

Cosmic Surf Wars

By DC Green

Chapter One: Mutations!

‘What a glorious day to die!’ Annie stretched.

‘Are you *serious*?’ I squinted.

Sand sparkled beneath the three suns. Steel-cows happily chomped and crapped in the pasture we’d just fenced. And the surf was absolutely *mesmerising* at the remote slab of rock known only as... Mutations.

So, yep, Annie was right about the quality of the day. Knowing my annoying 16-year-old twin, she was also deadly serious.

I did my best Crusty Carl impersonation. ‘Mutations is un-surfable, grommets. That wave’d squish a damned diamond-fish!’

On cue, a backless death-wedge of water heaved itself up to the elbows. The tube spat,

a dragon with throat cancer. Whitewash sonic-boomed.

Annie dropped the challenge no twin could resist. ‘Scared, Zack?’ She seized her board and darted down the rocks.

I grabbed my— ‘Dreck!’ Annie had hidden my leg-rope!

By the time I found it – steaming beneath a 100-kilogram steel-cow-pat – the twin from Hell was already paddling out. While I hopped rocks, the set of the day burst free of the horizon. My heart thrummed.

Annie paddled hard, face set like a tanned mask, surfboard ploughing through the ultra-dense water. The wave reared. Annie kicked like a bionic octopus. Live or die, she’d be the first to surf Mutations.

The lip pitched. Metres thick and weighing thousands of tonnes, it could crush a herd of elephants (or other mythological creatures).

‘GO!’ I bellowed.

Annie free-fell. Her feet crashed into her board, driving it underwater. Her powerful legs bent, but didn't buckle. By the time her board bobbed back to the surface, Annie stood shaded inside a gaping tube. The lip crashed over her shoulder, shaking the air, drowning my hoot.

'WOOOOO!'

At the take-off zone, I grinned. 'I hate you.'

'I'd hate you too – if you surfed better than me.' Annie grinned back. 'Actually Zack, you're just less... competitive. And you need to bulk up a bit.'

'I do, huh?' I paddled deeper.

Annie raised an eyebrow.

A wide set loomed. I sprinted back towards the peak. Annie was in perfect position.

'OI!' I called her off.

'You're too deep!'

Ignoring her, I leaped to my feet. Way too late. And yep, way too deep. The lip pitched me. I rolled into a ball. Slamming into the flats

was like driving into a brick wall, only harder and more violent. Good thing I weigh 687 kilograms and have muscles denser than a space gorilla's brain.

I drove underwater, my body compacting. The wave exploded. Shock waves of whitewater hammered my shoulders and back, smashing me deeper. Blanketed in bruises, I bounced and crashed. Finally, I bobbed to the surface. Gasping, I grinned.

Paddling back out, I shouted at the suns. 'This is what life's all about!' My veins throbbed with adrenalin. 'We're the luckiest surfers in the universe!'

'Are you crazy?' Annie splashed me. 'Zack, we live in a shed with our lonely mother on the farthest coast of the poorest planet in this Yen-forsaken sector of space. You've just been beaten almost to death. There's blood dripping out your ears. And I'm *spewing* coz we still have to shovel 200,000 tonnes of steel-cow crap before dinner!'

I laughed like maybe Annie was right with her crazy call. 'Perfect, huh?'

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'Bloody grommets.' Crusty Carl shook his grey beard at the Mutations line-up. 'Can't believe you're still breathin'.'

I peeled open my home-made leather wetsuit. 'Lucky you weren't out there, hogging all the sets!'

Carl snickered at my purpling bruises and rumbled at my sister. 'Your board's flotation devices are lookin' a bit low.'

Annie shrugged. 'Who can afford pump-ups these days?'

'Yeah, bloody trade slump,' Carl grumbled. 'They reckon there's companies wantin' to buy our whole damned planet.'

'Who'd be dense enough to buy Dense?' I chuckled. 'All we've got are thick-fruit plantations, rusty cows and right-hand reefs.'

Carl shook his head sadly. 'You groms hear 'bout the contest?'

‘What contest?’ Annie’s eyes sparkled.

Carl smirked. ‘Only the biggest damned surf contest in this sector of space... ever! The Cosmic Surf Federation’s havin’ a qualifyin’ event – a Q-contest – in Dense City!’

Annie beamed. ‘We haven’t been to the city since we were in nappy-boardshorts!’

‘Dense City?’ I kicked my board. ‘That crowded rat-hole must have 7,000 people!’

Carl continued, ‘The top four surfers in the Q-contest get seeded into the next top-level contest, which’ll be on right afterwards.’

Annie’s jaw dangled. ‘You mean... the Cosmic Surf Wars?’

‘Yeah!’ Carl cackled. ‘Comin’ to Planet Dense!’

‘No local would be dumb enough to enter that!’ I snorted, though I knew Annie was a mega Surf Wars fan. ‘Every year, dozens of surfers get sliced up on that stupid tour. Punters only watch it for the kills!’

‘Maybe,’ said Carl. ‘But in the Q-contest, surfers aren’t allowed to kill.’

‘You reckon we’d actually have a chance?’ Annie almost danced.

‘A bloody good chance. That session out Mutations proved you twins are maybe the hottest grommets on this planet. That’s why I’ve already entered you both, and got your Ma’s permission!’

‘But... I hate contests,’ I muttered.

‘I don’t.’ Annie smiled.

‘I hate you too.’

‘We gotta motor.’ Carl strapped our boards on his old tank. ‘Blow-in surfers are already landin’ from all over the sector. We gotta prove Dense locals are worthy of respect. If you two don’t have a go, you’ll be lettin’ down your whole damned planet!’

‘No pressure, huh?’

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Dense City was even more crowded and crazy than I remembered. One Main Beach peak had seven surfers out at once! Talk about packed!! And we passed a two-storey building! Who could live so far off the ground?

Annie gawked at passing aliens like she wanted to catch bugs in her gob. 'Is that a... Zriggle?' She pointed at a hulking surfer with a snout like a keg and six hairy arms.

'That's Snorthead.' Carl nodded. 'Regional planet surf champ. He'll be tough.'

Snorthead scowled and elbowed past
I frowned. 'Why are those people wearing weird metal frames?'

'They're bloody tourists.' Carl chuckled. 'And they've got no choice but to hobble round in exoskeletons.'

'Huh?'

'It's basic bloody astro-physics.' Carl jabbed my ribs. 'Our planet's the biggest in the galaxy, with a super-compressed lead core and a triple sun-system, right? So we've got the heaviest damned gravity this side of a black hole. Bloody off-worlders can't stand up here, unless they have super-dense muscles, like us. Even then, their bloody leg-bones would likely snap unless they'd evolved super-thick bones.'

Again, like us. Don't they teach you groms nothin' in school?'

'Musta missed that lesson.' I coughed.

Carl rolled his bloodshot eyes.

The sky dribbled rain-drops. They hit like rifle-bullets. Tourists scurried for shelter.

'Look!' Annie pointed at a holo-billboard.

Ten-metre tall words blared: 'DARTH SLATER IS COMING!'

I shuddered.

Carl spat. 'To win his record 17 cosmic championships, that bloody Darth robot murdered hundreds of surfers. Don't worry though. He won't be in the Q-contest.'

'I'm not worried.' Annie's jaw jutted. 'I'm gonna win that Q-contest, get into the main event and kick Darth's psycho metal bum!'

Crusty Carl cackled. 'That's the Dense spirit!'

I gaped at my sister like she was more alien than the scrawnies wearing those sexoskeleton... things.

‘And you reckon I’M crazy!’

Next: Squashed Skulls at the Q-Contest!