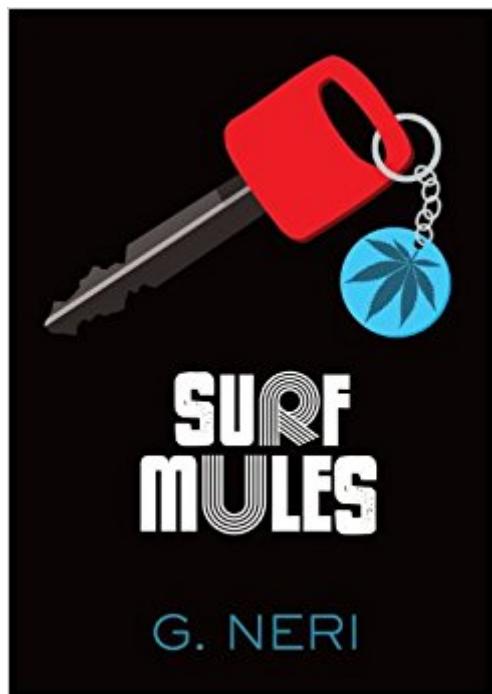


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# Surf Mules



## **Synopsis**

Logan never dreamed he would chop off his surfer shag, put on a Sears suit, and carry a Young Republicans ID card. But he'd rather look like a straight-laced loser than risk attracting any attention. Why? To raise money for college, he's driving nonstop from Cali to Orlando. And he definitely doesn't want anyone sniffing around inside his car.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

"Neri's novel catches readers' interest on the very first page and propels them to the end in this intense, funny, and exciting read. Reluctant readers will be hooked on this fast-paced, interesting adventure... it is a definite buy." -School Library Journal "Harrowing... Neri delivers a powerful story that doesn't flinch... Sometimes brutal, but always realistic, this will find an audience among teens looking for gritty contemporary fiction." - Booklist "Fraught with danger... many will be caught up in the page-turning action of the story. Neri does a great job of creating sympathy for the two hapless surfers." - VOYA "The tortured but loving friendship between Logan and Z-boy proves poignant and heartbreaking. Logan's agonized wrestling with morally ambiguous choices and his flawed yet appealing family and friends should find a wide audience." - Publisher's Weekly "Neri sandwiches his story between a crackling opening and a whipsaw climactic scene... older boys who say they've never read anything will be attracted to the novel's... [view of a] friendship on the brink of disaster." - Kirkus Review "Neri's novel catches readers' interest on the very first page and propels them to the end in this intense, funny, and exciting read." --School Library Journal

G. Neri is the Coretta Scott King honor-winning author of Yummy: the Last Days of a Southside Shorty and the recipient of the Lee Bennett Hopkins Promising Poet Award for his free verse novella, Chess Rumble. His novels include Surf Mules and the Horace Mann Upstander Award-winning Ghetto Cowboy. His latest books include the YA novel Knockout Games, and the picture book biography Hello, I'm Johnny Cash. His work has been honored by the Museum of Tolerance and the Simon Wiesenthal Center, Antioch University, the International Reading Association, the American Library Association, the Junior Library Guild, and the National Council for Teachers of English. Neri has been a filmmaker, animator, teacher, and digital media producer. He currently writes full-time and lives on the Gulf Coast of Florida with his wife and daughter.

easy to read and fun to follow.

After having read and enjoyed Chess Rumble, I was looking forward to reading Neri's latest book, Surf Mules. This book was his first endeavor as a YA author. In this book, Neri brings us into the world of three close friends. Fin dies in an opening surf scene. Z-boy isn't very book smart, but he can come through when you need him and he's as loyal as a puppy. Logan has actually managed to graduate high school and is planning to go to college, but the family's savings have been lost by his father's gambling. Logan is trying to transition to manhood, but dad has not left much of a positive impact on his son. Logan has few resources to draw on to make a decision: few values, no identified path to success and no reason to believe that a half-baked plan might work. Fin's father, Buddy, has been somewhat of a male presence for the boys, but doesn't his name say it all? He and his surfer friends have lived by the surfer code, surfing most of their lives away. Drugs, specifically marijuana, are easily accepted into this life and Logan and Z-boy are soon offered the opportunity to make a lot of money carrying marijuana across country. Logan knows the real decision whether to act as mules rests with him. He has a wisdom that Z-boy by does not. For Z-boy its all about a quick buck but for Logan, it could get him money for college or it could get him a felony charge that would ruin almost any career before it begins. Where can you go guidance? When you're a young man really trying to do something different from those around you, how can you find someone you can trust to guide you in a way that benefits your own interest? Logan has one of the roughest coming of age tales I've had told in quite a while. I haven't been much into surfing since Gidget movies, but I found Neri's surf scenes to be clearly written, exciting and quick paced. I was guided into the surfing world by a capable dude who didn't lose me with tedious details

but who didn't talk down to the majority of readers who don't know surfing. While we think of surfers as macho men who treat their boards with more respect than their women, Neri creates Emmie, a love interest for Logan that he truly respects and they're able to communicate as equals. This is Logan's story with Emmie having a minor role, but she is intelligent, confident and athletic. While Neri's character seems to accept marijuana as a natural substance that can't harm us, there is a powerful message about who is involved in the drug trade, who profits from it and who gets hurt. There's much to like about this book, from the humor and the well developed characters to the originality of the story and the complex themes which could lead to deep discussion. Neri is quickly becoming one of my favorite authors and I'm really looking forward to Yummy in early 2010.

Growing up Logan's two best friends and surfing partners were Fin and Z-Boy. Recently Logan's and Fin's friendship has been strained before they can work it out Fin's killed by a wave. Logan and Z-Boy are approached by a young drug dealer named, Broza with a chance to make some quick cash as mules. Z-Boy feels this is his only options and quickly says yes. Logan is unsure, though he eventually says yes, in hopes of relieving some of the financial pressure from his mother. Logan and Z-Boy drive cross country from California to Florida, in a car lined with pot. I loved how well this story moved. I thought the beginning was great, the author places readers right in the middle of the action. Logan and Z-Boy are in Texas and have a run in with some Texas surfers. I was quickly intrigued by Texas surfers, a car chase and a bloody nose. Thanks to that fast start, Neri has made Surf Mules hard to put down, even for the most reluctant readers. Logan's plans to go to college after graduation are put on hold thanks to his father's gambling debt. Logan wants to do this run once, with Z-Boy. Z-Boy believes this is a start to one day taking over for Broza. I really enjoyed Surf Mules. The characters have a very realistic feel to them. On Logan's and Z-Boy's trip, there is heart behind the well paced action. The author takes the time to develop secondary characters like Broza making it that much more interesting.

From the first to the last enigmatic wave, G. Neri masterfully sweeps the reader into a twilight zone against the sea's ever-present rhythm. A panoply of surreal characters - surfers (and surf nazis), duplicitous drug dealers, under-cover agents, and barely coping parents come alive on these pages for three unforgettable days. One member of Logan Tom's surfing trio has just drowned in a wave. The surviving duo, Logan and Zboy drive from L.A. to Orlando on a Faustian mission to deliver a car loaded with pot. Over-caffeinated and short on sleep, the two joke, bare their souls, and muddle through awkward situations. Author Neri rachets up the tension while keeping to a measured beat

with spasms of honest witty dialogue. Logan, in a fit of doubt they'll make their deadline, leaves Zboy at the New Orleans Airport. At the next reststop a stranger approaches him, confirming Logan's earlier suspicion they are being followed. Logan second-guesses his decision to go it alone and returns to the airport to pick up Zboy. The story's ominous finish begins in a lull before the killer wave curls over. The two friends deliver the pot and collect the payment. They're finished, right? Zboy guards the loot in a motel room while Logan returns their car to its owner. Amidst the euphoria building, reality smacks them down. Everything changes almost in the blink of an eye. But who said true friendship can't trump the fires of Hell? Lone surfer standing, Logan has the goods and support of family and friends to take on the next wave. Readers will want to ride on with him.

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