



NARUTO

SHONEN JUMP MANGA

Story & Art by

Masashi Kishimoto volume

18



岸本 齊史

Recently, my shoulder pain has been getting worse...And it seems to always be my left shoulder. Why does my left shoulder get stiff when I'm right-handed? It's one of the Seven Great Mysteries of Kishimoto.

—*Masashi Kishimoto, 2003*



Author/artist Masashi Kishimoto was born in 1974 in rural Okayama Prefecture, Japan. After spending time in art college, he won the Hop Step Award for new manga artists with his manga **Karakuri** (Mechanism). Kishimoto decided to base his next story on traditional Japanese culture. His first version of **Naruto**, drawn in 1997, was a one-shot story about fox spirits; his final version, which debuted in **Weekly Shonen Jump** in 1999, quickly became the most popular ninja manga in Japan.





NARUTO VOL. 18
SHONEN JUMP Manga Edition

STORY AND ART BY MASASHI KISHIMOTO

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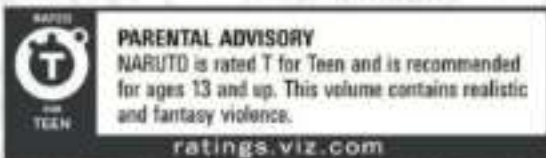
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SHONEN JUMP MANGA EDITION

NARUTO

VOL. 18
TSUNADE'S CHOICE

STORY AND ART BY
MASASHI KISHIMOTO



CHARACTERS



Sasuke
サスケ



Naruto
ナルト



Sakura
サクラ



Orochimaru
大蛇丸



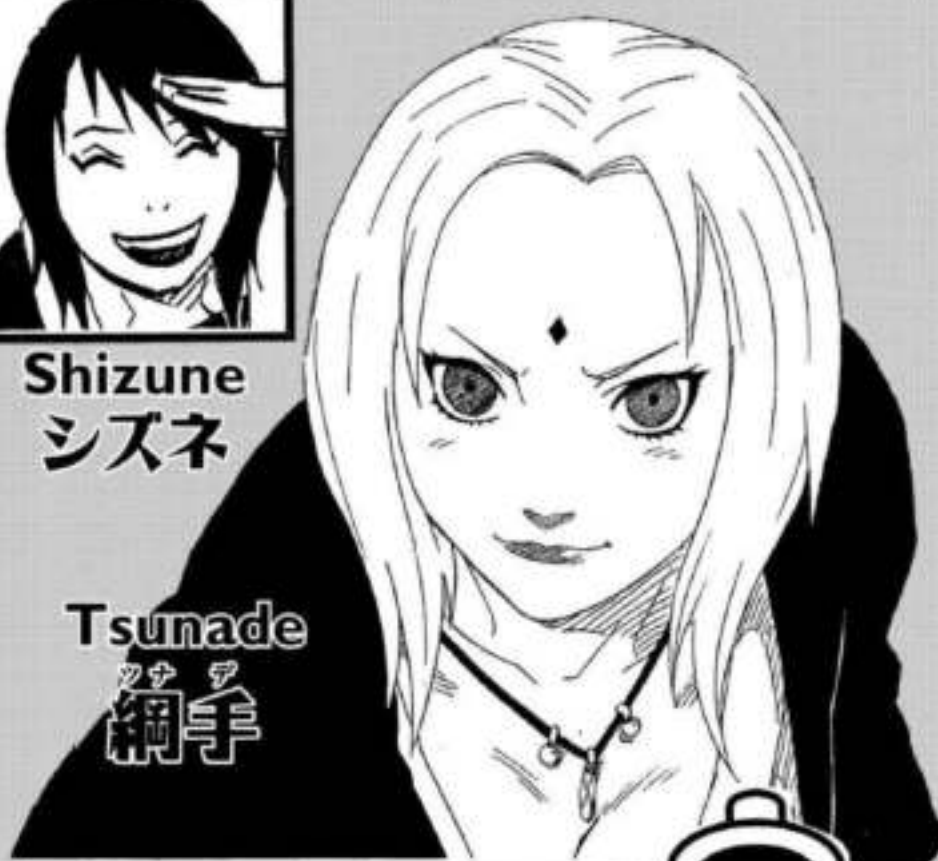
Kabuto
カブト



Jiraiya
自来也



Shizune
シズネ



Tsunade
ツナデ
綱手

Twelve years ago a destructive nine-tailed fox spirit attacked the ninja village of Konohagakure. The Hokage, or village champion, defeated the fox by sealing its soul into the body of a baby boy. Now that boy, Uzumaki Naruto, has grown up to be a ninja-in-training, learning the art of ninjutsu with his teammates Sakura and Sasuke.

Naruto and company take on the Chûnin Selection Exams but suffer a sudden attack from Orochimaru in the Forest of Death. Orochimaru leaves a curse mark on Sasuke's body and vanishes, only to return *during* the final rounds to launch *Operation Destroy Konoha!*

While Naruto battles Gaara, the Third Hokage falls to Orochimaru. But Konohagakure is saved and Jiraiya and Naruto set out to hunt down the future Fifth Hokage, Tsunade. On the way, they encounter Itachi, Sasuke's demented older brother...

The Story So Far...



NARUTO

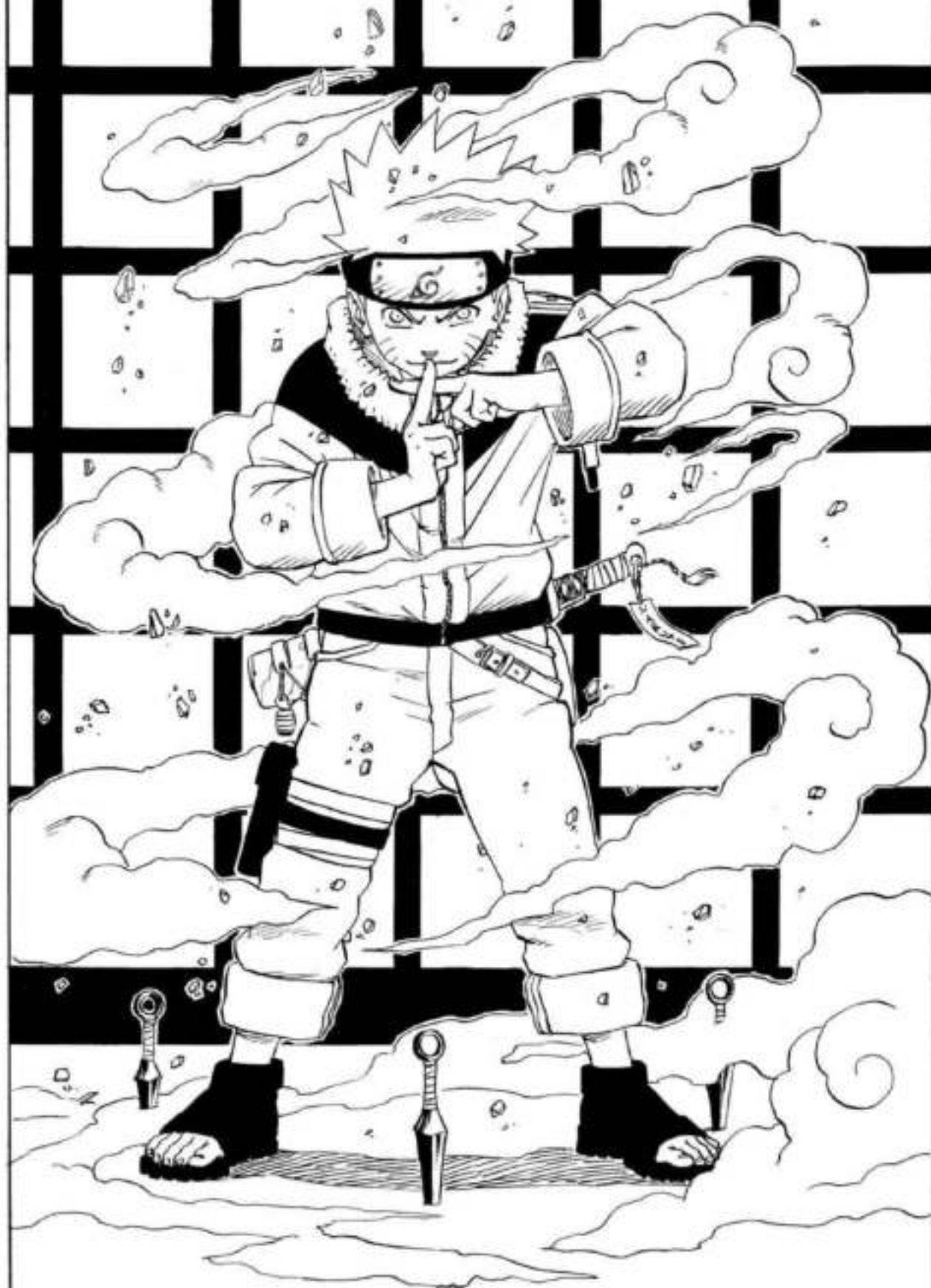
VOL. 18
TSUNADE'S CHOICE

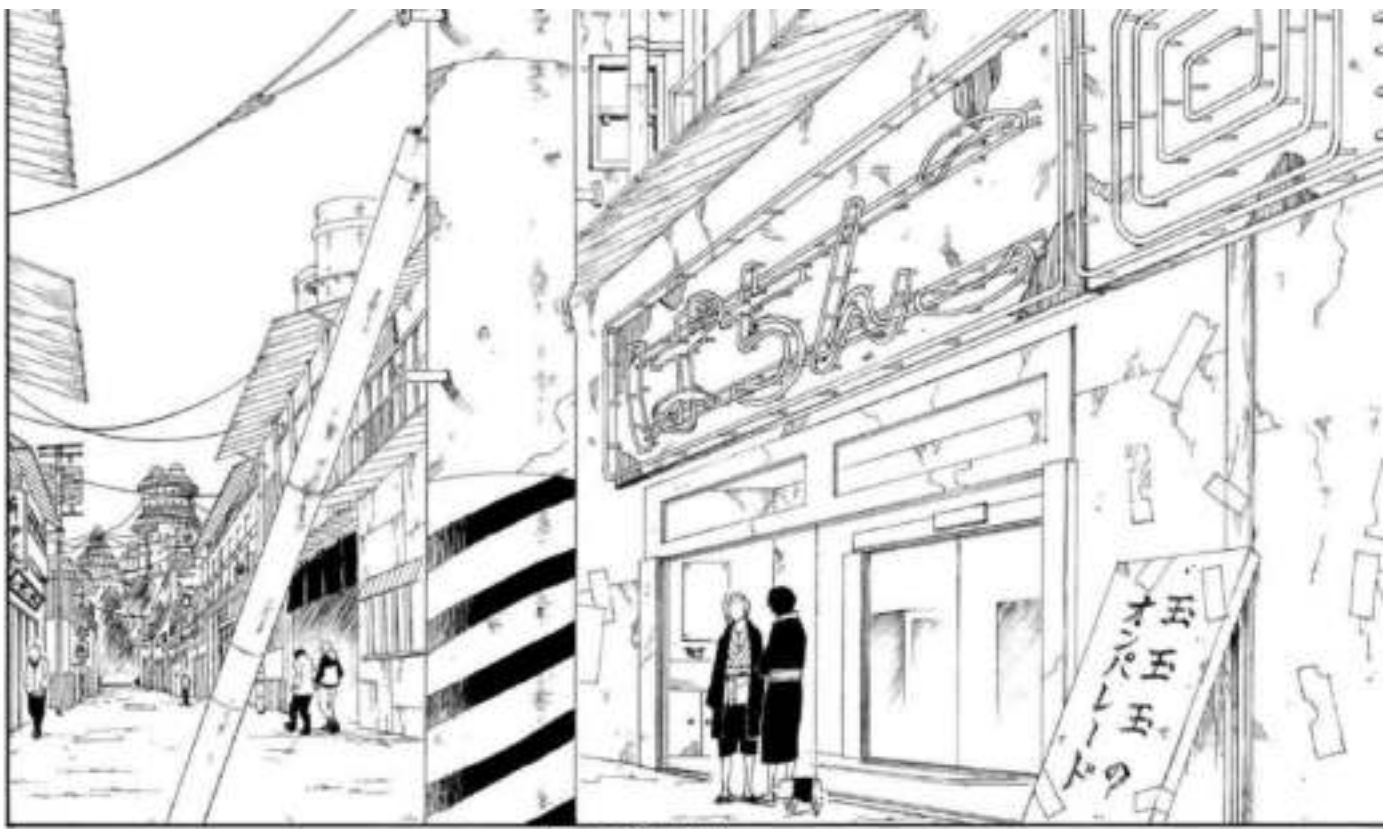
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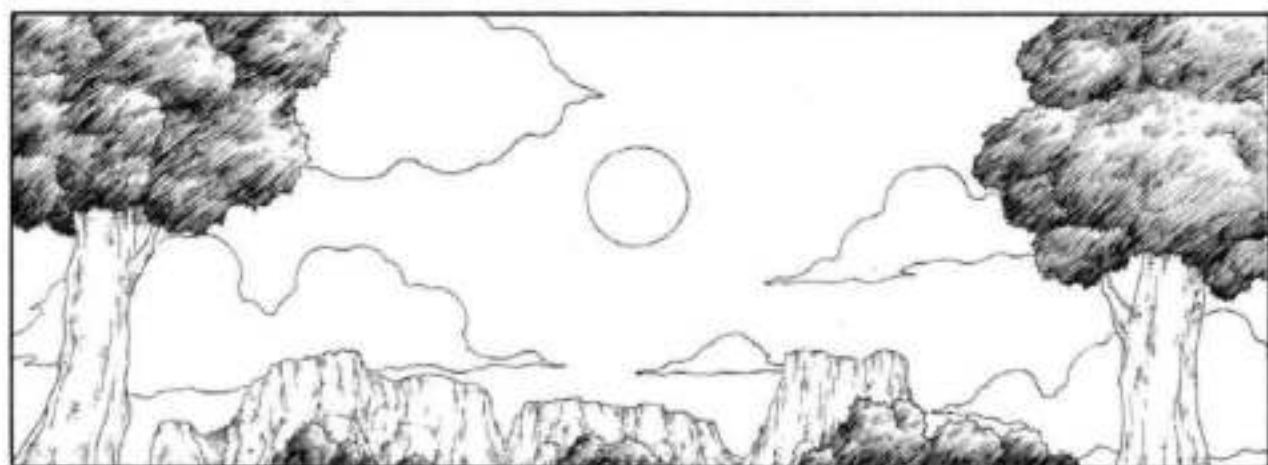


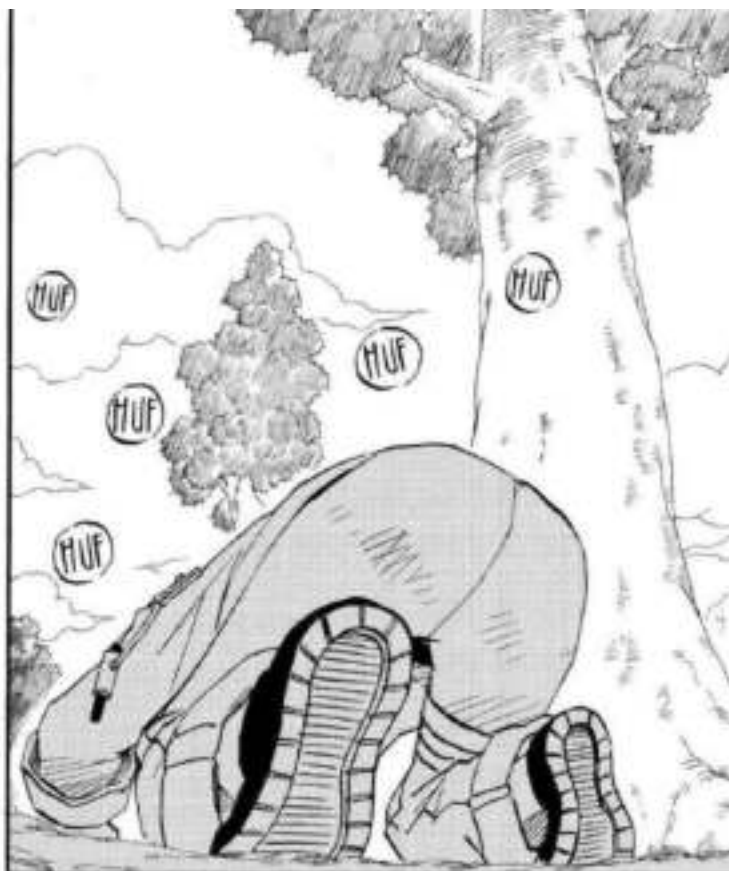
(Sign: Pachinko)

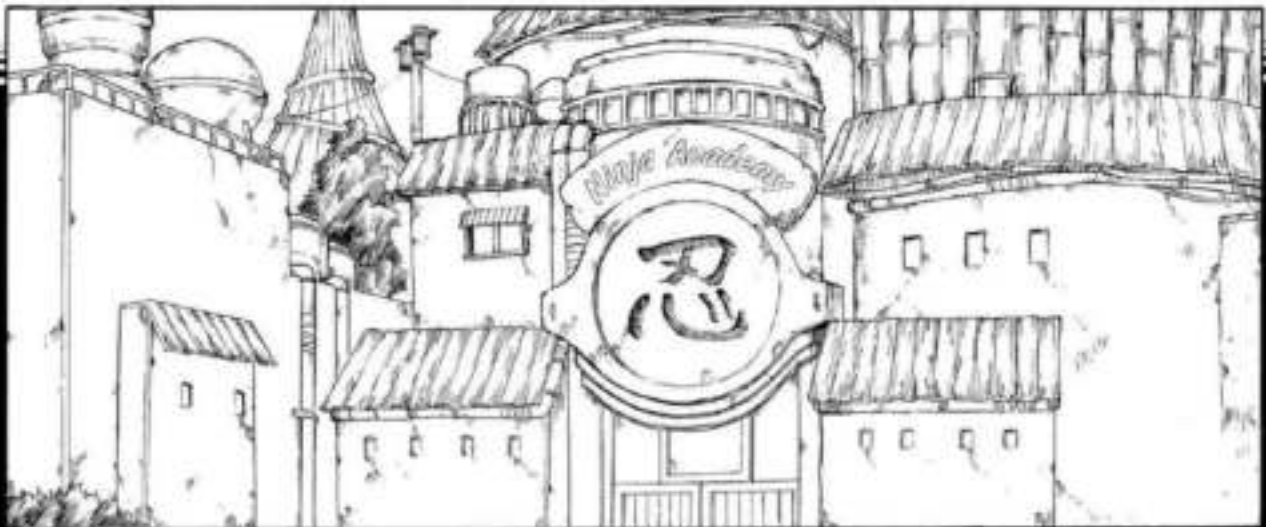












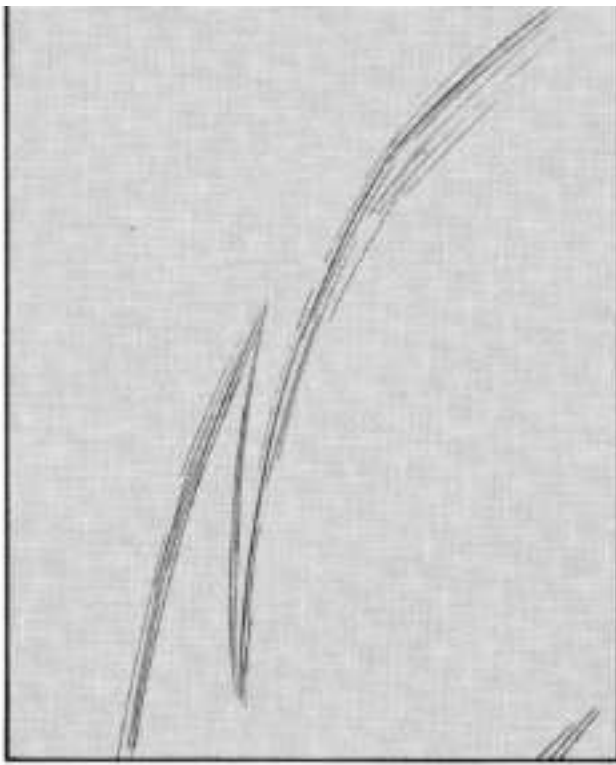














OOOOOAR!!





ROOOOOOOOO





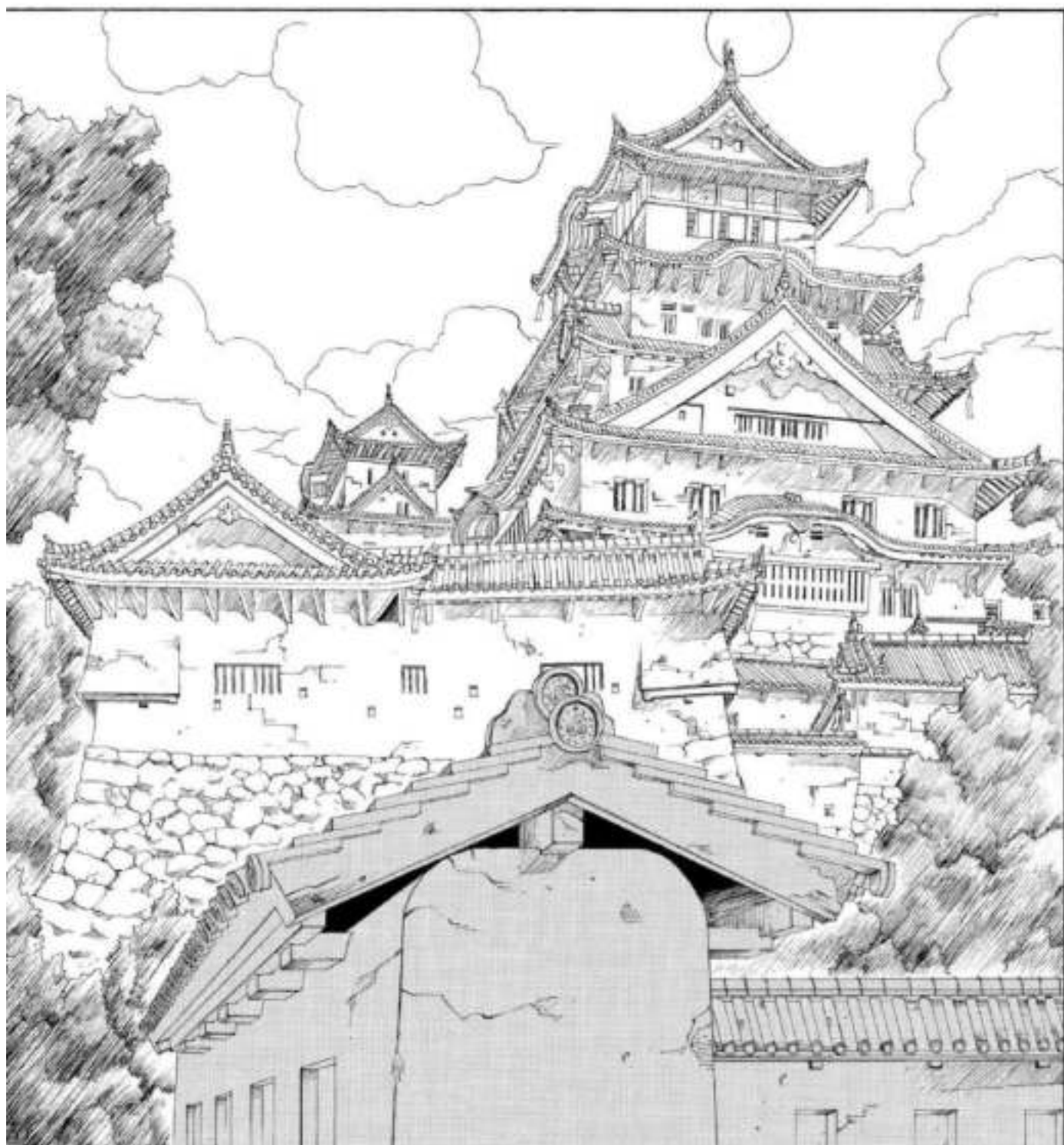
AWW, WHAT'S THE HURRY? LOOKING IS FREE.

CALM DOWN, SHIZUNE.

LET'S GET OUT OF THIS PLACE.

WOW. TANZAKU CASTLE LOOKS SPLENDID WHEN VIEWED FROM BELOW.

NO WONDER IT'S SO FAMOUS!







THE WORLD OF KISHIMOTO MASASHI
MY PERSONAL HISTORY, PART 27-A

SO I HAD FINALLY WON *WEEKLY SHONEN JUMP'S* NEWCOMER'S AWARD, WHICH HAD BEEN MY DEAREST DESIRE, AND TOOK ONE GIANT LEAP FORWARD TOWARD BECOMING A PROFESSIONAL MANGA ARTIST. I WAS ASSIGNED A PERSONAL EDITOR AND I RECEIVED 200,000 YEN [ABOUT \$2,000] IN PRIZE MONEY, SO I WAS FLOATING ON AIR. FIRST, I DECIDED TO PUT ASIDE AND SAVE THE ENTIRE AMOUNT OF THE PRIZE PURSE. AT THE TIME, I WAS THE PROVERBIAL STARVING STUDENT ARTIST WHO HAD SO LITTLE MONEY THAT I WOULD SQUEEZE OUT AND USE EVERY LAST DROP OF PAINT IN THE TUBE.

IN PARTICULAR, MY FAVORITE COBALT BLUE OIL PAINT... THAT SURE WAS EXPENSIVE! IF I REMEMBER CORRECTLY, EACH TUBE COST ABOUT 2,000 YEN [ABOUT \$20]...

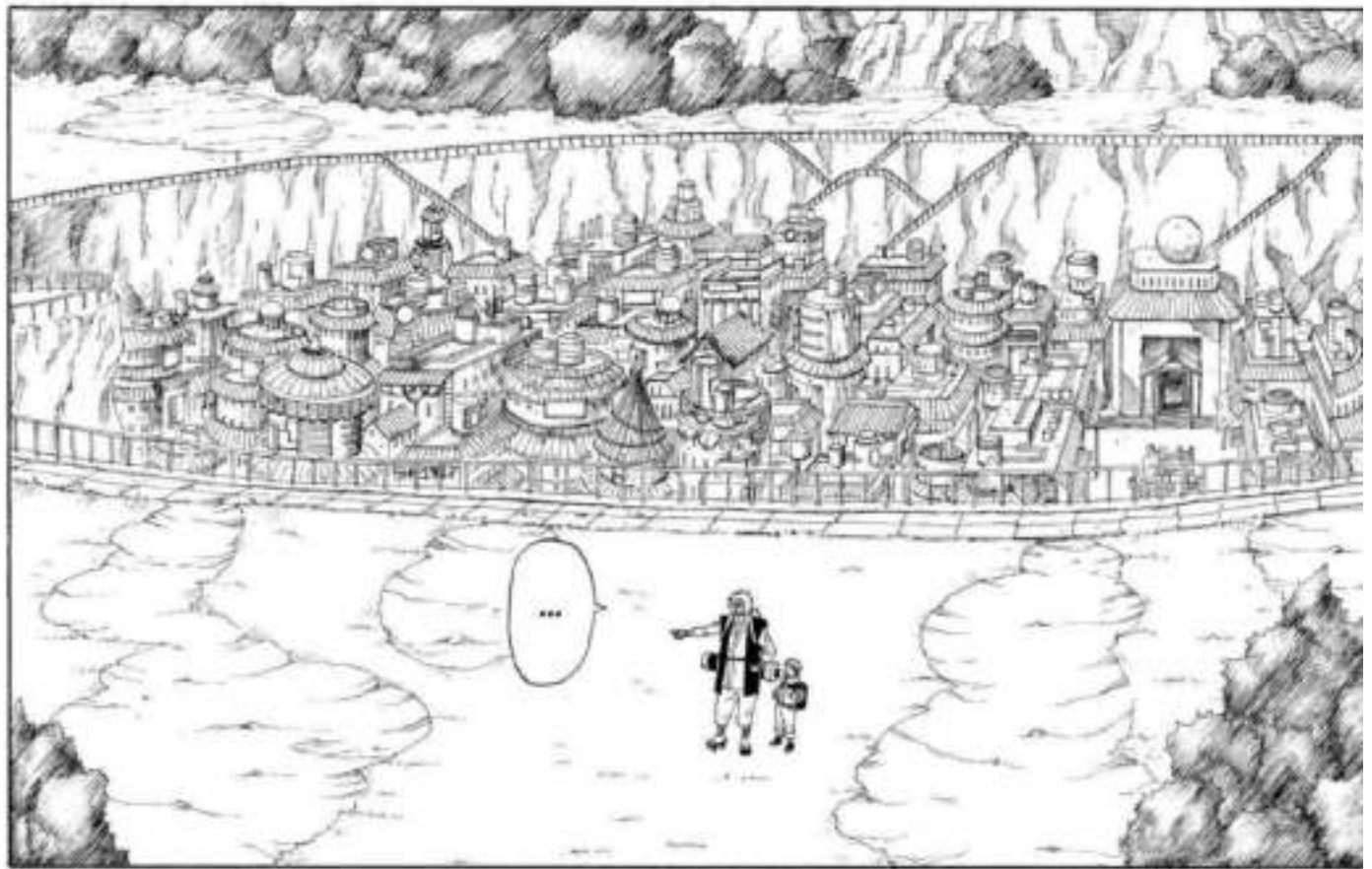
BECAUSE THE SUPER-FRUGAL ME WOULD MAKE THE COBALT BLUE GO FURTHER BY THINNING IT WITH ADDITIONAL OIL, THERE STARTED TO BE A REAL DIFFERENCE IN COLOR DENSITY BETWEEN MY PAINTINGS AND THOSE OF MY BOURGEOIS CLASSMATES WHO JUST SLATHERED IT ON. IT GOT TO A POINT WHERE MY ART INSTRUCTOR WOULD REGULARLY SCOLD ME, "TOO LIGHT!" OR "YOU NEED TO GIVE IT A HEAVIER, MORE OPPRESSIVE FEELING, YATTA YATTA." ON TOP OF IT ALL, HE'D SAY, "ARE YOU SLACKING?" OR "YOU OUGHT TO TAKE MORE TIME WITH IT, AND USE MANY MORE COLORS. YOU DON'T HAVE ENOUGH COLORS!" THAT INSTRUCTOR DEFINITELY DIDN'T TAKE HIS STUDENTS' WALLET CONTENTS INTO CONSIDERATION...

I WANTED TO SHOUT BACK, I CAN'T HELP IT IF I CAN'T AFFORD MORE PAINT TUBES! BUT ACTUALLY, AT THAT POINT I DIDN'T REALLY CARE ANYMORE... THAT'S BECAUSE THE CONSTANTLY MONEY-GOBBLING OIL PAINTING BUSINESS HAD LOST ITS APPEAL, AND I WAS ALSO TIRED OF THE WHINING, HIGH-NOSED ART WORLD. I'D RATHER SPEND WHAT PRECIOUS MONEY I HAD ON THE MOVIES, WHICH MIGHT HELP ME DRAW MANGA... AND THUS, I DECIDED TO SPEND ALL MY MONEY ON MOVIES AND VIDEOS.

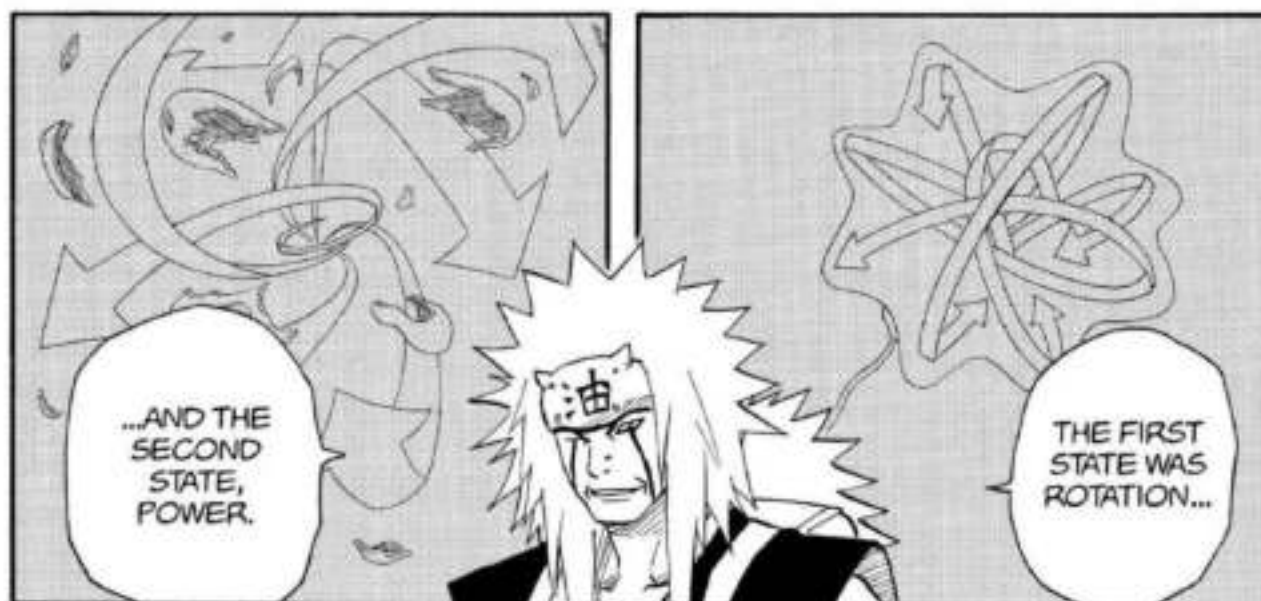
(TO BE CONTINUED)

 Number 155: The Third State

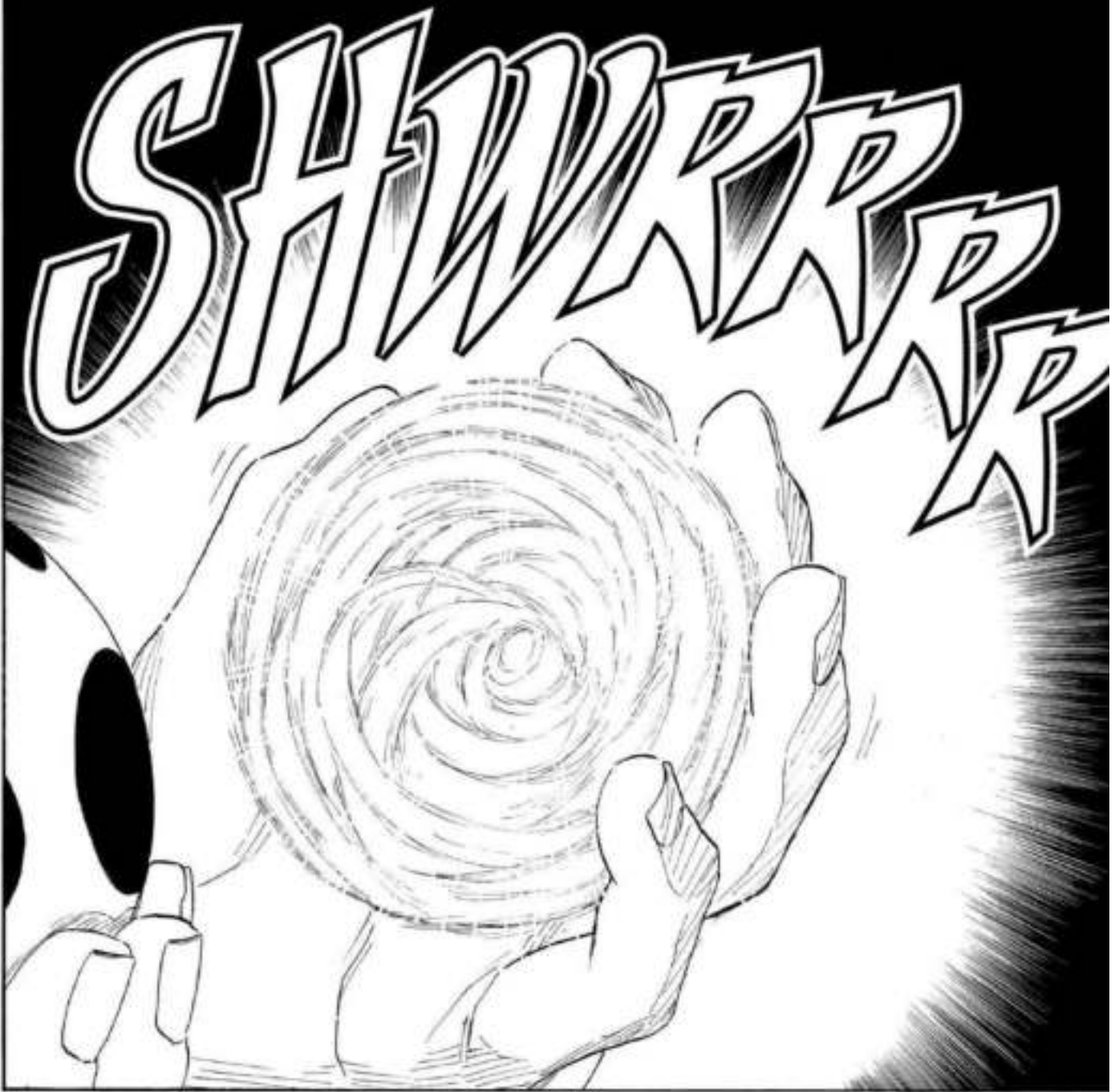












YET IT'S
STAYING IN
A CIRCLE...
IT'S LIKE...

...WHOA, HIS
CHAKRA IS
SWIRLING
FASTER AND
FASTER...!



...A MINI-CYCLONE!



WOW...

GULP



...INSIDE THE BALLOON IN YOUR RIGHT HAND?

...AND THE SAME THING'S GOING ON...

YUP!



...IN THE THIRD STATE, YOU PUT OUT EVERYTHING YOU'VE LEARNED SO FAR FULL FORCE, AND THEN...

SO YOU SEE...

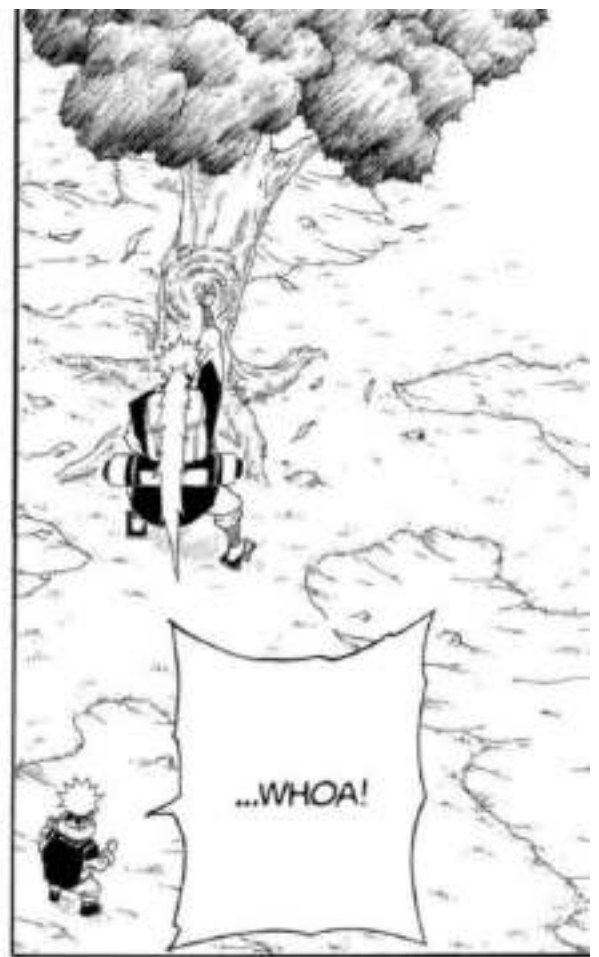


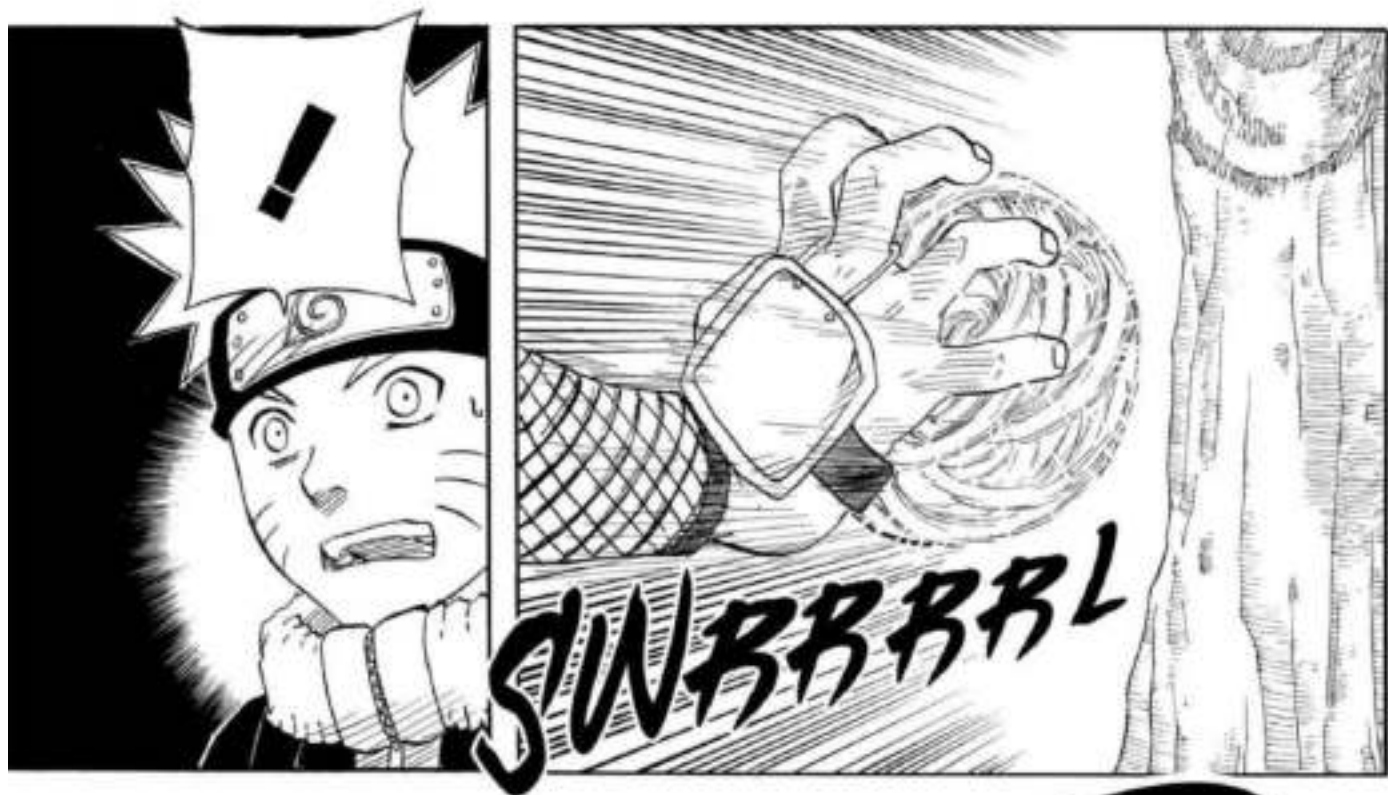
...EVEN THOUGH THE CHAKRA'S MORE POWERFUL AND ROTATING FASTER THAN WHEN HE BURST THE RUBBER BALL!

HE'S TURNING SO MUCH CHAKRA, BUT THE BALLOON DOESN'T EVEN MOVE...















NO WONDER... IT TAKES THREE STATES,

YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT...? I DON'T HAVE THAT KIND OF CONTROL OVER MY CHAKRA...



YOU HAVE TO CONTAIN THE POWER WHILE ROTATING FULL FORCE!

NO, NO HOLDING BACK!



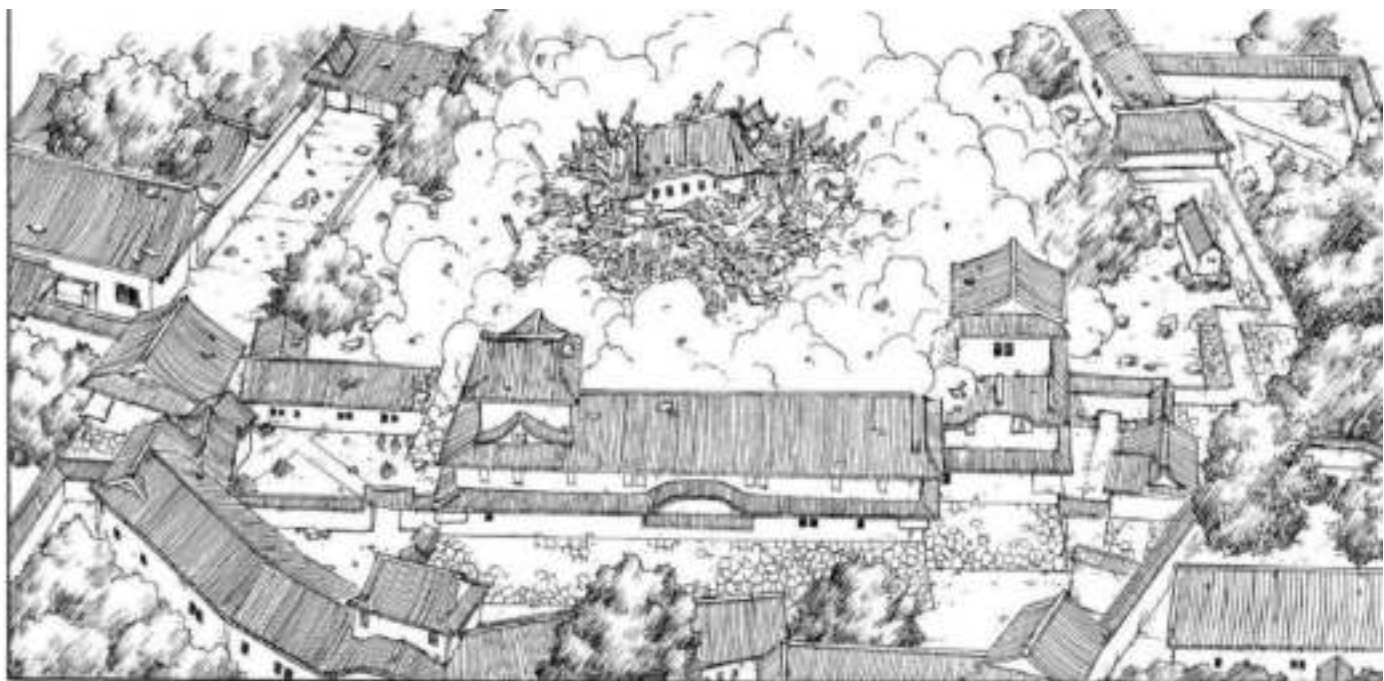
AN A-RANK SUPER-ADVANCED NINJUTSU...

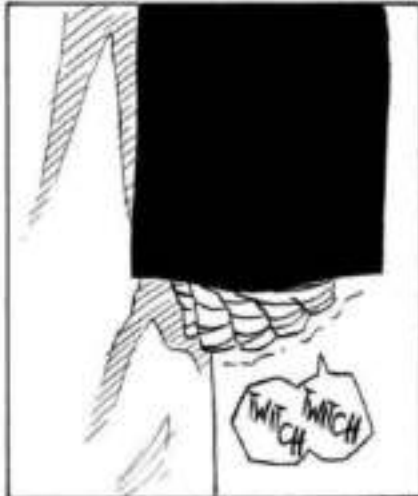
I TOLD YOU... THAT THIS WAS HIGH DIFFICULTY...



THIS IS ON A TOTALLY DIFFERENT SCALE THAN THE OTHER TWO...







ACTUALLY,
I HAVE A
SMALL
FAVOR TO
ASK OF
YOU.



HIS HEART RATE'S
ERRATIC...
FROM HIS COMPLEXION,
HE HAS A HIGH FEVER
AND HE'S BEEN IN A
STATE OF EXHAUSTION
FOR AWHILE...
AND HIS ARMS...



I QUIT
MEDICINE
A LONG
TIME AGO.

GO ASK
SOMEONE
ELSE.

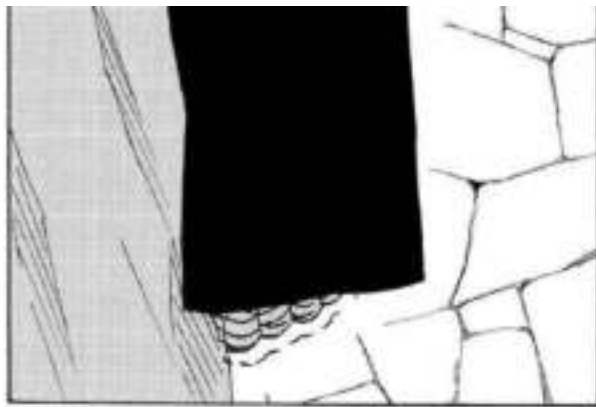


LADY
TSUNADE...
YOU
PROBABLY
ALREADY
KNOW.



NO ONE
ELSE CAN
HEAL HIS
ARMS.

BUT WE
CANNOT...
YOU MUST
UNDERSTAND
THE SEVERITY
OF HIS
WOUNDS...



ONE OF THE THREE GREAT SHINOBI OF LEGEND, PRINCESS TSUNADE.

YOU WHO GAINED FAME AS A MEDIC SPECIALIST...

NO ONE EXCEPT YOU.



SOME SORT OF CURSE MARK OR SOMETHING...

WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU, OROCHI-MARU?

...HIS ARMS... THOSE ARE NO ORDINARY INJURIES...



JUST A MINOR INCIDENT WHEN I KILLED THE THIRD LORD...

NOTHING REALLY...

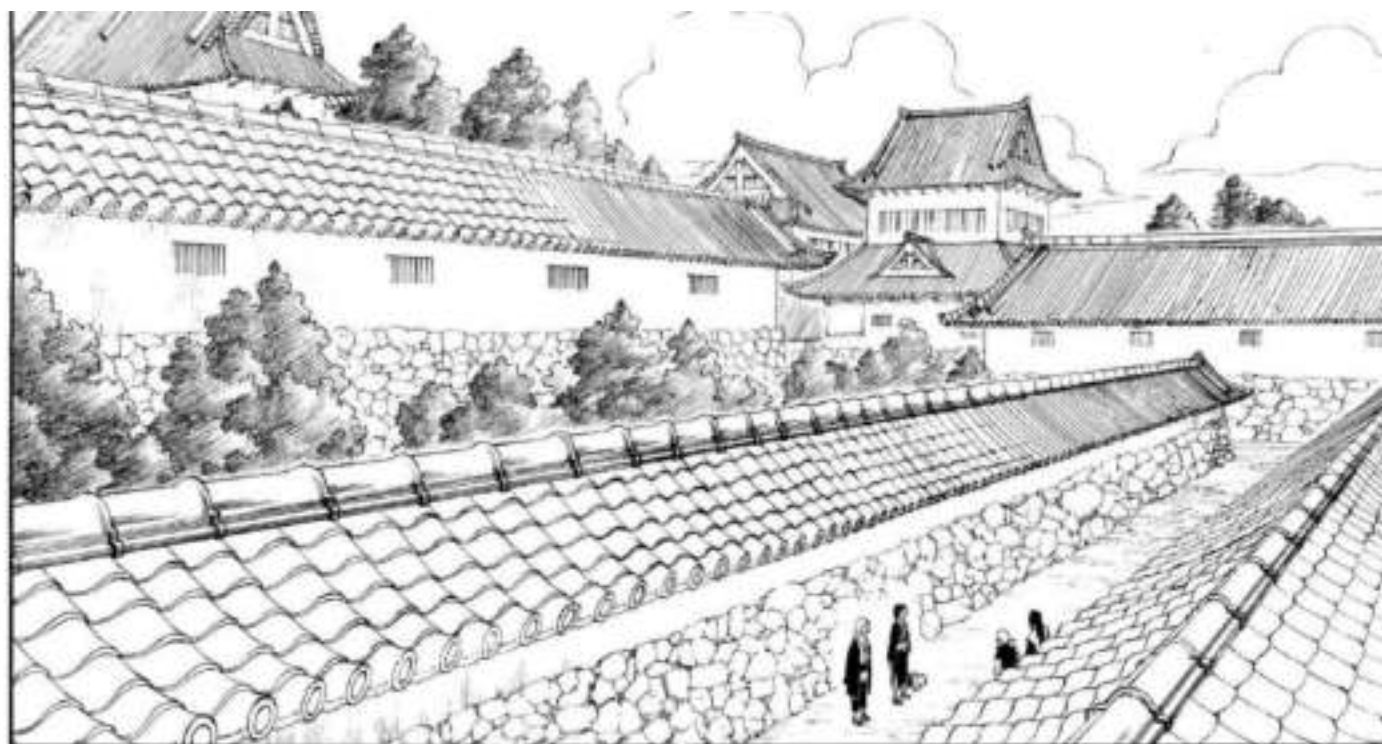


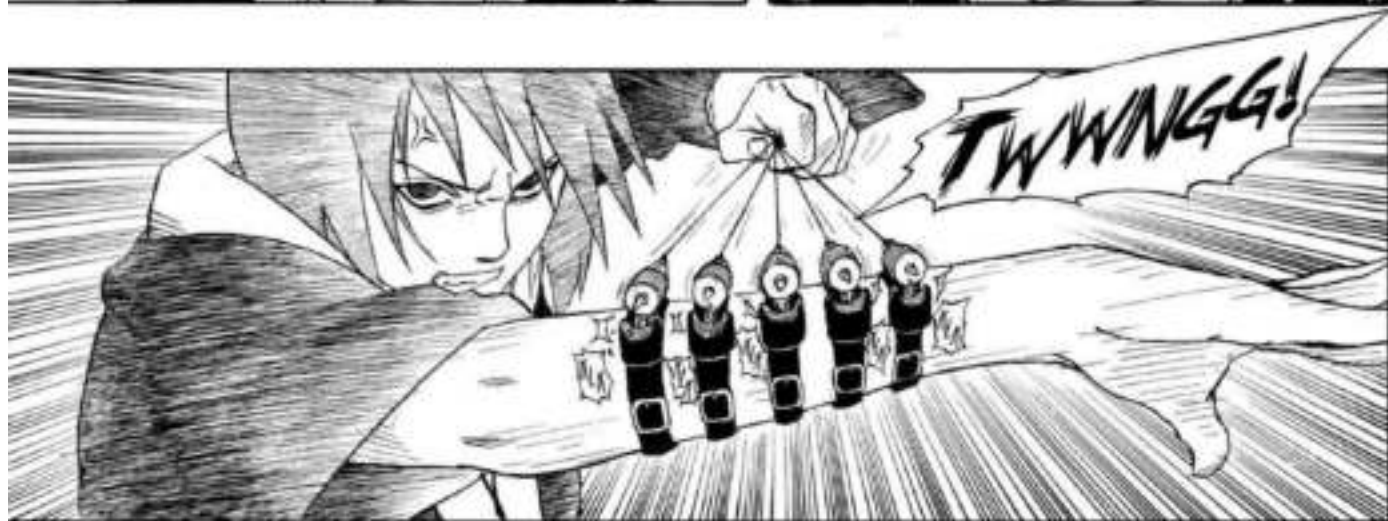




 Number 156: The Offer















...AND
I'LL KILL
YOU!

OKAY?!



(Sign: Tanzaku Town)











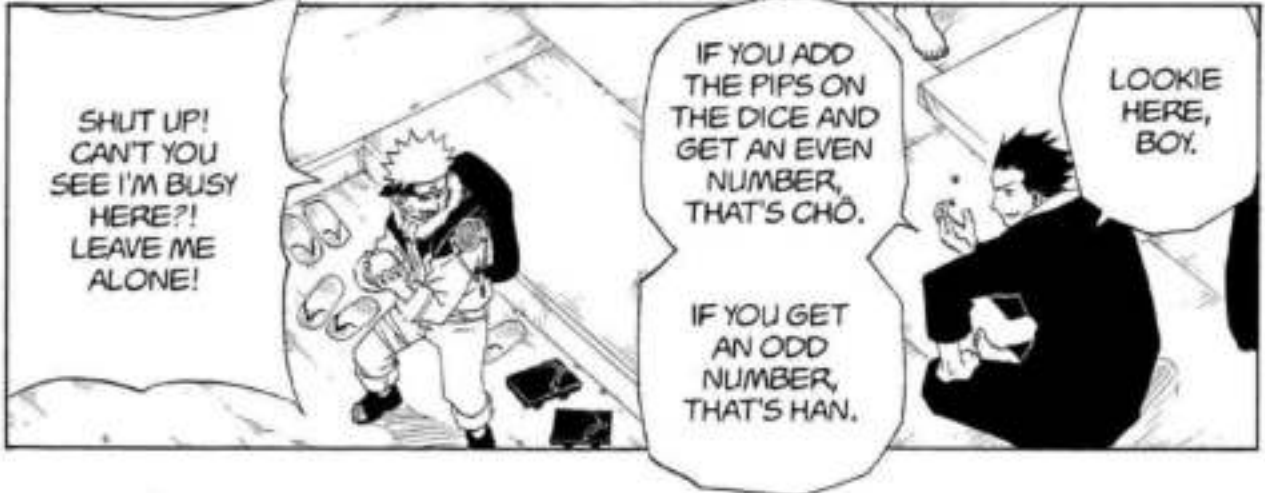
THERE?
WHERE'S
THERE?

I BELIEVE
SHE SAID SHE
WAS HEADING
THERE...

TO TRY TO
WIN BACK
THE MONEY
SHE LOST
HERE.

AAH...!

I THINK I
KNOW THAT
LADY...



SHUT UP!
CAN'T YOU
SEE I'M BUSY
HERE?!
LEAVE ME
ALONE!

IF YOU ADD
THE PIPS ON
THE DICE AND
GET AN EVEN
NUMBER,
THAT'S CHŌ.

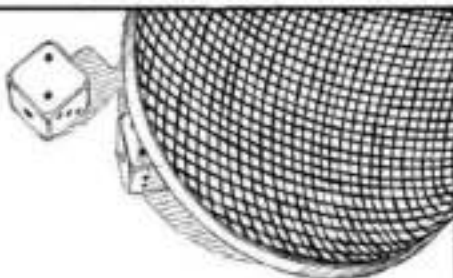
IF YOU GET
AN ODD
NUMBER,
THAT'S HAN.

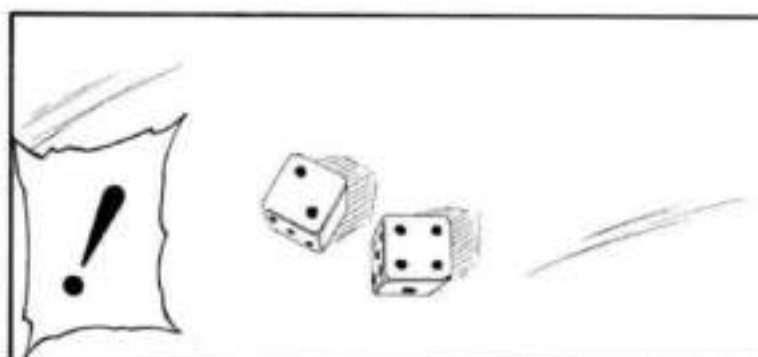
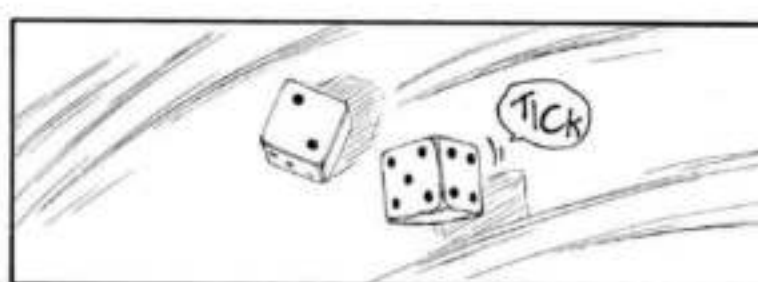
LOOKIE
HERE,
BOY.

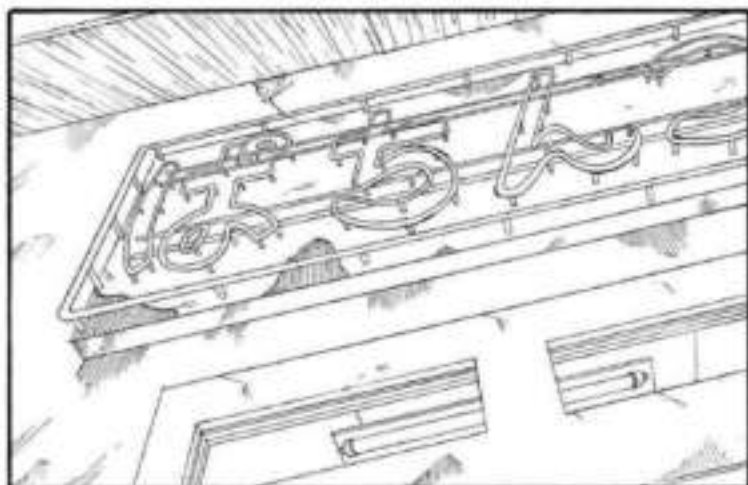




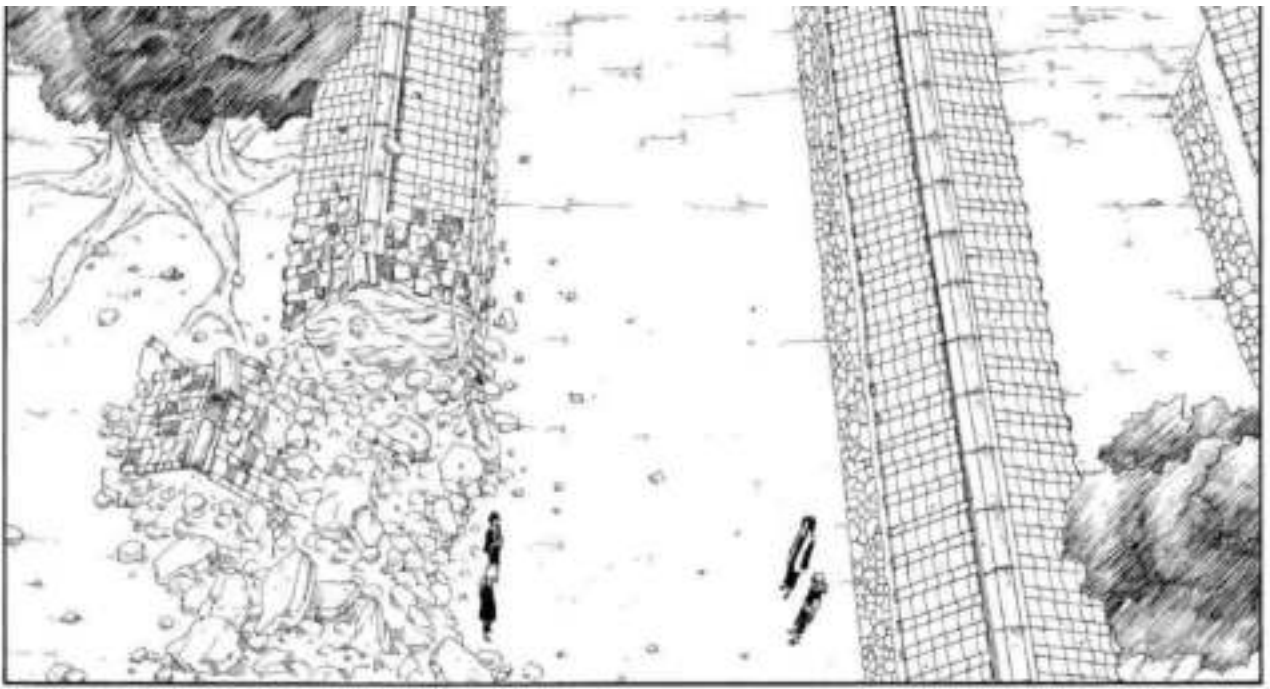
(*1,000 ryo is roughly 10,000 yen, or \$100.)

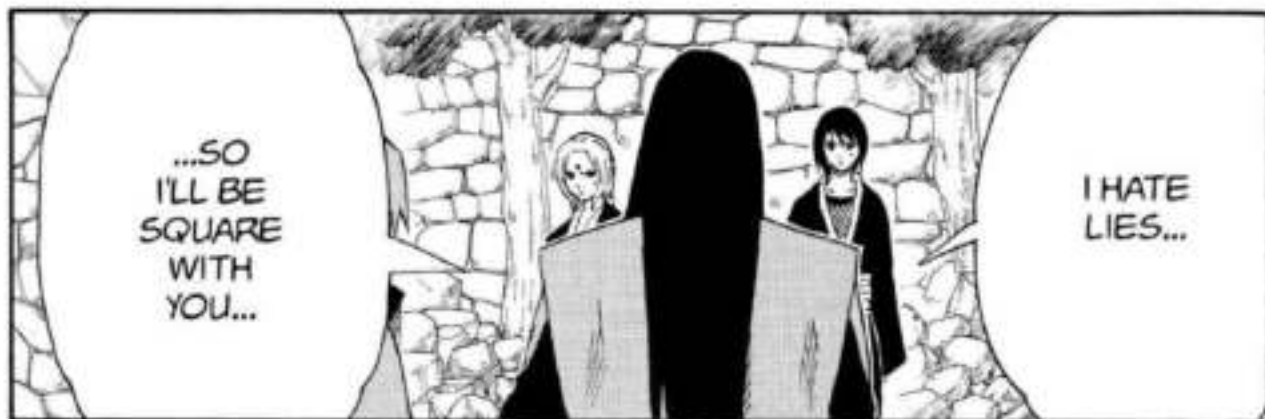














?!!

SO
WHERE'S
THIS
CASTLE?

HEY!
WAIT!

...THIS TIME I
ANNIHILATE
KONOHA
ONCE AND
FOR ALL.



THE WORLD OF KISHIMOTO MASASHI
MY PERSONAL HISTORY, PART 27-B

I LIKE OIL PAINTING, DON'T GET ME WRONG, BUT WHAT I LEARNED IN COLLEGE WAS FINE ART, SO IT WAS PRETTY USELESS. I WAS TAUGHT THAT ONE SHOULD CREATE WHATEVER ONE FELT LIKE, EXPRESSING SOMETHING THAT WAS INSIDE ONESELF IN A WAY THAT IT COULD BE APPRECIATED BY THE VIEWER, AND YET IT SEEMED TO ME THAT MOST WORKS WERE SO ABSTRACT THAT THE VIEWER HAD TO RELY ON THE TITLE OR THE ACCOMPANYING BLURB, AND NOT ON THE PIECE ALONE. ONCE, MY INSTRUCTOR BROUGHT IN PHOTOS OF OILS HE HAD PAINTED HIMSELF, AND WAS BOASTING ABOUT HIS SOLO EXHIBITIONS AND HOW HE HAD SOLD HIS ART, BUT ALL I COULD THINK TO MYSELF WAS "IF YOU WANT YOUR STUFF TO BE ACKNOWLEDGED MORE, BE A BETTER ENTREPRENEUR!" IT WAS ALWAYS INSTRUCTORS LIKE HIM THAT WOULD RIDICULE MANGA, AND TRY TO IMPOSE A RANKING SYSTEM UPON THE ART WORLD. THEY WHO ELEVATED FINE ART AND DENIGRATED ENTERTAINMENT WERE THE ONES WHO WANTED TO SELL THEIR OWN WORK OR BE ACKNOWLEDGED THE MOST. I THINK IF THEY REALLY WANT TO CREATE FINE ART, THEY SHOULD AIM FOR SELF-SATISFACTION. BECAUSE WORKS THAT THEY PAINT HOPING TO RELAY AND EXPRESS THEIR EGO, NO MATTER IF THEY FIT WITHIN THE REALM OF FINE ART, ONCE THEY DECIDE THEY WANT TO MAKE A LIVING FROM SELLING SUCH WORKS, THEY'VE ALREADY MOVED IN THE DIRECTION OF ENTERTAINMENT.

THE WORKS OF THOSE WHO WANT TO MAKE A LIVING AS PAINTERS BUT WHO CAN'T LIVE OFF OF THE SALE OF THEIR PAINTINGS SO RELUCTANTLY FIND EMPLOYMENT AS ART TEACHERS AND DENIGRATE MANGA (I.E. ENTERTAINMENT) ARE THE LOWEST FORM OF ENTERTAINMENT.

I THINK MANGA IS AN AMAZING MEDIUM BECAUSE NOT ONLY IS IT LOW-COST IN TERMS OF PRODUCTION, DEPENDING ONLY ON INK PRICES, BUT IT IS HIGH-QUALITY ENTERTAINMENT WHERE IT IS EASY TO CONVEY ONE'S SELF-EXPRESSION THROUGH THE USE OF DIALOGUE, STORYBOARDING, AND CHARACTERS.

...I LOVE FINE ART, DON'T GET ME WRONG. AND I REALLY ADMIRE THOSE WHO PRODUCE FINE ART. IT'S JUST THAT I AM WARY OF THOSE ARTISTS WHO TRY TO JUDGE FINE ART AGAINST ENTERTAINMENT. IT IS THOSE ARTISTS WHO ARE NEITHER ARTISTS NOR ENTERTAINERS, BUT JUST PLAIN CRUD. ♡

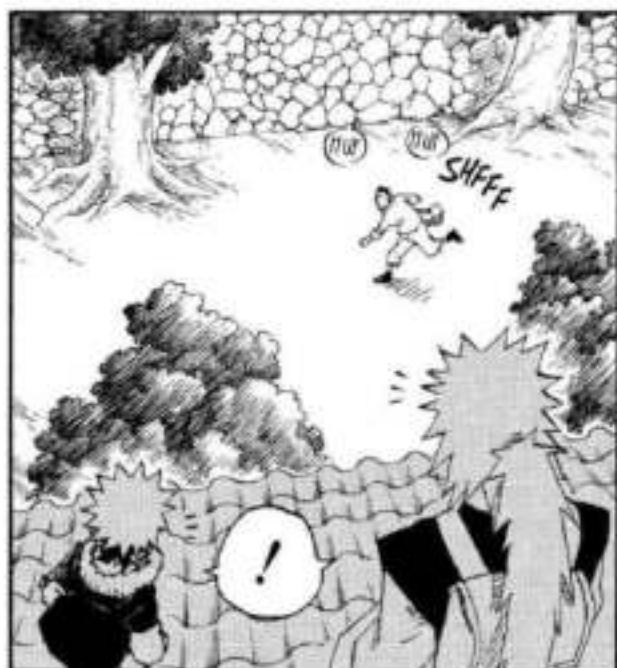
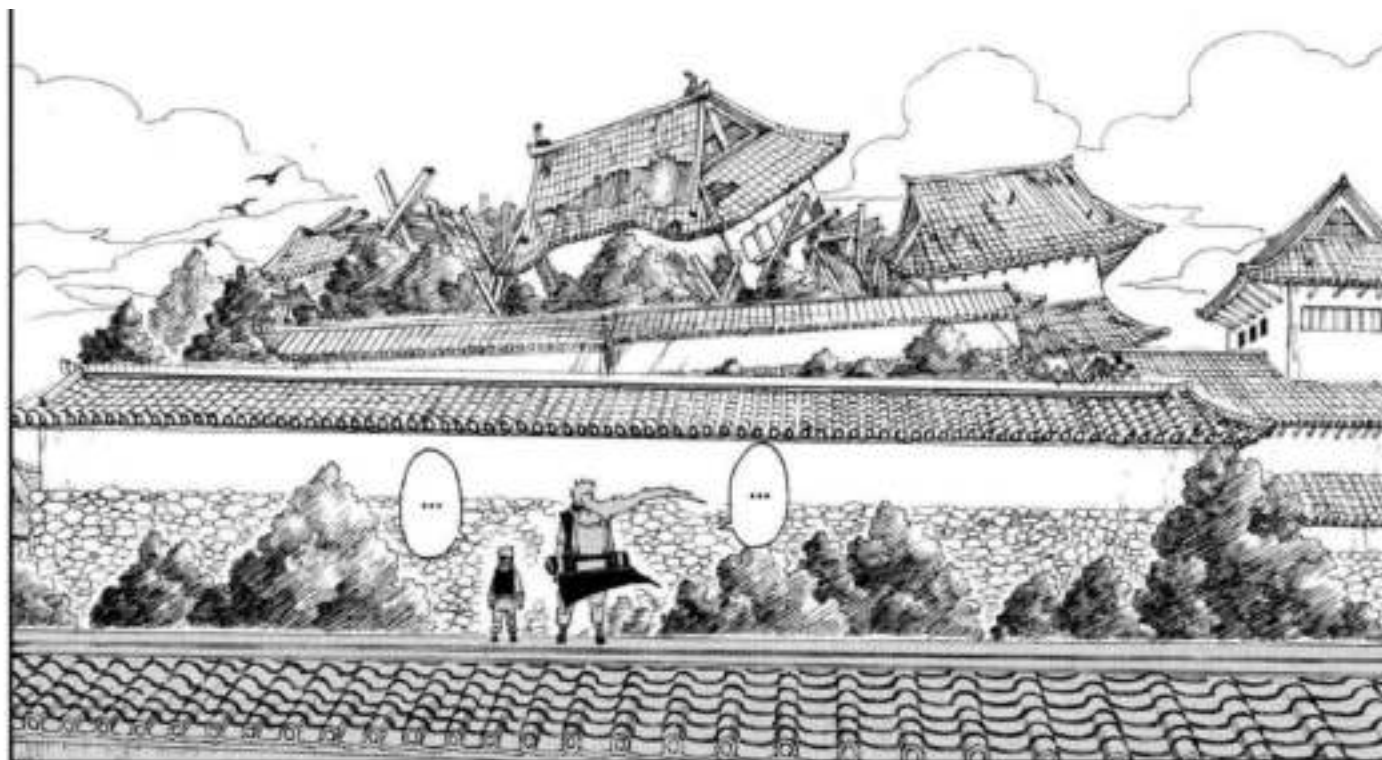
...HUH, I HADN'T REALLY INTENDED TO WRITE ABOUT THIS... BUT I GUESS OLD RAGE DIES HARD...A-HA-HA.



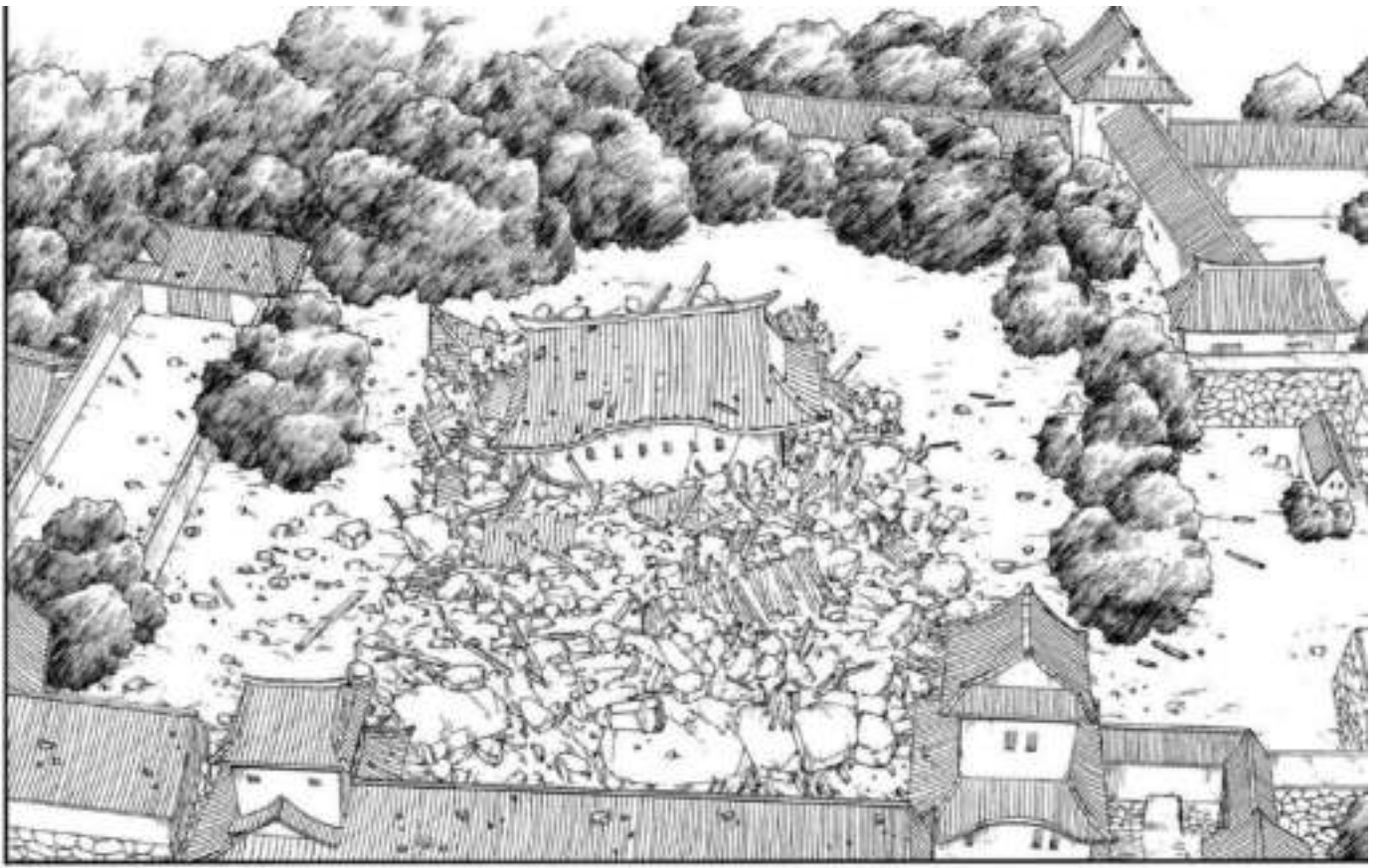
Number 157:

Tsunade's Answer...?!





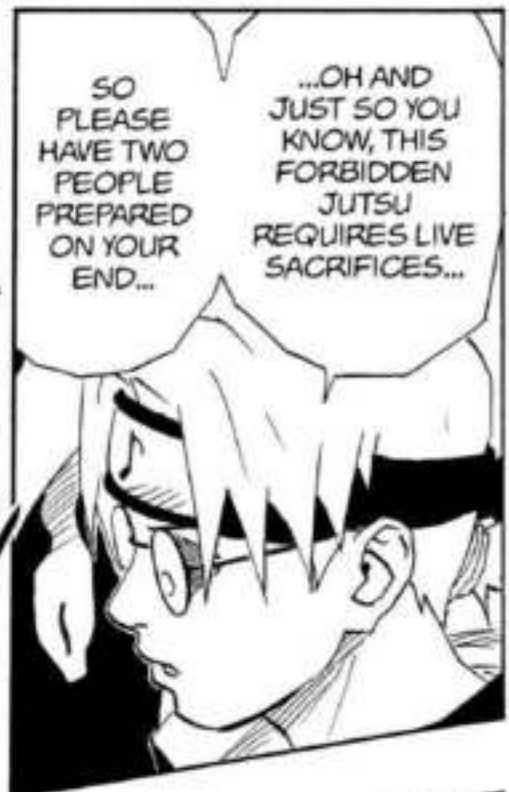




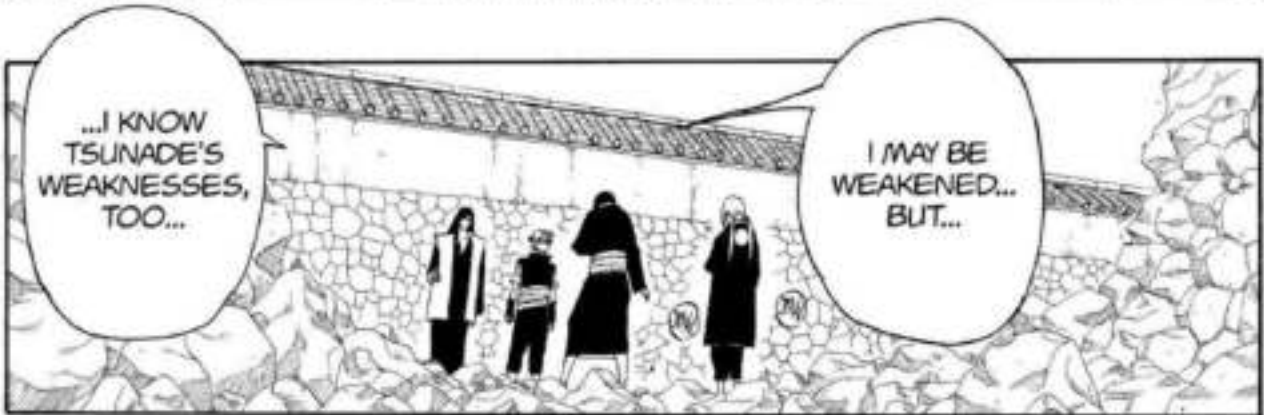
ANNIHILATE
KONOHA?!





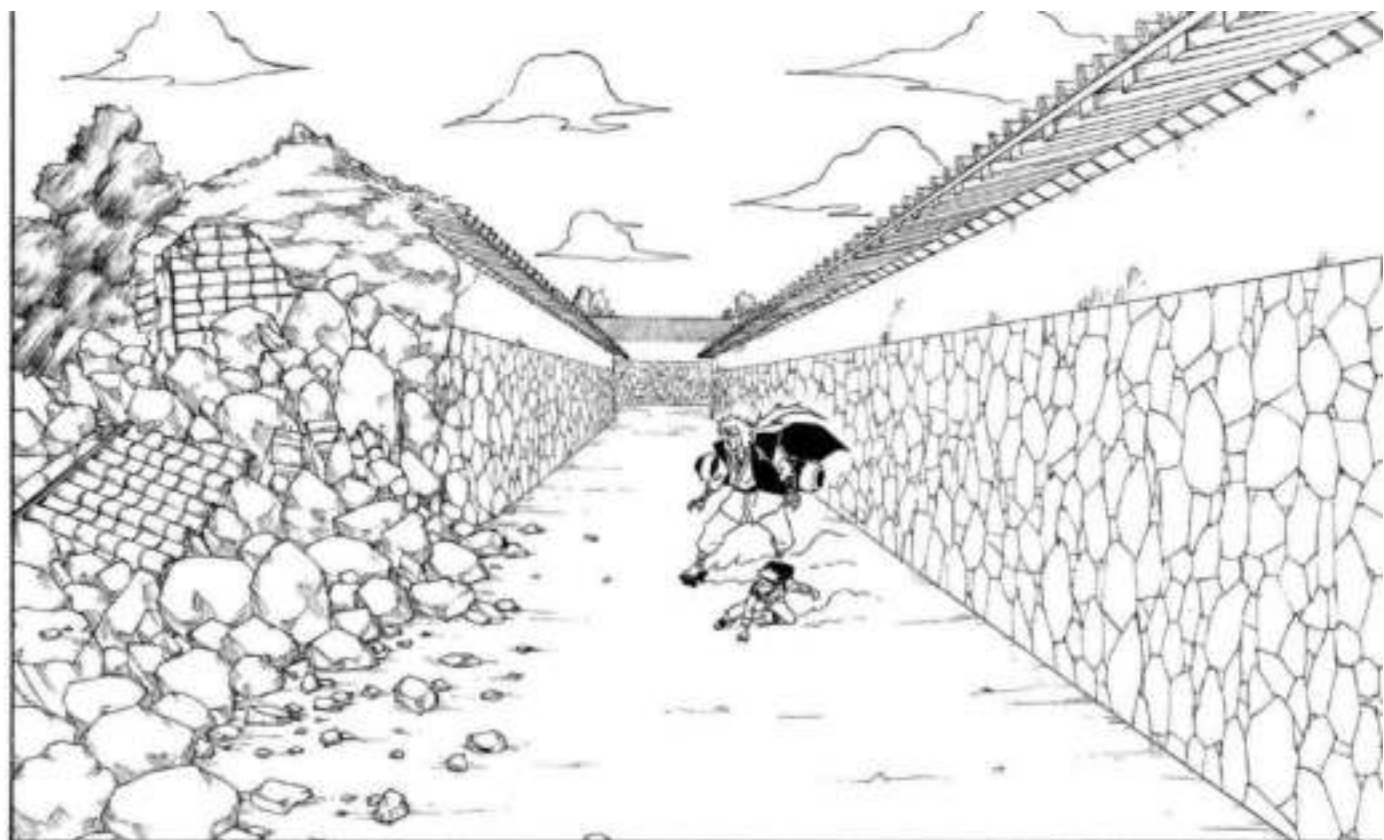












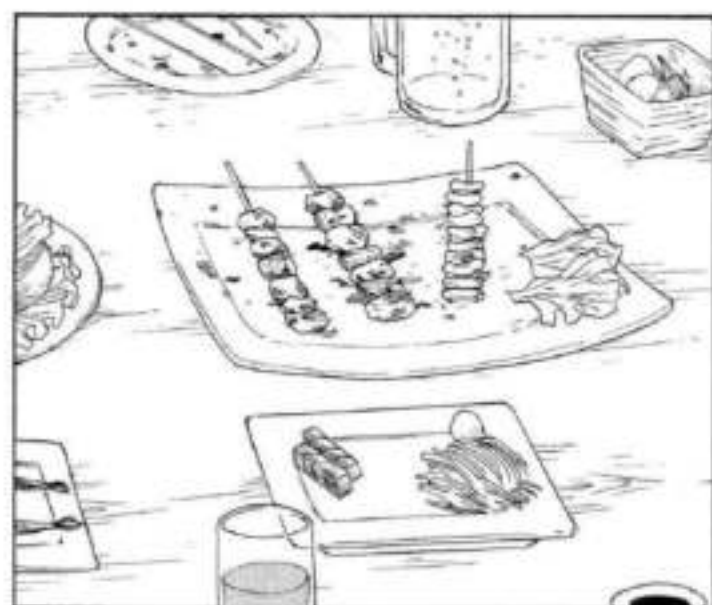
HMM, DID THE SNAKE DO THIS TOO?!

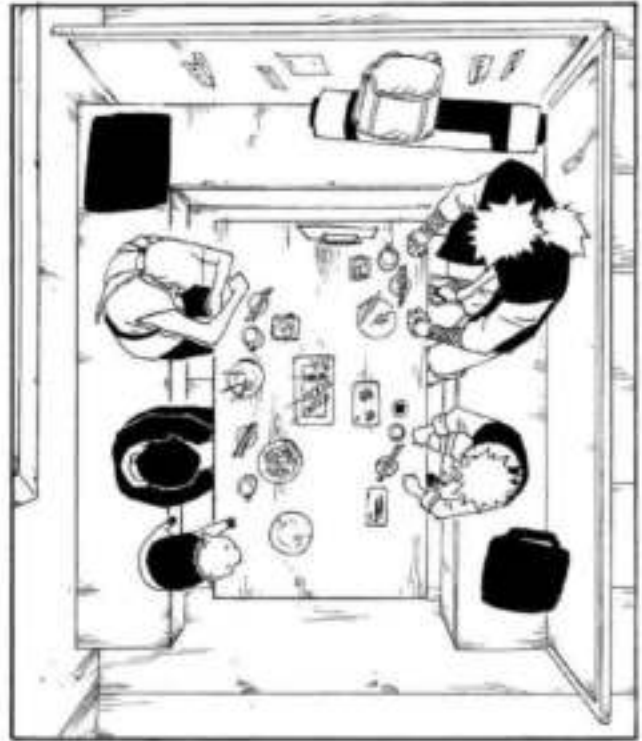


LOOKS LIKE WE MISSED THE PARTY...

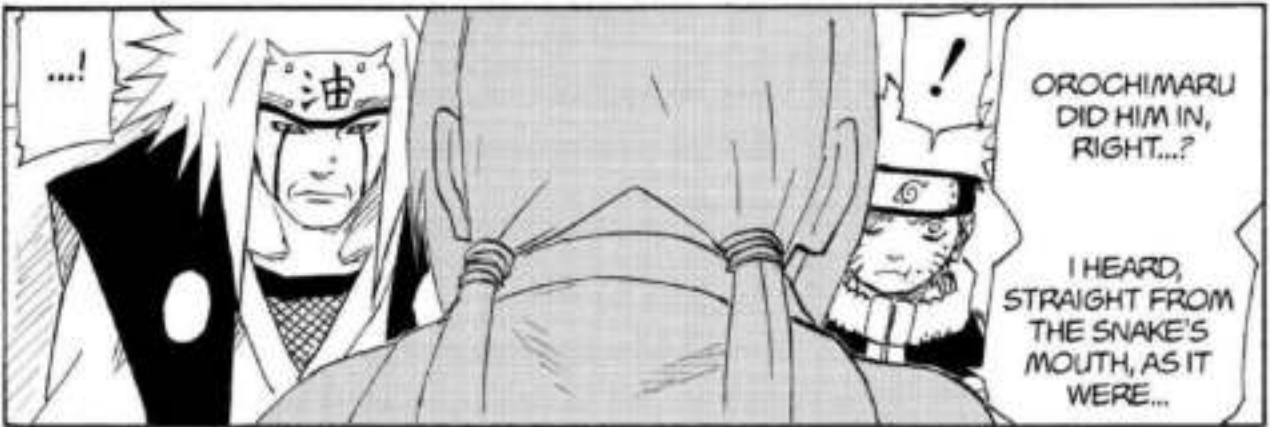




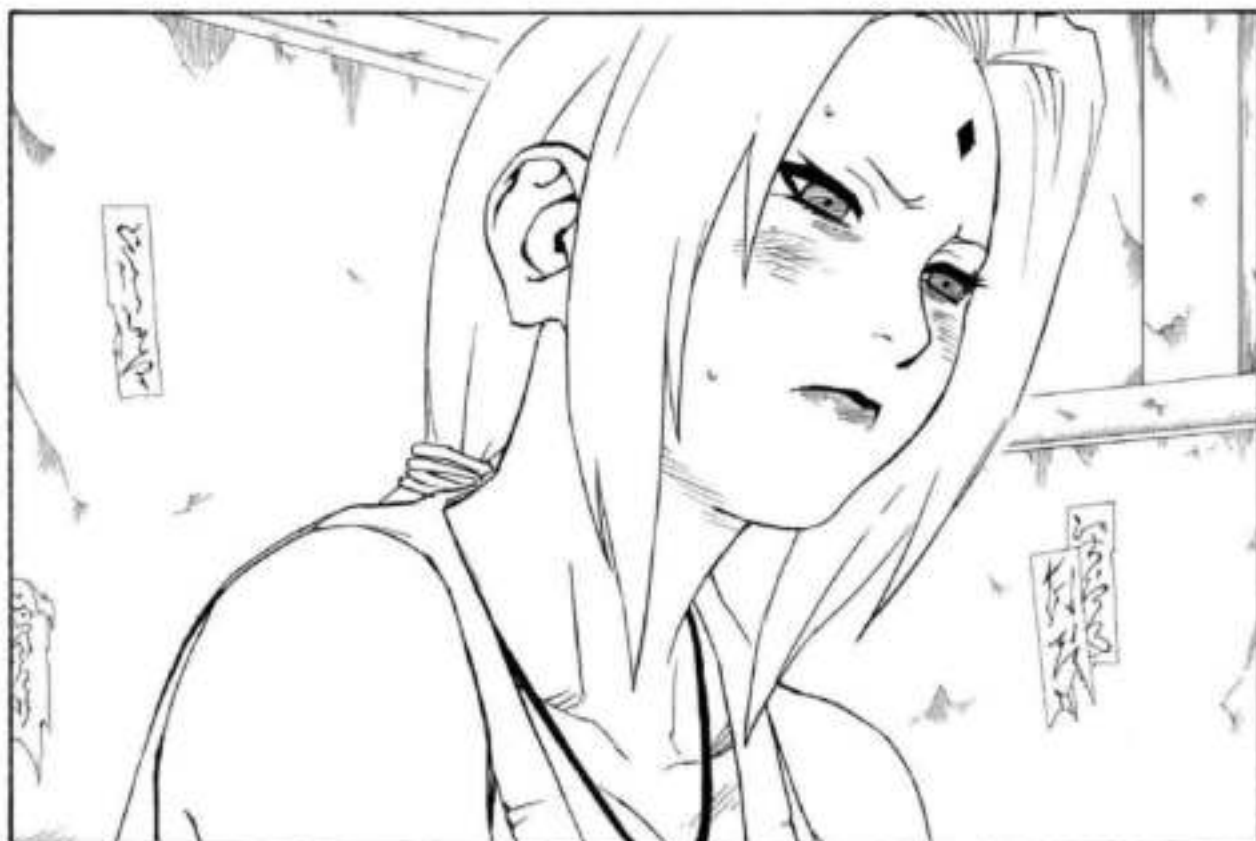
















Number 158:

No Forgiveness...!!

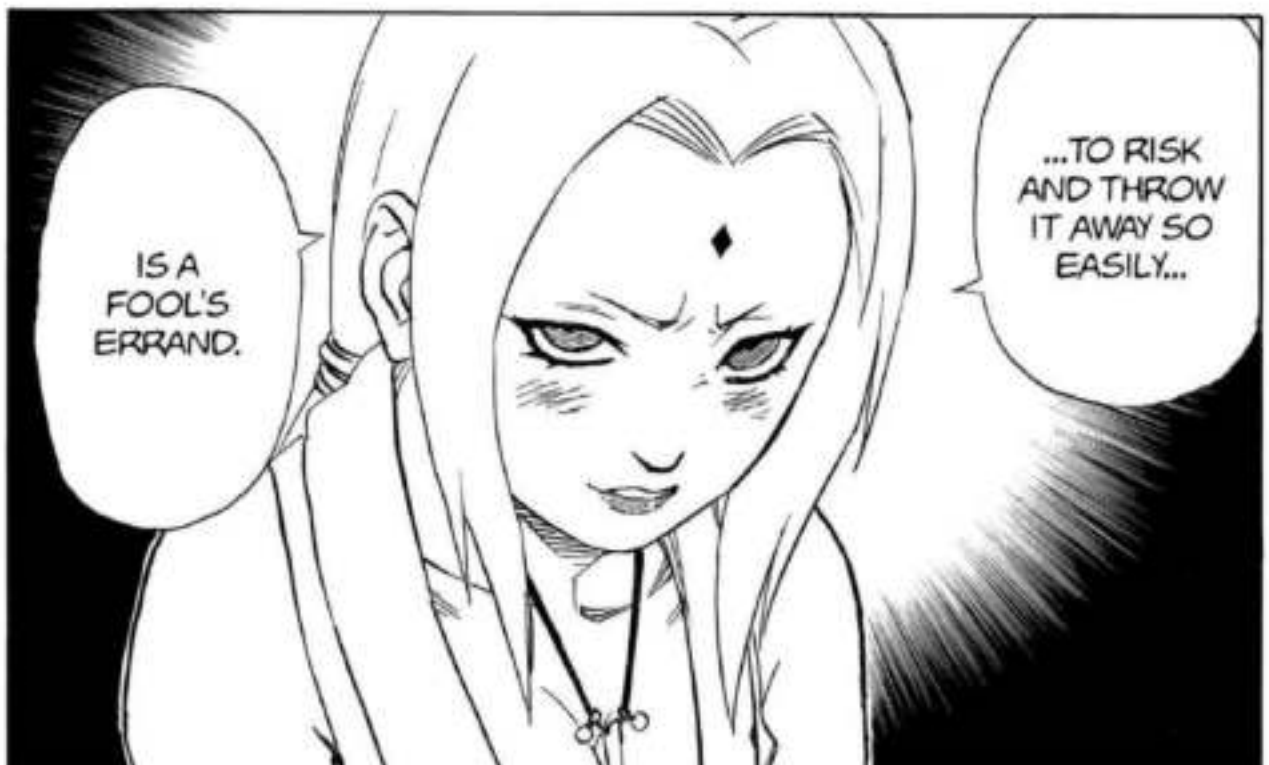


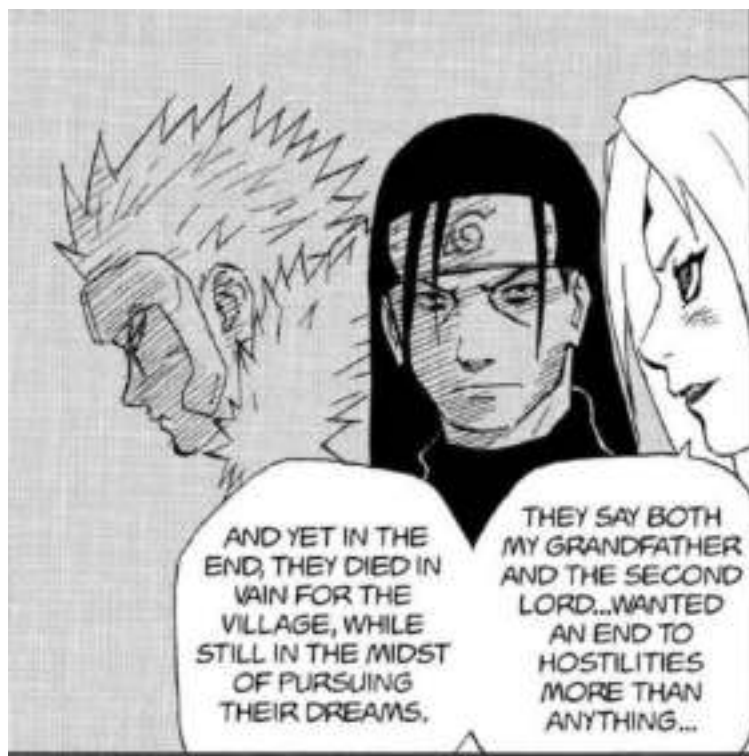


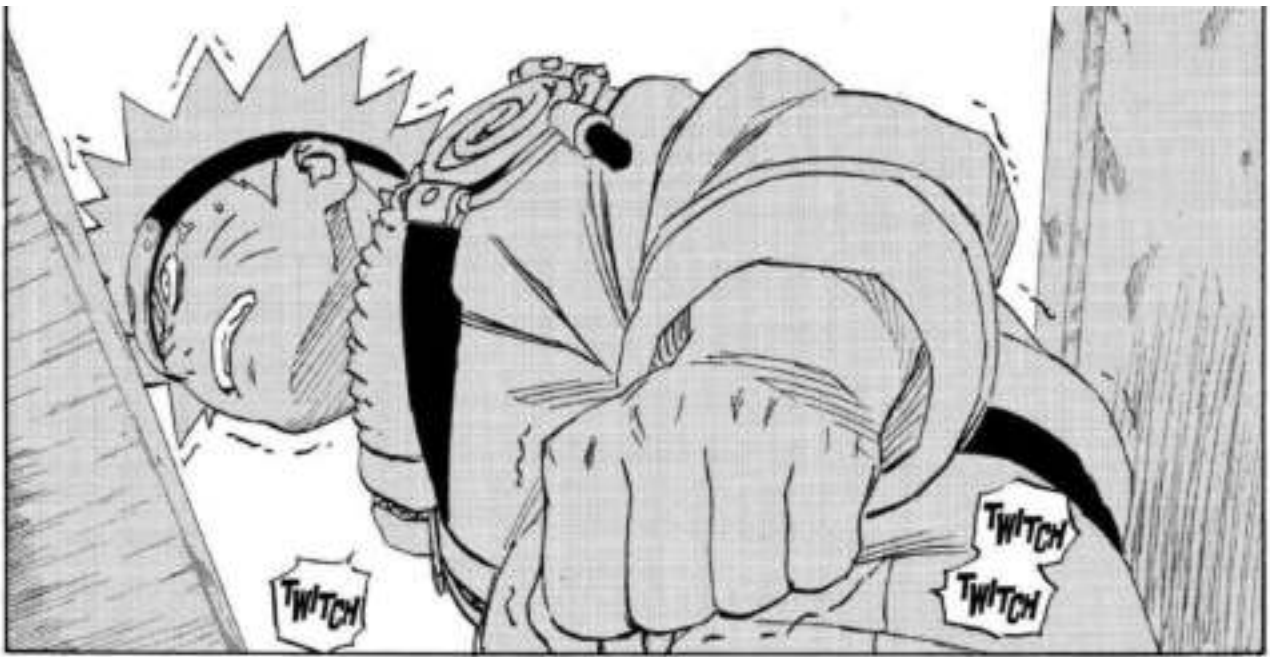












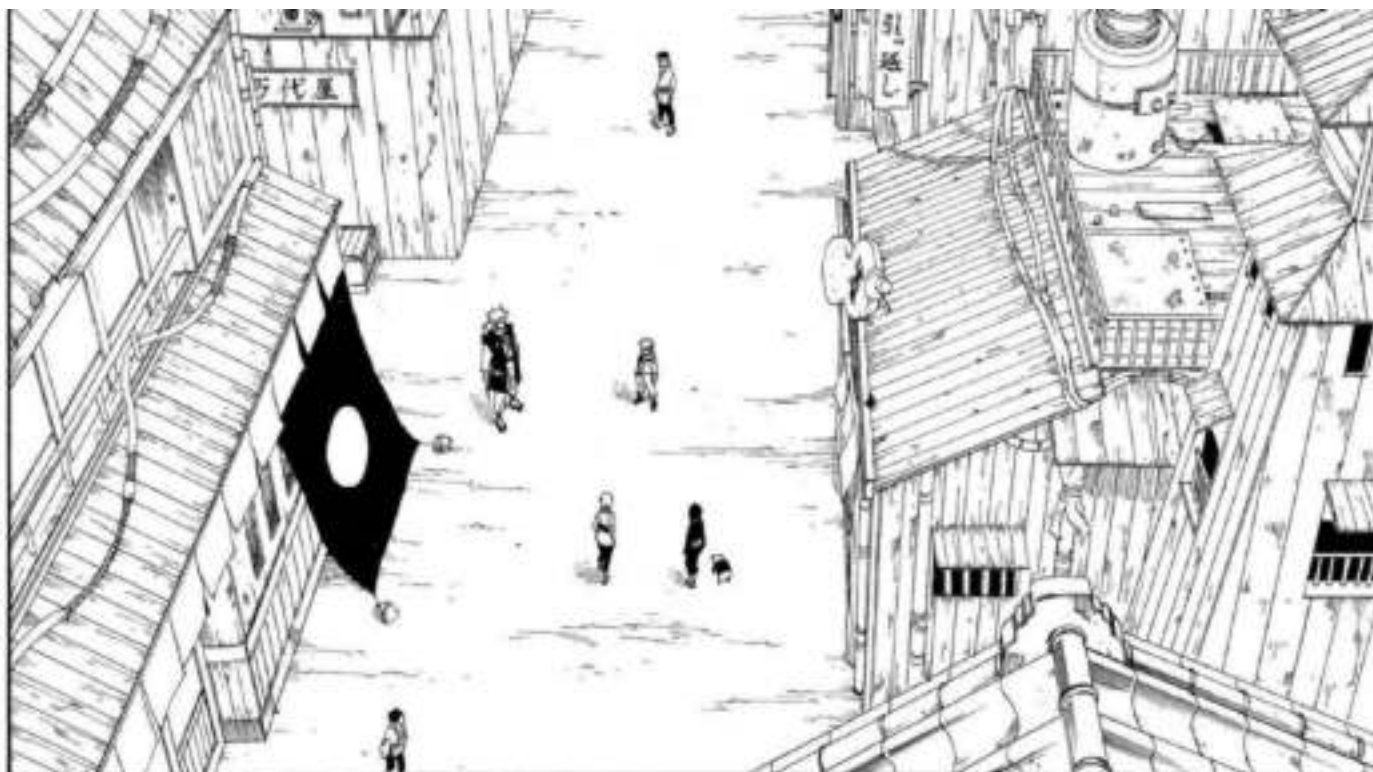


I'LL SLUG
YOU WITH
ALL I'VE
GOT!!!

I DON'T
CARE
THAT
YOU'RE A
LADY!!

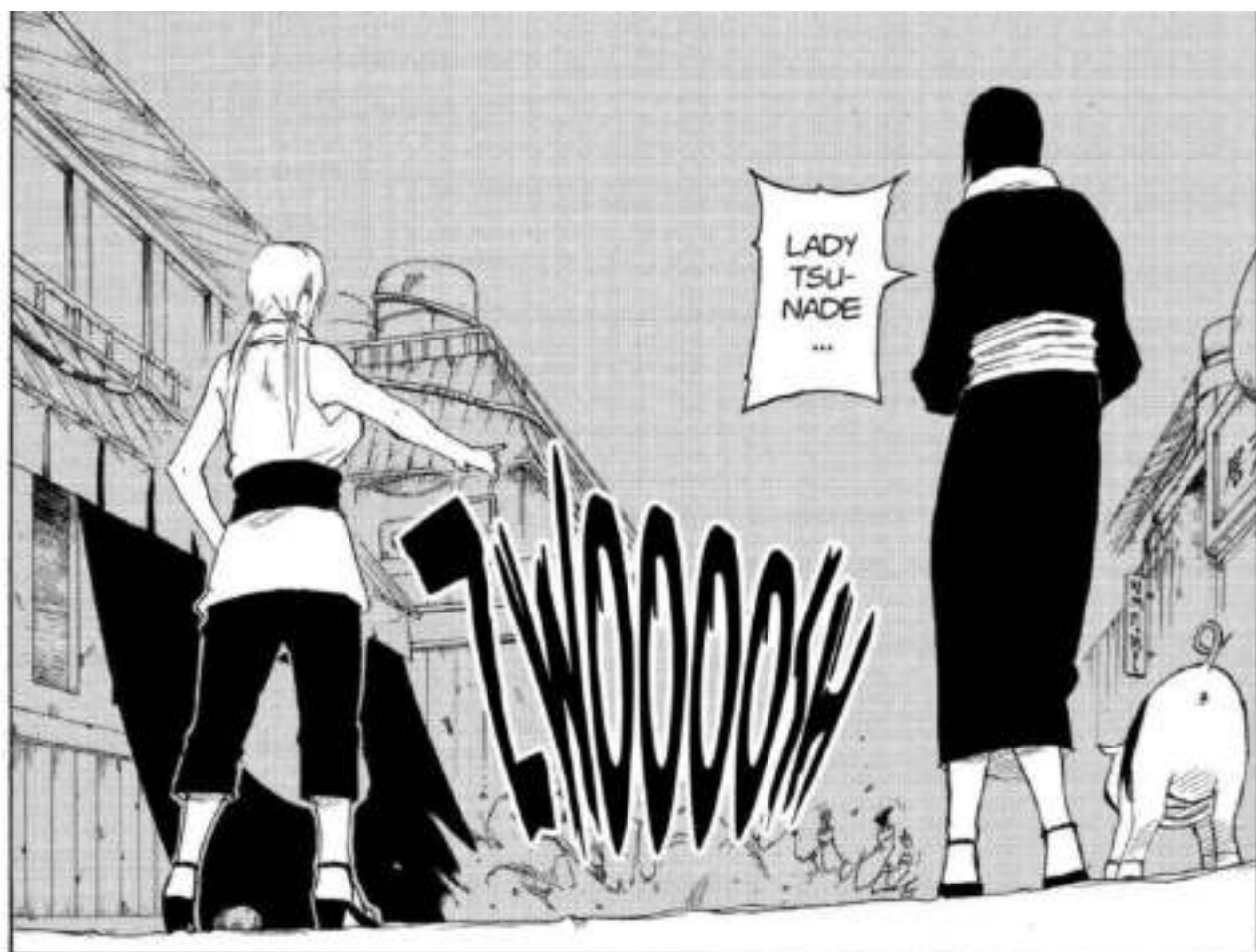
BAM

















READ THIS WAY



THE WORLD OF KISHIMOTO MASASHI
MY PERSONAL HISTORY, PART 28

RECENTLY, ALL SORTS OF THINGS ARE BECOMING DIGITIZED. THE *NARUTO* COMICS ARE APPARENTLY THE FIRST COMIC BOOK SERIES THAT IS EDITED DIGITALLY.

WHEN I WAS A COLLEGE STUDENT, THERE WAS A PARTICULAR MUSIC VIDEO THAT I REALLY GOT HOOKED ON. IT WAS KEN ISHII'S MUSIC VIDEO, EXTRA. IT CONTAINS THE WORK OF ONE OF MY FAVORITE ANIMATORS, MR. KOJI MORIMOTO. THE VIDEO WAS SHOWN OVER AND OVER ON MTV, AND GOT BIG ENOUGH THAT IT EVEN BECAME A CONVERSATION TOPIC AMONG MY COLLEGE FRIENDS. PRETTY AWESOME, THEY'D SAY!

I HAD SOMEHOW HEARD THAT IT WAS AN ANIME VIDEO PRODUCED BY A JAPANESE ANIMATOR, BUT UNTIL I ACTUALLY WATCHED IT, IT DIDN'T QUITE HIT ME. BUT THEN, I WAS STRUCK WHEN I DID! I GOT SUCKED INTO IT SO MUCH THAT I PLAYED HOOKY FROM SCHOOL AND SAT AT HOME WATCHING IT ALL DAY. THE REASON WHY I GOT SO HOOKED WAS BECAUSE I HAD NEVER SEEN SUCH MIND-BLOWING IMAGES BEFORE! TO USE A MORE CURRENT REFERENCE, IT WAS AN IMPACT LIKE THE SLO-MO FLYING BULLET SEQUENCE IN *THE MATRIX*.

FIRST, EVEN THOUGH THE SUBJECT CHARACTERS AND PERSPECTIVE KEEP RAPIDLY CHANGING, THE BACKGROUND SHIFTS ACCORDINGLY AND IN SYNC. AND THE NARROW SENSE OF SPACE AND DEPTH WAS SO REALISTIC. AT FIRST I WONDERED, HOW DID HE DO THIS? BUT BECAUSE I KNEW HE COULDN'T HAVE DRAWN THE BACKGROUNDS BY HAND, I REALIZED THAT HE MUST HAVE DIGITALLY RENDERED IT USING A COMPUTER OR SOMETHING AND THEN ADDED THE BACKGROUNDS AS TEXTURE LAYERS... I HEARD THEY DID THAT WITH GAMES LIKE *VIRTUA FIGHTER 2*, TOO... SUCH WERE THE GEEKY CONVERSATIONS I WAS HAVING.

NOW THAT ANIME HAS ENTERED THE DIGITAL AGE AS WELL, SUCH MOVING BACKGROUNDS ARE NO LONGER NOVELTIES. IN FACT, THERE ARE WORKS NOW WHERE EVEN THE CHARACTERS ARE RENDERED FROM POLYGONS AND ONE NO LONGER HAS TO DRAW EACH CELL INDIVIDUALLY. JUST... WHEN ONE USES THE COMPUTER, THE LINES ARE TOO CLEAN... IT KIND OF LOSES A LITTLE OF THE ENERGY... OR EMOTIONAL IMPACT, SOMETHING LIKE THAT... I FEEL LIKE SOME OF THE NICE PARTS OF HAND DRAWING HAVE DISAPPEARED (ESPECIALLY IN TERMS OF THE CHARACTERS).

I WISH THIS FEEL-GOOD STUFF COULD BE EXPRESSED BY THE COMPUTER AS WELL; THAT WOULD MAKE THINGS PERFECT... IT SEEMS LIKE MANGA ARE ALSO GETTING MORE AND MORE DIGITIZED, BUT I WONDER IF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY STILL COSTS TOO MUCH TIME AND MONEY...?

 Number 159: The Wager...!!









KLNK

KRN

WAAH!

FWHMP

GAKK





HUMPH...
THE ONLY
ONES WHO
CAN MANAGE
THAT JUTSU
ARE YOU
AND THE
FOURTH
LORD.

I AM HIS
MENTOR,
YOU KNOW...
FOR THE
PRESENT...



WHO TAUGHT
HIM THE
RASENGAN?!

JIRAIYA,
WAS IT
YOU?



RASENGAN...?!



...THAT'S
PRETTY
CRUEL.

PLAYING
MIGHTY
MENTOR BY
TEACHING
HIM JUTSU
HE HAS NO
HOPE OF
MASTERING?



THAT'S HOW
DREAMY-EYED
BRATS GET
STARTED ON THE
WHOLE I'M GOING
TO BECOME
HOKAGE FARCE!



SHUT UP!
SHUT UP!!

IT'S NOT
A FARCE!!



GIVE ME
THREE DAYS,
AND I'LL
MASTER THIS
JUTSU FOR
YOU!!



...



HEH!



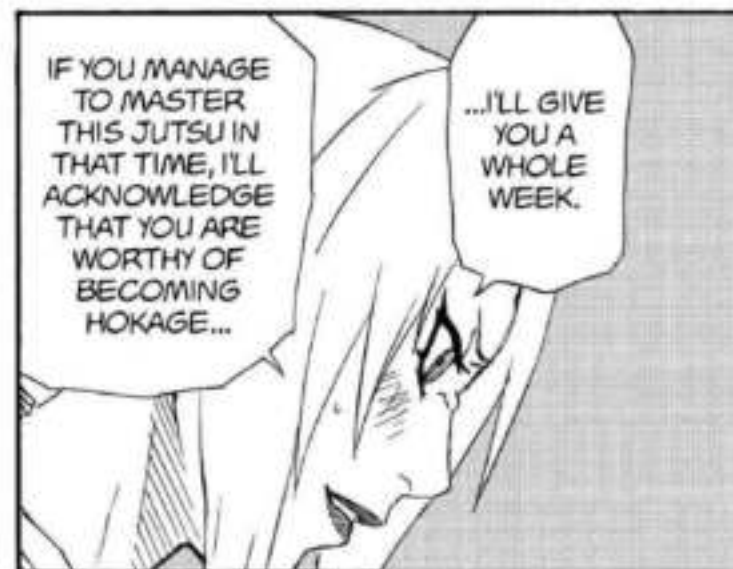
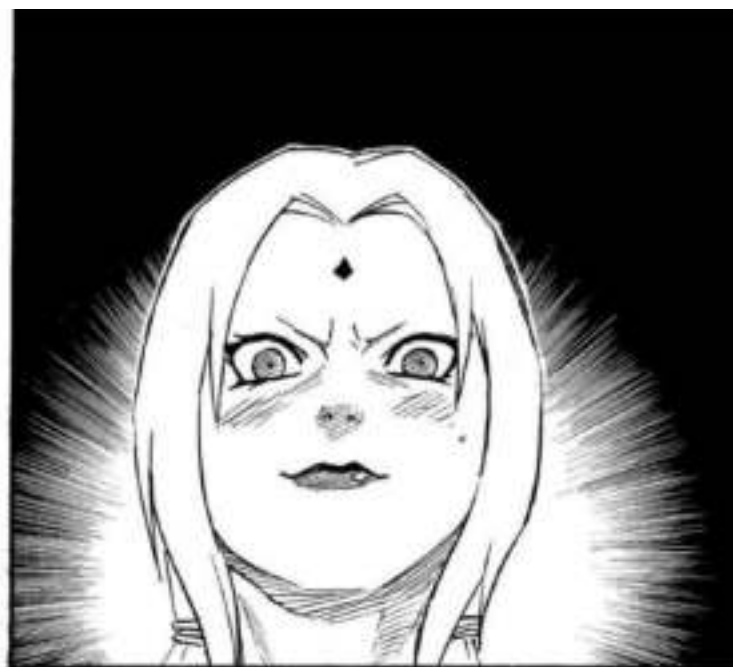
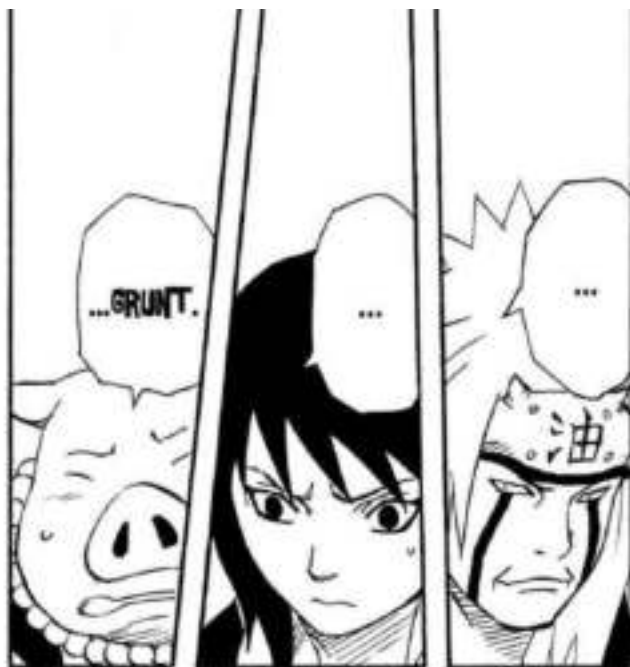
BUT A MAN
DOESN'T
BREAK HIS
WORD, YOU
KNOW!

FEH...
NICE
WORDS,
BRAT...



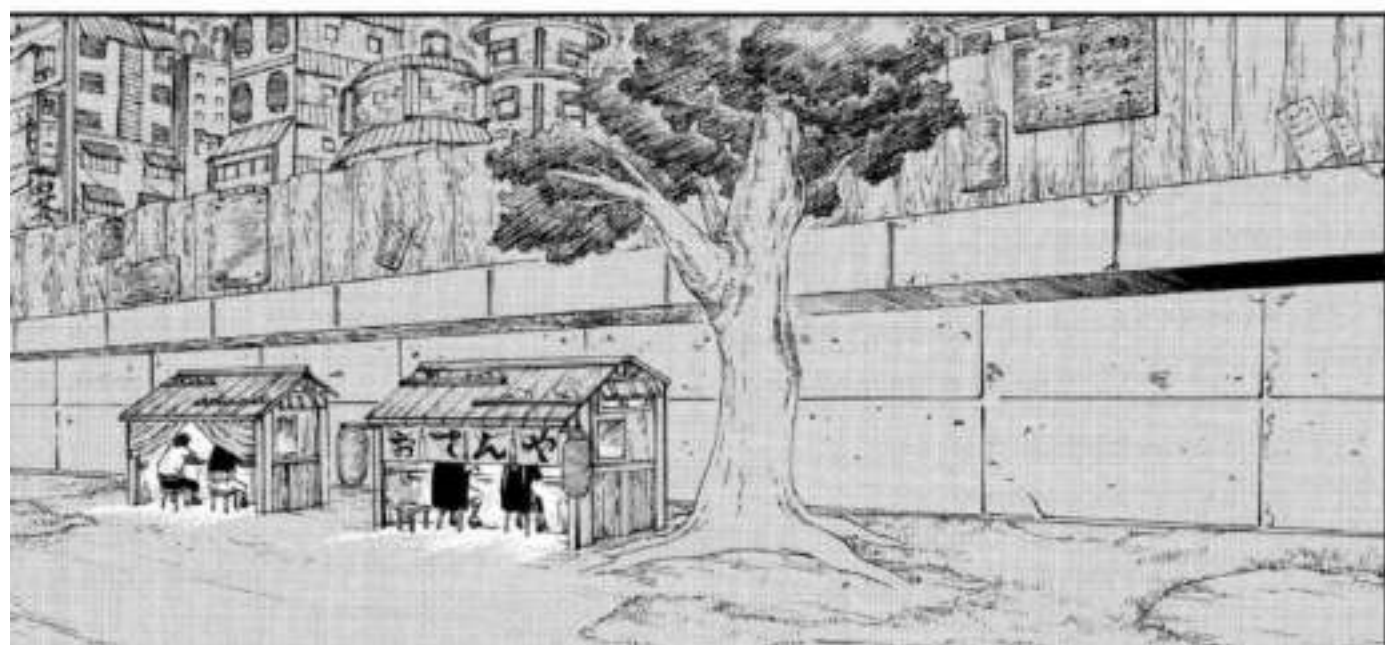
...THAT'S MY
SHINOBI
WAY!

I NEVER
GO BACK
ON MY
WORD...









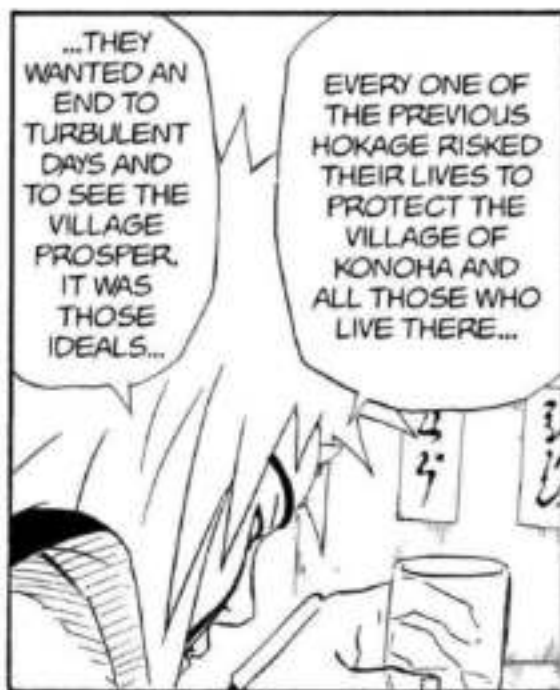








...THAT
WAS THE
DREAM THEY
FOUGHT
FOR!



...THEY
WANTED AN
END TO
TURBULENT
DAYS AND
TO SEE THE
VILLAGE
PROSPER.
IT WAS
THOSE
IDEALS...

EVERY ONE OF
THE PREVIOUS
HOKAGE RISKED
THEIR LIVES TO
PROTECT THE
VILLAGE OF
KONOHA AND
ALL THOSE WHO
LIVE THERE...



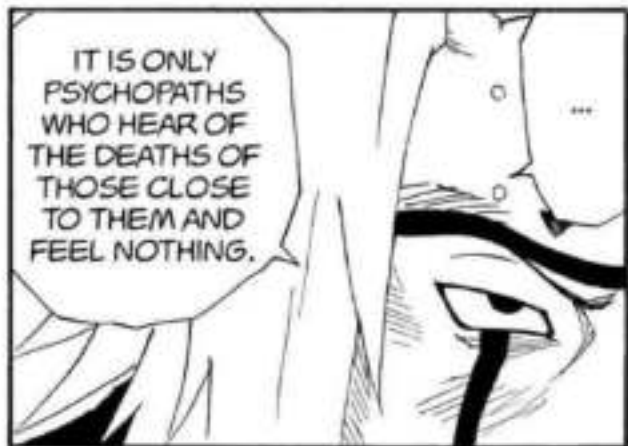
...



BUT...IF YOU
SHOULD EVER
HAPPEN TO DO
SOMETHING
THAT WOULD
BETRAY OUR
VILLAGE OF
KONOHA...



I DOUBT THAT
YOU DONT
UNDERSTAND
OUR
PREDECESSORS'
FEELINGS.







...IS MY DREAM!

TO BE HOKAGE...



DON'T YOU TELL A MAN TO RUN!!



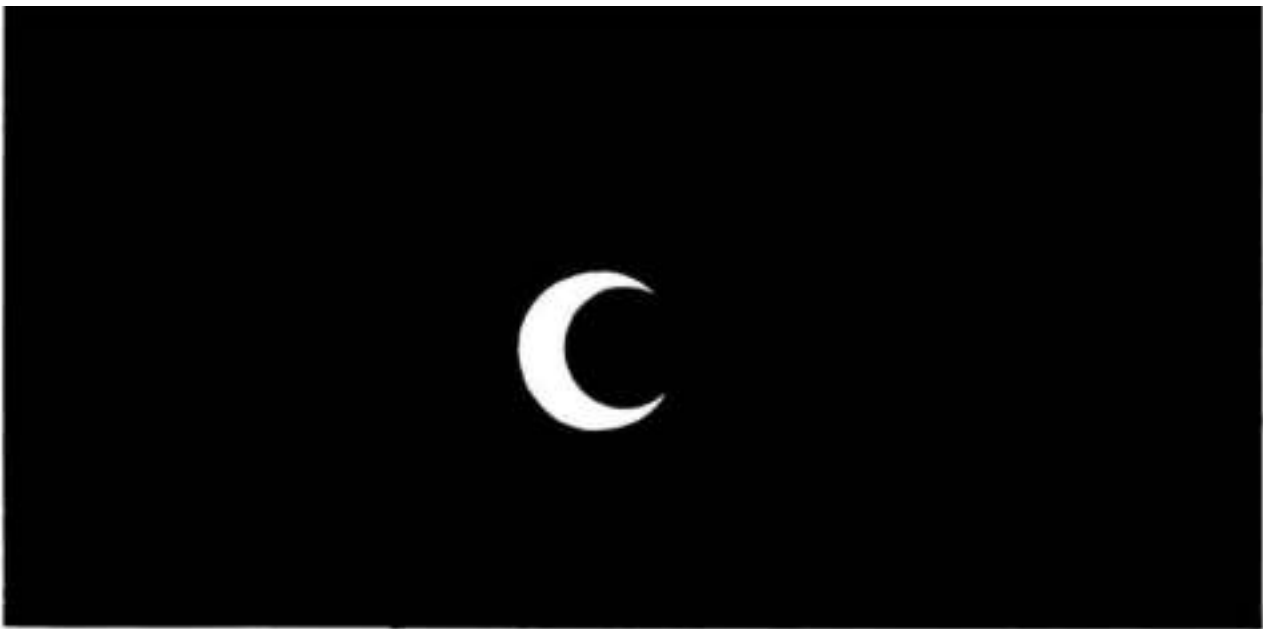
YOU'RE STILL A GENIN, NAWAKI, SO ON THE BATTLEFIELD, IT'S OKAY TO RUN OFF!

SHEESH, ALWAYS TAKING SUCH RISKS...DO YOU WANT TO DIE?!




EVEN HIS DREAM... AND HIS DRIVE...

...





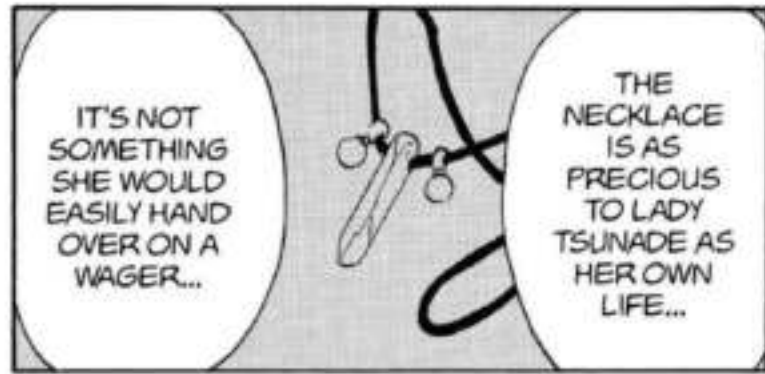
 **Number 160:**



The Necklace of Death...!!











HUMPH ...



...BUT I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU STILL HANG ON TO THE NECKLACE...

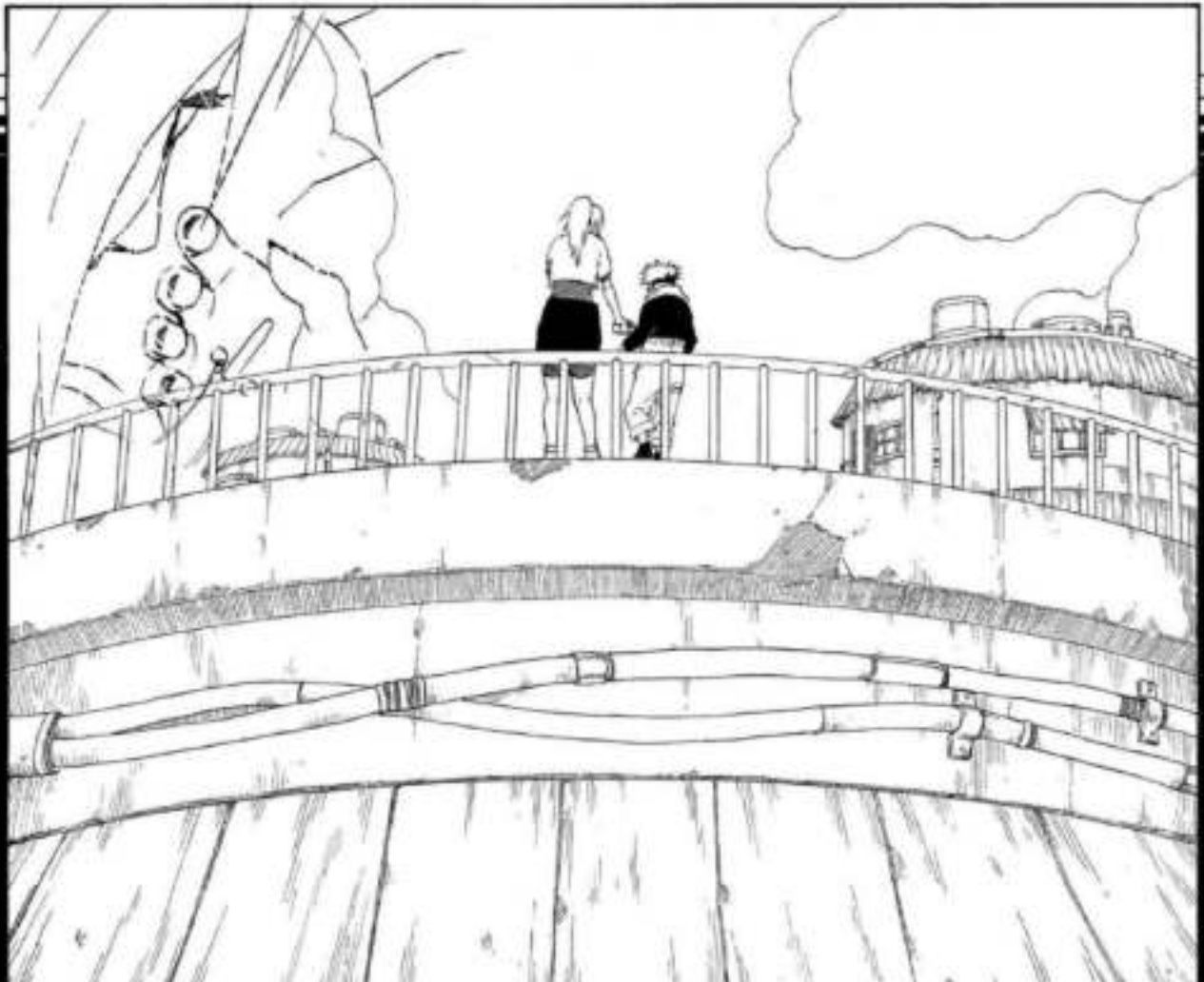
I THOUGHT YOU'D ALREADY LOST IT IN A WAGER.

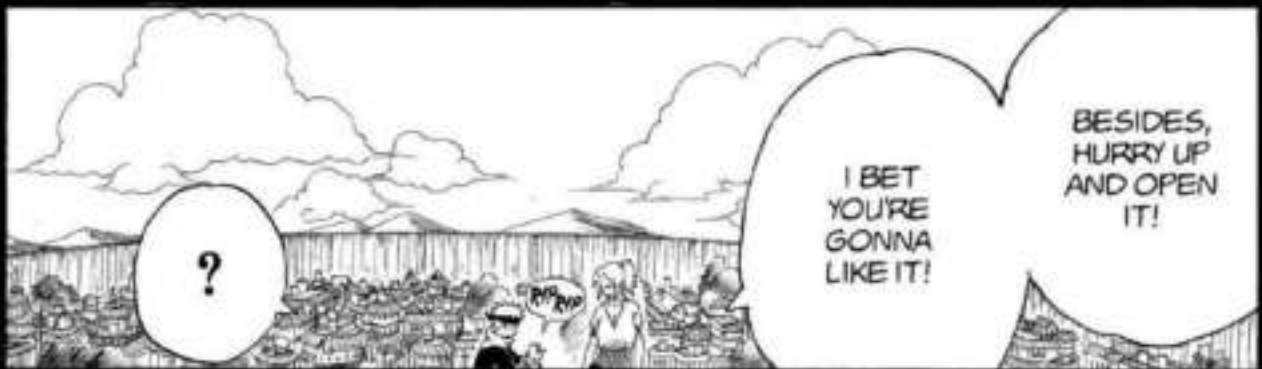


...



...IT'S A MEMENTO, ISN'T IT...?



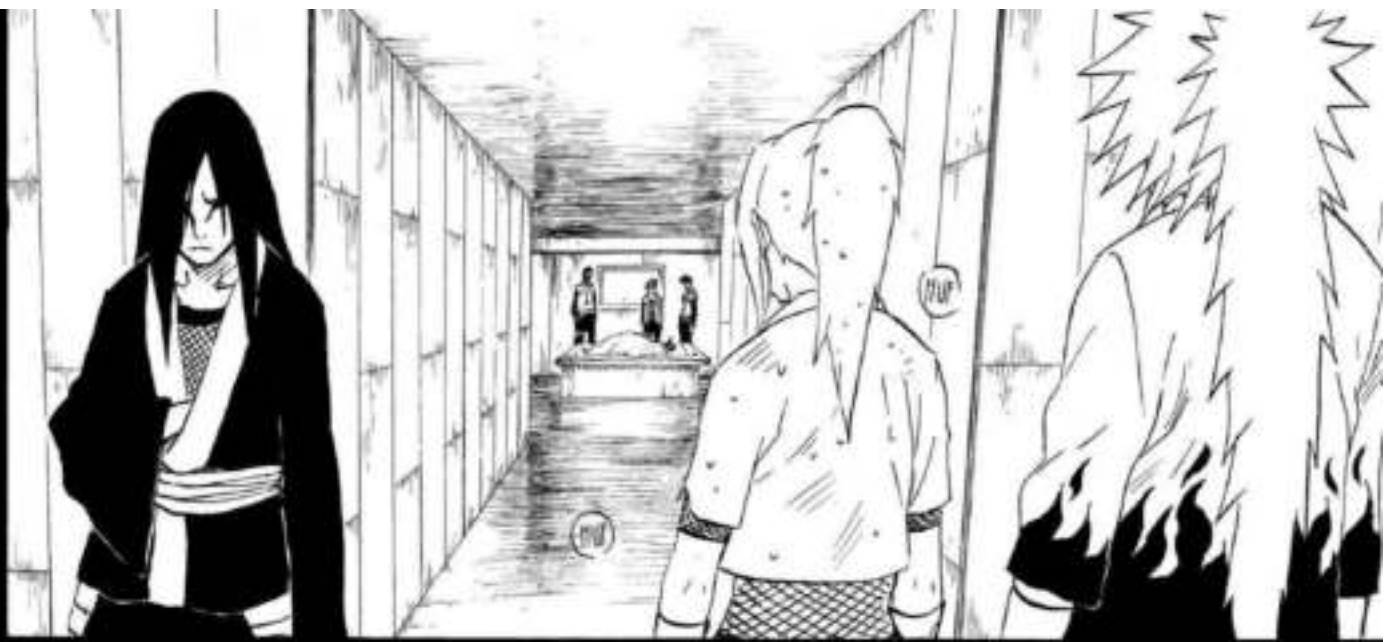




HO HO... NICE WORDS, BUT A MAN DOESN'T BREAK HIS WORD, YOU KNOW!







READ THIS WAY



IT'S NOT JUST THE NECKLACE, YOU KNOW!



AND I'M GOING TO DEFEND IT!

THE ENTIRE VILLAGE WAS GRANDPA'S TREASURE!



...EXTENDED TOURS IN ENEMY TERRITORY, ON MISSIONS REQUIRING AUTONOMOUS ACTIVITY...

...FIRST AND FOREMOST, FOR THOSE FOUR-MAN CELLS THAT WILL BE SPENDING...





WE OUGHT TO LEARN SOMETHING FROM THEM.

I DO NOT WANT TO WASTE THE DEATHS OF THOSE SHINOBI WHO HAVE ALREADY SACRIFICED THEIR LIVES.



YOU ARE CORRECT, YOU KNOW.



U...UM... THANKS FOR EARLIER.



REALLY? BUT WHERE DO YOU LIVE...?

HUH?

IT'S GETTING LATE... YOU WANT ME TO ESCORT YOU HOME...?

UM...

IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION.



...NO, REALLY... I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU ANYWAY...

THEN DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.






THIS MAN...
HE'S JUST
LIKE
ME...



THIS WAS THE
STREET I USED
TO ALWAYS TAKE
ESCORTING MY
LITTLE SISTER
TO THE
ACADEMY.

AND
BESIDES...

IT'S MY
FAVORITE
PATH.



TOMORROW,
OUR MISSIONS
WILL TAKE US
TO THE FRONT
LINE...




I LOVE THIS
VILLAGE, AND
ALL OF MY
FRIENDS...

THAT'S WHY
I WANT TO
DEFEND IT.

IT'S BECAUSE
I LIVE IN THE
WORLD OF
SHINOBI,
CONSTANTLY
SHADOWED
BY DEATH...

THAT I WANT TO
STAKE MY LIFE
ON PUTTING AN
END TO THIS ERA
OF CONFLICT.



...ISN'T
THE ONLY
JOB OF A
SHINOBI,
YOU KNOW.

TO FIGHT
AND LOSE
THOSE WE
LOVE...

...I
KNOW...



THAT'S
WHY I
WANT TO
BECOME
HOKAGE...

SINCE
THE DAY
MY LITTLE
SISTER
DIED...

THIS
THOUGHT IS
THE ONLY
THING THAT'S
BEEN
KEEPING ME
GOING.



BECAUSE TO
BECOME THE
PROTECTOR...
THE HOKAGE,
IS MY DREAM.



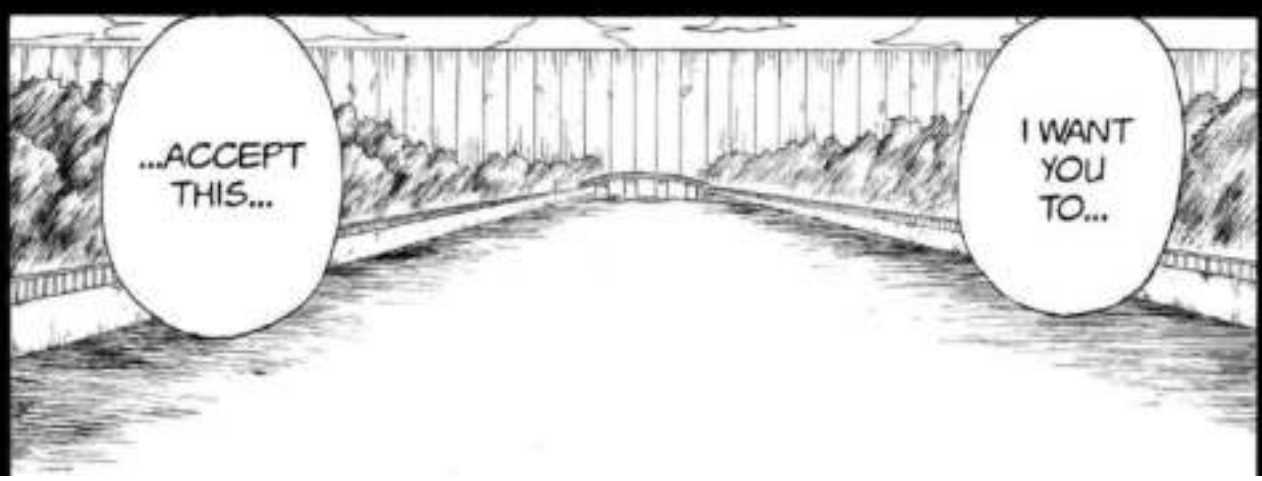
CLENCH!

DAN...

(Close-up of an eye)

(Close-up of a young woman's face)

...!



...ACCEPT
THIS...

I WANT
YOU
TO...









THE WORLD OF KISHIMOTO MASASHI
MY PERSONAL HISTORY, PART 29

I FEEL LIKE I GEEKED TOO MUCH IN MY PERSONAL HISTORY PARTS 27 AND 28, SO I THINK I'LL WRITE AN EMOTIONAL STORY THIS TIME.

IN ANY CASE, IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING MY MANGA *KARAKURI* WINNING THE HOP ☆ STEP AWARD, MY ASSIGNED EDITOR MR. YAHAGI ASKED ME TO DRAW A DRAFT (KIND OF A ROUGH SKETCH OF A MANGA) OF A STAND-ALONE STORY. WHEN HE SAW *WANDERING DETOUR*, THE BIG MISTAKE OF A MANGA THAT I JUST DREW WILLY-NILLY, MR. YAHAGI SIMPLY SAID, THIS...ISN'T SHONEN MAGAZINE MATERIAL! A-HA-HA-HA. AND I WAS THE MASOCHISTIC NEWBIE WHO REPLIED, SO IT'S A REJECT... HUH ACTUALLY REVELING IN THE REVERBERATION OF THE WORD REJECTION AND EVEN HAPPILY SELF-PROCLAIMING THAT IT WAS A REJECT (SEE VOLUME 9, PAGE 26'S KISHIMOTO MASASHI'S FIRST MANGA REJECT SPECIAL).

LATER ON, MR. YAHAGI ENCOURAGED ME WITH WHY DON'T YOU DRAW A MORE SHŌNEN-STYLE BATTLE EPIC! SO I EQUALLY EAGERLY REPLIED, RIGHT! AND WANTING TO MEET MR. YAHAGI'S EXPECTATIONS, I IMMEDIATELY SET OUT TO THINK UP A NEW VERSION OF MY WINNING WORK, *KARAKURI*. OF COURSE THE STORY OF AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL KID AND HIS MISADVENTURES ON THE WAY HOME FROM SCHOOL ISN'T ENTERTAINING! WHAT A FOOL I HAD BEEN! I HADN'T UNDERSTOOD ANYTHING! AND THE REGRET WENT ON... SO I QUICKLY DREW AN ALTERNATE VERSION OF *KARAKURI* AND MAILED IT IN...THIS TIME, FOR SURE...

MR. YAHAGI SIMPLY SAID, ER...I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT AT ALL! A-HA-HA-HA. SO AGAIN, I SELF-PROFESSED, ...WHICH MEANS...IT'S REJECTED, RIGHT...AND ONCE AGAIN, I HADN'T MET MR. YAHAGI'S EXPECTATIONS. ...THIS TIME, I LOST MY EAGERNESS. I BECAME QUITE DEPRESSED, IN FACT. ...REALITY IS HARSH. ...THEN ONE DAY, I RECEIVED A LETTER FROM MR. YAHAGI. WHEN I EXAMINED IT, I REALIZED IT CONTAINED TWO FULL PAGES OF POINTERS ABOUT HOW TO DRAW MANGA AND OTHER ADVICE. AND, WHEN I GOT TO THE END OF THAT LETTER...MY EYES STARTED WELLING A BIT WITH TEARS. HERE'S WHAT IT SAID...

"YOU DO HAVE TALENT. PLEASE KEEP TRYING."

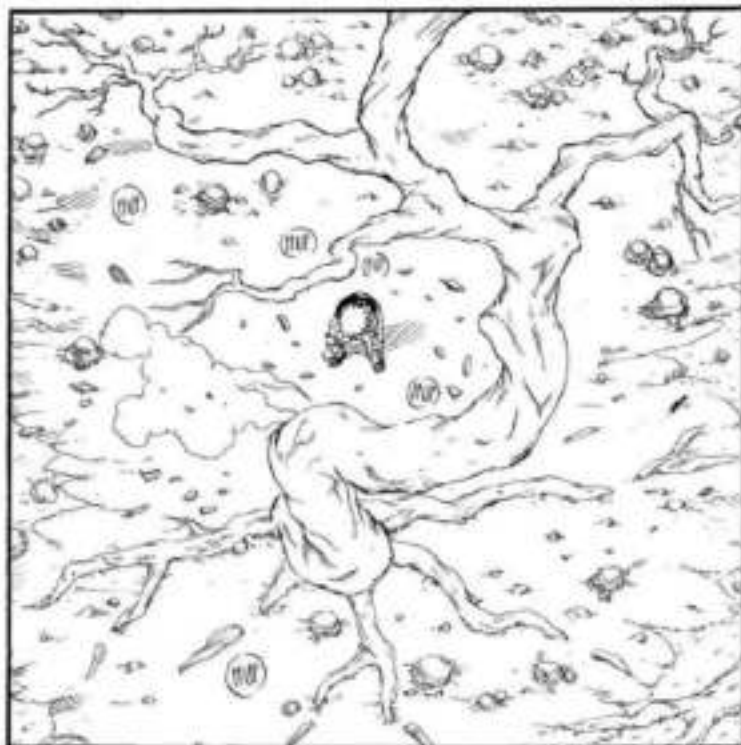
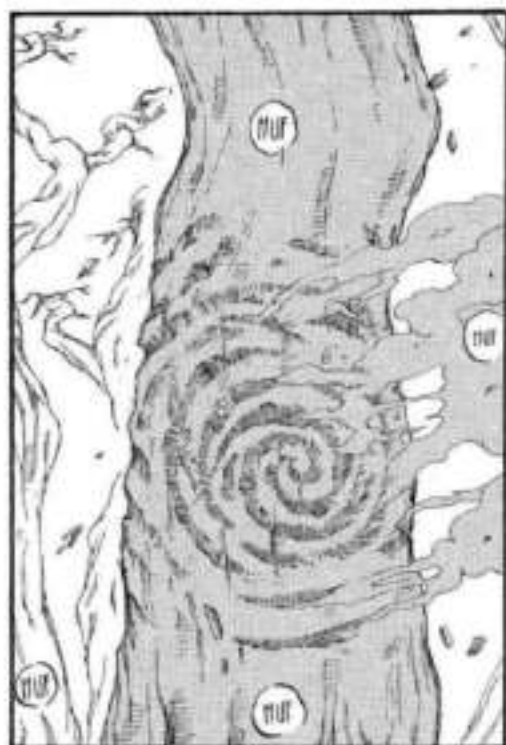
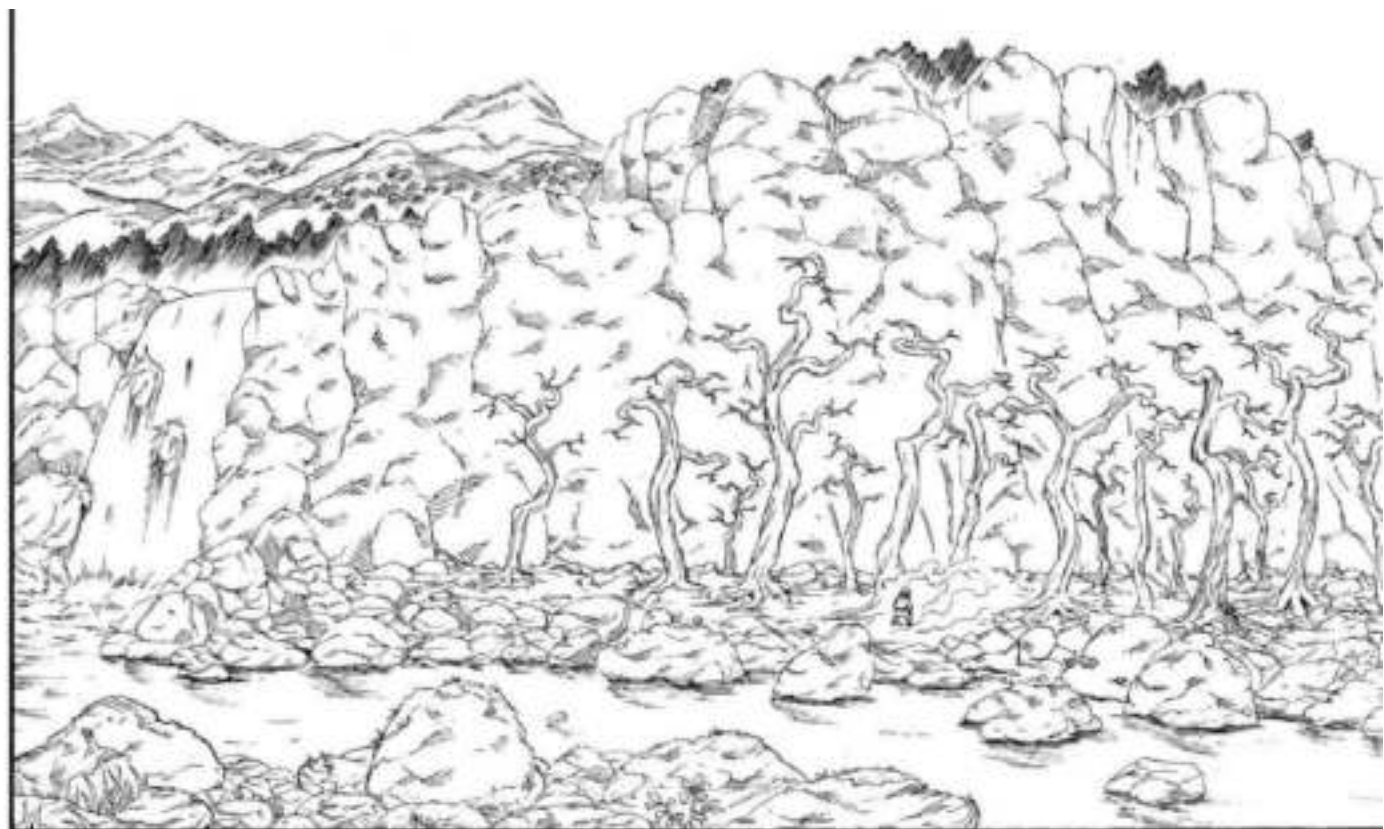
EVEN IF IT WERE A LIE OR FLATTERY, IT STILL MADE ME HAPPY! I HAD BEEN DEPRESSED, BUT IT RENEWED MY DETERMINATION! IMMEDIATELY, I STARTED DRAWING A DRAFT. AND THEN, WHEN I FOUND OUT THAT MR. YAHAGI HIMSELF WAS PLANNING TO PAY ME A PERSONAL VISIT TO MY HOUSE (IN KYUSHU) TO GO OVER IT, I PUT GREAT DRIVE INTO MY DRAFT, AND WENT TO MEET MR. YAHAGI AT MY LOCAL MISTER DONUT. I'M NOT GOING TO WASTE THOSE TEARS I SHED, I SWORE TO MYSELF! I PUT GREAT ENERGY INTO THIS DRAFT! THIS TIME FOR SURE!

HE TOOK A LOOK AT THE MANGA, THEN UTTERED, "THIS ISN'T REALLY MANGA..."

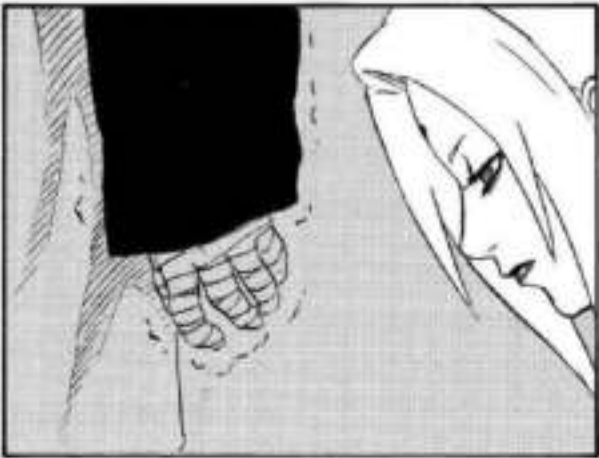
I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY ANYMORE...SINCE THEN, I'VE GOTTEN DEPRESSED COUNTLESS TIMES, BUT EACH TIME I WOULD PULL OUT THAT LETTER AND REREAD IT TO THE END AGAIN...IT'S A PRECIOUS LETTER THAT I STILL PEEK AT FROM TIME TO TIME EVEN NOW.

 Number 161: Tsunade's Choice!!










WONT YOU
CONSIDER...
OUR OFFER?



IVE
LEARNED
THE
FORBIDDEN
JUTSU...

...I CAN
REANIMATE
YOUR BELOVED
LITTLE
BROTHER AND
LOVER BOTH.



DON'T YOU
WANT TO SEE
THEM AGAIN,
TSUNADE...?



...SUPPOSE I
FIX THOSE
ARMS...WHAT
ARE YOU
GOING TO
DO?



HAVE YOU
FORGOTTEN
THEIR
WISHES...
OR EVEN
YOUR WISH...
YOUR DREAM,
LADY
TSUNADE?!

NO! YOU
MUSTN'T BE
TAKEN IN BY
THEIR
SWEET
TALK...!



THIS TIME I
ANNIHILATE
KONOHA
ONCE AND
FOR ALL.



...THE VILLAGE
REQUESTS THAT
YOU ACCEPT THE
TITLE OF FIFTH
HOKAGE.

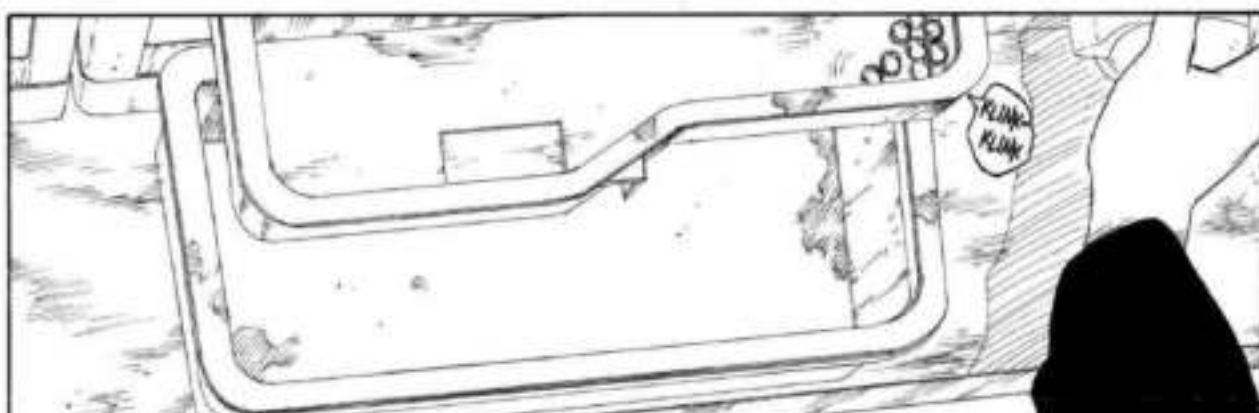
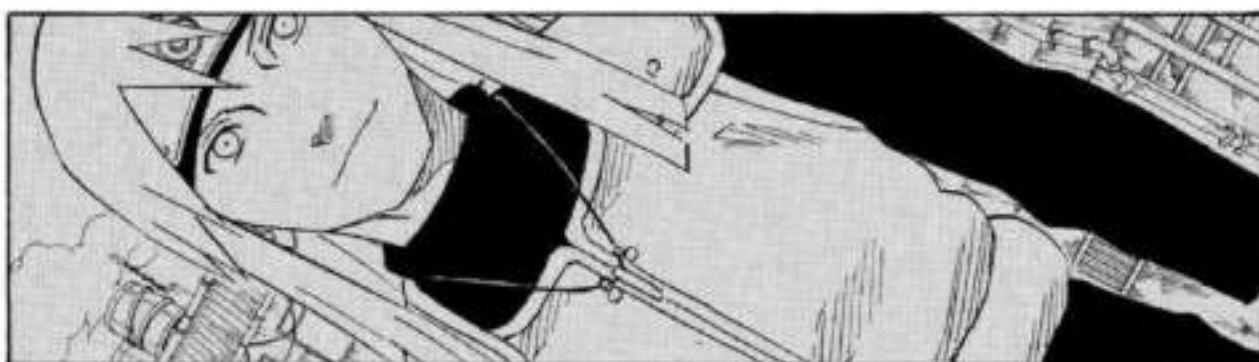
I'LL LAY IT
STRAIGHT,
TSUNADE...



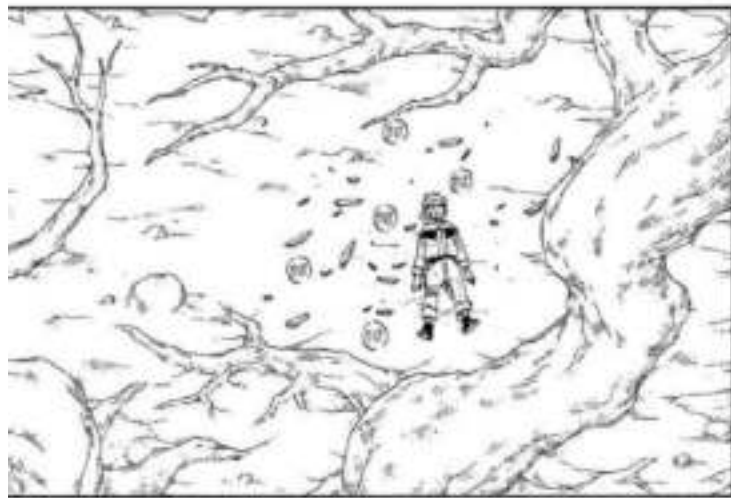
...THAT
WAS THE
DREAM
THEY
FOUGHT
FOR!

...THEY
WANTED AN
END TO
TURBULENT
DAYS AND
TO SEE THE
VILLAGE
PROSPER. IT
WAS THOSE
IDEALS...

EVERY ONE OF
THE PREVIOUS
HOKAGE
RISKED THEIR
LIVES TO
PROTECT THE
VILLAGE OF
KONOHA AND
ALL THOSE
WHO LIVE
THERE...

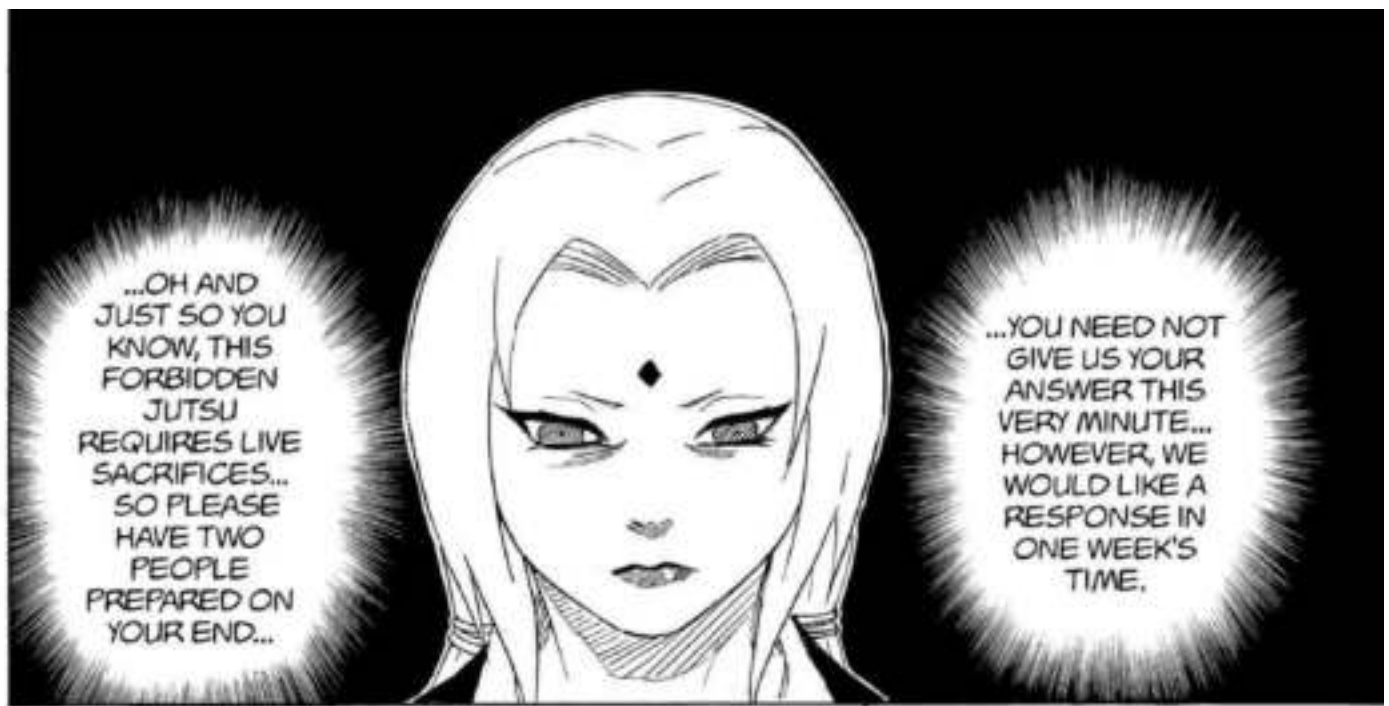


READ THIS WAY



THE SECOND NIGHT AFTER THE WAGER WITH TSUNADE...





...OH AND
JUST SO YOU
KNOW, THIS
FORBIDDEN
JUTSU
REQUIRES LIVE
SACRIFICES...
SO PLEASE
HAVE TWO
PEOPLE
PREPARED ON
YOUR END...

...YOU NEED NOT
GIVE US YOUR
ANSWER THIS
VERY MINUTE...
HOWEVER, WE
WOULD LIKE A
RESPONSE IN
ONE WEEK'S
TIME.



WELL?!
CALL IT!



SO!
WHICH
WILL IT
BE?!





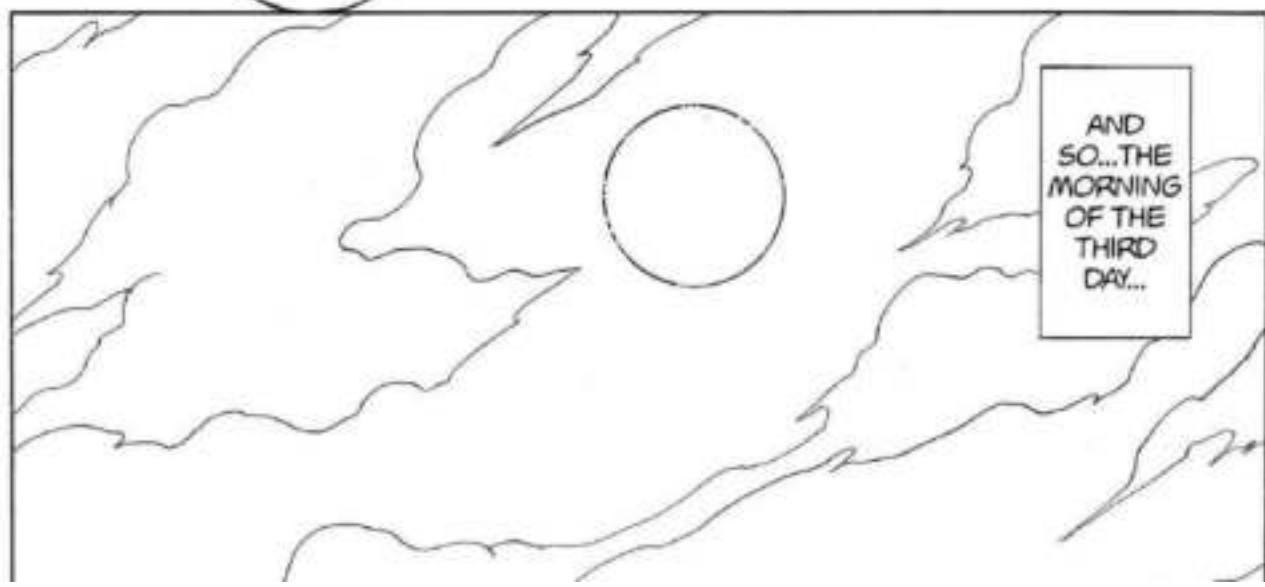
MAKE NO MISTAKE, SHE WILL SWALLOW OUR TERMS.

YOU CAN COUNT ON IT...



I KNOW HER BETTER THAN SHE KNOWS HERSELF...!

I ALSO KNOW HER GREATEST WEAKNESS.



AND SO...THE MORNING OF THE THIRD DAY...



HAH!



WOOOSH



IN SHORT, WHILE YOU MAXIMIZE YOUR CHAKRA'S ROTATION AND POWER, YOU FORM AN ADDITIONAL MEMBRANE ON THE INSIDE OF THE BALLOON AND VISUALIZE COMPRESSING THE CHAKRA WITHIN.

SO YOU SEE, IN THIS THIRD STATE, YOU PUT OUT EVERYTHING YOU'VE LEARNED SO FAR FULL FORCE, AND THEN... CONTAIN IT!



I UNDERSTAND THE PRINCIPLE OF IT IN MY MIND...



WHAPWH AP GLARE



...BUT I CAN'T SEEM TO COMPRESS MY FULL CHAKRA AND CONTAIN IT IN THE SHAPE OF A PERFECT SPHERE...





...THAT'S PRETTY CRUEL. THAT'S HOW DREAMY-EYED BRATS GET STARTED ON THE WHOLE I'M GOING TO BECOME HOKAGE FARCE!

PLAYING MIGHTY MENTOR BY TEACHING HIM JUTSU HE HAS NO HOPE OF MASTERING?



URGH!



THUMP



GATTA

GATTA



!!! ROOOOOOOOR !!!



GR

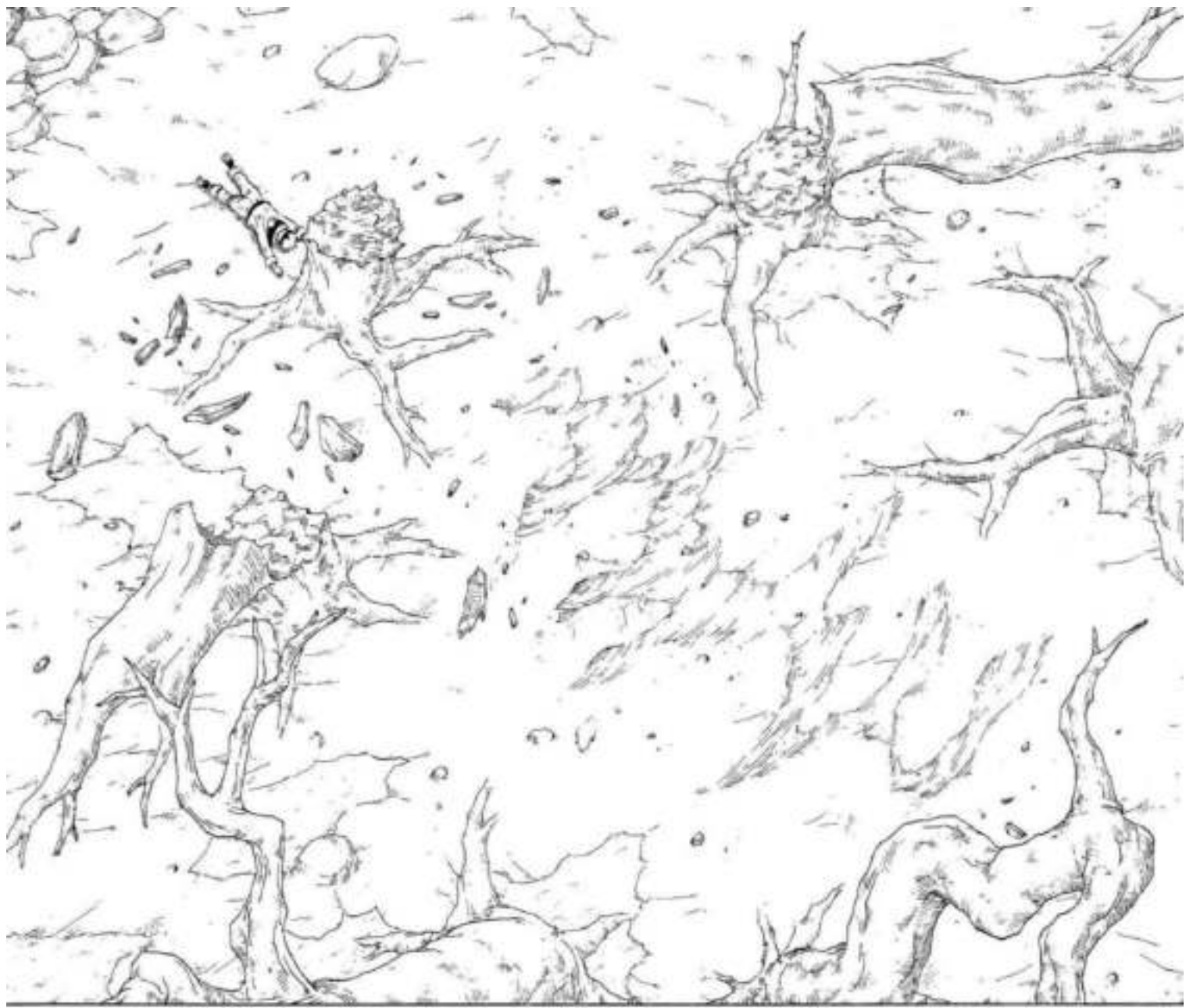


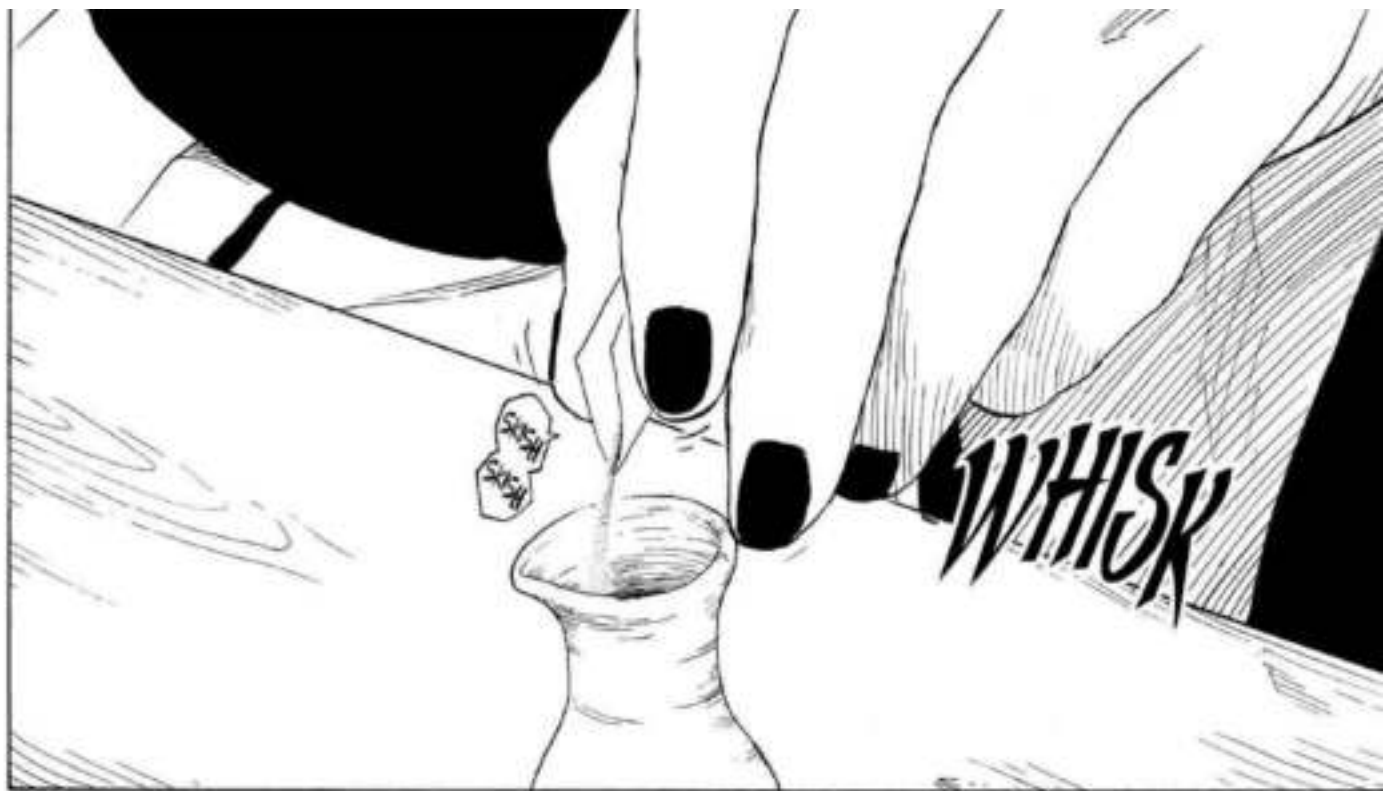
UNN

















Number 162: A Vulnerable Heart...!!



...YEESH.

...



MISTER!
IT'S
MORNING!

WAKE UP
ALREADY,
WILL YA!!



ARE
YOU ALL
RIGHT?!!

M...
MISTER?!



HEY?!

BMPBMP

KRACH



SLMP



Number 162:

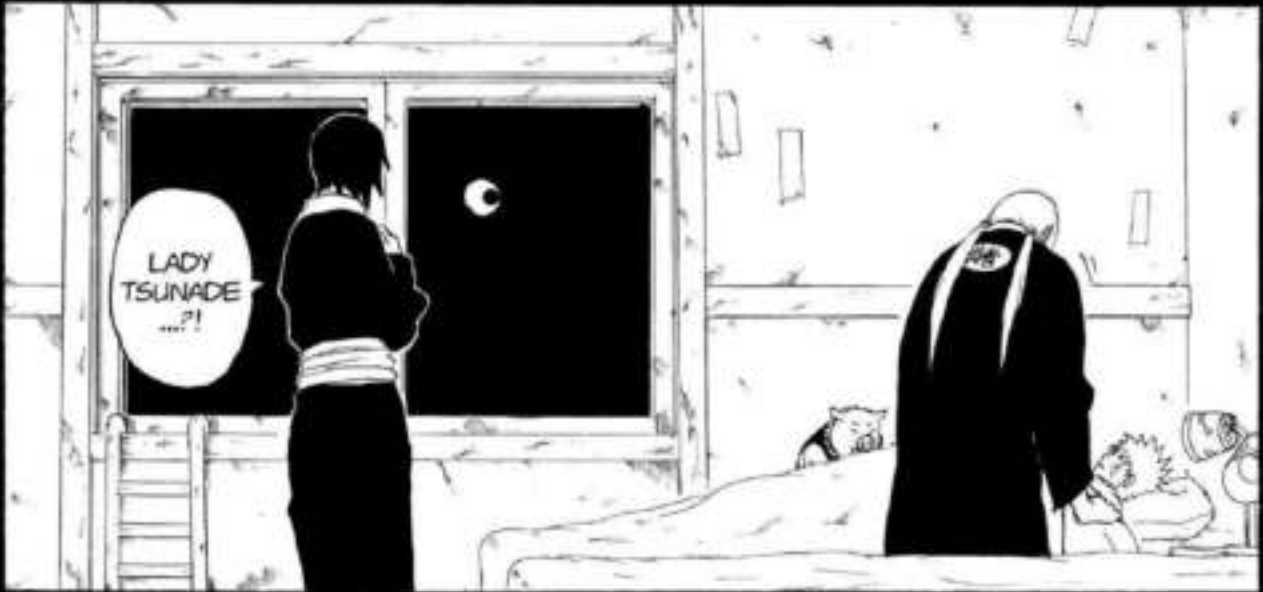
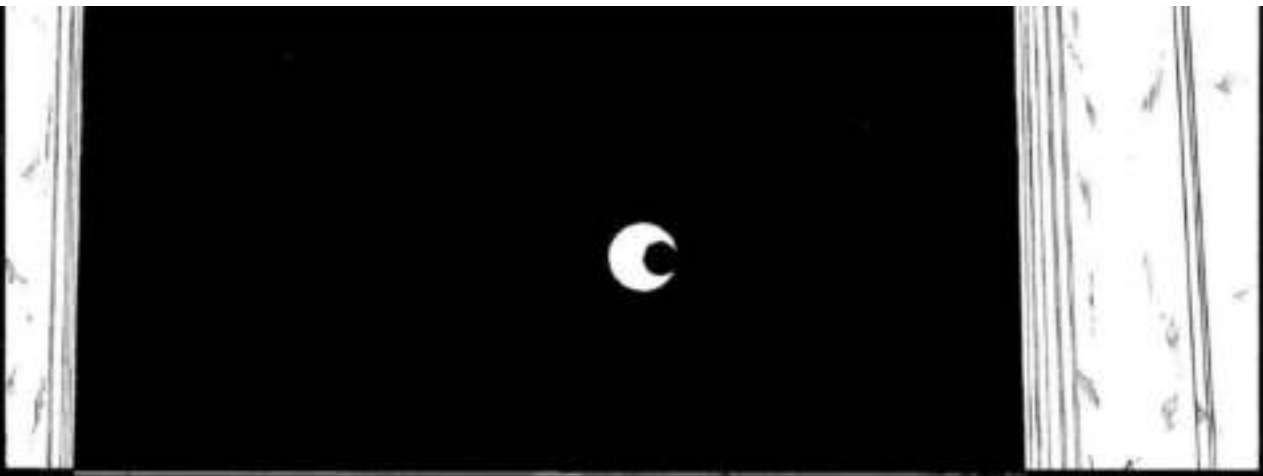
A Vulnerable Heart...!!

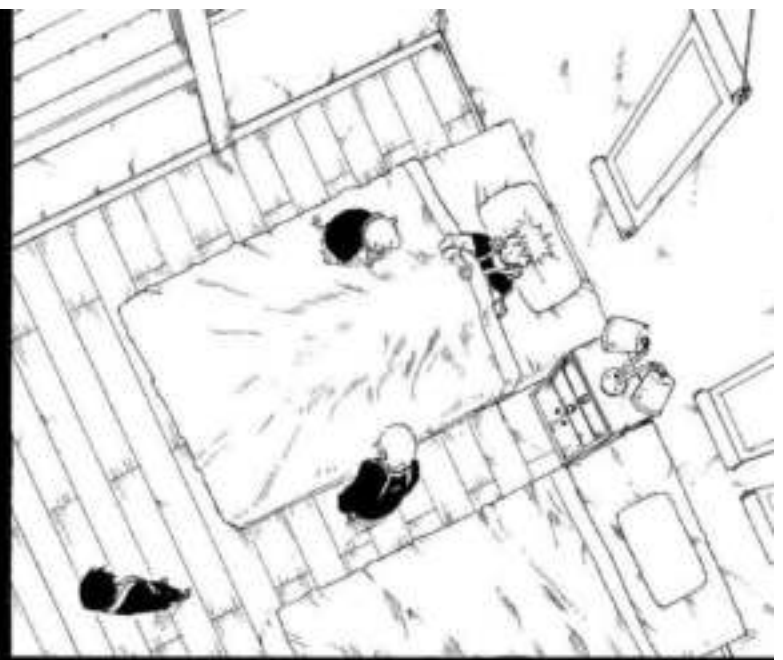


NARUTO

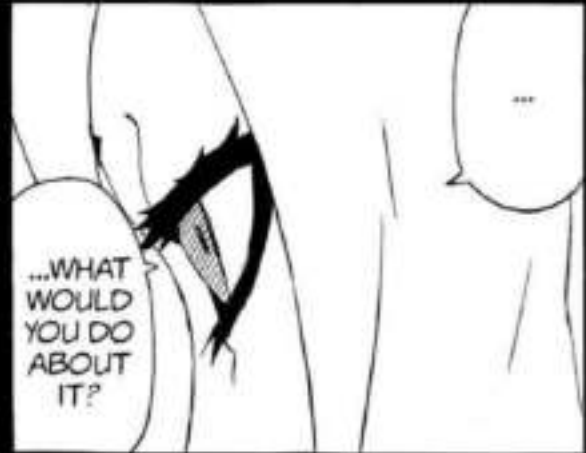
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READ THIS WAY



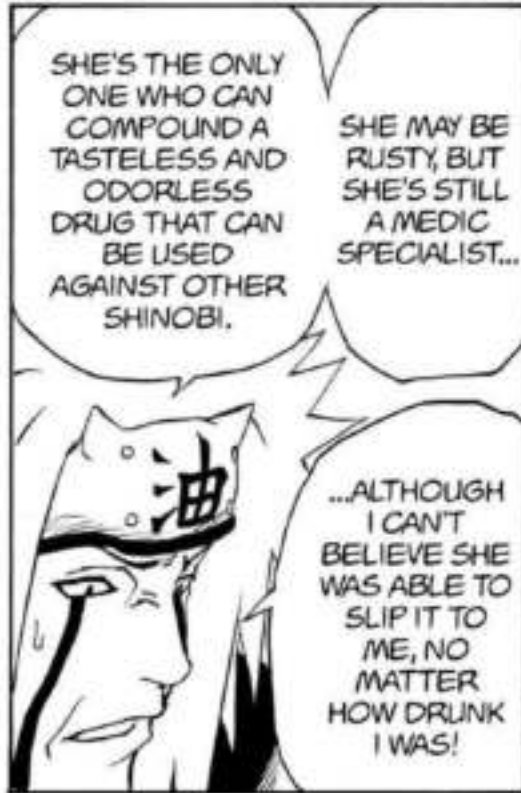






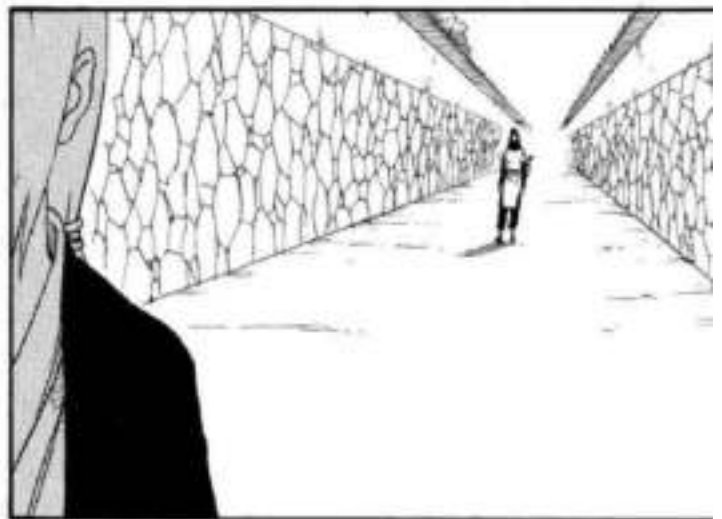
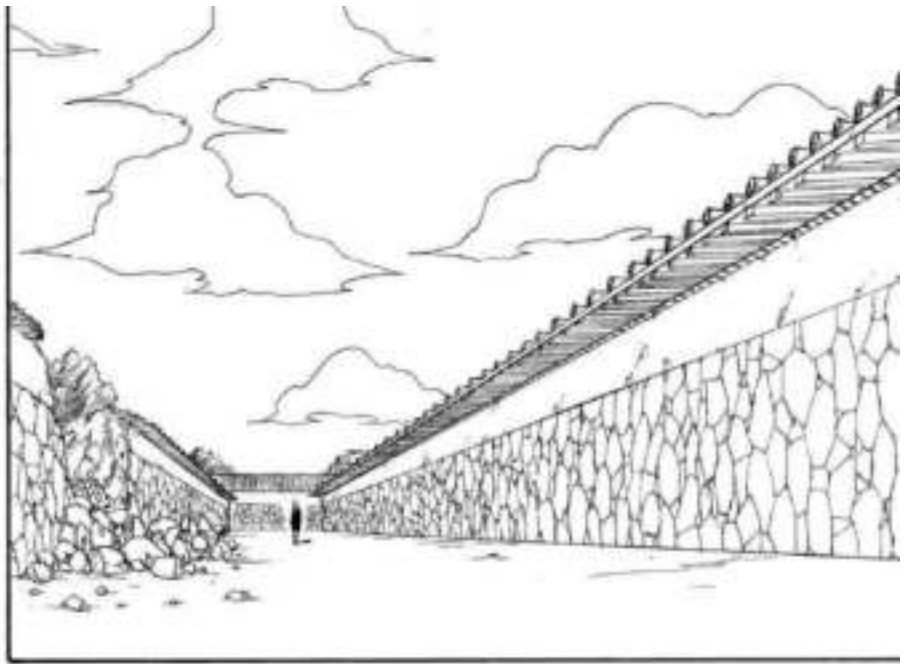






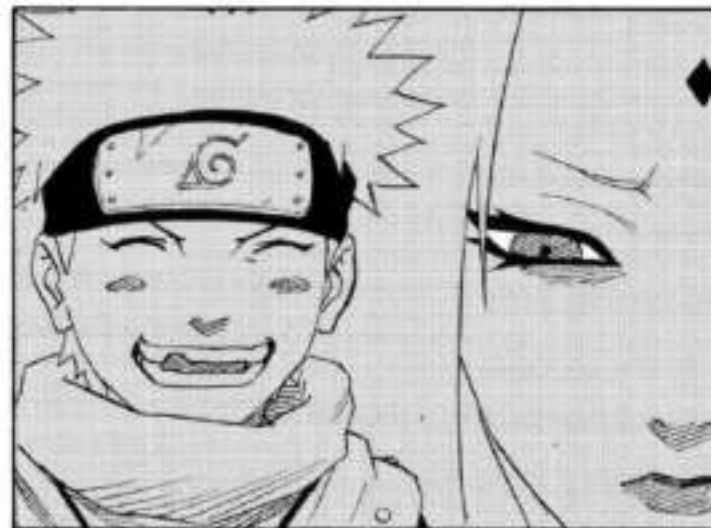


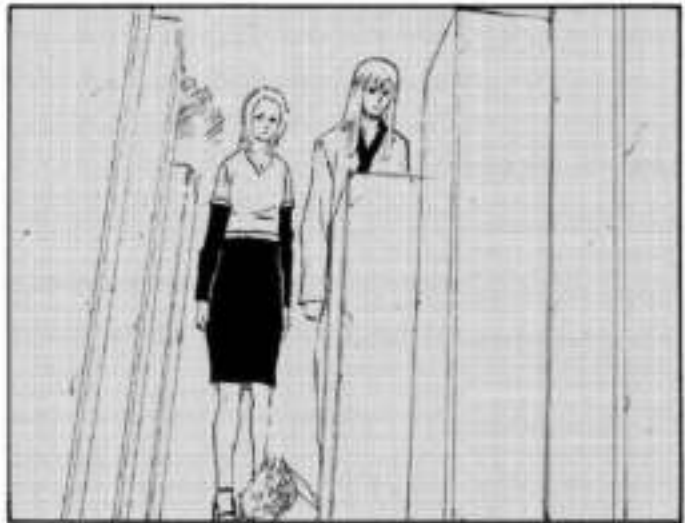
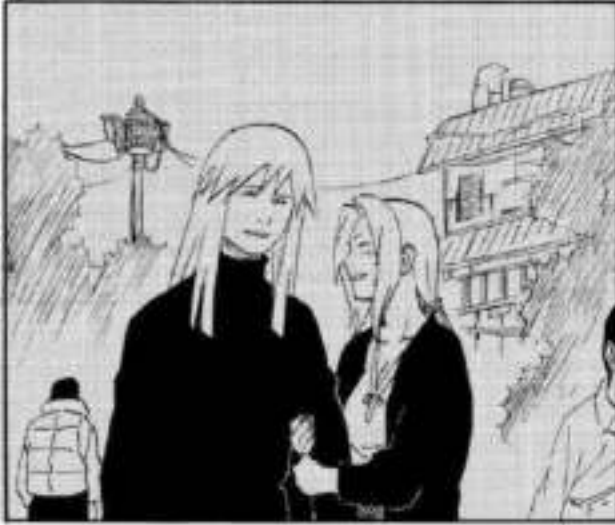




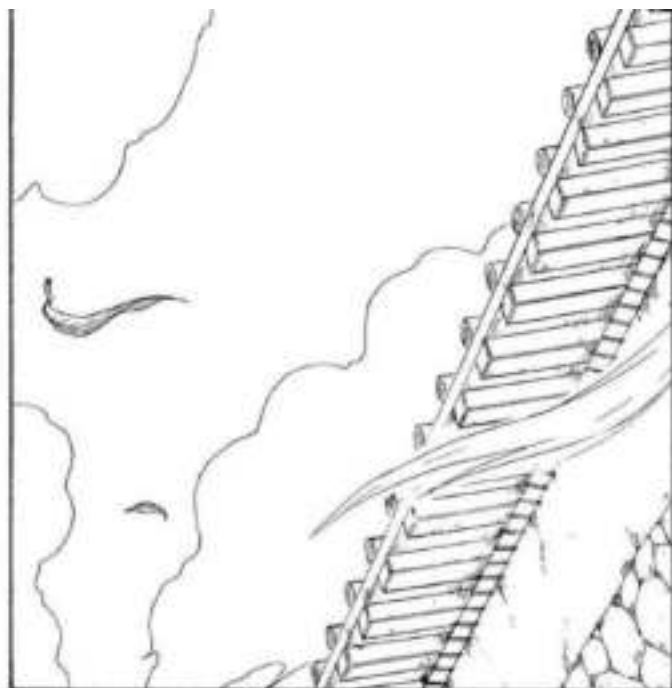
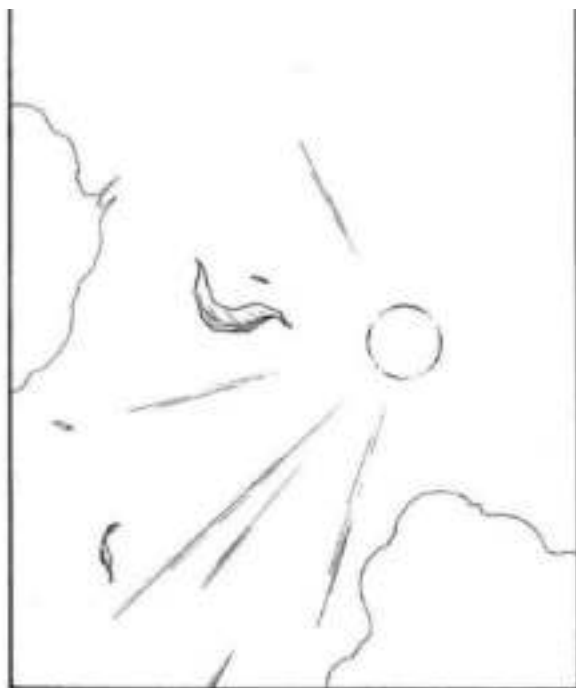
READ THIS WAY











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