



NARUTO

SHONEN JUMP MANGA

Story & Art by

Masashi Kishimoto volume

4



岸本 齊史

Thank you for your constant fan letters.
When I'm tired...
When I'm bored...
When I'm groaning in pain...
When I'm sleepy...
They always help to flip my heart's switch.
I read them all.
Thanks truly!!

—Masashi Kishimoto, 2000



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. 4
The SHONEN JUMP Graphic Novel Edition

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STORY AND ART BY MASASHI KISHIMOTO

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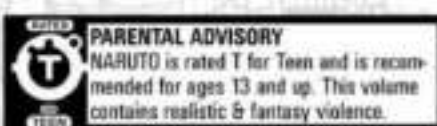
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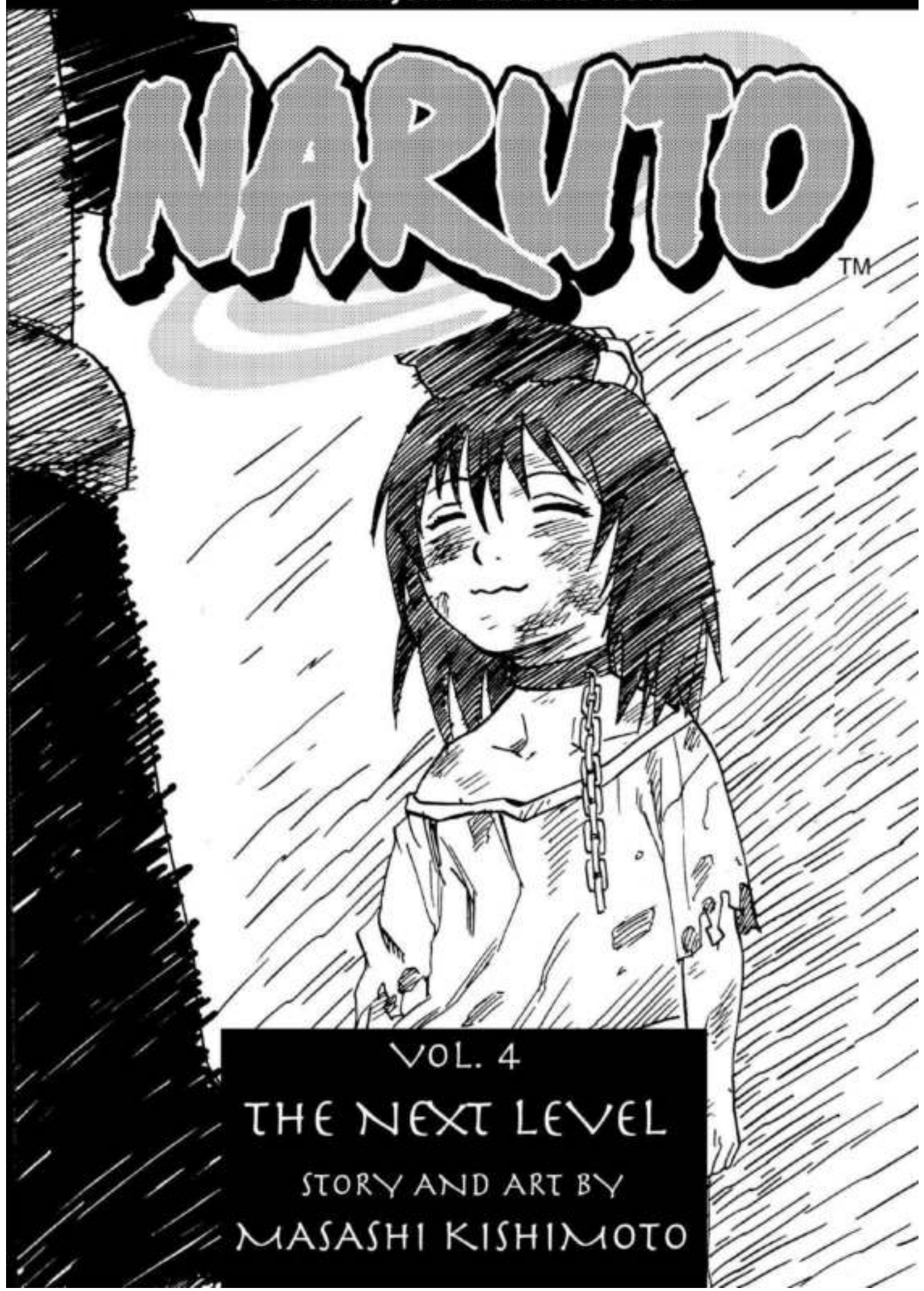


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SHONEN JUMP GRAPHIC NOVEL

NARUTO™



VOL. 4

THE NEXT LEVEL

STORY AND ART BY

MASASHI KISHIMOTO

SAKURA サクラ

Smart and studious, Sakura is the brightest of Naruto's classmates, but she's constantly distracted by her crush on Sasuke. Her goal: to win Sasuke's heart!

NARUTO ナルト

When Naruto was born, a destructive fox spirit was imprisoned inside his body. Spurned by the older villagers, he's grown into an attention-seeking troublemaker. His goal: to become the village's next Hokage.

SASUKE サスケ

The top student in Naruto's class, Sasuke comes from the prestigious Uchiha clan. His goal: to get revenge on a mysterious person who wronged him in the past.





KAKASHI カカシ

The elite ninja assigned to train Naruto, Sasuke, and Sakura. His *sharingan* ("mirror-wheel eye") allows him to reflect and mimic enemy *ninjutsu*.



ZABUZA 再不斬

A ruthless ninja assassin and mass-murderer known as "The Demon." He specializes in techniques involving water and mist.



HAKU 白

A mysterious orphan who befriends Naruto. Naruto doesn't realize that his new friend is Zabuzza's loyal masked assistant, who fights with chiropractic needles.



TAZUNA タズナ

An old bridge-builder struggling to bring prosperity to the Land of Waves. The evil millionaire Gato has hired Zabuzza to stop him from completing his newest bridge.

THE STORY SO FAR...

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 become a ninja-in-training, learning the art of *ninjutsu* with his classmates Sakura and Sasuke.

Tired of easy exercises, Naruto and his classmates make the mistake of asking their teacher, Kakashi, for a really hard assignment... and find themselves in the Land of Waves, protecting a bridge-builder named Tazuna. But the job turns truly dangerous when the notorious assassin Zabuzza shows up. While Kakashi holds off Zabuzza and Sakura protects Tazuna, Naruto and Sasuke face Zabuzza's assistant Haku. In the battle, Sasuke sacrifices himself to save Naruto from Haku's deadly throwing needles. Now, watching his classmate fall, Naruto feels something terrible stir within him...

NARUTO

VOL. 4
THE NEXT LEVEL

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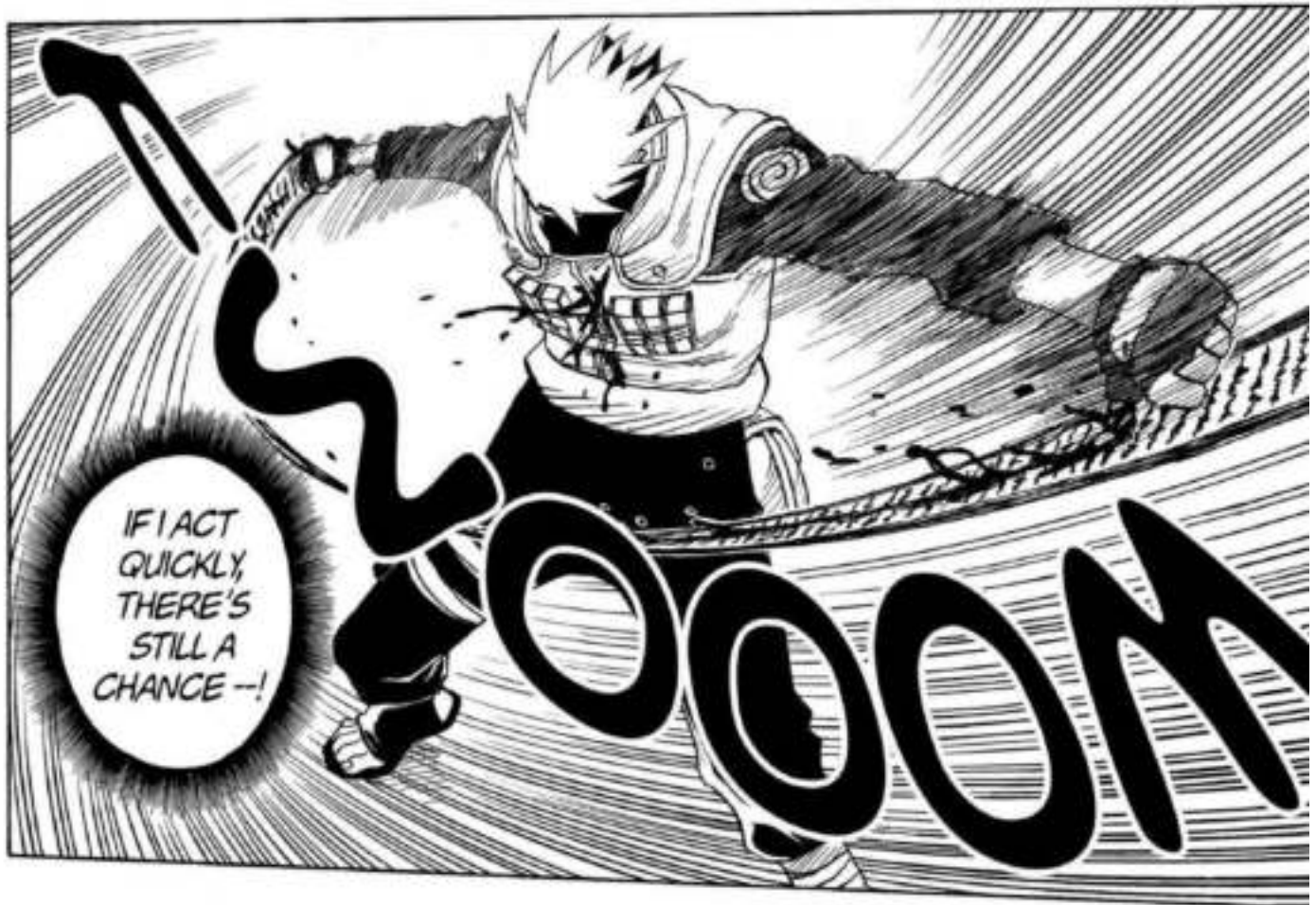
Number 28: Nine Tails...!!













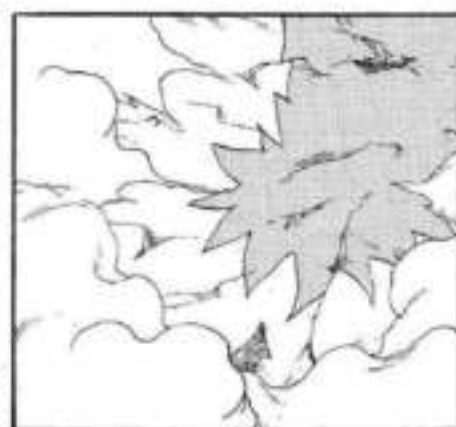
...BUT WHAT DO YOU SAY WE STOP SCREWING AROUND...



WHAT'S LEFT, KAKASHI?

SHOW ME WHAT YOU'VE GOT!

AN INTRIGUING NOTION...



HE'S SO
BLOODTHIRSTY!
HE'S COMPLETELY
CHANGED
FROM THE BOY
OF JUST
MINUTES AGO!

FWOOSH!



POW!



FWOOSH!

HE... HE
DEFLECTED
THEM...
WITHOUT EVEN
TOUCHING
THEM?!



GLARE



I'VE GOT
TO MAKE
IT TO THE
NEXT
MIRROR!





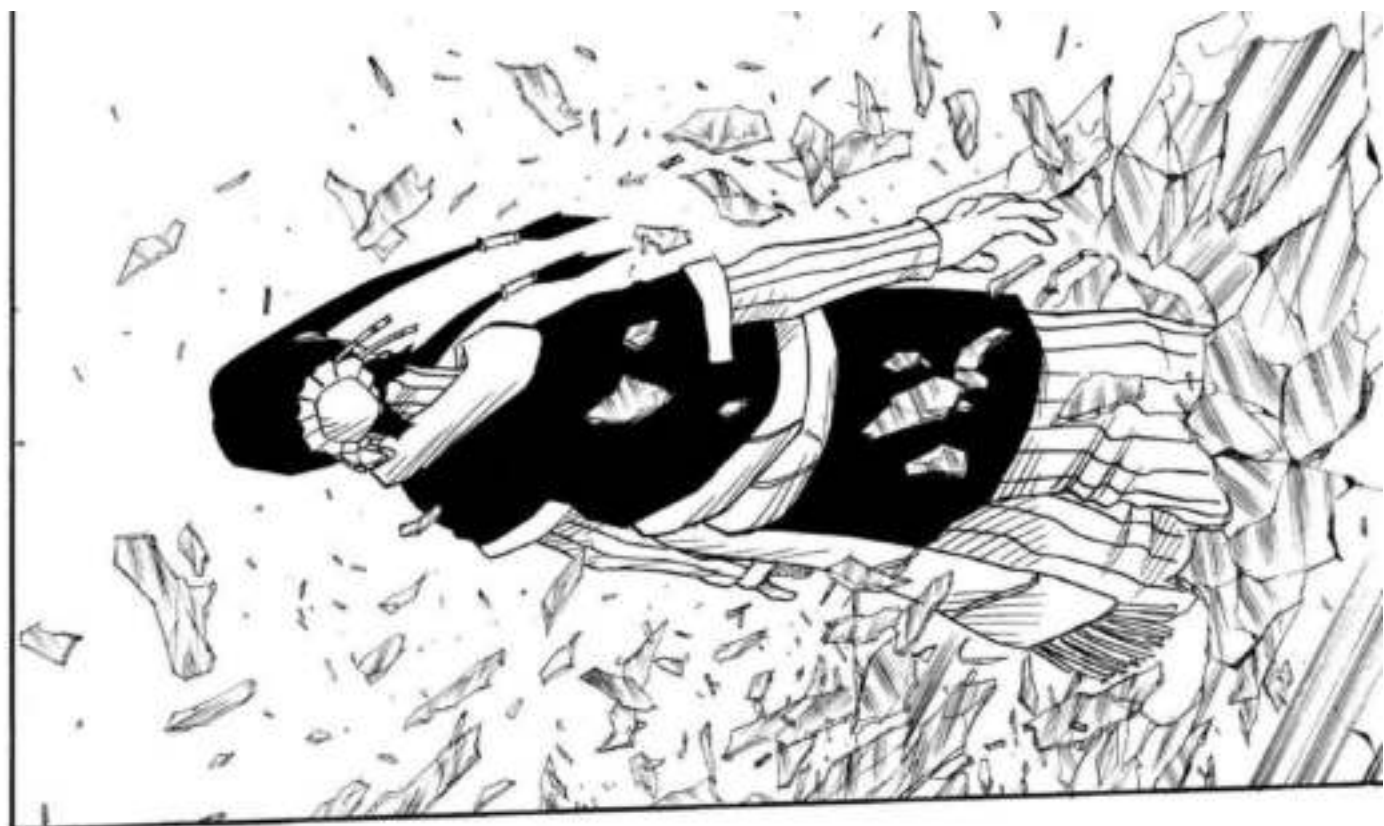
HE
COULDN'T
HAVE--!!

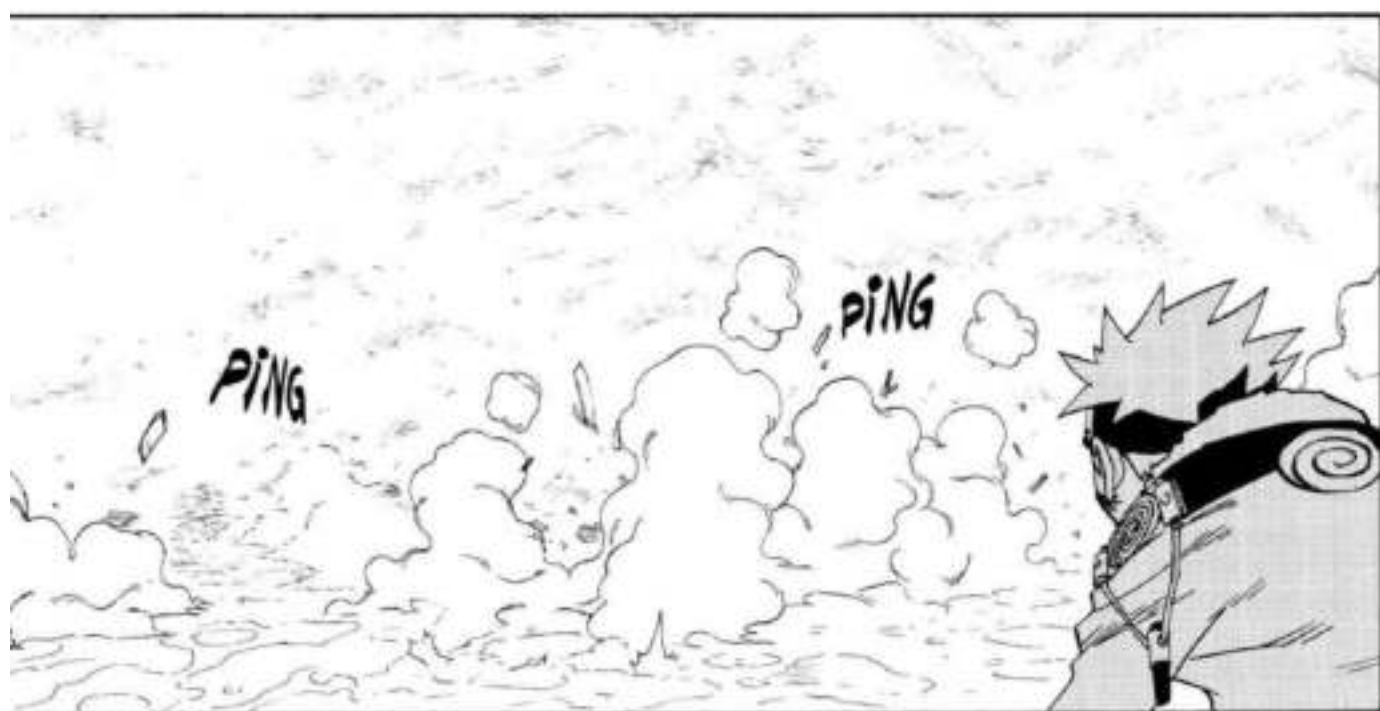
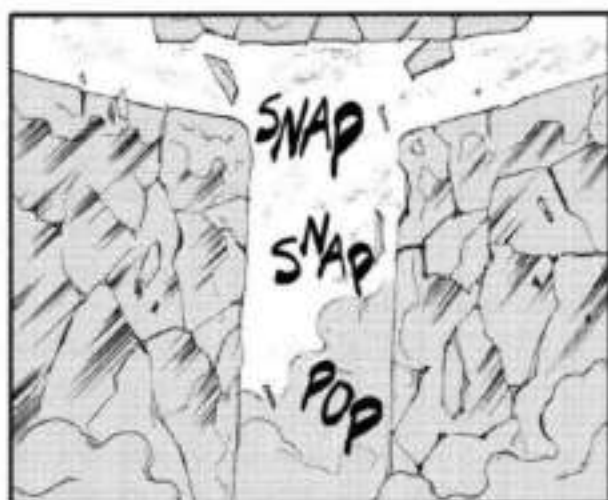
















KISHIMOTO MASASHI'S FIRST MANGA REJECT SPECIAL!



THE CHARACTER DESIGNS TO THE LEFT ARE FROM A FAILED PROJECT OF MINE CALLED "WANDERING DETOUR" THAT I CAME UP WITH RIGHT AFTER I WON THE HOP-STEP STAR AWARD.

THE STORY IS ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS WHEN AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL KID NAMED AKIRA AND HIS FRIENDS KATCHIN AND KAORU FIND A WALLET ON THE WAY HOME FROM SCHOOL, AND OF ALL OF THE TROUBLE THAT ENSUES WHEN THE THREE OF THEM DECIDE TO KEEP THE MONEY THAT THEY FIND AND SPEND IT ON THEMSELVES. MAYBE IT WAS TOO HARD TO FOLLOW, OR SIMPLY TOO DOWN-TO-EARTH FOR A BOYS' ADVENTURE MAGAZINE... BUT FOR WHATEVER REASON, IT WAS SUMMARILY REJECTED.

YOUICHI



KAORU



KATCHIN



YUMI

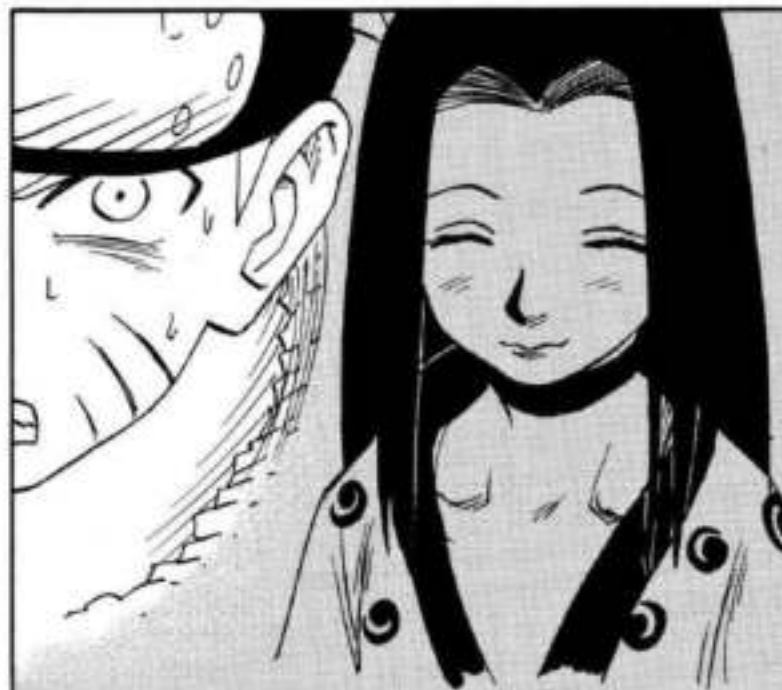
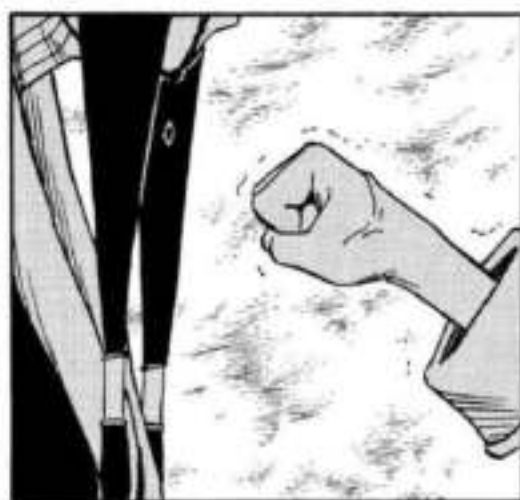
IT WAS MY FIRST REJECTION EVER. BUT I WAS SUCH A KID BACK THEN, EVEN GETTING MY FIRST REJECTION SEEMED LIKE A BIG DEAL, ANOTHER PROFESSIONAL MILESTONE I'D PASSED. FOR THE LONGEST TIME, I'D BEEN READING OTHER MANGA CARTOONISTS' TALES OF WOE ABOUT THE REJECTIONS THEY'D GOTTEN, AND I'D BEEN FEELING A LITTLE LEFT OUT. WITH "WANDERING DETOUR," I WAS FINALLY IN THE CLUB! I EVEN BRAGGED ABOUT IT A LITTLE. LIKE I SAID, I WAS A KID THEN. NOW, I'M A TRUE PROFESSIONAL, AND I AGREE WITH MY FRIENDS: "REJECTION SUCKS!" (LAUGHTER)



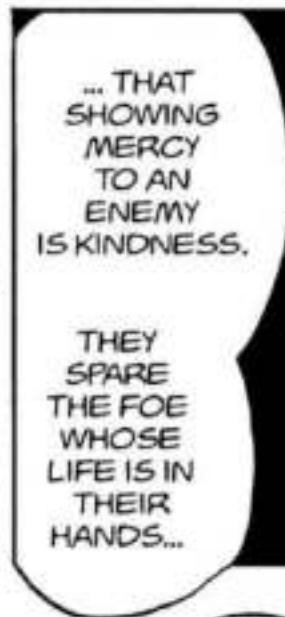
Number 29:
Someone Precious To You













YOU'VE TAKEN AWAY MY REASON FOR LIVING!

MASTER ZABUZA HAS NO USE FOR A WEAK SHINOBI.

HEH



SAY WHAT--?!



THAT MERCENARY SCUMBAG DOESN'T CARE WHO HE WORKS FOR OR WHO GETS HURT, JUST SO SOMEONE PAYS HIM!

WHY WASTE ALL THAT DEVOTION ON SUCH A CREEP?!



WHEN PEOPLE ARE PROTECTING SOMETHING TRULY PRECIOUS TO THEM, THEY TRULY CAN BECOME... AS STRONG AS THEY MUST BE!

WHY...



...



IS THAT BROWLESS WONDER REALLY PRECIOUS TO YOU - YOUR "BELOVED FRIEND?!!!"





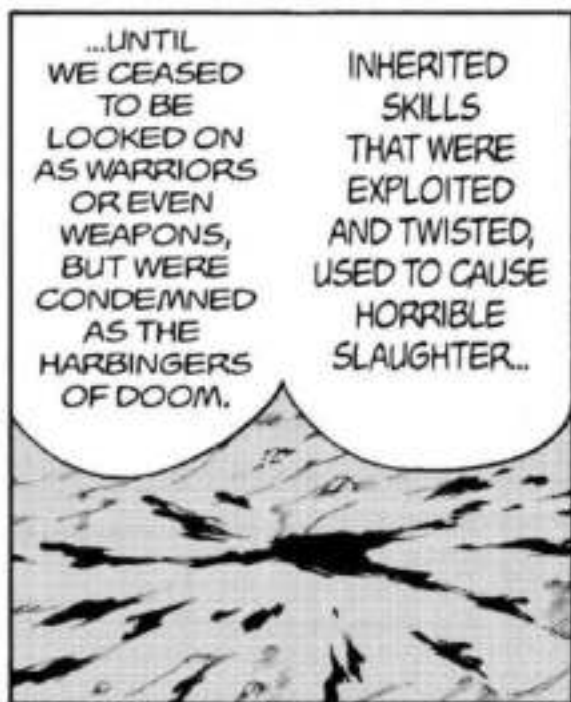


WHY--?



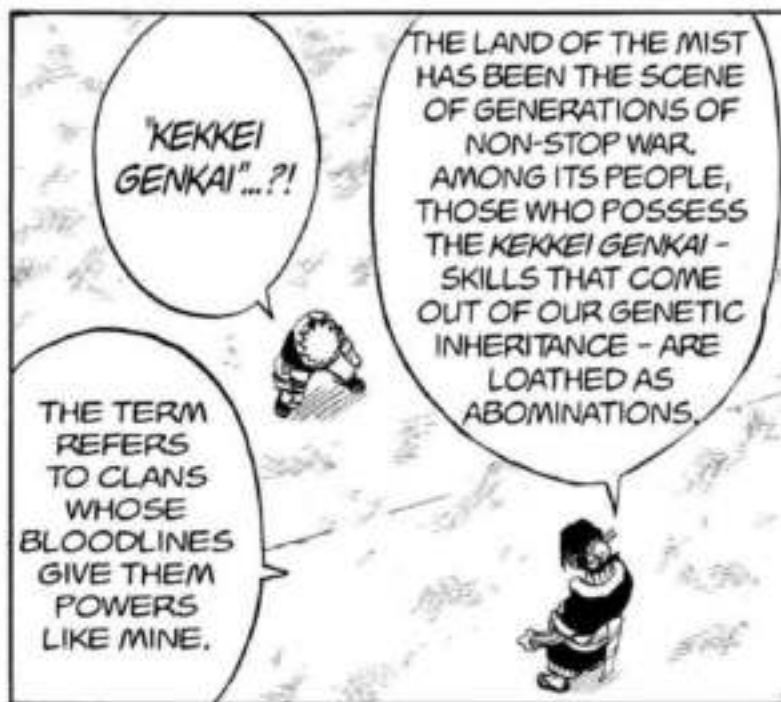
...AND TRIED TO KILL ME.

MY FATHER KILLED MY MOTHER...



...UNTIL WE CEASED TO BE LOOKED ON AS WARRIORS OR EVEN WEAPONS, BUT WERE CONDEMNED AS THE HARBINGERS OF DOOM.

INHERITED SKILLS THAT WERE EXPLOITED AND TWISTED, USED TO CAUSE HORRIBLE SLAUGHTER...



"KEKKEI GENKAI"...?!

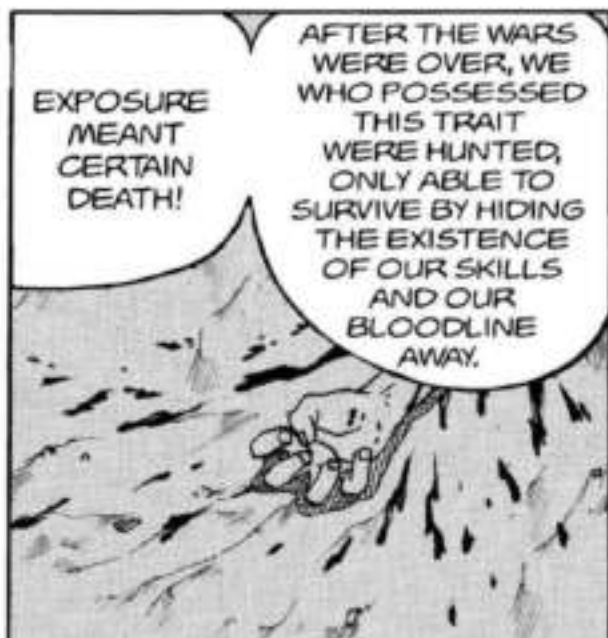
THE TERM REFERS TO CLANS WHOSE BLOODLINES GIVE THEM POWERS LIKE MINE.

THE LAND OF THE MIST HAS BEEN THE SCENE OF GENERATIONS OF NON-STOP WAR. AMONG ITS PEOPLE, THOSE WHO POSSESS THE KEKKEI GENKAI - SKILLS THAT COME OUT OF OUR GENETIC INHERITANCE - ARE LOATHED AS ABOMINATIONS.



WE ARE SPECIAL. WE ARE POWERFUL. AND WE ARE FEARED.

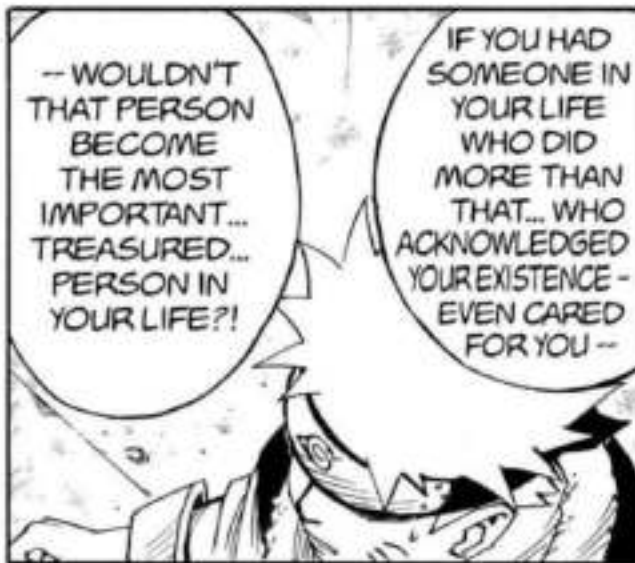
I'M SURE THE BOY I KILLED, WHO SHARED THAT SKILL, MUST ALSO HAVE GROWN UP KNOWING THE PAIN OF WHICH I SPEAK.



EXPOSURE MEANT CERTAIN DEATH!

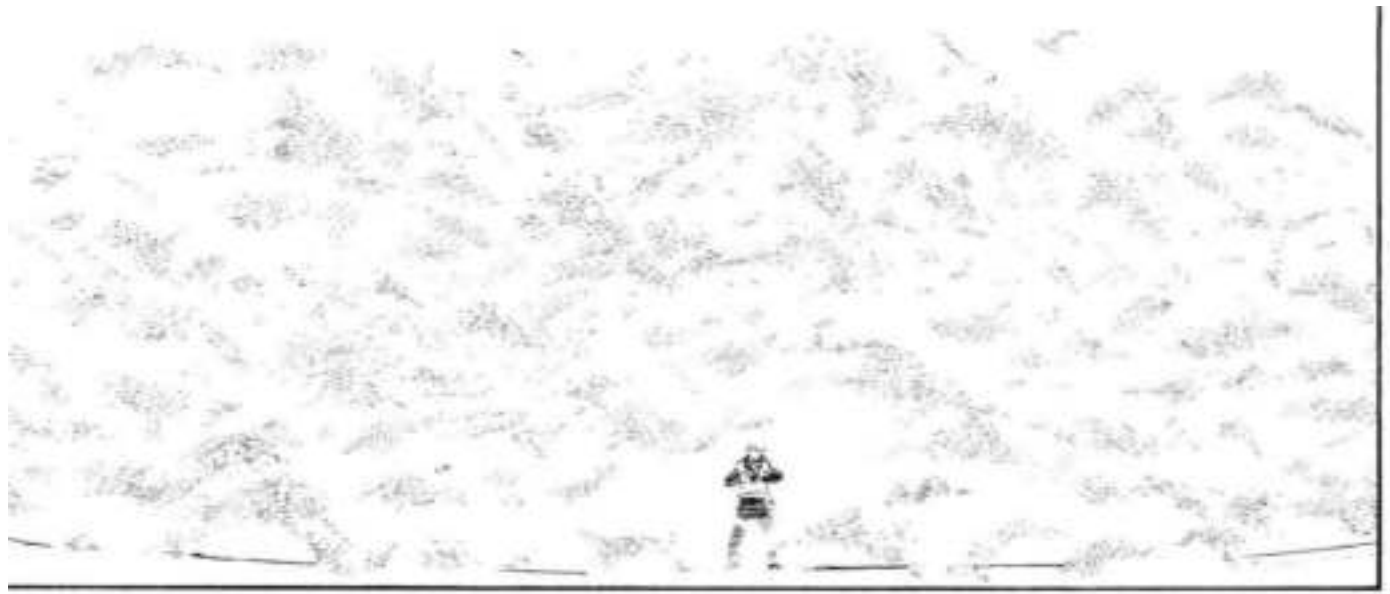
AFTER THE WARS WERE OVER, WE WHO POSSESSED THIS TRAIT WERE HUNTED, ONLY ABLE TO SURVIVE BY HIDING THE EXISTENCE OF OUR SKILLS AND OUR BLOODLINE AWAY.

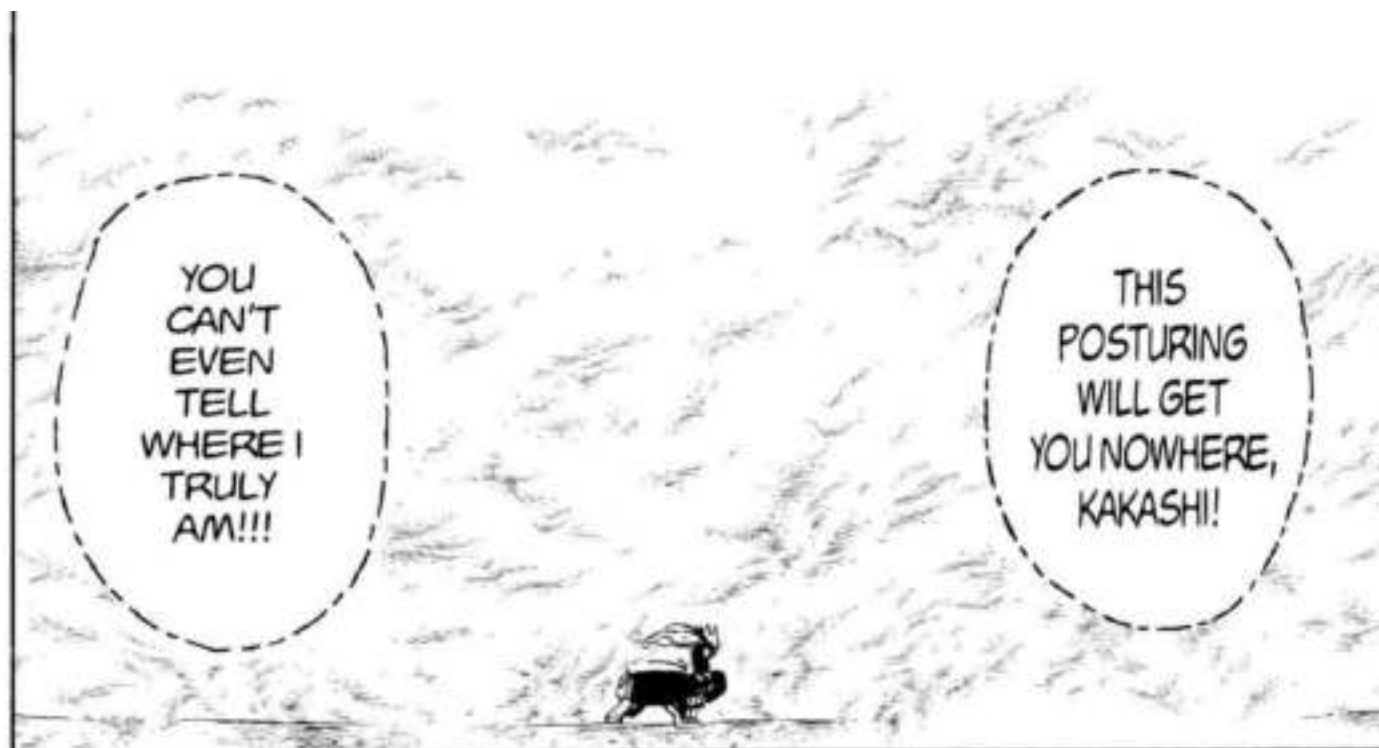


















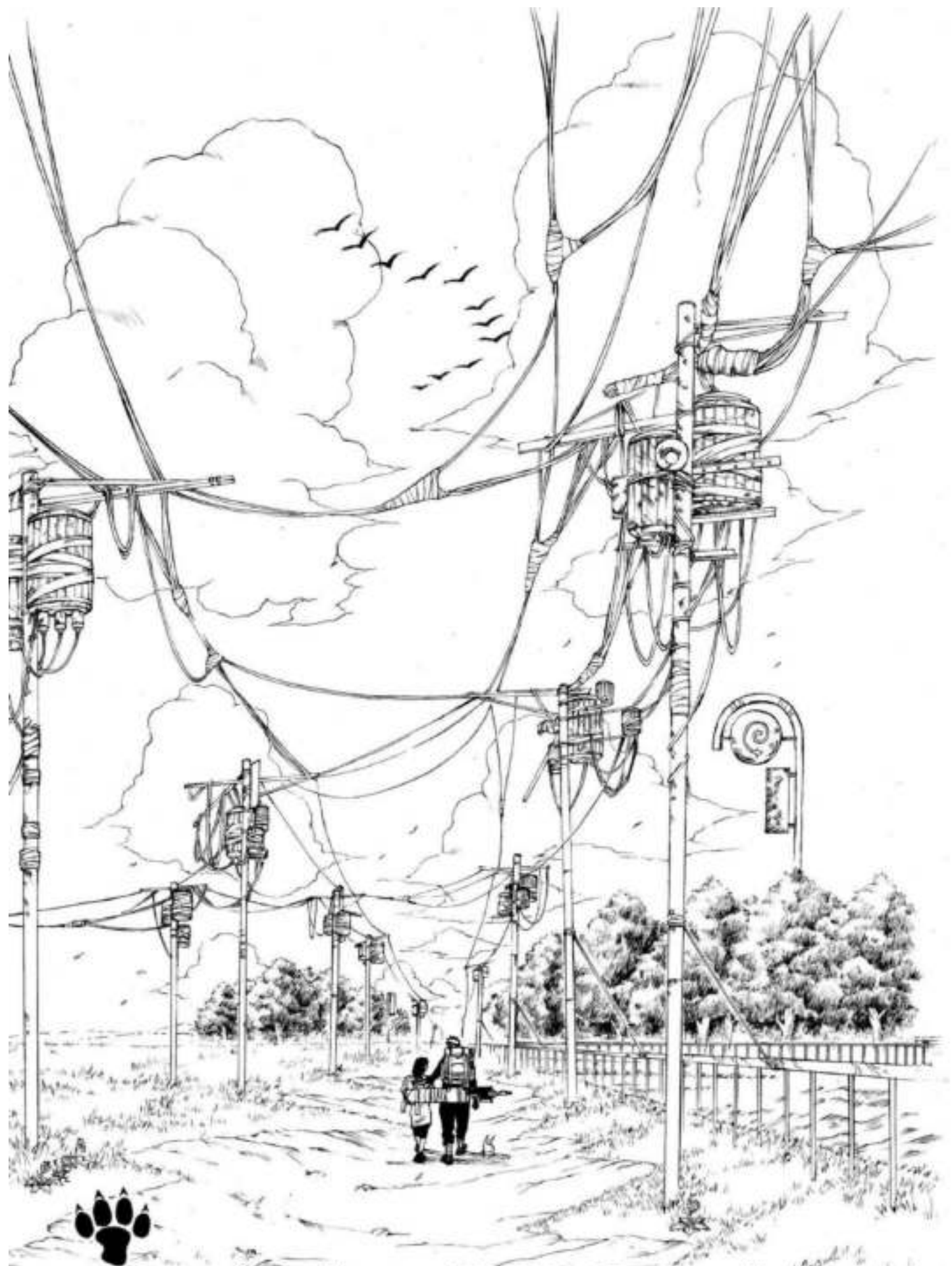
KISHIMOTO MASASHI'S SECOND MANGA REJECT SPECIAL.



THE DESIGN TO THE LEFT IS FROM ANOTHER FLOP - A MANGA CALLED "ASIAN PUNK", THAT WAS RESOUNDINGLY REJECTED AT EVERY TURN. TO BE FRANK, THE PREMISE WAS-NOT COINCIDENTALLY-KINDA LIKE "GHOSTBUSTERS."

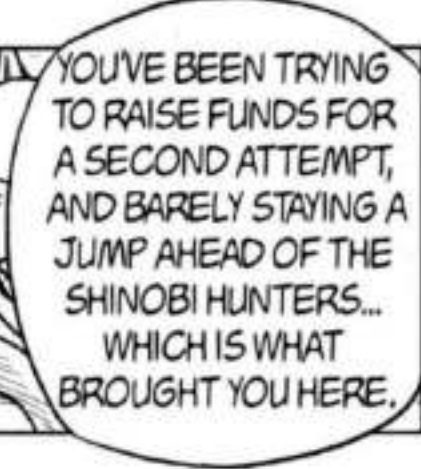
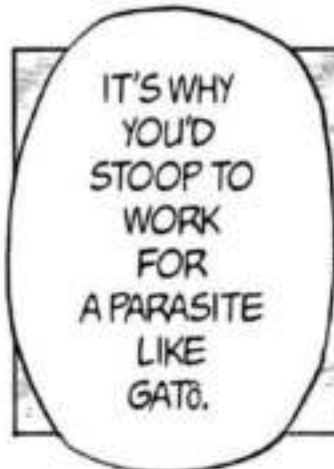
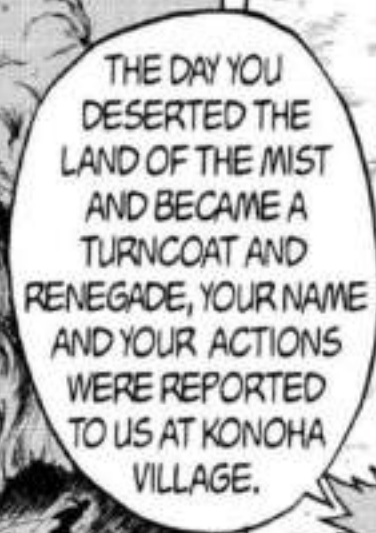
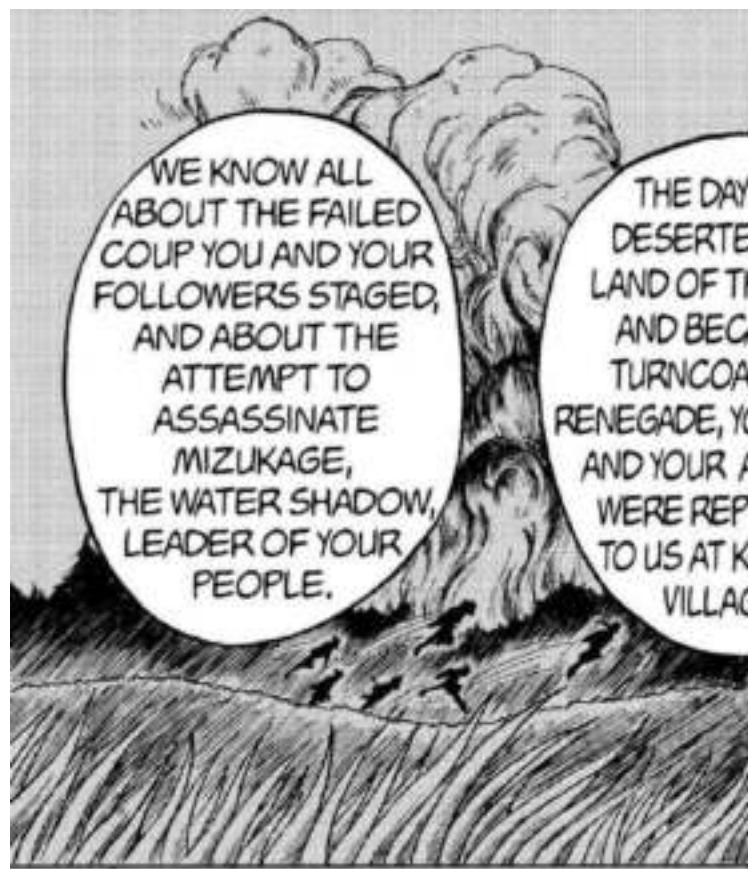
THE MAIN CHARACTER WAS A KID WITH AN AXE TAKING ON AN EVIL FENG-SHUI MASTER WHO COULD SUMMON AND CONTROL EVIL SPIRITS... AND THE MAIN CHARACTER WASN'T REALLY HUMAN HIMSELF, BUT HAD BEEN CREATED BY SOME GREATER POWER. THERE WAS MORE, BUT WE DON'T NEED TO GO INTO IT HERE.

THE THING IS, WITH THAT STORY, MY PRIZE-WINNING SERIES KARAKURU, AND NARUTO, IT OCCURS ME TO ME THAT MY HEROES ARE ALWAYS THESE YOUNG GUYS. I GUESS I'M JUST A SUCKER FOR BOYS' ADVENTURE TALES!



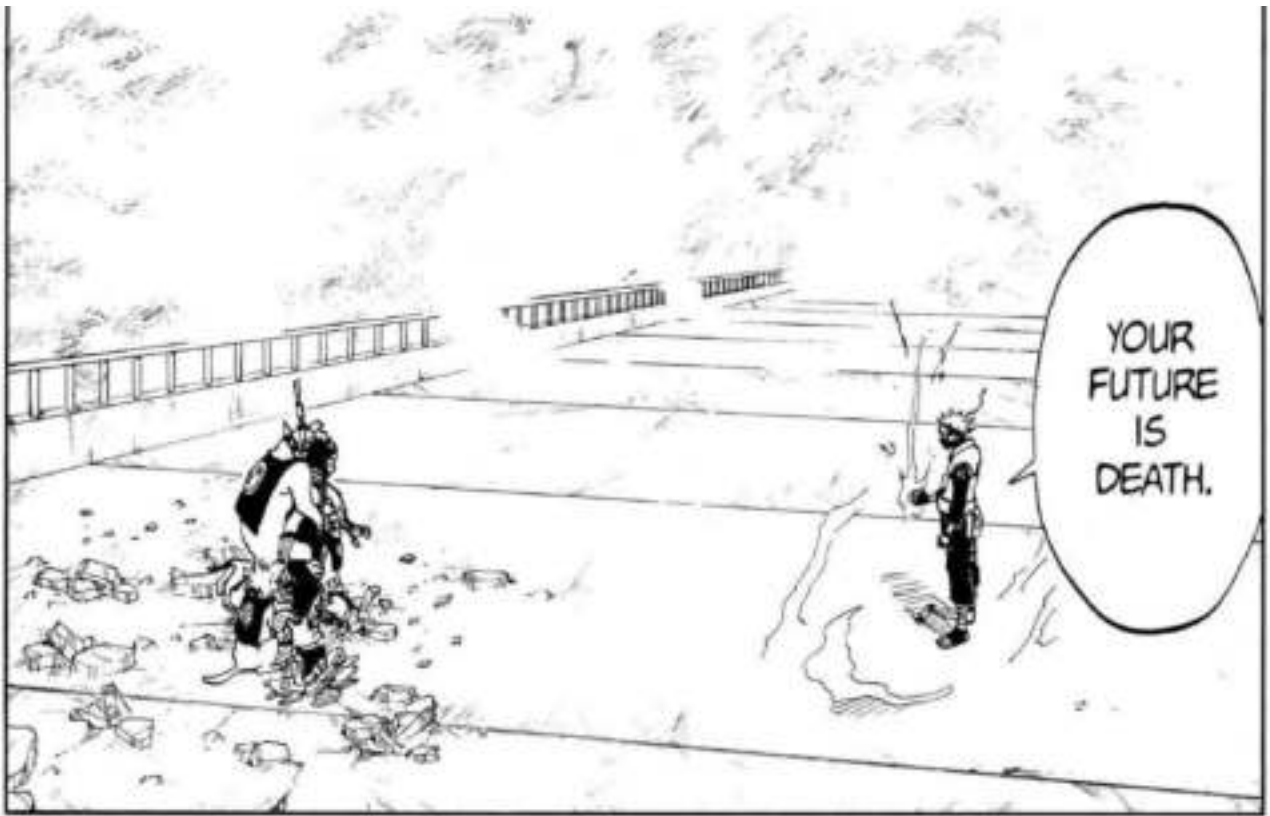
Number 30: Your Future is...!!



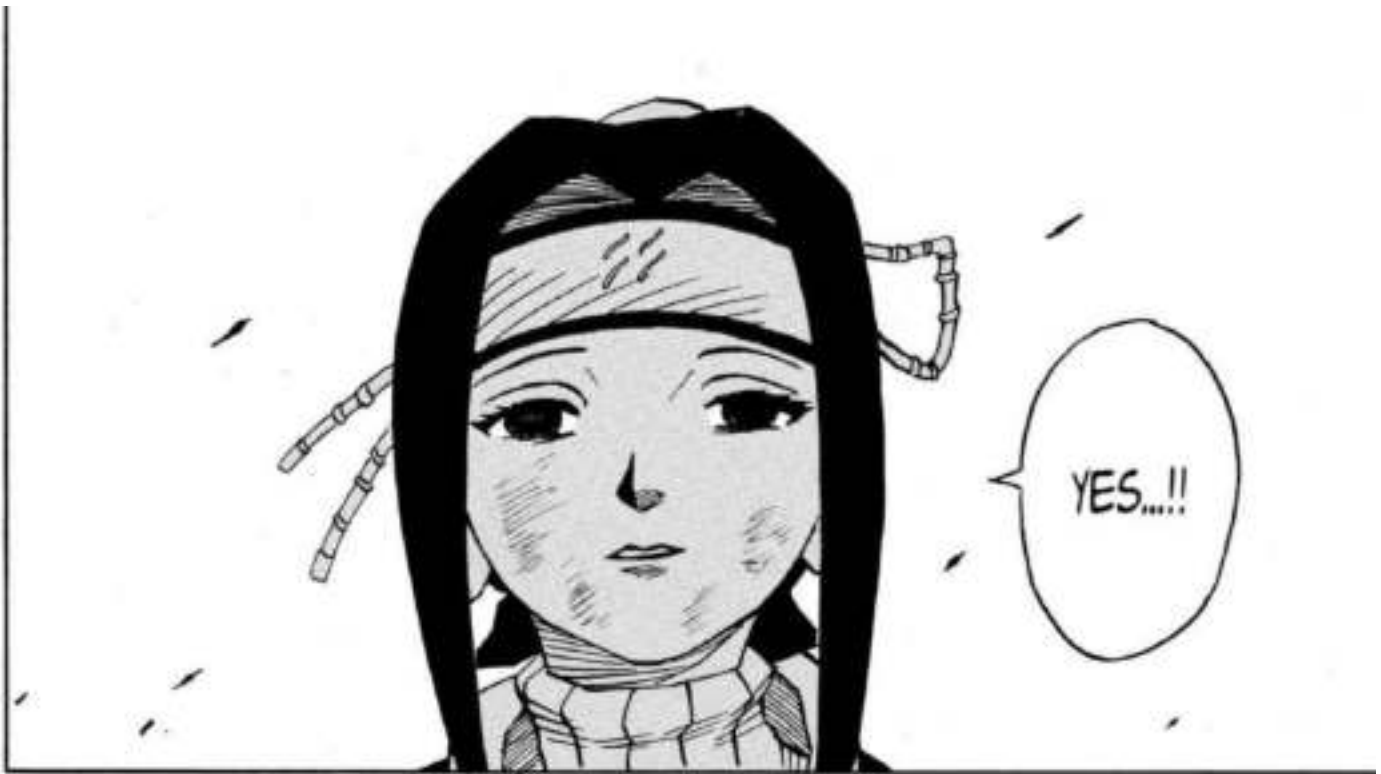




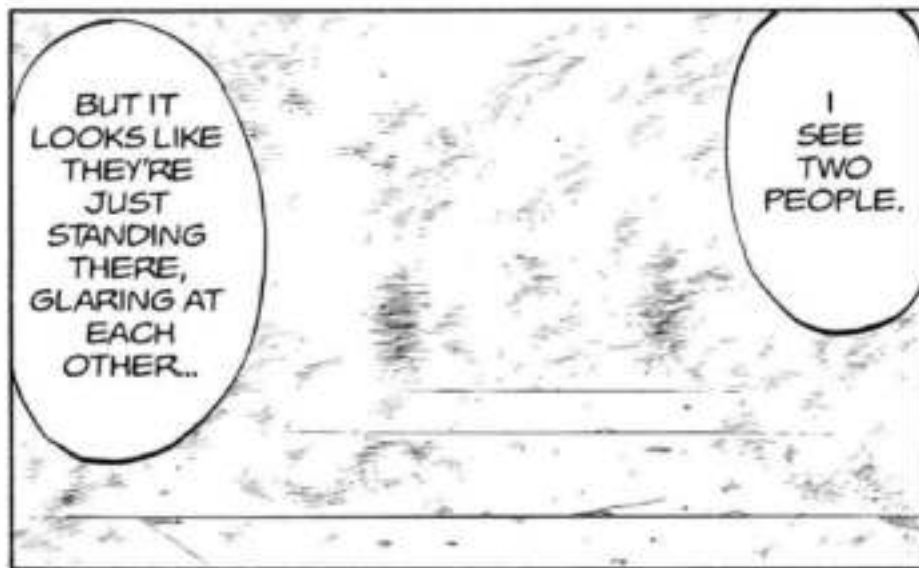


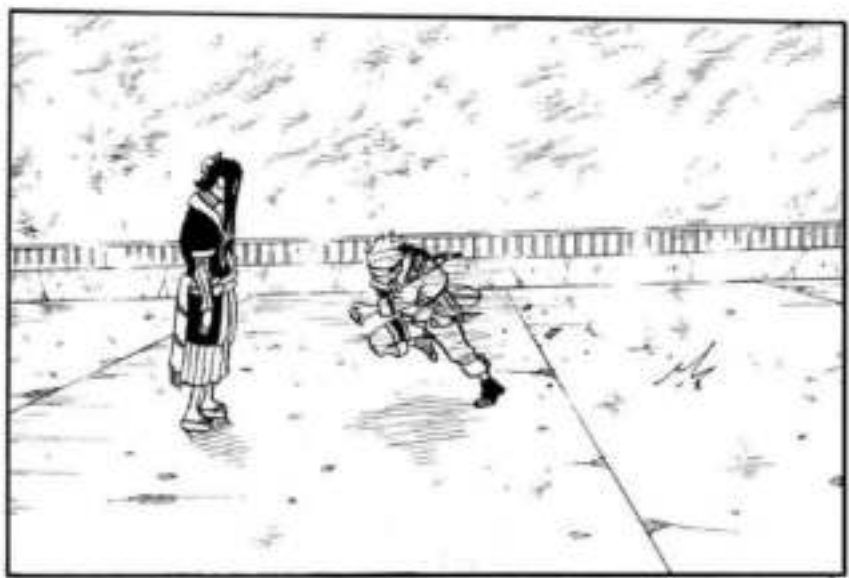












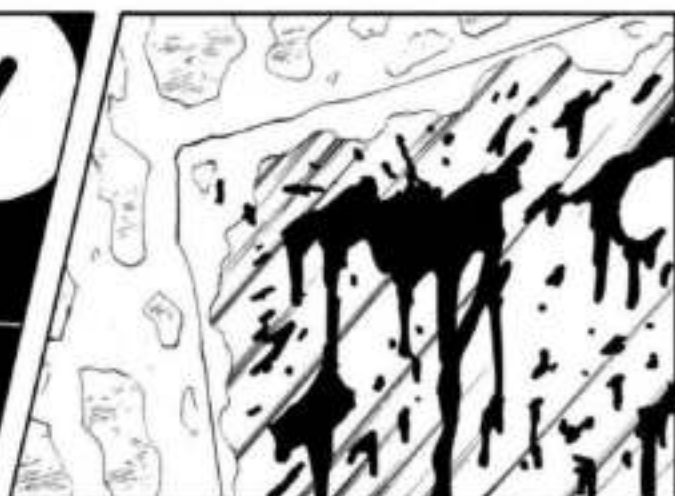
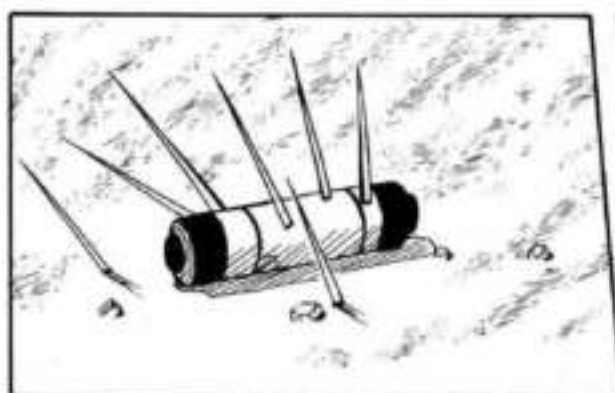




WHAT?







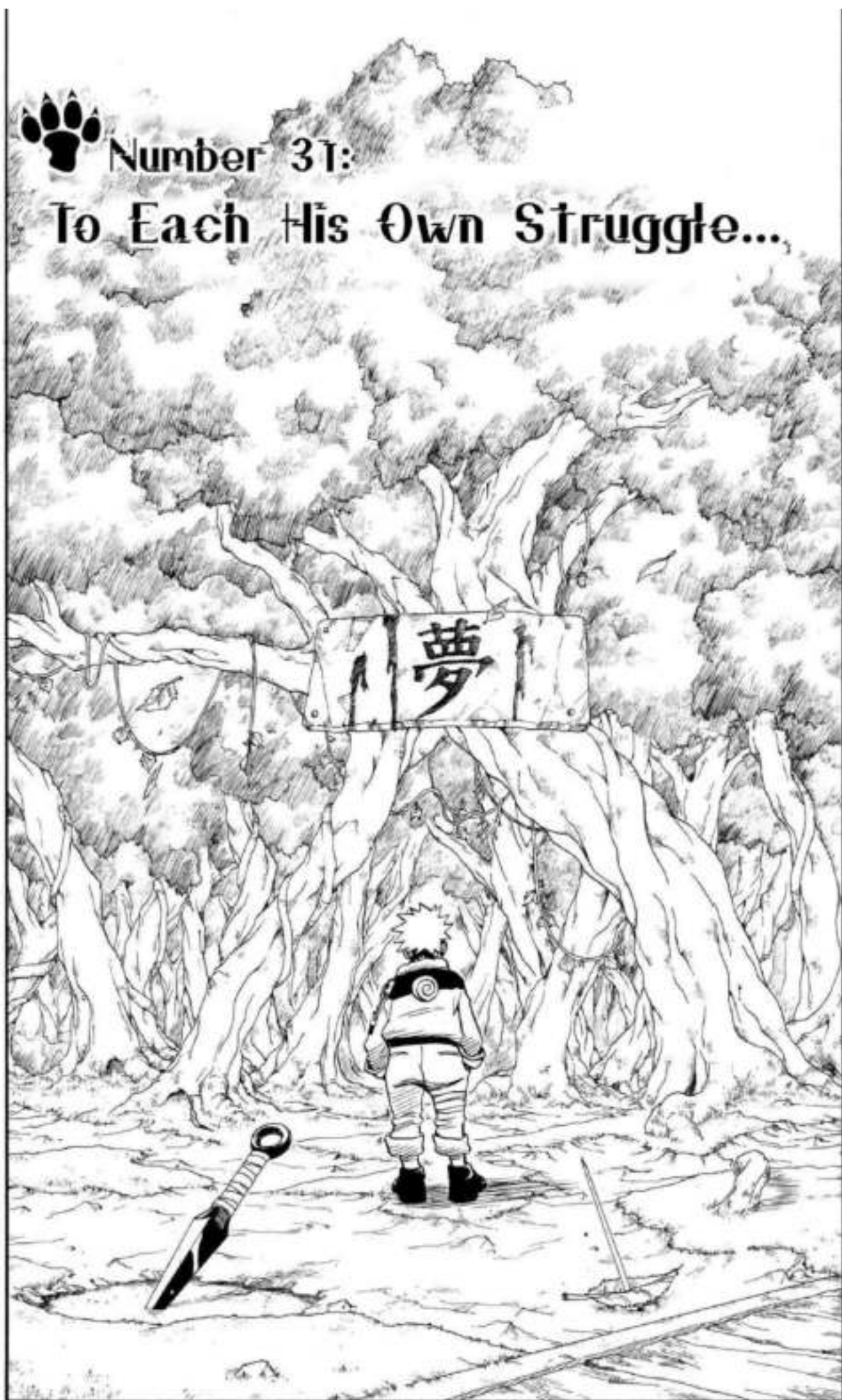






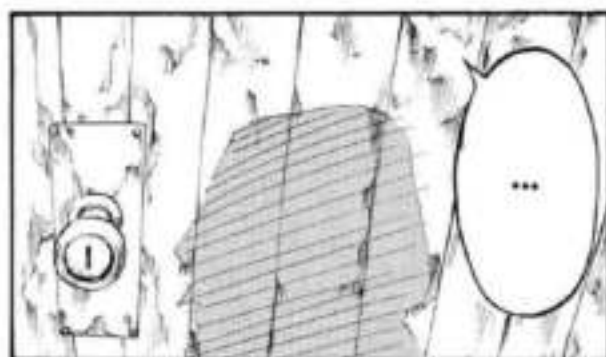


Number 31:
To Each His Own Struggle...





I NEED YOU
TO COME
WITH ME TO
THE BRIDGE!!!
IF WE STICK
TOGETHER,
THIS TIME
WE CAN BEAT
GATŌ AND HIS
WHOLE GANG!





THAT I CAN'T PROTECT ANYONE BY BEING A BIG CRYBABY.

AND I UNDERSTAND NOW...



ARE YOU SURE HE'LL BE ALL RIGHT LIKE THAT... BY HIMSELF?

LITTLE INARI IS GROWING UP TO BE A FINE YOUNG MAN, ISN'T HE...



...



BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN...!

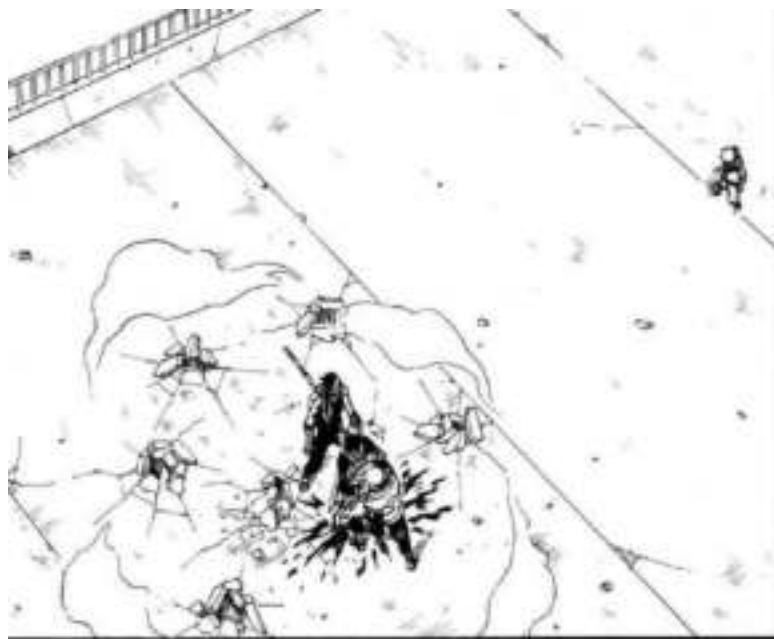
HAVE TO. NO ONE IN THE VILLAGE WAS WILLING TO GO WITH ME.



WAIT! YOU CAN'T GO TO THE BRIDGE ALONE!

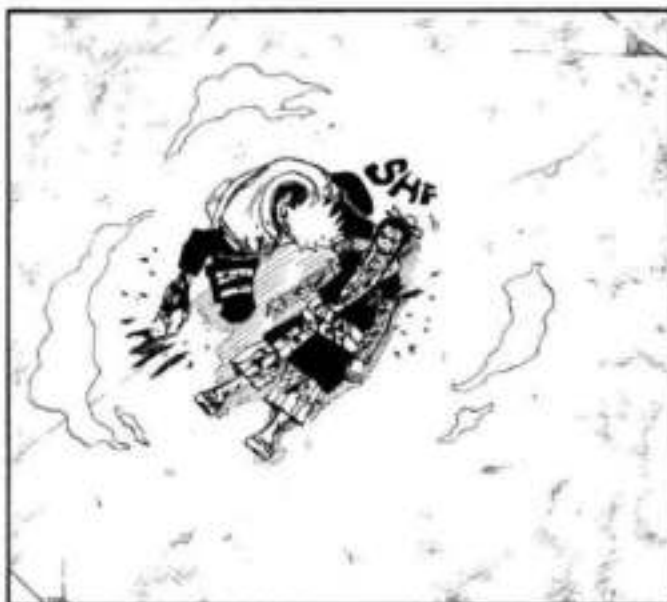
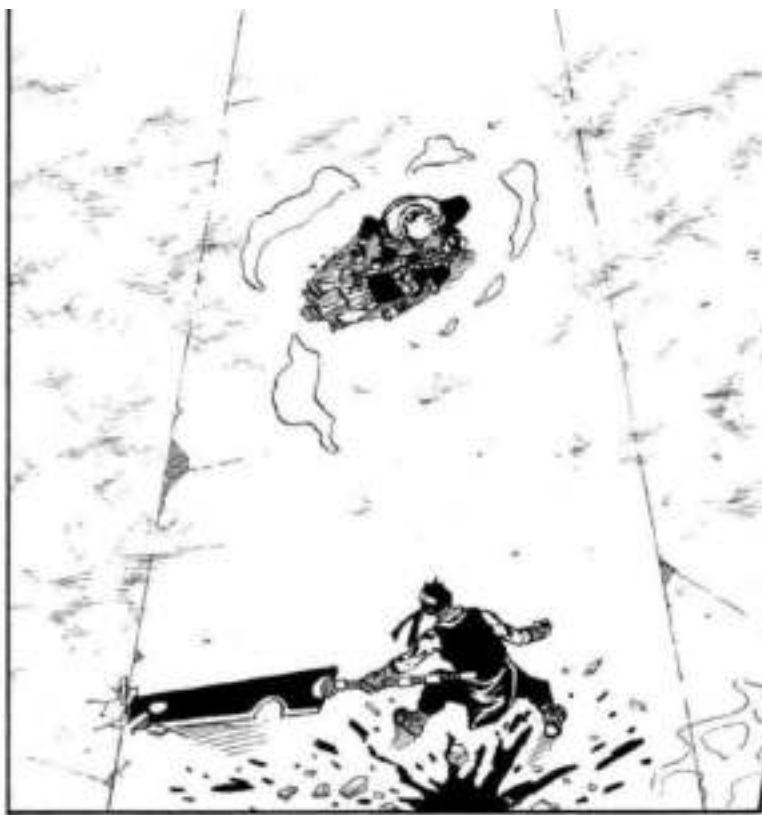














...NARUTO...?



THIS IS MY FIGHT!!



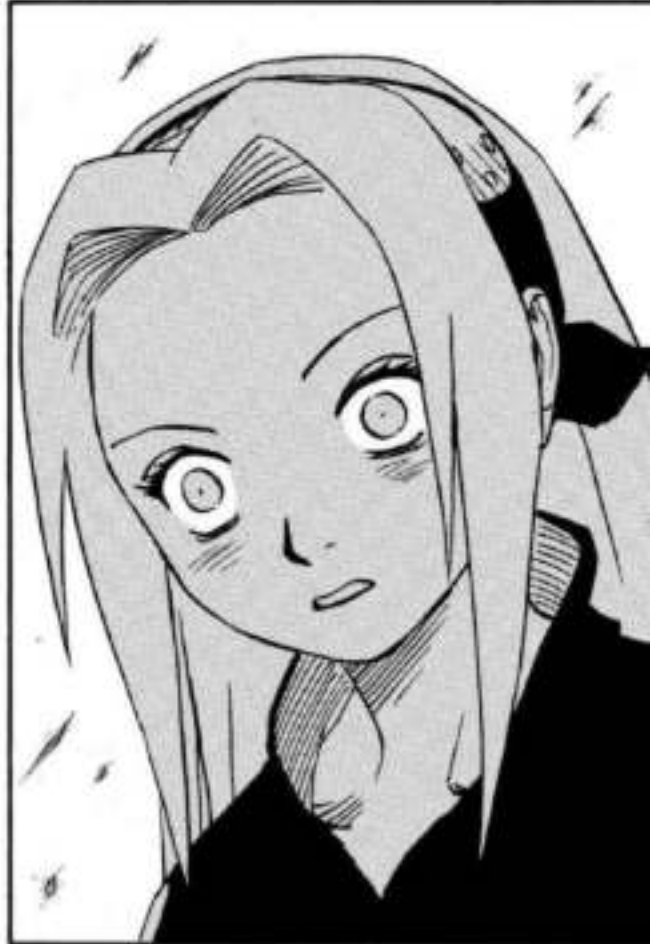
SAKURA!!



NARUTO--!!!
YOU'RE ALIVE--!!

















 32: THE TOOLS CALLED SHINOBI





Number 328

The Tools Called Shinobi







ALL OF YOU NINJA ARE SO EAGER TO FIGHT EACH OTHER. ONCE YOU'VE WORN EACH OTHER DOWN, COMMON THUGS CAN FINISH OFF THE REST.

IT'S SO MUCH SIMPLER TO HIRE LIKENIN-RENEGADES-LIKE YOURSELF. NO ONE CARES WHAT I DO TO YOUR KIND ONCE THE JOB IS DONE.

...IT'S SUCH A BOTHER HIRING A SKILLED SHINOBI AFFILIATED WITH ONE OF THE TOP VILLAGES. IT'S EXPENSIVE... AND THEY TEND TO HAVE FRIENDS WHO OBJECT WHEN I BETRAY AND KILL THEM.

IT'S A GREAT BUSINESS PLAN-EFFICIENT AND INEXPENSIVE.



MORE LIKE A BABY DEMON, IF THAT.

HEH HEH... YOU'RE NO DEMON...



CALLING YOURSELF THE DEMON OF KIRIGAKURE IS JUST PLAIN FALSE ADVERTISING!

MY ONLY MISTAKE WAS HIRING YOU IN THE FIRST PLACE.



THAT'S SOME CROWD!

WHO THE HECK ARE THEY?



THE SHAPE YOU'RE IN, WE'LL TAKE YOU DOWN WITHOUT EVEN BREAKING A SWEAT!





WHAT
THE
HECK
ARE
YOU
DOING,
YOU
CREEP?!



HEY, WHY DON'T
YOU DO SOMETHING?!
HE WORKED FOR YOU!
HE WAS PRACTICALLY
YOUR SLAVE!!













WHAT HAKU DID... WAS NOT JUST FOR ME.

WHILE WE FOUGHT, HE BROKE HIS HEART... OVER YOU... AND YOUR FRIENDS. THAT'S THE TRUTH.

...!

KID...

YOU'RE RIGHT, YOU KNOW.

...I'M GLAD MY LAST BATTLE... WAS AGAINST YOU...BOY.

?!

...HUH?

HE WAS TOO KIND... TOO GENTLE.

BITE

SHIPPARD

WOULD YOU LEND ME YOUR KUNAI KNIFE?

FULLER

...

HUHH? UH...

!!

SURE.

AND I'VE LOST... EVERYTHING.

SAY WHAT WE WILL, DO WHAT WE WILL. IN THE END, WE SHINOBI ARE STILL JUST PEOPLE AFTER ALL... WITH FEELINGS ALL-TOO-HUMAN.







WHY
WON'T
YOU
DIE?!





WHOOY





EEEK!!



AND I'M SORRY...

THANKS FOR EVERYTHING...



IT'S... GOODBYE NOW, HAKU...

KISHIMOTO MASASHI'S THIRD MANGA REJECT SPECIAL!



ONCE AGAIN, THE ROUGH SKETCH TO THE LEFT IS FROM ANOTHER REJECTED MANGA. IT WAS A BASEBALL MANGA, TITLED SIMPLY "BASEBALL KING." I PLAYED BASEBALL MYSELF, BACK IN MY STUDENT DAYS, SO I (MAYBE FOOLISHLY) THOUGHT I WOULD TRY MY HAND AT A BASEBALL STORY.

DURING THIS PERIOD, I WAS IN A SITUATION WHERE, NO MATTER HOW MANY CONCEPTS FOR ADVENTURE MANGA I SKETCHED OUT, I DIDN'T GET ANY GREEN LIGHTS, SO I THOUGHT I SHOULD GO FOR A SPORTS THEME.

BUT WHEN I ACTUALLY TRIED TO DRAW ONE, PERHAPS BECAUSE I WAS WRITING FROM PERSONAL EXPERIENCE, IT BECAME A MORE REALISTIC WORK THAN I HAD INTENDED.

THE REASON IT FAILED WAS THAT IT WAS TOO SERIOUS FOR A SHONEN PUBLICATION. IT WASN'T ENTERTAINMENT.

HOWEVER, "BASEBALL KING" ACTUALLY STILL HOLDS A SPECIAL PLACE IN MY HEART. I SOMETIMES FIND MYSELF THINKING, "THAT WAS SO FUNNY... I CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S A REJECT, DARN IT...!"



33: THE BRIDGE OF THE HERO!!



THIS WAS THE END OF A MAN WHO LIVED FULL OUT.



DON'T LOOK AWAY.



YEAH...

...



AM I... AM I...?!

SAKURA...?!

-SOB-

-SOB-



AM I... DEAD...?

SASUKE...

-SOB-



LUB-DUP

-SOB-

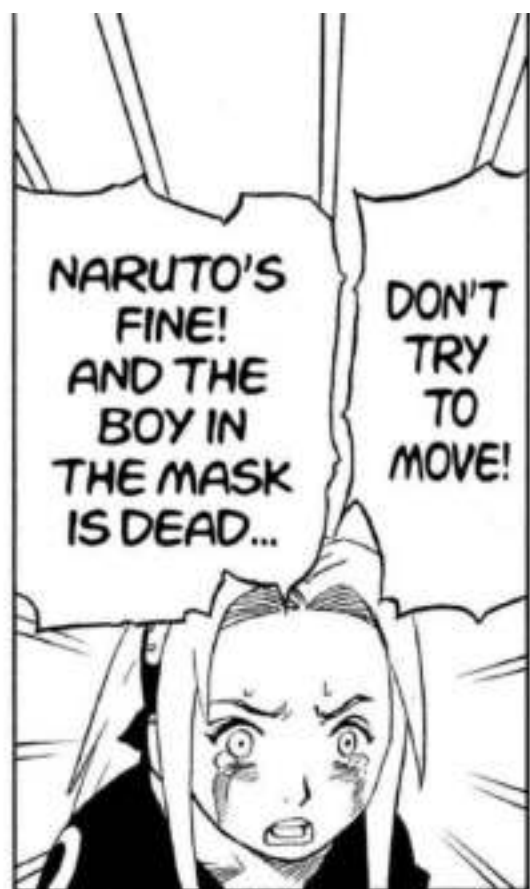
-SOB-



Number 33: The Bridge of the Heron!!





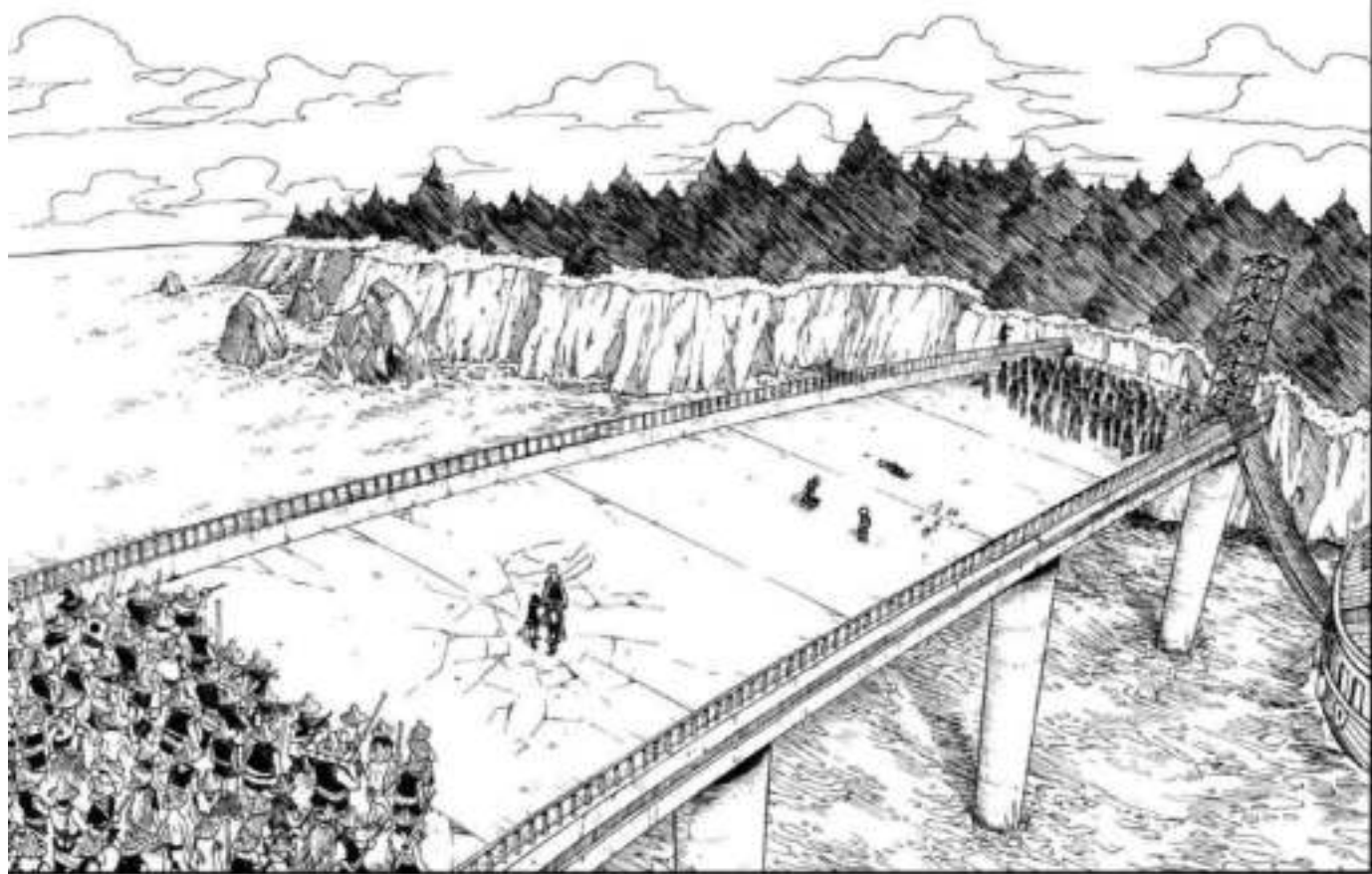














ART OF
THE
SHADOW
DOPPLE-
GANGER!!

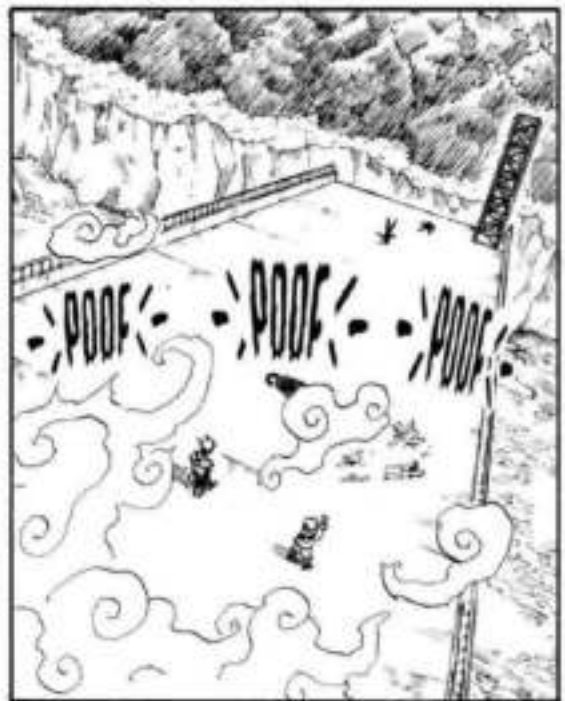
KAKASHI
STYLE

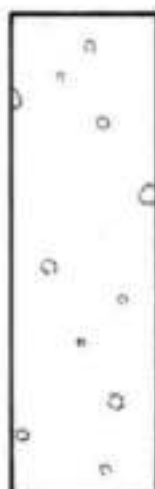


NOW...
SHALL
WE?!



AIEE--!!!

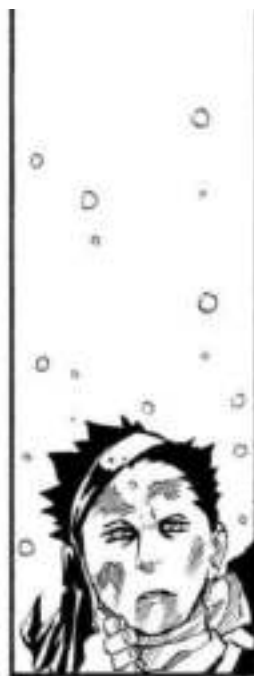






ARE YOU CRYING?

MY DEAR HAKU...



IN THE MIDDLE OF SUMMER...?



YOU WERE AT MY SIDE RIGHT FROM THE START...

AND I'M AT YOURS, NOW, AT THE END...



...THANK YOU... KAKASHI.

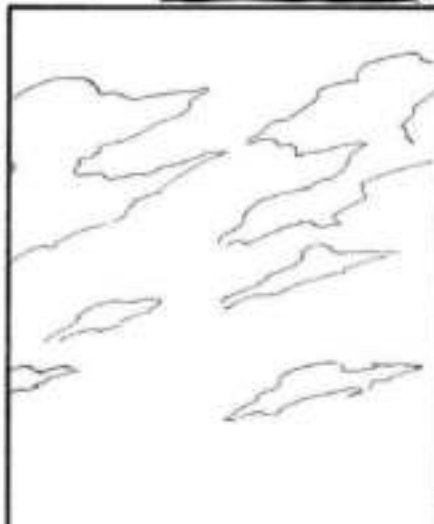
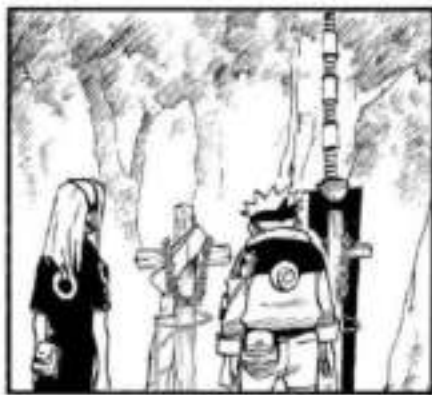
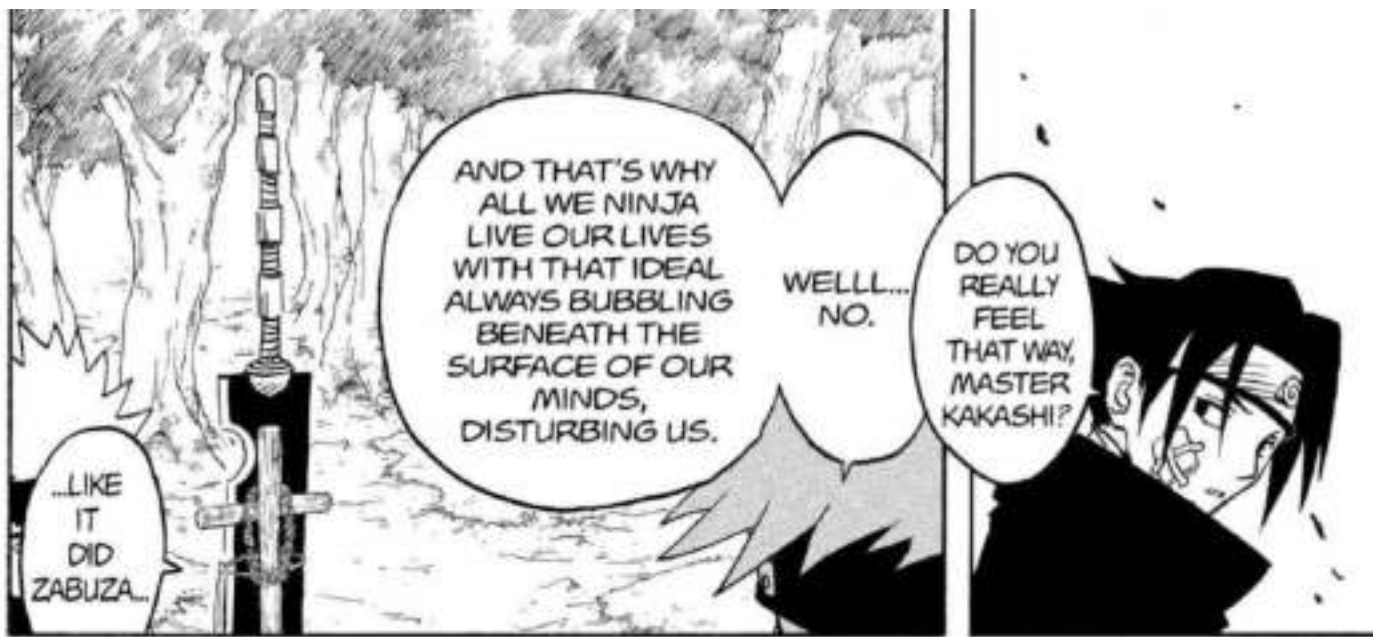


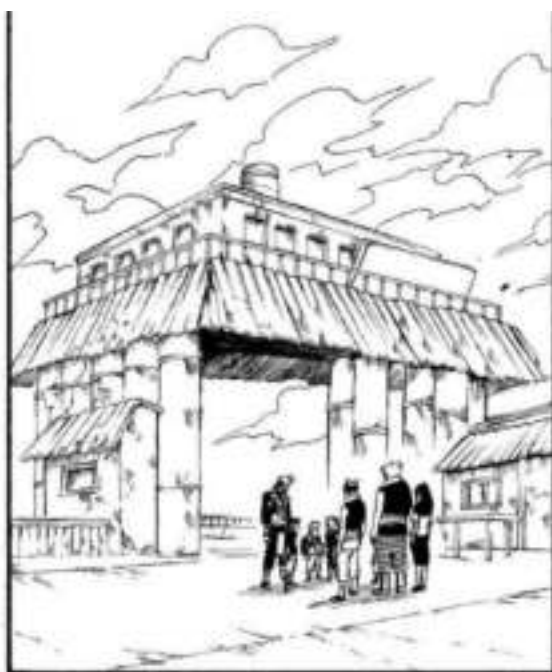
...IF I COULD...
...IF I WERE ABLE...
I WOULD WANT TO GO...
TO THE SAME PLACE...
ON THE OTHER SIDE...

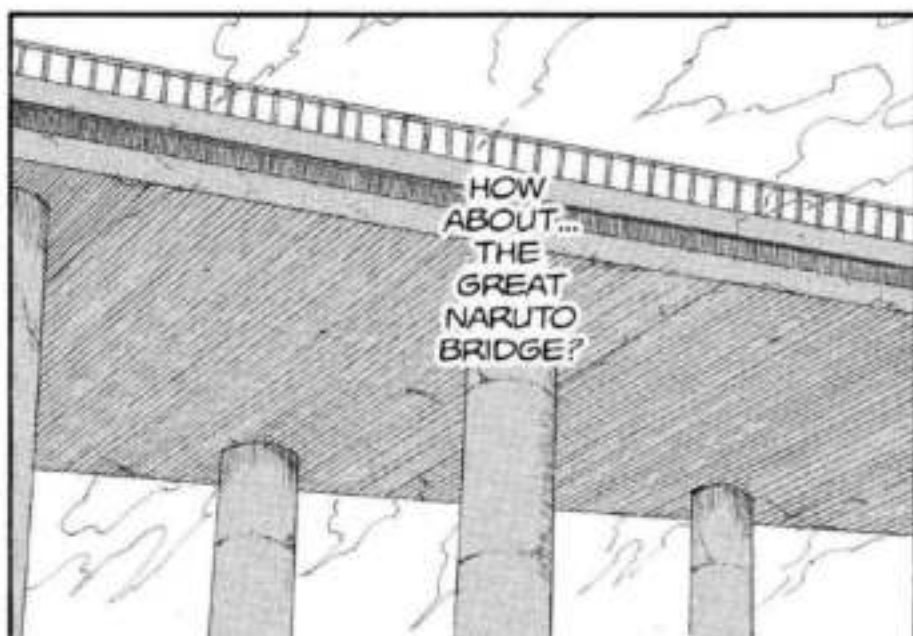
...AS YOU.













HEY!
I'LL GO
OUT
WITH
YOU!

N-
NO...?...

OH... UH...
OKAY.
BY THE WAY,
SASUKE...
WHEN WE
DO GET
HOME...
WOULD YOU
LIKE TO...
GO OUT
WITH ME?

UH,
NO.
THANKS.

NARUTO!
NO!
KNOCK
IT
OFF!

AND THEN...
AND THEN,
YOU KNOW,
I HAVE TO
TELL LITTLE
KONOHAMARU
MY EPIC TALE
OF MARTIAL
ARTS
BRAVERY--!!

ALL
RIGHT--!
LET'S GET
HOME.
MASTER
IRUKA'S
GONNA TAKE
ME OUT FOR
RAMEN
NOODLES
TO
CELEBRATE
US
ACCOMPLISHING
OUR MISSION!



HEE
HEE...
IT'S
A
NICE
NAME,
DAD.



HEH...
QUITE SURE.
YOU SEE,
I HOPE THAT
IN GIVING
IT THAT NAME,
WE'LL ENSURE
THAT IT
WILL STAND
FOREVER..

ARE...
YOU
SURE?
CALLING
IT
THAT...?!



THAT'S
WHAT
I HOPE...
AND
HOPEFULLY,
THAT'S
HOW
IT'LL
BE.

OUR BRIDGE
WILL BECOME
SUPER-FAMOUS THE
WORLD OVER,
ASA SYMBOL
OF TRIUMPH AND
ENDURANCE!



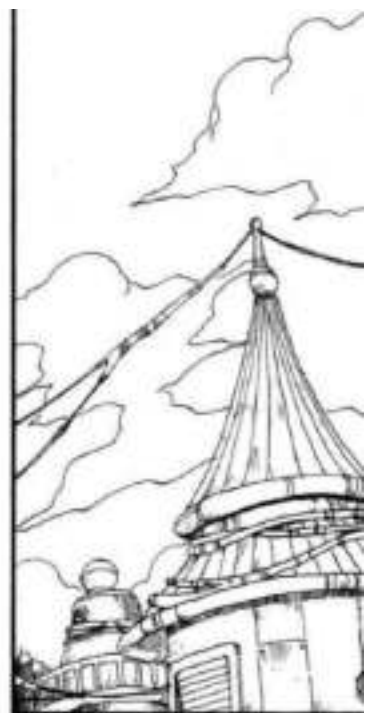
Number 34: Intruders?





START
YOUR
ENGINES!!
MACH 5!!

WOO-HOO!
NO
MATTER
WHAT
TODAY'S
MISSION IS,
I'LL HAVE
THE ENERGY
TO FACE
IT NOW!



YOUR NOSE IS GROWING, MASTER!!!

YOU ALWAYS LAY IT ON TOO THICK.

GOOD MORNING, EVERYONE.

THREE HOURS LATER...

I'M AFRAID I GOT LOST ON THE WAY HERE...

AS NINJA DECEPTIONS GO... THAT ONE SUCKS!

WE WANT ACTION!
A CHALLENGE!
SOMETHING WHERE I COULD USE MY SKILL - LIKE THIS... AND THIS... AND - AND -

SIZZLE

HEY, MASTER KAKASHI!
ANY HOT NEW MISSIONS FOR THE 7TH CELL?
WE'VE HAD NOTHING BUT GIMMES!
BORRRRING!

OH, REALLY?

I SEE WHERE YOU'RE GOING WITH THIS...

SAVING YOU IS SUCH A NUISANCE, SASUKE!

IT'S OVER, AS OF NOW!

THAT'S WHAT I'LL TELL 'EM!!

EVERY TIME WE GO ON A MISSION, THEY END UP SHOWING ME UP AND SAVING ME. BUT NOT THIS TIME!

GRR... THOSE TWO...

WOULD YOU CHILL?!

YESSIR!

HEY, NARUTO!
WAKE UP!
WE'RE HEADING OUT ON OUR MISSION!

DOPE

SKA

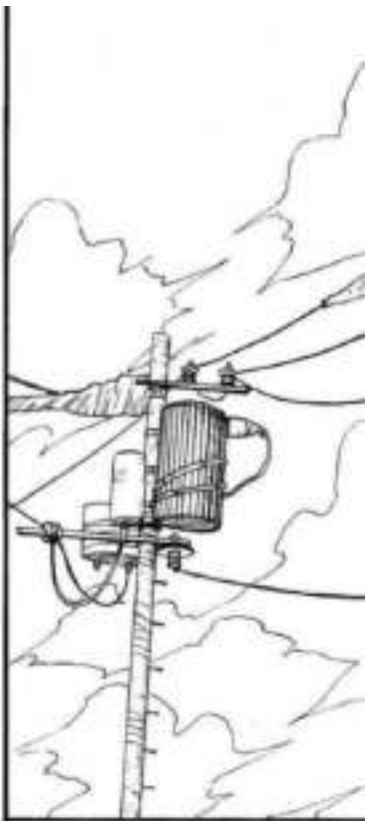


YOU'RE A REAL NUISANCE.

YOU'D HAVE BEEN FINE IF YOU HADN'T OVERDONE IT.

AND AT THE MISSION'S END...

SIGH...

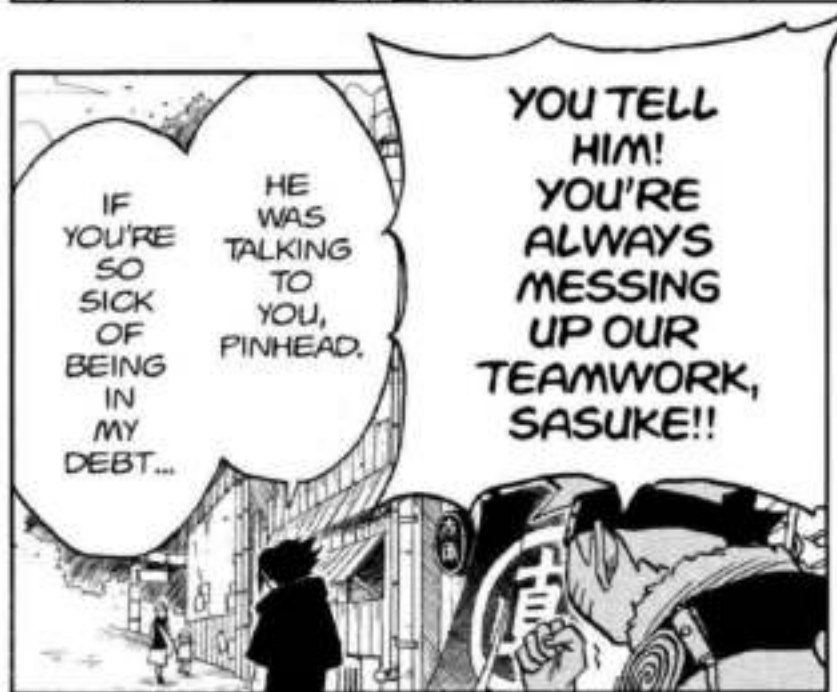


HAH!

...

IF YOU START ANYTHING MORE, I'LL BURY YOU!

THAT DOES IT!! SASUKE-



IF YOU'RE SO SICK OF BEING IN MY DEBT...

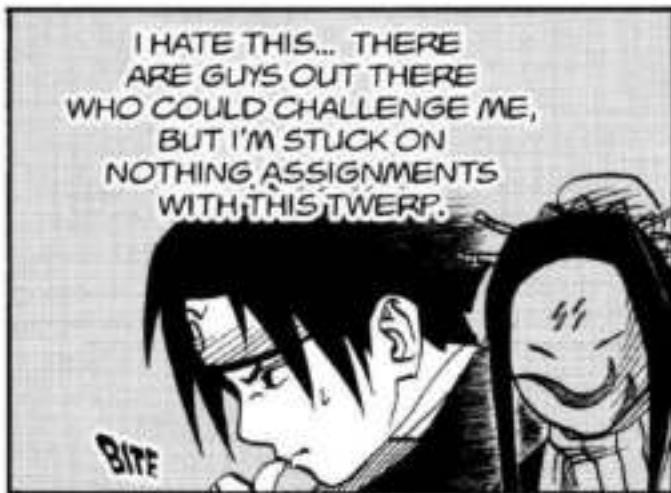
HE WAS TALKING TO YOU, PINHEAD.

YOU TELL HIM! YOU'RE ALWAYS MESSING UP OUR TEAMWORK, SASUKE!!



LATELY... YOUR TEAMWORK HAS BEEN ALMOST NON-EXISTENT.

HMM...

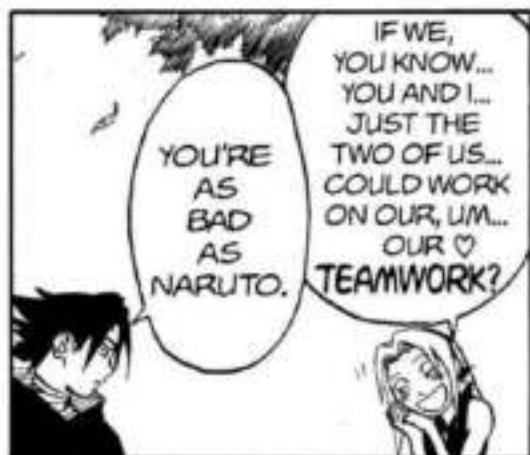




THEN I'M GOING HOME.

I'VE GOT TO GO HAND IN MY REPORT ON TODAY'S MISSION.

OKAY, THAT'S IT. WE'LL CALL IT A DAY RIGHT NOW.



'CAUSE I'M ALWAYS THE WEAKEST... THE ONE WITH ALMOST NO SPECIAL SKILLS!

HE'S RIGHT... IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT OUR MISSION IS. THEY'RE ALL THE SAME TO ME...



LITTLE HINT...
NO ROCK HAS
PERFECT ANGLES,
PERFECT CORNERS...
AND EYE HOLES.
KIND OF A BIG CLUE.



PSYCH!!
FAKED
YOU
OUT,
ROCK!!!

TA-DAAAAA



LEAVE IT
TO THE
MAN
I HAVE
ACKNOWLEDGED
AS BEING
ALMOST
MY EQUAL!
YOUR
SKILLS
RIVAL
MY OWN!!



HEH HEH
HEH
YOU'RE
OUR
IDOL,
RIGHT?
WE'RE
COPYING
THE
STYLE YOU
USED
TO WEAR.



UHH..
WHAT'S
UP
WITH
THE
GOGGLES?

OH,
IT'S
YOU
GUYS.

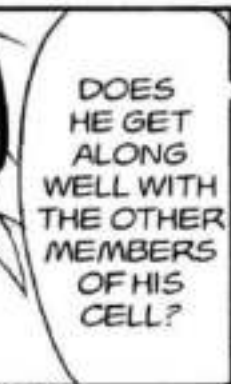








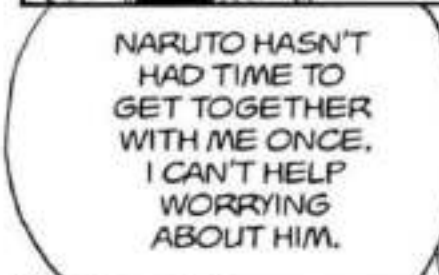
HE'S... GETTING THERE.



DOES HE GET ALONG WELL WITH THE OTHER MEMBERS OF HIS CELL?



HOW'S OUR LITTLE HELLION?



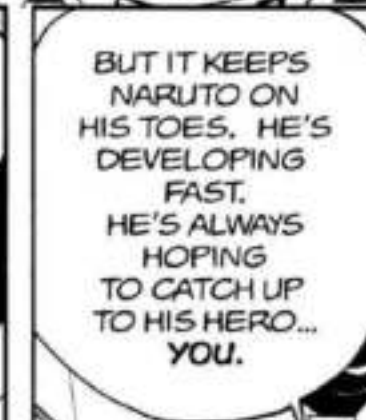
NARUTO HASN'T HAD TIME TO GET TOGETHER WITH ME ONCE. I CAN'T HELP WORRYING ABOUT HIM.



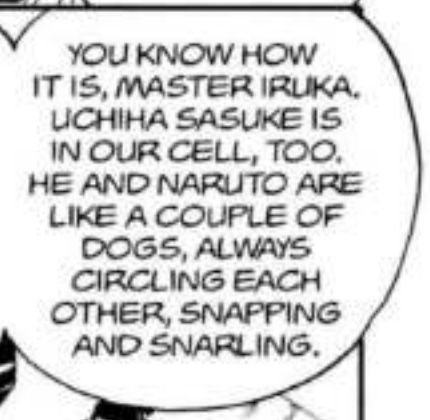
YOUR TEAM'S SEEN A LOT OF ACTION LATELY.



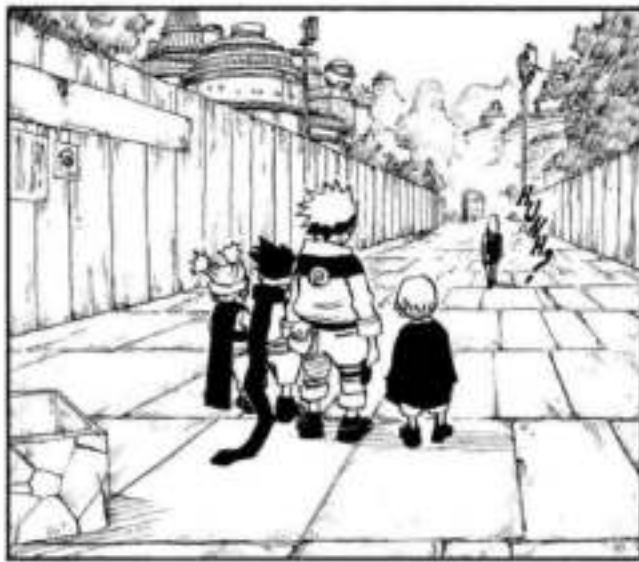
REALLY?



BUT IT KEEPS NARUTO ON HIS TOES. HE'S DEVELOPING FAST. HE'S ALWAYS HOPING TO CATCH UP TO HIS HERO... YOU.



YOU KNOW HOW IT IS, MASTER IRUKA. UCHIHA SASUKE IS IN OUR CELL, TOO. HE AND NARUTO ARE LIKE A COUPLE OF DOGS, ALWAYS CIRCLING EACH OTHER, SNAPPING AND SNARLING.













SEEING WHOM I INVITED HERE, YOU MAY BE ABLE TO GUESS...



ISN'T THIS RATHER SUDDEN?

ONE WEEK FROM TODAY.



BECAUSE I BELIEVE I HAVE ALREADY SEEN SOME OF THEM IN OUR VILLAGE.

HAVE YOU INFORMED THE LORDS OF THE OTHER LANDS YET?

IS IT TIME ALREADY?

WHEN IS IT TO BE?



...WHAT WE ARE HERE TO DISCUSS.



WE SHALL BEGIN CONDUCTING EXAMINATIONS FOR JOURNEMEN NINJA - THE CHUNIN.

TO MAKE IT COMPLETELY OFFICIAL, I HEREBY ANNOUNCE...

SEVEN DAYS FROM NOW, ON JULY 1ST...



HUM



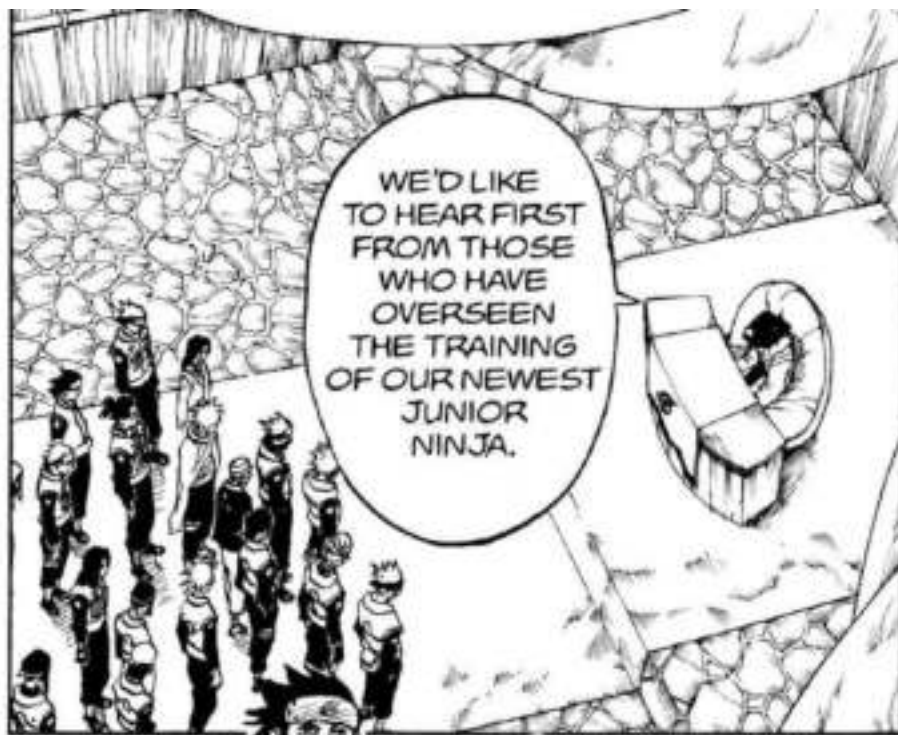
Number 35:

Iruka vs. Kakashi









WE'D LIKE TO HEAR FIRST FROM THOSE WHO HAVE OVERSEEN THE TRAINING OF OUR NEWEST JUNIOR NINJA.



NOW, THEN...



...DO ANY OF YOU HAVE, AMONG YOUR CHARGES, ANY GENIN YOU'D RECOMMEND FOR THIS YEAR'S JOURNEYMEN EXAMS?

TELL US...

MASTERS KAKASHI, KURENAI, AND ASUMA.



BEYOND THAT, EMPLOY YOUR OWN JUDGMENT AS TO WHETHER THEY ARE READY TO ASPIRE TO THE NEXT LEVEL.

THEY MUST HAVE COMPLETED A MINIMUM OF EIGHT MISSIONS.

...THAT BEFORE WE CAN EVEN CONSIDER THEM,



YOU MAY BEGIN, KAKASHI.



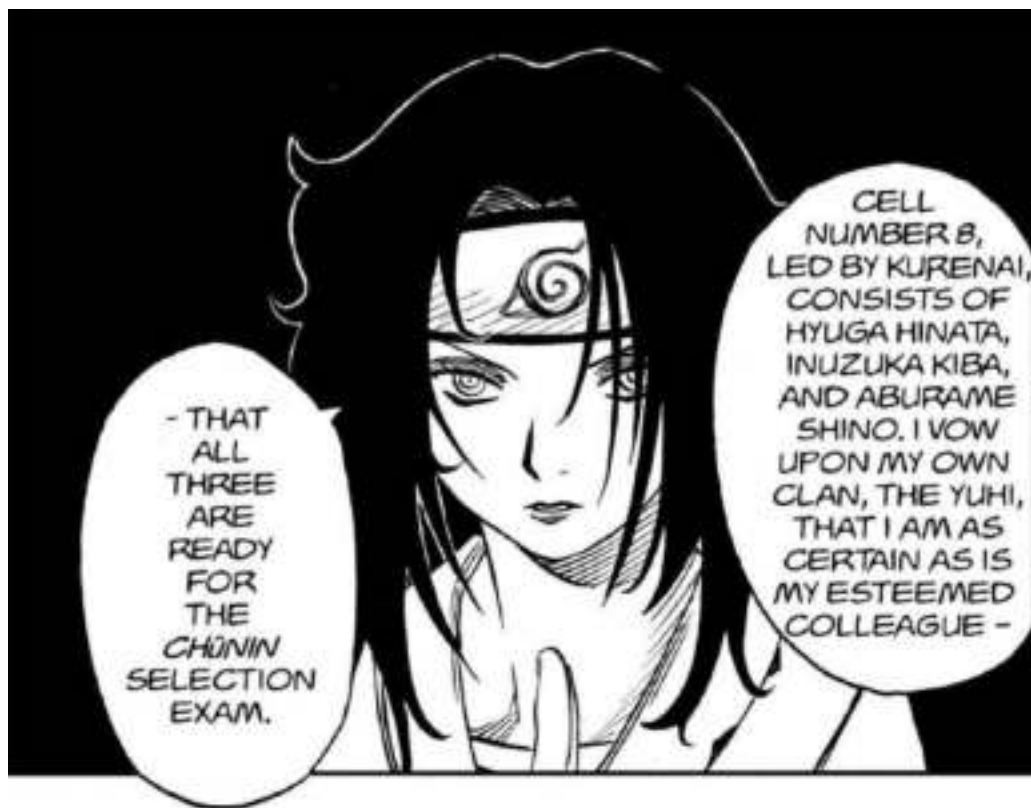
HE SHOULDN'T BE ASKING THIS YET... IT'S TOO SOON FOR ANY OF THEM.

TO BE TRULY COMPETITIVE, CANDIDATES SHOULD PROBABLY HAVE COMPLETED AT LEAST DOUBLE THE RECOMMENDED NUMBER OF MISSIONS...



- THAT ALL THREE OF THEM ARE READY FOR THE CHUNIN SELECTION EXAM.

CELL NUMBER 7, LED BY KAKASHI, CONSISTS OF UCHIHA SASUKE, UZUMAKI NARUTO, AND HARUNO SAKURA. I VOW UPON THE HONOR OF MY CLAN, THE HATAKE -





CERTAINLY, THEY ARE ALL GIFTED AND SHOW BOTH COMMITMENT AND TALENT... BUT IT'S TOO SOON FOR KIDS THAT YOUNG TO BE STEPPING UP TO THE JOURNEYMAN LEVEL.

FORGIVE ME IF I OVERSTEP, BUT MOST OF THE NINE STUDENTS JUST NAMED...
... WERE MY STUDENTS WHILE THEY WERE AT THE ACADEMY.



NARUTO'S NOT LIKE YOU!



I WAS SIX YEARS YOUNGER THAN NARUTO WHEN I ATTAINED THE RANK OF CHUNIN, IRUKA.



ONLY WITH TIME WILL THEY HAVE THE KIND OF EXPERIENCE AND MATURITY THOSE EXAMS REQUIRE.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY THEIR SUPERVISORS CAN'T SEE THAT.



LET'S ADMIT IT. BREAKING THEM WOULD BE FUN.

THEY GRIPE ABOUT EVERY DETAIL OF EVERY MISSION. JUST FOR ONCE, I THINK IT WOULD DO THEM GOOD TO FIND OUT WHAT REAL PAIN IS...

ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR MIND?



YOU ALL KNOW WHAT THEY CALL THE CHUNIN SELECTION EXAMS, DON'T YOU?

DO YOU WANT TO DESTROY THOSE CHILDREN?!







: GAARA'S TATTOO SAYS "LOVE."









I SWEAR IT WON'T HAPPEN AGAIN.

... BUT WE DIDN'T COME HERE TO PLAY AROUND.

SHHM

I KNOW WE'RE A LITTLE EARLY...

!



...COME FROM THE VILLAGE HIDDEN IN THE SAND.

YES?

ACCORDING TO YOUR HEADBANDS, YOU THREE...



WAIT!

LET'S GO.

!



WE CAN'T JUST LET YOU GO YOUR MERRY WAY.

STATE YOUR BUSINESS!



...BUT ACCORDING TO OUR TREATY, YOUR NINJA ARE NOT PERMITTED TO CROSS THE BORDER WITHOUT AUTHORIZATION.

YOUR COUNTRY IS ONE OF KONOHA'S ALLIES...



WEREN'T YOU INFORMED?

TA-DA!
MY TRAVEL PAPERS!

...EVER HEARD THE OLD SAYING ABOUT IT BEING DARKEST AT THE BASE OF THE BRIGHTEST LIGHT-HOUSE?



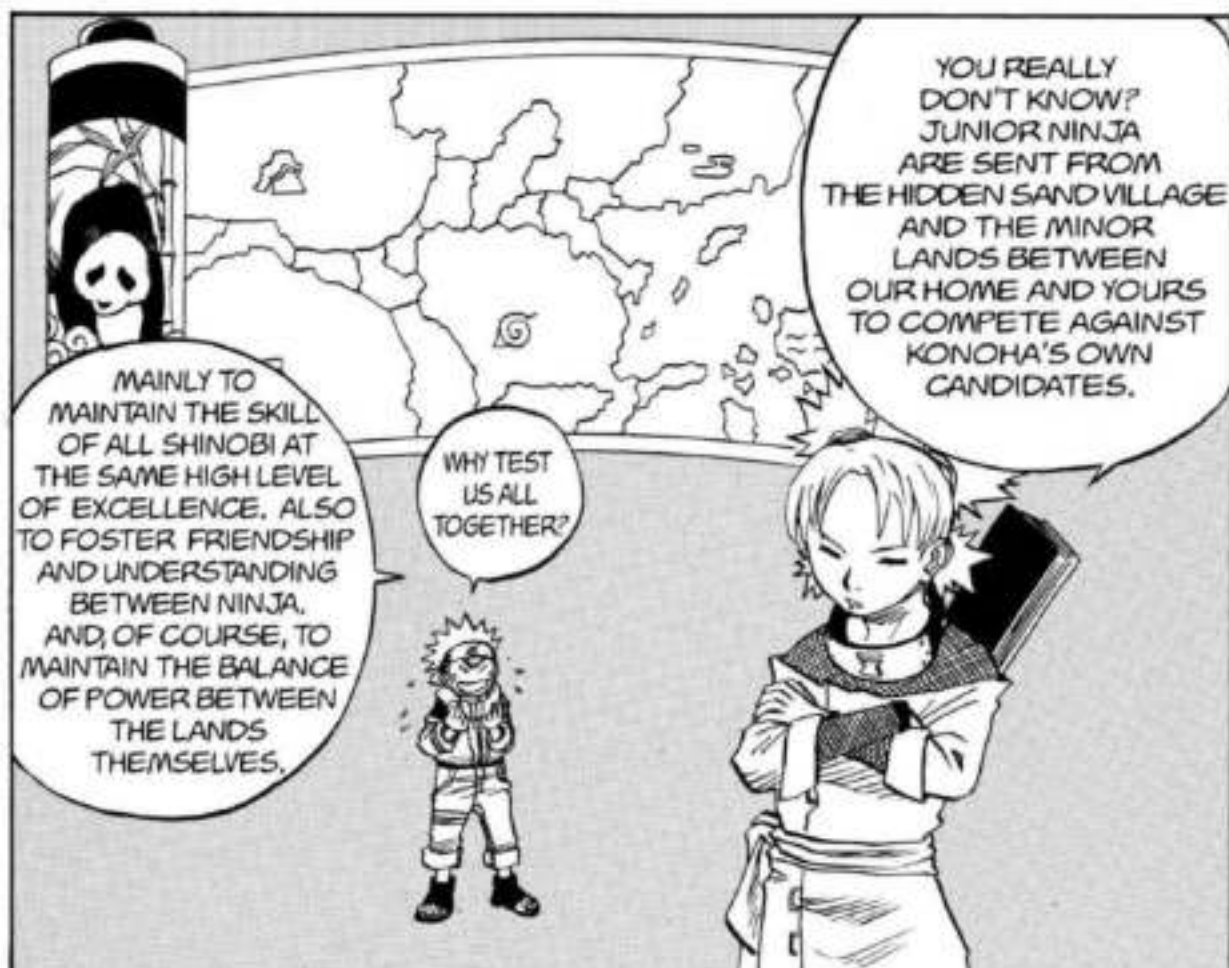
WHAT'S THE CHUNIN SELECTION EXAM?

...



WE'RE HERE TO TAKE THE CHUNIN SELECTION EXAM

AS YOU GUESSED, WE'RE JUNIOR-LEVEL NINJA FROM THE HIDDEN SAND VILLAGE.



MAINLY TO MAINTAIN THE SKILL OF ALL SHINOBI AT THE SAME HIGH LEVEL OF EXCELLENCE. ALSO TO FOSTER FRIENDSHIP AND UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN NINJA, AND, OF COURSE, TO MAINTAIN THE BALANCE OF POWER BETWEEN THE LANDS THEMSELVES.

WHY TEST US ALL TOGETHER?

YOU REALLY DON'T KNOW? JUNIOR NINJA ARE SENT FROM THE HIDDEN SAND VILLAGE AND THE MINOR LANDS BETWEEN OUR HOME AND YOURS TO COMPETE AGAINST KONOHA'S OWN CANDIDATES.





UCHIHA SASUKE.

HEH



NO.
LET'S GO.

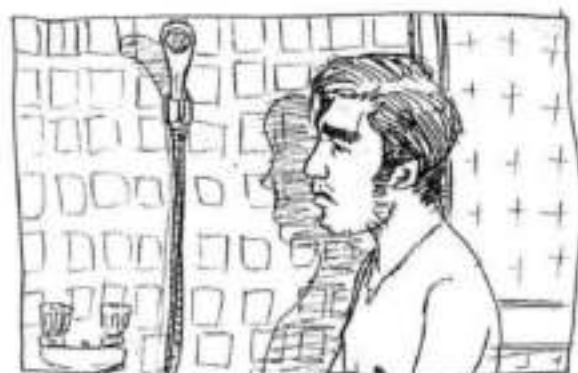


HEY!
HEY!
DON'T
YOU
WANT
TO
KNOW
MY
NAME?



KISHIMOTO MASASHI'S

POINTLESS LITTLE STORY

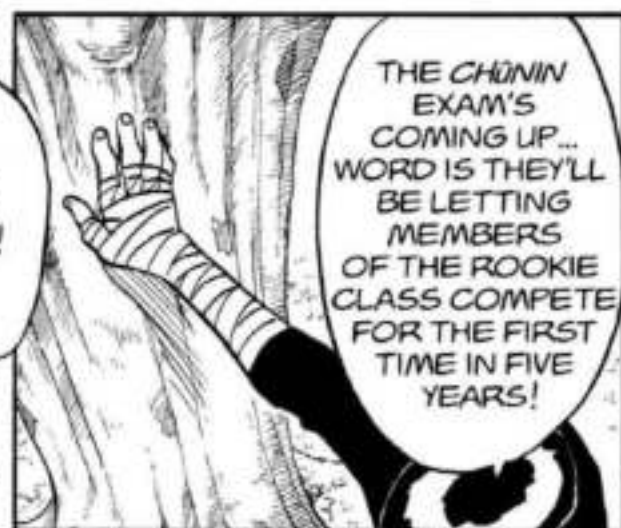
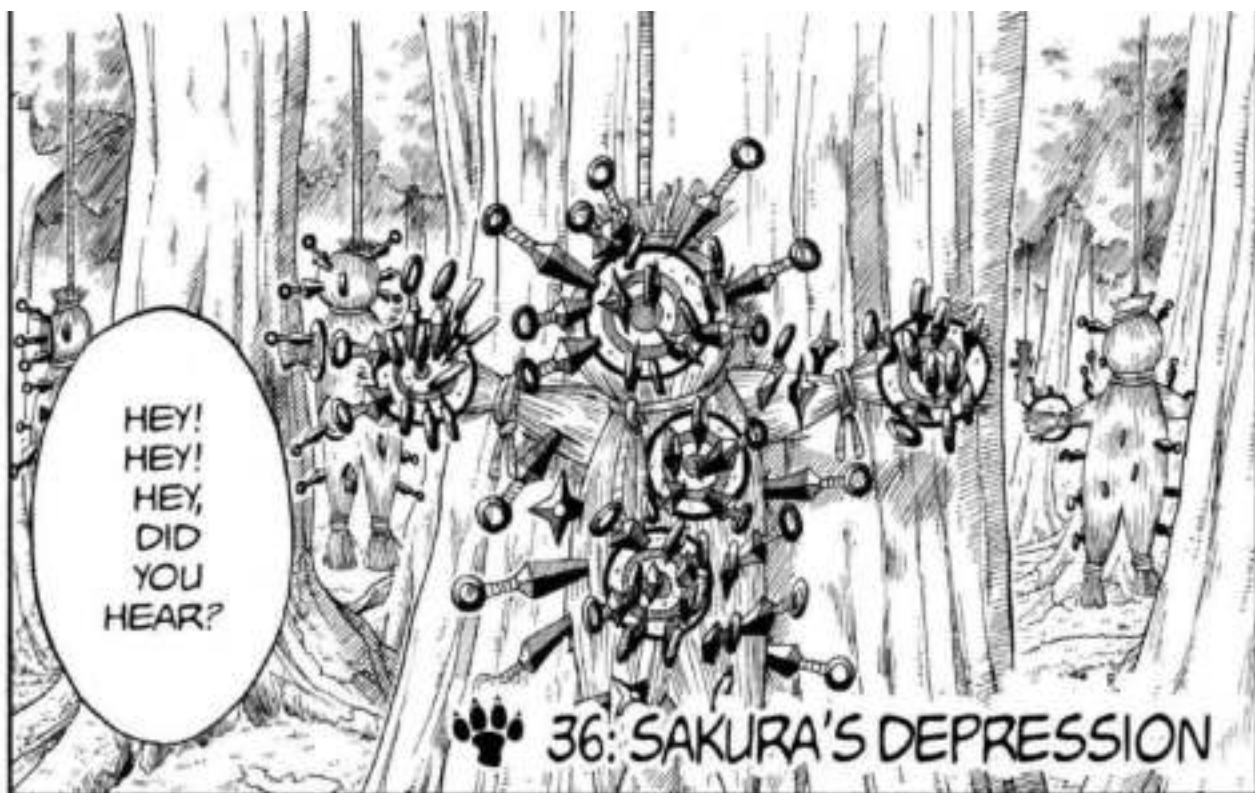


THE END



THE EIGHT-FRAME MANGA ON THE LEFT BRINGS BACK FOND MEMORIES FOR ME OF KOISHI, THE FRIEND WHO DREW IT FOR ME BACK IN COLLEGE. I HAD BEEN DRAWING MANGA SINCE MY HIGH-SCHOOL DAYS, BUT I DIDN'T HAVE A SINGLE FRIEND WHO SHARED MY PASSION. IN COLLEGE, I HEARD OF A GROUP OF MANGA FANS AND ASPIRING ARTISTS WHO CALLED THEMSELVES THE MANKEN, OR MANGA LAB. BUT THEY WEREN'T SO MUCH DRAWING MANGA AS THEY WERE PATTING EACH OTHER ON THE BACK FOR DRAWING PIN-UPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS WITH NO ATTEMPT AT STORYTELLING WHATSOEVER. I AVOIDED THOSE PHONIES LIKE THE PLAGUE AND WENT MY OWN WAY, TRYING TO DRAW ACTUAL MANGA.

THEN, ONE DAY, I MET A MAN WHO CLAIMED HE HAD DRAWN AUTHENTIC MANGA BACK IN HIGH SCHOOL. I HAD DOUBTS ABOUT WHETHER HE WAS ON THE LEVEL, SO I CHALLENGED HIM. I WAS DETERMINED TO FIND OUT WHETHER HE WAS A REAL MANGA ARTIST OR ANOTHER PHONY. I DEMANDED THAT HE DRAW A TWO-PAGE STORY FOR ME ON THE SPOT. SO HE DREW THE MANGA ON THE LEFT AND GAVE IT TO ME. IT WAS MOMENT OF INTENSE JOY FOR ME TO HOLD SOMEONE ELSE'S MANGA IN MY HAND LIKE THAT, FOR THE VERY FIRST TIME, AND I TREASURE HIS MANGA TO THIS VERY DAY.

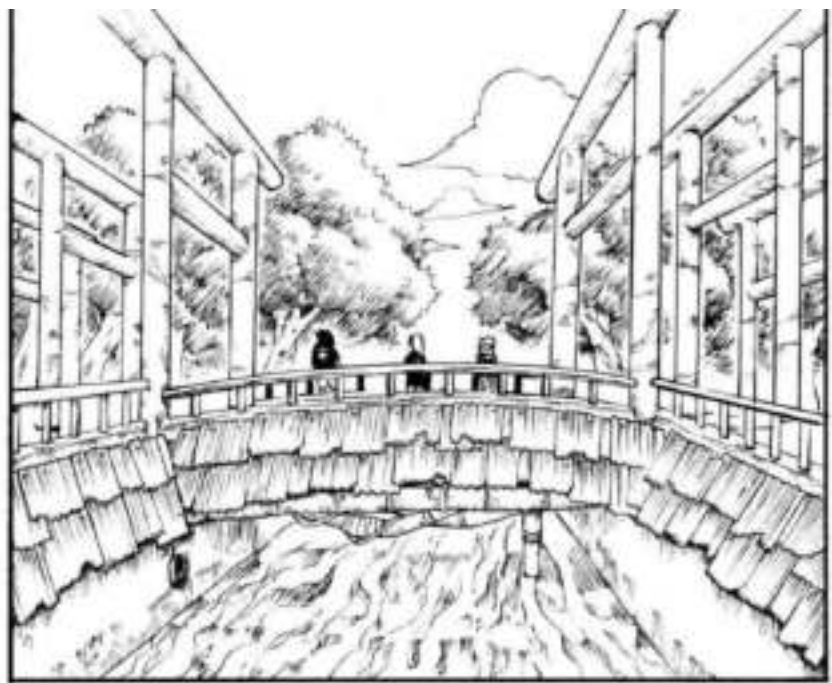




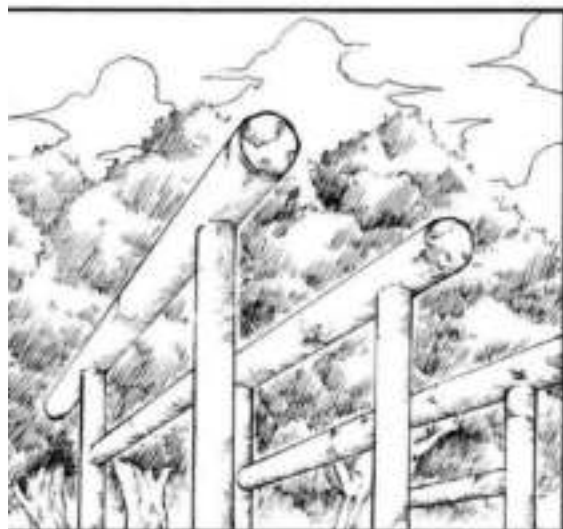
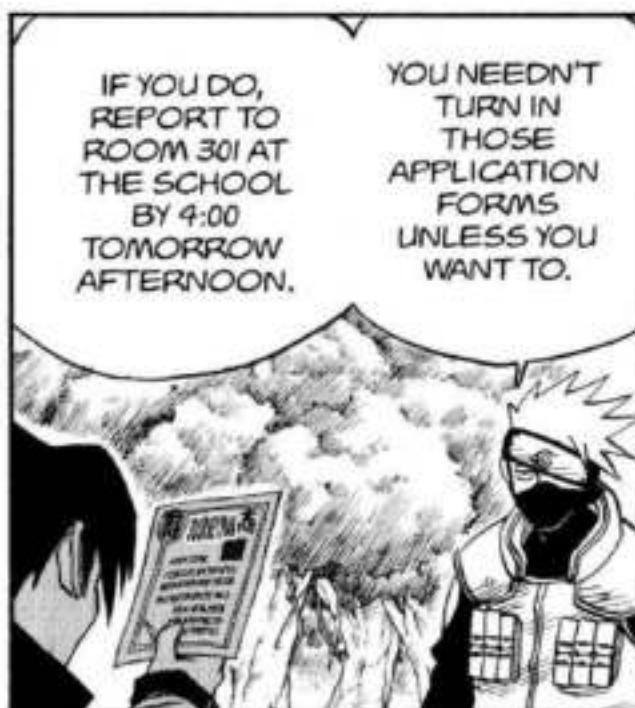
IT
ALL
HAS
A VERY
SAD
SOUND
TO IT.



Number 36:
Sakura's Depression

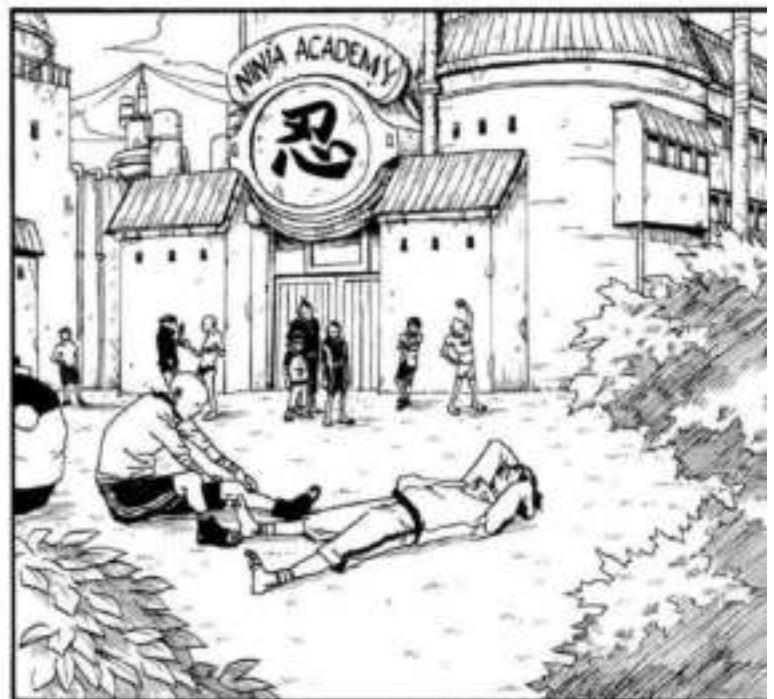






READ THIS WAY









WE'RE JUST TRYING TO SPARE YOU...

YOU MISUNDERSTAND!

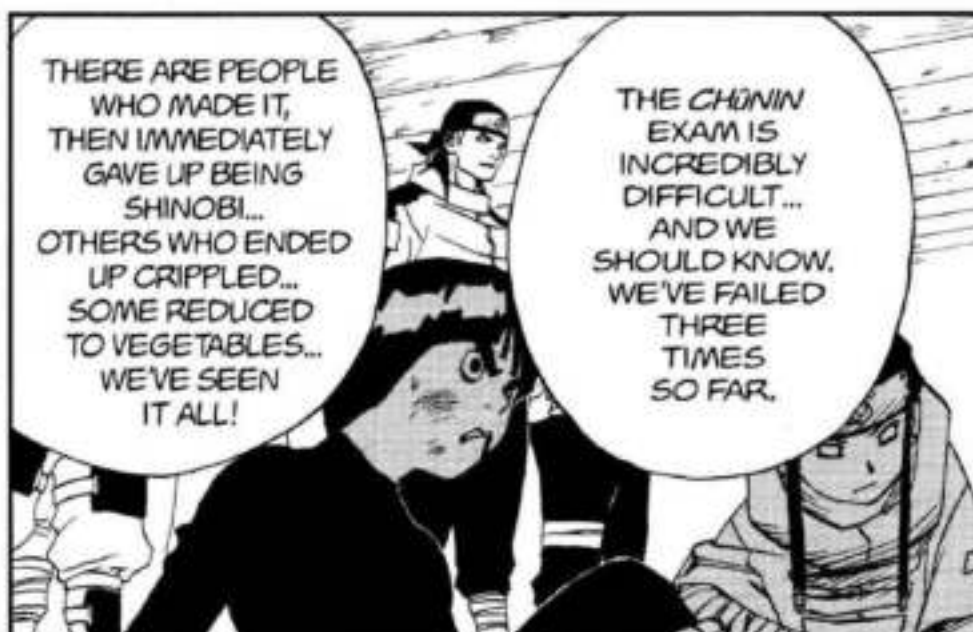


WHAT DID YOU SAY?



WHOA AW. MAN

!!



THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO MADE IT, THEN IMMEDIATELY GAVE UP BEING SHINOBI... OTHERS WHO ENDED UP CRIPPLED... SOME REDUCED TO VEGETABLES... WE'VE SEEN IT ALL!

THE CHUNIN EXAM IS INCREDIBLY DIFFICULT... AND WE SHOULD KNOW. WE'VE FAILED THREE TIMES SO FAR.



AND YOU LITTLE PUNKS HAVE THE NERVE TO APPLY?

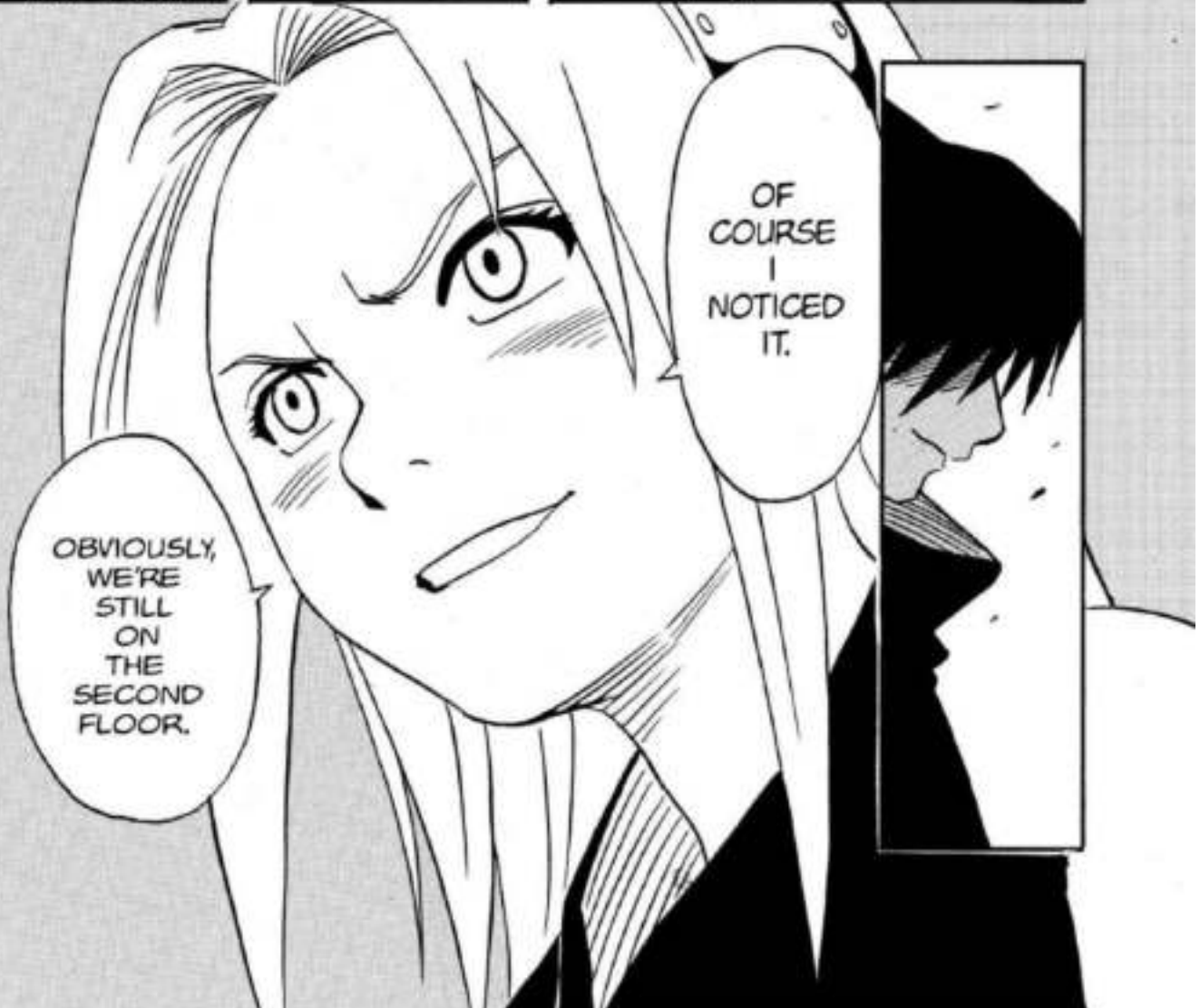
SHORT



THE RESPONSIBILITIES FOR FAILED MISSIONS AND DEAD SHINOBI REST FIRMLY ON THEIR SHOULDERS.

BESIDES THAT, CHUNIN ARE CELL COMMANDERS. THEY LEAD THEIR UNITS.





READ THIS WAY





HE PERCEIVED THE ATTACK PATTERNS ON BOTH SIDES AND PLANTED HIMSELF AT THE NEXUS OF BOTH THEIR KICKS... IS THAT EVEN POSSIBLE?!

HE'S SO FAST!!



HE'S A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT PERSON FROM THE BOY WHO WAS GETTING BEATEN UP JUST A MINUTE AGO.



BUT THERE'S SOMETHING WEIRD ABOUT HIS CHAKRA.

HE BLOCKED MY KICK!

READ THIS WAY



YOU'RE THE ONE WHO INSISTED WE SHOULD AVOID DRAWING ATTENTION TO OURSELVES.

THAT'S NOT WHAT WE AGREED!





READ THIS WAY



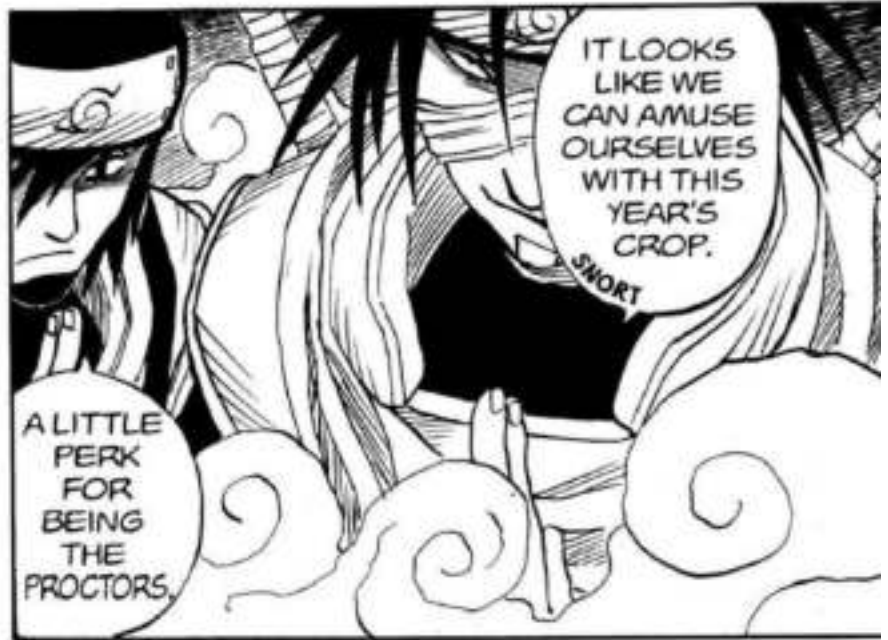


YEP.

HEH...
SO THOSE
ARE KAKASHI
AND GUY'S PRECIOUS
BRATS, EH? WELL,
AT LEAST THEY
MANAGED TO SUBMIT
APPLICATIONS.



NOW!
SASUKE,
NARUTO,
LET'S
GO!!



IT LOOKS
LIKE WE
CAN AMUSE
OURSELVES
WITH THIS
YEAR'S
CROP.

SHORT

A LITTLE
PERK
FOR
BEING
THE
PROCTORS.



...

LET'S GO,
LEE.
WHAT ARE
YOU DOING?



STOP
PULLING

TRALALA
AA
TION



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