, but when voicing a novel this broad, some notes are bound to ring false. Overall, Stiers's abridged reading is an intelligent, entertaining rendition of Wolfe's scrupulously detailed and bitingly funny portrait of America at the turn of the millennium. (Running time: 8.5 hours, 6 cassettes) --George Laney