



## Surface Tension

*Mike Mullin*

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**After witnessing an act of domestic terrorism while training on his bike, Jake is found near death, with a serious head injury and unable to remember the plane crash or the aftermath that landed him in the hospital.**

A terrorist leader's teenage daughter, Betsy, is sent to kill Jake and eliminate him as a possible witness. When Jake's mother blames his head injury for his tales of attempted murder, he has to rely on his girlfriend, Laurissa, to help him escape the killers and the law enforcement agents convinced that Jake himself had a role in the crash.

Mike Mullin, author of the Ashfall series, delivers a gripping story with memorable characters and all-too-real scenarios.

## Surface Tension Details

Date : Published May 8th 2018 by Tanglewood

ISBN :

Author : Mike Mullin

Format : Kindle Edition 350 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Thriller, Mystery, Fiction

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## From Reader Review Surface Tension for online ebook

### Karen says

**Jake:** an avid cyclist becomes the only eyewitness to a domestic terrorist attack; now the terrorists want him either dead or framed for the crime.

**Betsy:** the terrorist's daughter; she's willing to do whatever it takes to prove her worth, even if it means murder.

Told in two voices, this is a high-stakes, action-packed thriller set in Indianapolis with an ending that will leave readers eager for another book. Hand it to older middle school and high school students who crave page-turning suspense, crime investigations, and conspiracies. Could it really happen? The science behind it has me observing my surroundings more carefully!

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### Skip says

A high-action suspense thriller about a 17-year-old boy, Jake, whose passions are competitive bike riding and his black girlfriend, Laurissa. While out riding, he witnesses a domestic terror attack and is nearly killed. Due to his traumatic brain injury, he cannot remember what happens and then several attempts are made on his life, which are not believed. He becomes a suspect, and is persecuted by corrupt law officials. Readers have a tough time telling the good cops from the bad ones. His wealthy and loyal girlfriend Laurissa helps him again and again. We also sympathize with Betsy, his nemesis, once we learn about her situation. Mullin does great characters, but this YA terrorist thriller is not as gos as his post-apocalyptic series, *Ashfall*. Please hurry and finish *Blades of Spring*, the next installment.

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### Lisa Wolf says

Surface Tension is a high-action suspense thriller about a 17-year-old boy, Jake, who stumbles into a domestic terror attack by accident -- but because of a traumatic brain injury and corrupt law officials, isn't believed when he tells his story. Thanks to his remarkably loyal girlfriend Laurissa, he persists in trying to uncover the truth while staying a few steps ahead of both the terrorists and the FBI agent who want to see him dead.

Meanwhile, the lead terrorist's daughter Betsy is embroiled in the attack and the follow-up attempts on Jake's life, but as she learns unpleasant truths about her father, she too realizes that he and his organization must be stopped.

Mike Mullin, who wrote the amazing *Ashfall* trilogy, excels at quick bursts of action and leaving the reader panting for more at the end of each chapter. This is a hard book to put down once you start. At the same time, I felt that the credibility of the plot got thinner and thinner as the story moved forward, until the climax and resolution seemed basically unbelievable. Add to that a tacked on final chapter that makes it clear that this story isn't actually over, and I wound up feeling somehow underwhelmed by the book as a whole.

It's a fast, entertaining read, but the plot doesn't really hold together in a way that makes a whole lot of sense. I stayed interested all the way through, but if there is a sequel, I won't be bothering with it.

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### **Kim says**

I was SO excited to enter a new world created by Mike Mullin. His Ashfall series ranks among my all time favorites and is on a shortlist of books I have reread multiple times. When an ARC came my way, I dropped what I was reading and started on it right away. Unfortunately this book didn't strike a chord for me. I understand that some stories come with a heavy dose of suspension of belief, but when you get to a point in a story where you start saying phrases aloud like, "Are you FREAKING kidding me?!" "This is absolutely ridiculous!" and the like, it has crossed the acceptable level of that suspension. This overkill actually made me angry. I learned the meaning of #RageReading thanks to this book. I did finish it and there were a few plot twists that I found intriguing, so if you like thrillers maybe you'll want to give it a shot. Be prepared though, you do have to have a HIGH threshold for crazy crap happening.

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### **Sherry says**

Couldn't put it down! Mike Mullins has written quite the page turner... love the ending that hints to a sequel. The level of suspense and action had me on the edge of my seat chapter after chapter.

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### **Sherwood Smith says**

Long distance high-school-aged Jake is doing his usual long distance riding exercise when he stumbles into a weird scenario on a deserted road, passing a bunch of semi-trucks giving off a nasty smell. After an explosion, he finds himself not rescued, but captured by guys who apparently want to kill him.

He manages to escape from a moving truck. When he wakes days later, he's in the hospital, his memory is as battered as his body. His goal of joining the US cycling team is blown to smithereens . . . but he gradually discovers that his dreams are only a small part of what blew up.

And. There's someone is trying to kill him.

We switch to the would-be killer, a girl named Betsey, who at first has pejoratives for everyone not in her father's secret society, the Sons of Paine. She's a textbook case of brainwashing, but she keeps remembering her mother, who had misgivings about the group's plans.

Betsey is ordered to try again, or she's going to be in deep trouble with her very, very scary father.

Meanwhile Jake, who is trying to reacquaint himself with his girlfriend Laurissa, finds himself tangling with the FBI, whose agents need a confession for a crime he didn't commit, he has nowhere to turn.

Mike Mullin provides high velocity tension by showing the readers both sides of the conflict. What Jake and Laurissa don't know jacks the tension up might higher, I think, than if they were constantly encountering these dangerous jolts along with the reader.

I loved Jake, Laurissa, and even Betsey, who I think deserves her own book. The kids are smart, believable, and have sound moral cores, which is such a relief to read, especially these days when the news is full of powerful criminals and con men doing their best to wreck the world.

Great pacing makes this a terrific summer read.

Copy provided by NetGalley

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### **karen says**

NOW AVAILABLE!!!

MIKE MULLIN HAS A NEW SERIES!

although this book has ZERO supervolcanoes, it is in many respects similar to his superb *Ashfall* series (WHEN IS BOOK FOUR COMING OUT, MIKE MULLIN???), particularly in the way he writes his characters. they feel familiar in the best way possible - dependable, rather than predictable - a comforting reminder of “oh yeah, *this* is what he’s so good at.”

his characters always have a refreshing lack of bullshit to them -they are level-headed, practical, quick-thinking, resourceful, and they don’t do emo or histrionics. it’s not that they’re miniature adults - there’s plenty of dorky teen dialogue and awkwardness, but they are always very smart teens, capable and impressive while still staying within reasonable standards of teenage abilities.

this one is slightly less-so, because the specialized skills in *Ashfall* & co were mostly connected to wilderness survival and rebuilding in the aftermath of a profoundly destructive natural disaster, and kids knowing how to fix stuff and build stuff and grow stuff is all perfectly believable and age-appropriate knowledge for eagle scouts, rural teens, outdoorsy types and really any intellectually curious teen with a library card.

Surface Tension is more of a tom clancy/james patterson-type thriller for teens - a genre in which you tacitly agree to suspend your disbelief when you choose to read it, because it’s much more fun to get swept up in the action than to nitpick plausibility, and this book is at least twice as realistic as *Scandal* - and much more consistent - and *Scandal* is a boatload of fun:

speaking of histrionics...

and even within the context of a domestic terrorism thriller with teenage assassins and an *amnesia* element, where teens navigate complex life-or-death situations without a great deal of adult supervision or even *presence*, where jake sustains and guts out enough injuries that it made me ache just to read about them, and where the authorities are - for the most part - inept, corrupt, or bullying if not flat-out murderous, there’s still so much *realism*; so much that was clearly researched - details and flourishes that make the dodging bullets and thwarting villainous plots parts if not always 100% *plausible*, at least not the only thing to look at. there are a lot of cool little nerdy sciency details, but obviously the best one is the “how to replicate the bermuda

triangle in your own backyard" part. spoiler alert - you need to have really specific connections/resources/access which you likely do not have. stick to baking soda volcanoes. baking soda SUPERVOLCANOES!

i keep coming back to character, but it's because they are so *winning*. laurissa is formidable. whether she's saving jake's life or cleaning up his wounds afterwards, sweet-talking salespeople or scheming out intel, she's just a wonderfully no-nonsense heroine who's maybe more accomplished in the car chase/jumping out of windows department than your average teen, but the fact that she's also great at taking charge in real-world settings somehow makes it all seem more realistic - she's competent across the board, and honestly, the scene where she's calling her credit card company and the dmv &etc is, to me, her most impressive and heroic moment. i go limp when i have to deal with that stuff - it just flattens me and she's just like beep beep boop gettin' it done.

and while we're on character - which we never truly left, but whatever - since the current trend is to simultaneously blast YA authors for "not enough diversity" and also blast them for cultural appropriation or lack of authenticity when they *try* to be representative, lemme just say that i think mike mullin, grown-ass white man, does just fine writing a teenage, female, african american character. i'm only qualified to weigh in on half of that (2/3 if you count the fact that once i was a teenager), but he's always written fantastic teengirl characters with a healthy "gender roles - who needs 'em!" attitude, and the fact that he doesn't write flimsy skinny flustered girls of *any* race is worth celebrating.

plus, he writes excellent boyfriends. as geeky as they are, jake and alex are what girls really want. pretty vampires and brooding bad boys are fine for fantasies, but a respectful, attentive boy who accepts boundaries without hesitation and isn't too proud to let his lady save the day? that's a keeper.

special bonus points for kindly librarians!

but *damn*, that cliffhanger...

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### **Bea Charmed says**

I love Mullin's Ashfall series and I was intrigued when I heard he was writing a thriller. I was curious to see how Mullins handled a thriller and he didn't disappoint. "Surface Tension" was a wild ride, fast paced and high on action.

"Surface Tension" starts with a bang and never lets up. Jake is a high school student and a serious cyclist. While out training for a bike race, he sees a plane crash, then is injured and wakes up in the hospital. The details he remembers don't align with that people are telling him, the police are suspicious, and then someone tries to kill him.

Jake, Laurissa, and Betsy are vivid, memorable, strong characters. They are strong, resourceful, smart, sometimes cocky, sometimes impulsive, but ultimately believable and enjoyable. They felt like real teens and not a cleaned up version suitable for adults. Jake made mistakes but most of the time his intentions were good. He's in a race to save his life and top stop the terrorists from doing more damage. The police believe he's involved with the terrorists and treat him accordingly. Federal agencies are involved also and I

absolutely loathed one of the agents. He was no better than the terrorists, just working for the US, sadly. He was every bit as fanatical and unethical as the people he was fighting.

While "Surface Tension" had some unbelievable moments, much of it was frighteningly plausible and possible. I read it in one sitting, gobbling it up, and later had to go back and re-read to catch some of the details I had missed the first time around. "Surface Tension" combined memorable characters, tight plotting, thorough research (a trademark trait of Mullin's), a (mostly) realistic story line, and made for an utterly engaging story.

I received an egalley from the publisher for review.

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### **Dianne says**

If the spirit of young adults facing unbelievable odds is something that draws you in, Mike Mullin's **SURFACE TENSION** is exactly what you need! Geared to a young adult audience, the main character, Jake and his girlfriend, Laurissa are average teens who become incredible survivors against all odds. Even the anti-heroine, Betsy is a great character, especially once her life is revealed.

Jake was in the wrong place at the wrong time and it could cost him his life as both terrorists and the government are hot on his tail. His one goal was to get on the USA cycling team, and that's what put him on that deserted road, among semi-trucks when a commercial airliner was blown from the sky.

Captured by the terrorists and in a moment of daring, he escapes a moving truck. When he awakes days later in the hospital, his memory is almost non-existent, his dreams of cycling greatness are gone and someone is trying to kill him. When the FBI needs a confession for a crime he didn't commit, he has nowhere to turn.

Only the quick thinking of his girlfriend, Laurissa and her family's wealth and power give him any sense of hope in the legal arena, but first he must survive the further attempts on both his life and the lives of those he loves by the terrorists and an unscrupulous FBI agent.

Mike Mullin provides high velocity tension, giving readers a gut-clenching and wild ride from start to finish! With a cast of incredible characters that feel lifelike, a seemingly insurmountable stack of odds against them and some pretty contemporary events, Mr. Mullin has created a tale that is riveting from that first page until the very end.

Perfect pacing, action and crazy-scary events make for a perfect young adult read, (no matter how old your birth certificate says you are!)

I received a complimentary ARC edition from Tanglewood Publishing!

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For Reviews, Giveaways, Fabulous Book News: <http://tometender.blogspot.com>

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### **Kelly Hager says**

The synopsis refers to this as a "gripping story," but I'm pretty sure that's one of the biggest understatements I've ever seen. This book is insane. It's definitely unbelievable but at the same time, this would be a fantastic TV show. (I would normally say movie, but there's too much. It would have to be, like, four hours long.)

The story is mostly told from Jake's perspective, with occasional chapters from Betsy (the terrorist's daughter). I understand why it was done this way, but I wish we had gotten a little more from Betsy. (Domestic terrorists freak me out the most, because they're a much bigger threat than anything else, and yet we hear about them the least.)

But beyond that, the other freakiest part of this is how quickly Jake becomes a target. He didn't see very much and didn't understand what he saw. And yet, even the fact that he saw ANYTHING was enough to nearly get him killed multiple times.

One warning: there is a cliffhanger. And, according to Goodreads, no second book. (Which, you know, UNFAIR.)

Highly recommended.

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### **Margaret Boling says**

10/31/2017 \*\* Jake is a bike rider training to become a member of the USA cycling team. He sees a group of people crashing a plane from the ground and they want him dead.

The book has a strong supporting cast of Jake's girl friend, Laurissa, and the alternate narrator, Betsy. They are all everyday kids thrust into a life and death situation, and their story helps us see how we can each step up to be a hero if necessary. This book is primarily a thriller, with a fast-paced plot and several twists. However, it also explores issues of race and class through the relationship between Jake (white, working class) and Laurissa (African-American, wealthy). Likewise, through Betsy's eyes, we see what it might be like to be raised in a racist, xenophobic household and what it might be like to shift one's perspective and become more open-minded about others.

Fans of the *Ashfall* series (also by Mike Mullin) will not be disappointed. Likewise, readers who enjoy James Patterson will want to try this book.

Note: I am the wife of the author and have read numerous drafts of this manuscript.

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### **Read InAGarden says**

I have conflicting feelings about *Surface Tension*. I really liked the overall nature of the espionage-type thriller. But I thought it was overly long (about 420 pages) and really dragged at points. I think the length of the book is going to make it a tough sell with teens.

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## **Patty Smith says**

Thank you to Netgalley, Tanglewood and Mike Mullin for an ARC in exchange for an honest review.

There is nothing that Jake loves more than riding his bike. He is addicted to the speed, banking around tight turns and the feel of the wind in his face. He not only loves to ride, but to race and not only to race, but to win. He needs to win enough races so that the USA team will make him an offer to join them. Jake trains very hard and today he is annoyed that a whole bunch of tanker trucks are lined up along his special route. Jake hears the roar of a plane overhead and all of a sudden, he witnesses the trucks opening up in unison when this horrid smell causes Jake to throw up and smash into one of the open trucks. He finds himself in the front seat of a pickup truck, with two men who, instead of helping him, are trying to kill him. Next, Jake wakes up in the hospital and discovers that along with his other injuries, he has undergone brain surgery. He doesn't remember anyone, including his own mother and has no recollection of his life, including the day of the accident.

Betsy is 17, the same age as Jake, and lives with her father. Her mother left the family a long time ago when her father was becoming radicalized. Betsy was involved in helping bring down Flight 117 but her goal is to become the first full fledged member of the organization. But she needs to complete one more task before that can happen. It is something her father has been training her for her whole life. She just has to kill Jake.

I really enjoyed the first half of this book. It was exciting and there was lots of fast paced action and Mullin did a great job with the writing. We know that there is some sort of terrorist group whose members speak Arabic and dress up as Muslims, but are just trying to place the blame of the attack onto Muslims. You always had enough information to be interested in the mystery, without the author giving too much away. The story is told in the style of alternating chapters between Jake and Betsy's point of view and I found that it worked really well. The characters were well developed and you were invested in their well being.

And then, about two thirds of the way through, the book took a sudden shift. I don't want to reveal any spoilers but the whole thing just became so unrealistic. The actions didn't seem true to character, there were too many unbelievable things happening, almost like the author decided that the storyline wasn't enough and he had to add in a bunch of extra stuff in to keep it exciting. I didn't really respond to the ending and how the whole storyline resolved itself.

Overall I enjoyed the book, except for the wild turn and some parts of the ending. I think that YA's might enjoy it. One thing I got out of it - Jake made me take out my bike and go for a spin!

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## **Sherry Guice says**

Very exciting and could-happen thriller for teens! The book begins with a girl posing as a Muslim in the Indianapolis airport where she signals a group to blow up a plane...meanwhile Jake, the male protagonist, is training for a cycling race along the airport's access road...he wakes up in the hospital with a terrible head wound and without his memory. Soon Jake discovers that people are trying to kill him, but no one believes him...Good enough for high school students and clean enough for middle school students...

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## **Wendy says**

“Surface Tension” an action-packed thriller opens after seventeen-year-old Jake Solley a bike racer in training witnesses a domestic terrorist attack which downs a Delta flight killing the passengers onboard and leaving him hospitalized with a serious head injury. Struggling to recover and regain his memory when assassins try to kill him again, his girlfriend Laurissa helps him repel down his knotted bed sheets to safety. Knowing his life’s in danger Jake is more determined than ever to return home and take up his life once again only to discover that death is only a bike length away.

The story heats up when Jake’s life is endangered by a surprise attack on a bike trail, stops a bullet meant for Laurissa, and when an FBI agent believing he’s an accessory in the plane crash threatens to hurt those he loves. Intensity and suspense quickly escalate when Jake determined to protect Laurissa and his mother begins to hunt for the truth uncovering a traitor, his abused daughter, an extremist group and a scheme to perpetrate a second terrorist attack. Told from two perspectives tension quickly builds in Mike Mullin’s inimitable and flowing writing style. Keeping you on the edge of your seat in a thrill-ride from the first page to the last his explosive conclusion and surprising cliff hanger promises another compelling and exciting story.

Infusing this complex plot that vibrates with depth, emotion and high-energy are characters like Jake Solley, a bike racer who has grit, courage and is driven to succeed. As the story progresses he’s not only stubborn in his need to protect those he loves but shows empathy towards the abused daughter of the terrorist leader. Laurissa Davis his wealthy girlfriend is pragmatic, feisty, but headstrong when she wants her own way. Betsy haunted by the disappearance of her mother, programmed with extremist ideals and taught to fight hates killing, regretting her part in the plane crash. Smart, wary and determined she chooses to join Jake and Laurissa in thwarting another terrorist attack.

I thoroughly enjoyed “Surface Tension” with its twists and turns and realistic, unforgettable characters that make it a gripping and exciting story, not to be missed.

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