



STAR-QUEST  
**SENSEI**  
& THE FLYING 'S'

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Wind School  
Morristown, New Jersey

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# CONTENTS

Before The Beginning

## **A HUNT BEGINS**

**Chapter 1:** Star Struck

**Chapter 2:** The Owi-Nwo

**Chapter 3:** Spit-Fire

**Chapter 4:** Mint Toe, Anyone?

**Chapter 5:** The Bat Catcher

**Chapter 6:** Let's Stalk

**Chapter 7:** Hallow Weenie!

**Chapter 8:** Battleship "Fire Dragon!"

**Chapter 9:** The Tantrum

**Chapter 10:** The Sage

**Chapter 11:** Don't Look Up

**Chapter 12:** Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary (Part 1)

**Chapter 13:** The Eye Way

**Chapter 14:** Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary (Part 2)

**Chapter 15:** All That Glitters Is Not Gold

**Chapter 16:** Inspectors, Inspect, Protectors,  
Protect, Detectors, Detect, And Boys  
Will Be Boys

**Chapter 17:** The Bicycle Kick

**Chapter 18:** The Flying 'S'

**Chapter 19:** Rub-A-Dub-Dub: Bully in a Tub

**Chapter 20:** The ObTec of My Desire

**Chapter 21:** Kung Fu Dumpling

**Chapter 22:** Big Itch at The Samurai Salon

**Chapter 23:** Terrible Tummy

**Chapter 24:** Slice and Dice

**Chapter 25:** The Sniffer Stick

**Chapter 26:** Goldie

**Chapter 27:** Who, Me? Yes, You! Couldn't Be!  
Then Who?

**Chapter 28:** Scent of An Acorn

**Chapter 29:** Chariot of The Grass Gods

**Chapter 30:** A Wee Story

**Chapter 31:** Karate Interruptus

**Chapter 32:** Star War(t)s!

**Chapter 33:** Falling Leaves

**Chapter 34:** Phone Home

**Chapter 35:** Dazed and Confucius'd

**Chapter 36:** Operation 'Scapegoat'

**Chapter 37:** Rin Tin Wang and Mr. Fa

**Chapter 38:** Time, Time, Time with Its Syncopated Rhyme

**Chapter 39:** Fa, Fa, Away from Home

**Chapter 40:** The Boy Who Would Be Soccer King

**Chapter 41:** *Carmegeddon!*

**Chapter 42:** Office Bash

**Chapter 43:** Ding!

**Chapter 44:** The Golden'R

**Chapter 45:** Closing In

**Chapter 46:** Ready, Reset, *Go!*

### **Story Stash**

*Hidden Turns, Extra Treats & Secrets Along the Way*

**1. Wuru's Beard**

**2. How Sensei Earned the Black Turtle Pin**

**3. Sensei's Mango Mash-up**

**4. Not So Humble Humboldts**

5. HuGa—Human Gator
6. The Bomb Sniffer and the Isbjorn
7. The Deadly Art of *Gnar Gok*
8. Spritzing
9. The Iron Eyelid
10. Cats Versus Bats
11. Sabbath's Scare
12. Bad Dog
13. Ashukti Tobadi and the Tantrum Temple
14. Aliens and the Spirit Vine
15. The Turtle Sage
16. The Eye Way Record
17. Finders Keepers
18. Pele and Dragon Boy
19. Ramjet the Ramgoat

- 20. Ear Wagging**
- 21. Horse Power**
- 22. Sleeping in Shoes**
- 23. B ō: The Long and Short of It**
- 24. Mary, Out of Time**
- 25. Aiopuna and the Third Eye**
- 26. The Possum Technique**
- 27. Sticky Leaves**
- 28. Who Wants Seconds?**
- 29. Dapper Derby's Collision**
- 30. Three Kinds of Kids**
- 31. How TomTom Got His Name**
- 32. Sensei's Bed**
- 33. Spirit Dogs**
- 34. Speed Blinking**

**Acknowledgement**

**About the Author**



## CHAPTER 1

# STAR STRUCK

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“Where are my stars?”

Sensei—karate teacher, part-time world saver, and full-time collector of unusual problems—moved through his attic with urgency.

Boxes opened.

Lids flew.

Baskets overturned.

Objects tumbled out in no particular order.

His eight silver throwing stars were gone.

That alone would have been troubling. But ten minutes earlier, the President of the United States had called him.

Not on a normal phone.

On his red bamboo hotline, hidden inside a large copper prayer wheel.

The ringtone—Tibetan temple bells—never brought good news.

Using his code name, OT, the President spoke without delay.

“A classified satellite has detected a powerful electromagnetic disturbance,” he said. “Origin: your town. More specifically... your dojo.”

Then came the part he liked even less.

“One of your students may not be human.”

Click.

The line went dead.

His stars were missing. And something strange was occurring in his town.

Unless the President had suddenly developed a sense of humor, the two events felt connected.

Sensei exhaled and reached for another box.

He remembered exactly where the stars had come from.

Japan.

His second trip.



It had been a bright afternoon in Shibuya.

Sensei had gone looking for an insect pet shop. Instead, he found a narrow storefront with a blinking sign:

*Sharpest Shuriken in Shibuya — Little Zippis*

No clerk. No customers. Only a glass case filled with perfectly balanced throwing stars.

A stunning set etched with the Five Elements: Fire, Earth, Metal, Water and Wood, drew his attention.

He tested one against a poster on the far wall.

Thirty feet.

Dead center.

He left payment and took the box.

But that wasn't what stayed with him.

Outside, lying in the gutter, something caught the sunlight.

A small gold-colored cube. A curious object to be lying in the street.

The moment he picked it up, his watch stopped.

The world tilted—just slightly.

A young girl stood nearby beside a lunch cart, watching him.

Then the feeling passed.



In the airport the customs agent had questions about the stars and the gold cube and the unusual insect.

Sensei answered none of them. He simply opened his jacket revealing the Black Turtle pin.

The agent saw it—and bowed immediately. Then waved him through without another word. He knew exactly what the pin meant. And exactly what it allowed.

### *Story Stash 1*

#### **How Sensei Earned the Black Turtle Pin**

##### *Why Some Symbols Are Never Explained*

Sensei blinked.

He had gone to Japan to purchase a rare Stag Beetle for his grandson, Miso.

He had found one.

But he had also come back with a set of perfectly balanced throwing stars...and a small gold-colored cube picked up off the street.

It had looked valuable. Possibly lost. If no one claimed it, it would round out his practice of *Nage Mono* (Throwing Stuff).

Wuru had taught him well.

Any object could be weaponized.

Sensei could flick a playing card into a watermelon.

Snuff a candle flame with a coin from a distance.

Launch kitchen utensils with deadeye aim.

Hurl kumquats, eggs and avocados.

Torpedo zucchinis and cucumbers, and sidearm Patty Pan Squashes and pancakes like miniature discus.

Sensei had spent years learning how to turn ordinary objects into defensive tools.

This cube, he had thought, could be useful.



He straightened—and bumped his head lightly against the attic beam.

“Mm.”

A small parchment, loosened from the rafters, fell to his feet.

From it tumbled an iridescent green hornet—large, bald-headed, and immediately furious.

“Oops.”

The hornet, angered its nest had been dislodged, hovered for a fraction of a second, then launched.

Sensei moved without hesitation.

The stinger flashed past his ear.

Too close.

Sensei had been stung by plenty of mosquitoes, bees, yellow jackets—but never a hefty bullet-sized hornet.

“Not today,” he said calmly.

The hornet circled and dove again, faster this time.

Sensei answered with a sharp front kick—missing the insect but cracking the beam.

A cascade of karate uniforms tumbled down.

The hornet slipped through the falling cloth like a fighter pilot.

Good, Sensei thought. Very good.

It came again.

This time, he met it midair with a crisp backhand strike.

The hornet ricocheted into a silk lampshade, rebounded, and vanished—into his sleeve.

“*Ayaa!*”

His arm snapped outward, launching it free.

Now the match became precise.

Strike. Dodge. Kick. Evade.

Neither could land the final blow.

Sensei stepped back onto a small plastic train...and slipped.

Down the attic stairs he tumbled.

He slapped his arms hard on the carpet to break his fall.

The hornet dove.

From the floor, Sensei grabbed the toy engine and flung it—not at the insect, but at the attic fan switch.

Click.

The fan roared to life.

Air twisted into a tight cyclone.

The hornet was sucked straight into it and vanished through the vent.

Silence returned.

Sensei lay still for a moment, breathing slowly into his belly.

“Okay,” he said. “Now we’re awake.”

He climbed back up. His stars were still missing.

Dozens of cartons remained to be open. They dotted the attic, as if they’d gathered for a secret meeting.

One box revealed black nylon ninja masks, underwater bamboo breathing tubes, tabi socks, and a faded pair of lime-green monkey pajamas. Another held sharkskin-handled daggers, frizzy wigs, and a porcelain jar of *Sangre de Grado*—Blood of the Dragon.

Not real dragon blood.

A Chinese tree sap used to stamp his students’ belt rank certificates.

The *real* Dragon Blood he kept sealed in an oak barrel in his garden shed.

He opened another box of small treasures: gold Krugerrands, a tiny brass *Ganesha*, wooden nickels, cat’s-eye marbles, Japanese pens shaped like samurai swords. And at the bottom—a long, carefully braided beard.

Sensei paused.

Wuru's.

His teacher had given it to him years ago, as simple token of friendship.

And it was.

Wuru had always been clear that way—direct when it mattered, generous without ceremony.

Sensei allowed himself the briefest smile at the memory, then set the beard aside.

### *Story Stash 2*

#### **Wuru's Beard**

#### *A Gift That Could Not Be Returned*

The President's warning still stood. And something in his attic was not behaving normally.

A faint sound broke the silence. A tapping.

Sensei turned.

On top of a dusty carton sat a perfect mahogany acorn.

It hadn't been there moments ago.

"Flying squirrels?" he murmured.

They had invaded his attic once before, until he sealed their entry.

But something about this felt... off.

Too still. Too deliberate.

Had he chanced to look closer he might have seen the letter s caved into the nut—with uncanny precision.

He turned for just a moment.

The faintest tapping again, behind him.

When he looked back, the acorn was gone.

Sensei did not move.

Now he had a problem. Something had entered his attic. And whatever it was could appear—and disappear.

His stars were missing.

Sensei's gaze hardened.

He did not like mysteries that started in his own house.

A gradual chill seeped into his bones.

He gave the attic one last slow, deliberate look, then turned toward the stairs.

Somewhere beneath the floorboards, something shifted.

If something had come into his home, he was going to find out what it was.

And he wasn't going to wait.



## CHAPTER 2

# THE OWI-NWO

---

A steaming cup of Jasmine Dragon Pearl tea warmed Sensei's body—but not his thoughts.

He could use help opening the remaining cartons. He flipped open his BlackBeltBerry mobile phone.

A dozen calls.

Help would arrive in an hour.

Time for one more plan.

Something had entered his attic that could appear and disappear.

That was not normal. And normal was something Sensei preferred.

He set the mug down.

If he couldn't see it—

he would trap it.

The hunt had already begun.

In the garage he dragged out the Owi - Nwo—the *One Way In—No Way Out* trap.

The odd, rectangular contraption lay buried beneath a paint-splattered tarp and crinkled newspapers.

Some people collect stamps, coins, Pokémon cards, Smash Brothers figurines, Funko POPs, vinyl.

Sensei collected traps.

If he had time, he built his own specialty snares. His South African insect lures could corral jumbo red fire ants, king baboon tarantulas, red-fanged

bedbugs, and—with slight modifications—sixty-seven common U.S. household pests.

A handy trap, considering the average home hosts over one hundred species of insects.

His Native American buffalo-skin snares caught groundhogs, prairie dogs, mice, rats, snakes, flying squirrels, chipmunks, and the occasional curious raccoon.

Lastly, were his NPTs— *Nosey People Traps*. Dollhouse-sized homes placed at the bottom of his driveway to catch snooping kids, pesky salespeople, spies from rival karate schools, and dangerous criminals from his secret missions.

Last year, by municipal decree, he had been forced to dismantle his L'il Green Church Snare.

Someone had abandoned a miniature, white-washed church in his driveway while he vacationed. By the time Sensei returned, it had trapped twelve furious holy people—including his neighbor Rabbi Schnitzel, three Jehovah's Witnesses, a Deacon named Jeryl, four Evangelicals, two Hare Krishnas, and the altar-boy brothers Owen and Bradley Saint.

The town passed a special ordinance shortly afterward: *The number of persons that can be safely trapped in miniature religious structures is restricted to eight*. Sensei donated the church to Habitats for the Holy.

His favorite contraption by far was his Sticky Leaf Snare—capable of holding nearly anything except, perhaps, a nine-foot rampaging robot like the one he'd fought during his fifth-degree black belt test on Okinawa, twenty summers earlier.

### *Story Stash 3*

#### **Sensei's Mango Mash-up**

##### *A Disagreement Involving Fruit, Speed, and Regret*

He leaned the Owi-Nwo beside the rusted hull of his underwater submersible, *Snark 2*, stored beneath his deck. Sensei used his Snark subs for deep-sea missions.

*Snark 1* had been destroyed by giant Humboldt squid off Newport Beach during the invasion of 1982.

*Story Stash 4*

**Not-So-Humble Humboldts**

*Why Squid Should Not Be Taken Lightly*

The Owi-Nwo itself was a boxy, lightweight containment trap—built from fifty-two pieces of *Guadua* bamboo, three linen bedsheets, baby-blue toothbrushes, red Legos, dental tape (not floss), and thirty-four precise dabs of Super Galactic Adhesion Formula #36.

It didn't snap.

It didn't flip.

It held.

Once something entered, there was no obvious way back out.

As a monk, Sensei had taken a solemn vow never to kill any living thing. He was a Bodhisattva Warrior Monk—a BWM. Once you took that vow, you couldn't squash bugs, juggle kittens, or throw stones at birds.

Sensei kept a red, white, and blue *Freedom for Bugs* jar on his counter. Every evening, he released its occupants into the yard. After all, many elders in Asia believed insects and animals might be reincarnated relatives. Better not risk squashing Uncle Hugh.

He once captured a brown marmorated stink bug that saved his life by alerting him to an electrical fire.

Speaking of wildlife, Sensei remembered the time he cornered Morton HuGa, the South African child snatcher.

*Story Stash 5*

**HuGa—Human Gator**

*When a Monster Walks Upright*

The Owi-Nwo was ready.

Downstairs, a dozen young karate students had arrived to help with the search.

“Bring every carton from the attic into the living room,” Sensei instructed the eager group. “I’m looking for eight silver *shuriken*—about the width of English muffins. Be careful. Some boxes have secret compartments.”

Eighty-four cartons were hauled downstairs onto a large round rug.

Twelve-year-old Scarlet shrieked when four golf-ball-sized spiders tumbled out of her box onto her lap.

“Freeze-dried,” Sensei assured her, dangling one by a leg. “I hide them in bad guys’ socks.”

In a heavy green box, Hudson discovered a dozen army-issue, night-vision, picture-taking binoculars.

“These will make night look like day,” Sensei explained. “And the button takes postcard-perfect pictures.”

Everyone grabbed a pair.

Drew spotted a neighbor’s cat and read its name tag.

Joe scanned a maroon van idling beneath a Japanese red maple down the street.

A hooded figure stared back at him—through binoculars. The van sped away before Joe could take a photo. But he remembered the license plate: ONERING.

Brendan aimed his binoculars at a squirrel frolicking in a tree.

At first glance, it clutched an acorn. At higher magnification, Brendan realized the squirrel wasn’t gripping the nut—it was wearing it. A gold chain. An oak-nut pendant carved with the letter s.

Click. Brendan snapped a picture.



Two hours later, no throwing stars had been found.

That’s when Sensei heard it. A thin, shrill whistle slicing the air. “*Kaba o Tore!*” He shouted. “Take cover!”

Years of meditation had sharpened his hearing. He could hear ants crawl, worms swallow dirt—sometimes even people blinking.

*Story Stash 6*

**The Bomb Sniffer and the Isbjörn**

*A Nose That Knew Too Much*

Too late.

A flat, spinning object tore through the open window, knocked a cookie from Jasmine's hand.

Scratched Aryel's glasses.

Skipped off David's shoulder—

and buried one of Sensei's missing Five Element stars in Brendan's left butt cheek.

Brendan shrieked and collapsed, stiff as stone.

The K-marked shuriken paralyzed Brendan completely.

He couldn't speak.

He couldn't move.

He could only blink.

"Do not touch it," Sensei warned. "Removing it could paralyze him for life."

He recognized the star immediately.

A K for *Kaze*, the nickname Wuru had given him, on each star.

A crash thundered above them.

The Owi-Nwo had sprung.

Everyone rushed upstairs—everyone except Brendan, left alone on the kitchen floor.

That's when the squirrel returned.

It climbed through the window,

walked upright across the floor.

Opened Brendan's binoculars.

Removed the memory chip.

Chewed it to pieces,

and swallowed.

Then it looked Brendan in the eyes—and winked.

When Sensei returned, Brendan began blinking the Kara Code.

But who would believe him?

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