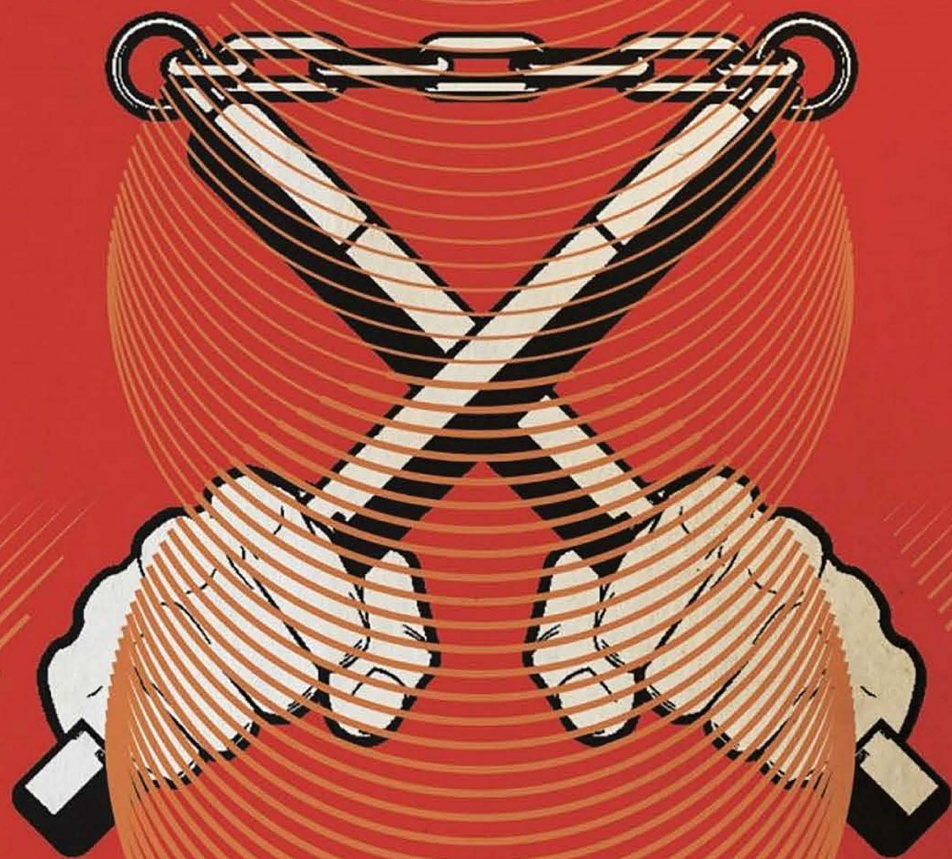


# NUNCHUCK CITY



Brian Asman

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BRIAN ASMAN

**A MUTATED MEDIA PRODUCTION**

**Nunchuck City**  
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ISBN:

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**I'M SKIP BAXTER, AND I APPROVE  
THIS MESSAGE. OSHIRIGAKUSAI!**





# KICK IT

**S**KIP BAXTER, the Most Dangerous Man in Turbo City, gently guided his cherry-red '89 'Vette into the strip mall parking lot, paying more attention to the incredibly photogenic and more importantly lethal-as-fuck hands resting on the steering wheel than the road. He'd been down to the police station no less than three times to register them as Deadly Weapons™ but never got past the desk sergeant, a tall woman with a laugh like a twat-tickled donkey. Hell, once he even showed up at a gun buy-back in the parking lot of the long-shuttered Niederman Toys building, even brought his own bone saw, but all they did was laugh at him.

*Bunch of pansies, with their Glocks and their nightsticks and their pussy-ass radios to call for backup, Skip thought. I'm Skip Baxter, and I'm my own goddamn backup.*

Skip eased into the reserved space with SENSEI emblazoned on the asphalt in front of Hawk Dragon Martial Arts, the dojo he'd founded two years before, and got out, the scent of baking conchas from the panaderia next door thick in the air. Idly, one of his Deadly Weapons™ wandered down to the thick roll of fat straining the elastic waistband of his tracksuit.

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He gazed at the OPEN sign on the panaderia door for a hot second before remembering he was supposed to be doing that stupid keto diet. Marsha swore by it, she'd dropped seven pounds. His complexion was already going south, a bright sheen of grease covering his face, clogging his pores. But he had to do *something*. Middle age was a real motherfucker.

At least he still had his hair. Thick, black, lustrous, cut in an exaggerated mullet hanging down between his shoulder blades, held back with a hachimaka embellished with the Hawk Dragon logo—a hawk, with dragon claws and shit, breathing fire. Totally badass.

Just like Skip.

Skip fumbled through his key ring until he found the front door key, nodding his head in time to the soft ranchero music leaking out of the bakery. He shoved the key in the lock and turned it, but the key didn't want to go. He turned it back the other way.

Locking the door.

Skip frowned. He must have forgotten to lock up the night before. No surprise, that one little wiener kid, what was his name, Robert or Mark maybe, failed to stand the requisite ten fucking feet back while Skip was demonstrating a roundhouse kick. What followed was a shitload of crying—heavily frowned upon at Hawk Dragon Martial Arts—and the realization that little Robert or Mark's nose looked slightly different than when he trotted through the front door at the beginning of class.

Specifically, it looked like a nose then.

Skip figured the kid was lucky he'd gotten caught with a roundhouse kick instead of a karate chop. A

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knifehand strike from one of Baxter's Deadly Weapons™ might've sheared the nose clean off his face, and then he could have gone as Skeletor for Halloween and maybe he'd at least win a costume contest, because little what-his-nuts definitely wasn't winning any karate contests any time soon. "It only takes three pounds of pressure to break a human nose," was something Skip was very fond of saying, he'd even worked it into his vows when him and Marsha got married, and Skip didn't understand a man who'd cry over a measly three pounds of pressure.

Even an eight-year-old one.

Then the ambulance came and Robert or Mark's dad showed up and beat the shit out of Skip—when you're an eighth-degree black belt, it's not fair to trot out advanced karate techniques against a civilian, even a construction worker who outweighs you by fifty pounds. No, sometimes you've got to take your lumps, and you better believe Skip Baxter didn't *cry* like a little bitch about it.

Granted, he didn't remember *everything* that happened between the moment Robert or Mark's dad shoved a greasy finger in his face and when he woke up in the parking lot with a pair of black eyes and a splitting headache several hours later, but Skip was damn sure he didn't cry.

Given the fortitude he'd shown in the face of adversity, he figured he could be forgiven his failure to lock the fucking door.

Skip pushed the door open and flipped the lights on, hoping nothing had been stolen. Everything looked to be in its proper place, from the white

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wooden cubbies where students put their shoes to the sea of blue mats extending to the back wall. The glass case full of trophies for tournaments that technically never happened stood intact to one side of the door, and no gang graffiti defaced the Hawk Dragon mural on the wall.

No, everything looked like Skip left it, right down to the unfamiliar man standing in the middle of the room.

Wait, what?

"Mr. Baxter," the man said, crossing his arms— weirdly long appendages, like a chimp or a monkey. He was tall, too, over six feet, and thin, wearing a black silk kimono and Ray-Ban sunglasses. His hair was bleached blonde, gelled and spiked, with the sort of elaborate fade Skip sometimes saw when he taught a charity self-defense class for at-risk youth.

Weirdly, his voice was absurdly high—the kind of sound you'd get if you kicked Alvin, Simon or Theodore in the nuts. That set Skip at ease. Anybody with a voice that high had to be a pussy.

Still, his presence in the dojo was a mystery, and Skip hated mysteries. They made him feel stupid.

"I'm Skip Baxter," Skip said, since nothing else was really coming to him.

The man slowly reached up, pulled his Ray-Bans off, and regarded Skip with one pale blue eye and one black one. "My name, or rather the name bestowed upon me, is Kunderai Saru. Do you know Japanese, Mr. Baxter?"

Skip shrugged. "Domo arigato?"

Saru smiled, revealing very expensive veneers. "I'm afraid that doesn't really apply here, Mr. Baxter.

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No, my name means *Glorious Warrior*. A hard-earned name. Many years, many battles. Many enemies vanquished in my quest. A quest that has now brought me to you."

"To me?"

"Tell me, Mr. Baxter, you fancy yourself a *sensei*?"

"Sho nuff," Skip said, getting his composure back. He *was* a sensei, and this was *his* dojo. He hadn't been paying attention to everything this Kundy Ricey Roo fella was saying, in fact most of it went right over his head, but he was Skip Fucking Baxter, the Most Dangerous Man in Turbo City, and even though technically this was an unincorporated area called Agave Gardens, they were only a quarter mile outside the Turbo City city limits, and Skip figured maybe he was the Most Dangerous Man here, too.

Outside of Mark/Robert's dad.

Saru nodded, once. "Very good. And who was your master?"

Skip scoffed. "I'm my own master." He supposed if you wanted to get technical Michael Dudikoff was his master, since he'd watched *American Ninja* about three hundred times (including twice on his wedding night, much to Marsha's chagrin), but he doubted this dipshit with the frosted tips and the lady clothes knew who Michael Dudikoff was.

"Self-taught. Interesting."

"What's this about, anyway? I got a class."

"Your class can wait, Mr. Baxter. I have traveled a long way, across oceans, lakes, rivers, other assorted bodies of water, to be here today. To find my destiny."

"Cool story. What's that got to do with me?"

Saru pointed to the case of trophies. "Every time I

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arrive in a new city, I seek out the greatest martial arts masters in town. And I kick. Their. Asses."

Skip flexed his Deadly Weapons™. "I'd love to accommodate you, champ, but I think I'm coming down with something. Cough-cough. So—"

"Prepare to defend yourself!" Saru dropped back into a fighting stance, his hands gracefully arcing through the air.

Skip pulled his phone out. "Like I said, I'm busy, so I'd suggest you beat feet before I call the—"

"Hai-ya!" Saru lashed out with a kick and sent Skip's phone flying. It bounced off the wall, landed on a mat.

"Ow!" Skip said, shaking one of his Deadly Weapons™. He sucked on his thumb, tasted blood. "Not cool, I just got that."

"Worry about me, not your phone." Saru circled, light on his feet like a moth fluttering around the dojo.

Skip backed away towards the door. "Okay, man, I'm out—" *Whumph!*

That sure didn't feel like a door.

Skip slowly turned, found himself face-to-mask with some dude dressed up as a ninja—dark blue pajamas, demon facemask, eyes tight with malice. "Oh shit!"

"*Oh shit* is right, Mr. Baxter. Daisuke?"

The ninja shoved him.

Skip stumbled backwards, spun around, nearly knocked the display case over. His jaw hit the floor—he was surrounded by ninjas. Five, ten, more? They lined the walls, still as statues, some holding bows, katanas, sai.

*What do you call a group of ninjas?* Skip thought. *A pack? A swarm?*

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*A fuckload.*

"Come, Mr. Baxter!" Saru beckoned to him. "Show me your Hawk Dragon style!"

Skip looked from the ninjas, to Saru, down at his Deadly Weapons™. Asked himself a very important question.

What would Michael Dudikoff do?

Probably *not* piss himself.

Skip Baxter ignored the wet warmth in his crotch and curled his Deadly Weapons™ into fists. They were shaking, undoubtedly from all the chi coursing through his body.

Skip let out the patented Hawk Dragon Martial Arts war cry, a fierce "Ca-caw!" following by a long *fwooooosh* (representing a dragon's fiery breath, of course) and rushed Saru.

He didn't even see the first blow, let alone the last.



# NUNCHUCK NICK, SUPER-SERIOUS BUSINESS GUY

**N**UNCHUCK “NICK” NIKOLOPOULOS struggled against the tightening rope around his neck. Already, he couldn’t breathe. He panicked, even though he’d practiced this same position a hundred times—nay, a thousand. It should have been automatic. But now, in a real life-or-death situation, his allegedly well-trained hands simply wouldn’t cooperate.

“You . . . shall not . . . best . . . ME!” Nick cried, finally knotting the silk paisley tie into something resembling a Windsor knot. He stepped back, admired his work in the floor-length mirror on the back of his closet door. For a guy who habitually wore a black tank top, white jeans, and leather fingerless gloves, he had to admit he looked pretty okay. Granted, he was wearing one black shoe and one brown shoe, and the tan jacket/red shirt combo wouldn’t be causing a stir on the Milan catwalks any time soon, but he’d managed a facsimile of a big-time serious business guy, which was what he was

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desperately trying to be. In an hour, he'd walk into the biggest meeting of his entire life. Ever since he left Japan, he'd been training for this moment.

Nick picked up the framed picture of his old master, Pierre, from his nightstand and kissed the dour old Frenchman smack on the forehead. Eight thousand miles away, in his mountaintop redoubt in the French Alps, Nick liked to think Pierre sensed the gesture of affection. Granted Pierre probably would have thrown a rock at him if he'd been within rock-throwing distance, but *c'est la vie*.

"You got this, Nick," he muttered and quickly crossed the bedroom which was also the living room, kitchen, library, self-reflection square, and band rehearsal space and exited his studio apartment into the warm, Turbo City sunshine.

Nick headed down the steps towards a late-model Porsche. And walked past it. He couldn't afford a car, or a cell phone, couldn't even afford rooms, plural, having sunk every last dollar into this new business venture.

Hence the meeting. Hence the importance. Hence the not-fucking-up.

"Morning, Mr. Ortiz!" Nick called to a man he'd never met before, waving animatedly. The man looked confused for a moment, then waved back. Nick didn't make a habit of calling strangers by the wrong name, but he was really in the mood to say hello to someone and he didn't know anybody in Turbo City besides his business partner Rondell. He wanted to share a wave, a smile. Some reassurance everything was going to go smoothly.

Nick left the befuddled man who was probably not

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named Ortiz behind and turned left on Corporal Curtis Jackson Boulevard, the main drag cutting across the south end of Turbo City. What his apartment lacked in size, it totally made up for in location and black mold. Which Nick preferred—all those deadly spores kept his immune system working overtime, toughening up his white blood cells.

Jackson Boulevard bustled with energy. People hurried to work, taxis zipped past, fast food restaurants belched out dark, pungent clouds of breakfast exhaust.

*All these people, going about their business,* Nick thought. *What a strange, beautiful, enticing foreign country.* Business!

The idea that people could make a living by exchanging goods and services rather than brutally murdering clans of rival ninjas blew him away.

Nick waved to a woman in a smart pantsuit, who hurriedly ducked behind a large homeless man wearing a piece of carpet like a poncho. The homeless man jangled a Styrofoam cup with a dollar sign carved into it at Nick, which totally reminded him he'd forgotten to bring change for the bus.

*Oh, shit!*

Nick sprinted back to his apartment, jumping over an oversized stroller stuffed with triplets and rolling between two dog walkers with approximately three hundred dachshunds between them. He dashed up the stairs, grabbed a handful of change from the jar on the kitchen counter, kissed Pierre's picture once more for good luck, and ran back out onto Jackson Boulevard.

Just in time to see the 8:17 a.m. bus pull away from the curb.

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Nick ran after it, dodging traffic, but even he wasn't fast enough to catch a bus. He staggered to a stop in the middle of the street, delivery vans honking at him until he shuffled over to the sidewalk to lean dejectedly against a newspaper kiosk.

"Scuse me," a scruffy, ball-capped man said.

Nick moved aside so the man could get his paper. Checked his watch—8:19, now. His meeting was scheduled for 9 a.m. sharp at City Hall and he had it on good authority the clerk most definitely did *not* fuck around. If he wanted his business license approved, he was going to have to haul ass.

"The hell's this world coming to," the scruffy man muttered over the sound of rustling newsprint.

"Huh?"

The man shoved a headline Nick's way—**MARTIAL ARTS MAVEN MAIMED BY MYSTERIOUS MALEFACTOR**. There was a picture of a portly man with his arms bent at weird angles splayed across a mat. The blood-spattered legend **HAWK DRAGON MARTIAL ARTS** was painted on the wall in the background along with what looked like a really pissed-off chicken.

A flood of memories came rushing back, memories he'd worked hard to forget. "Poor guy," Nick said.

"Not him," the man said, jabbing a finger at the headline. "All this goddamn alliteration! *Martial arts maven's* bad enough, but *maimed by mysterious malefactor?* It's a joke."

The maimed martial arts master on the mat didn't look very funny to Nick.

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"I'd better get going," Nick said, "I've got a meeting."

"And I've got to write a letter to the editor. Alliteration, my left foot." The man tucked the newspaper under his arm and stalked away, mumbling.

Nick shook his head and broke into a light jog. City Hall was four miles away, but he could make it. He had to.

Otherwise, Fond Dudes was toast.

Digging the book? Can't wait to find out what happens next? Score the full version on Amazon or get a signed copy from my merch site!

# ABOUT THIS DUDE



Brian Asman is a writer and editor from San Diego, CA. He's the author of *I'm Not Even Supposed to Be Here Today* from Eraserhead Press and *Jailbroke* from Mutated Media. He's recently published short stories in the anthologies *Breaking Bizarro*, *Welcome to the Splatter Club* and *Lost Films*, and comics in *Tales of Horrorgasm*. An anthology he co-edited with Danger Slater, *Boinking Bizarro*, was recently released by Death's Head Press. He holds an MFA from UCR-Palm Desert. He's represented by Dunham Literary, Inc. Max Booth III is his hype man. Find him on Instagram or Twitter (@thebrianasman), Facebook (brian.asman.14), or his website [www.brianasmanbooks.com](http://www.brianasmanbooks.com).

Here's a picture he drew of Koga Shuko, the villain of 1994's *Double Dragon*:



(It's Robert Patrick with an Everclear goatee)