

NARUTO

18

SHONEN JUMP MANGA

Story & Art by

Masashi Kishimoto volume



岸本斉史

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

Translation & English Adaptation/Mari Morimoto
Touch-up Art & Lettering/Mark McMurray

Design/Yvonne Cai
Editor/Joel Enos

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PARENTAL ADVISORY

NARUTO is rated T for Teen and is recommended
for ages 13 and up. This volume contains realistic
and fantasy violence.

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THE WORLD'S
MOST POPULAR MANGA



www.shonenjump.com



SHONEN JUMP MANGA EDITION

NARUTO

VOL. 18
TSUNADE'S CHOICE

STORY AND ART BY
MASASHI KISHIMOTO



CHARACTERS

Sasuke
サスケ

Orochimaru
大蛇丸

Naruto
ナルト

Sakura
サクラ

Kabuto
カブト

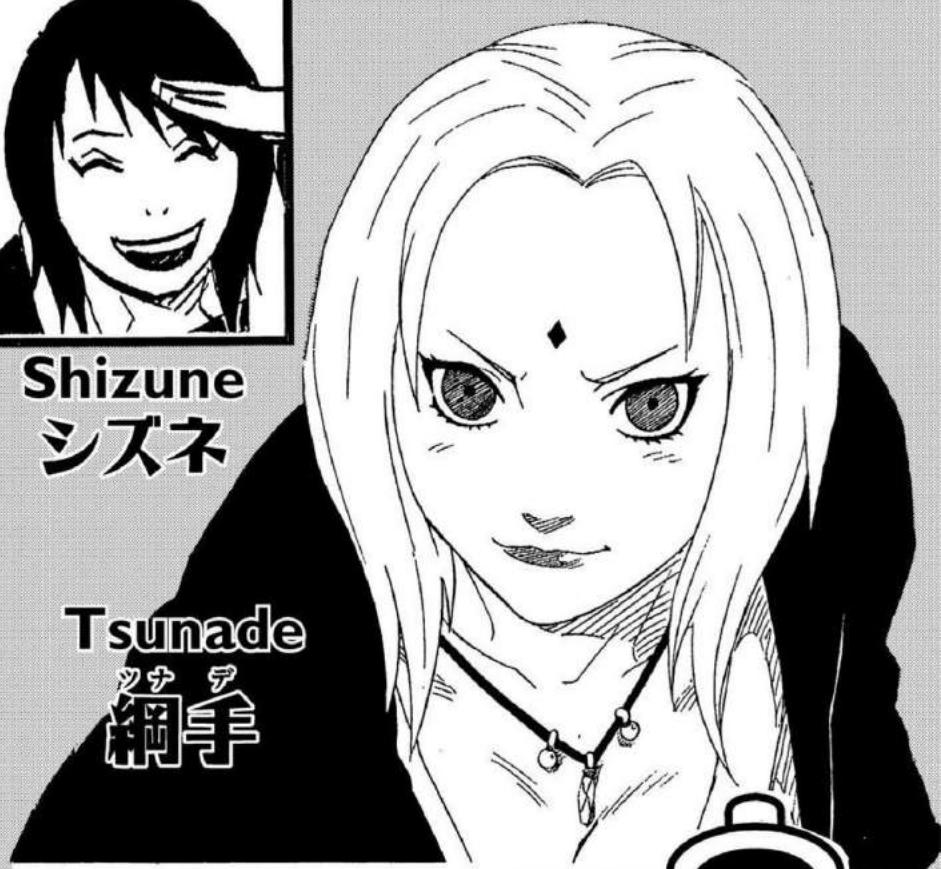




Jiraiya
自来也



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 Chūnin 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

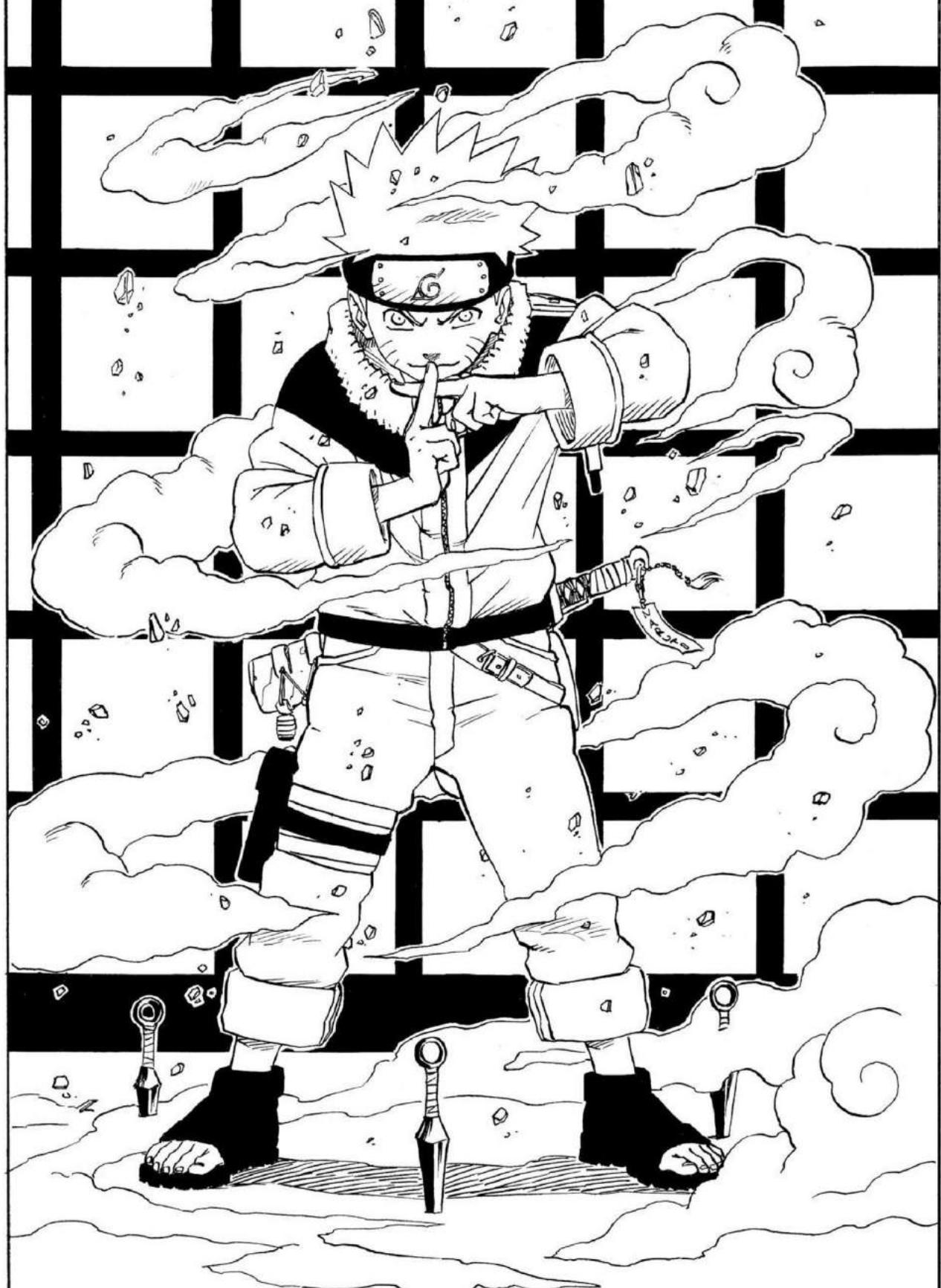
VOL. 18
TSUNADE'S CHOICE

CONTENTS



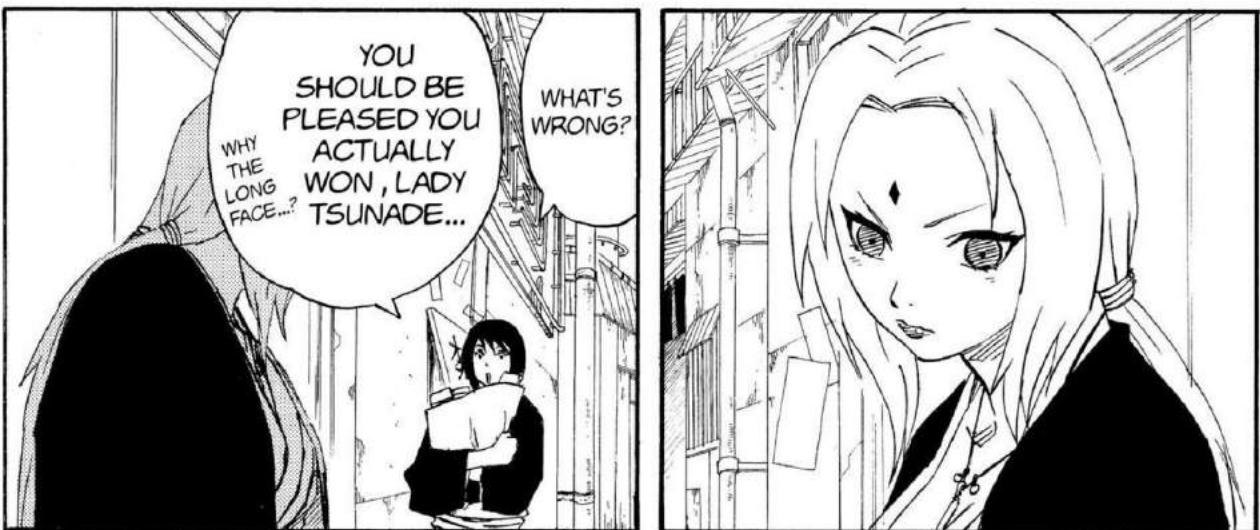
NUMBER 154: CONVERGENCE...!!	7
NUMBER 155: THE THIRD STATE	27
NUMBER 156: THE OFFER	47
NUMBER 157: TSUNADE'S ANSWER...?!	67
NUMBER 158: NO FORGIVENESS...!!	87
NUMBER 159: THE WAGER...!!	107
NUMBER 160: THE NECKLACE OF DEATH...!!	127
NUMBER 161: TSUNADE'S CHOICE!!	147
NUMBER 162: A VULNERABLE HEART...!!	167

Number 154: Convergence!!!





(Sign: Pachinko)





SINCE...I
WAS PART
OF THE
MEDICAL
CORPS AT
ONE POINT.

I KNOW A
LITTLE BIT
ABOUT LADY
TSUNADE
TOO, YOU
KNOW.



...EVEN THOUGH
IT'S PRETTY
OBVIOUS WHAT
HAPPENS TO
ORDINARY FIGHTING
UNITS WITHOUT
EMERGENCY
MEDICAL KNOW-
HOW...

BUT BACK
THEN, IT WAS
A GROUND-
BREAKING
NOTION...

...HUMPH...



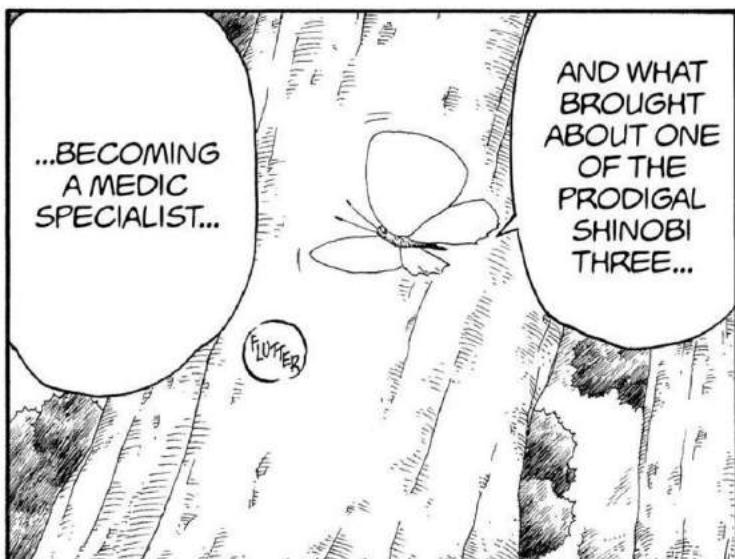
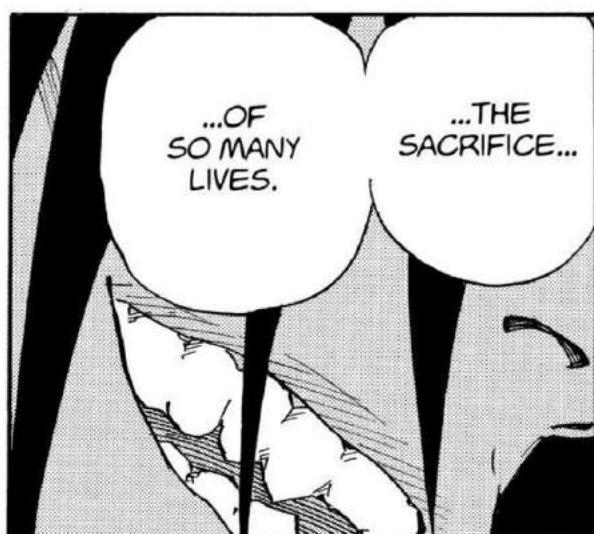
...ON THE
BATTLEFIELD.

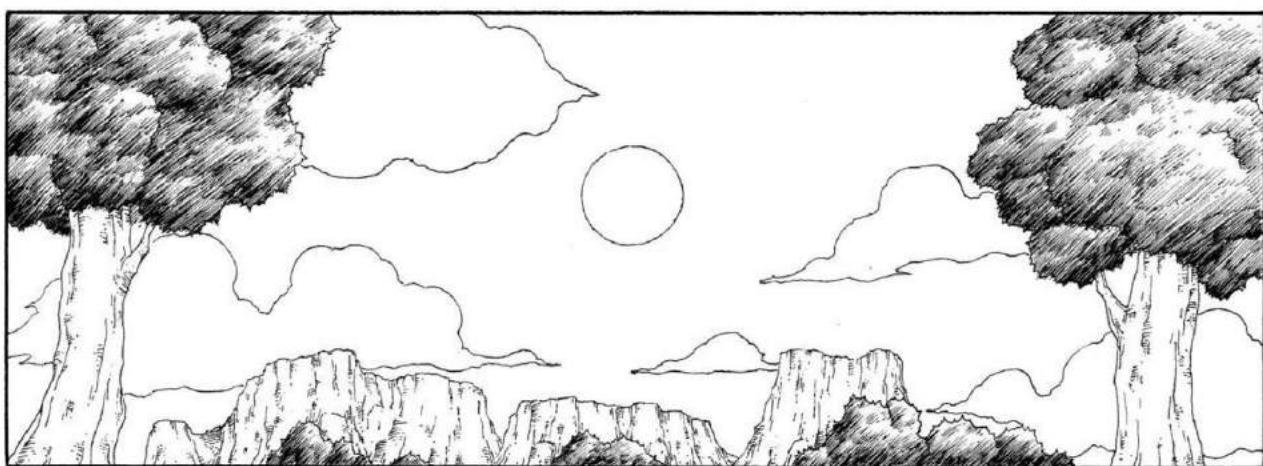


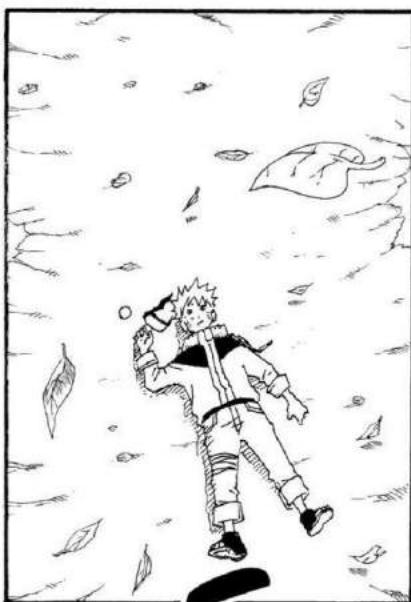
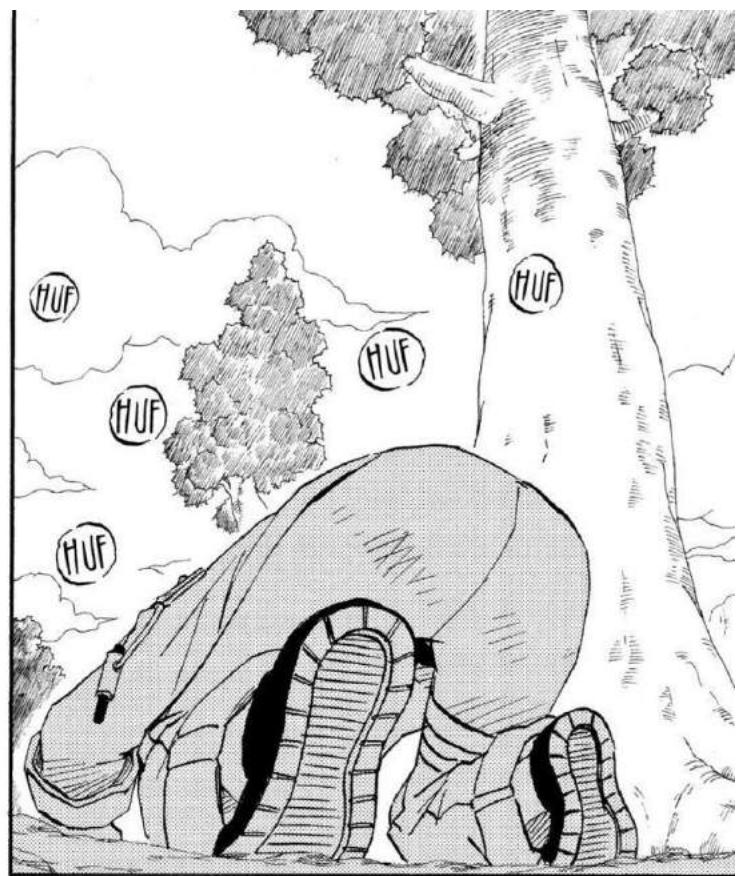
...HAVING
A MEDIC
SPECIALIST IN
THE BASIC FOUR
MAN CELL.

SHE WAS
THE FIRST
TO
PROPOSE...

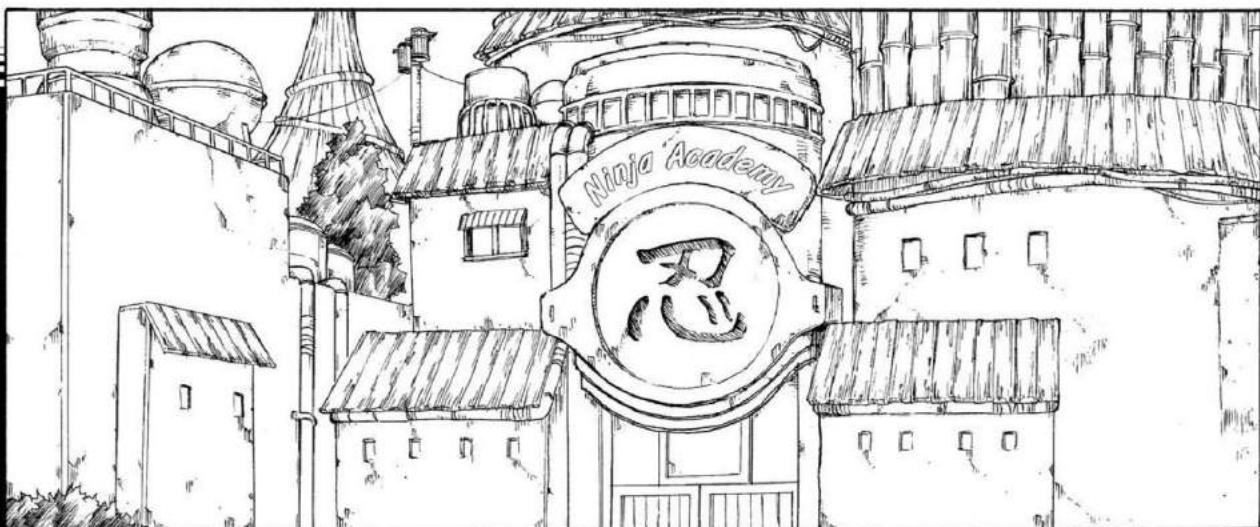
SOMETHING
WE TAKE FOR
GRANTED
THESE DAYS...

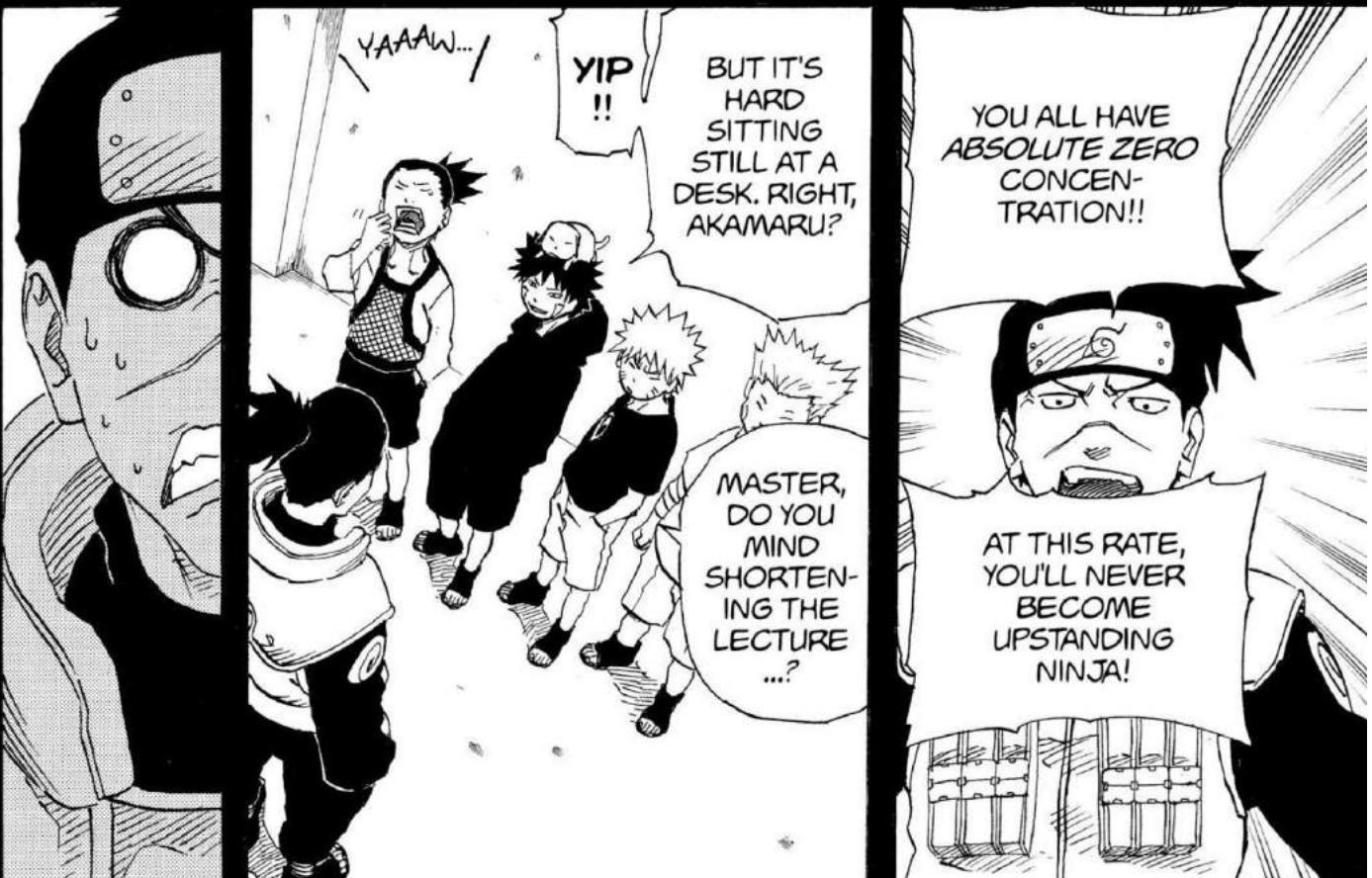
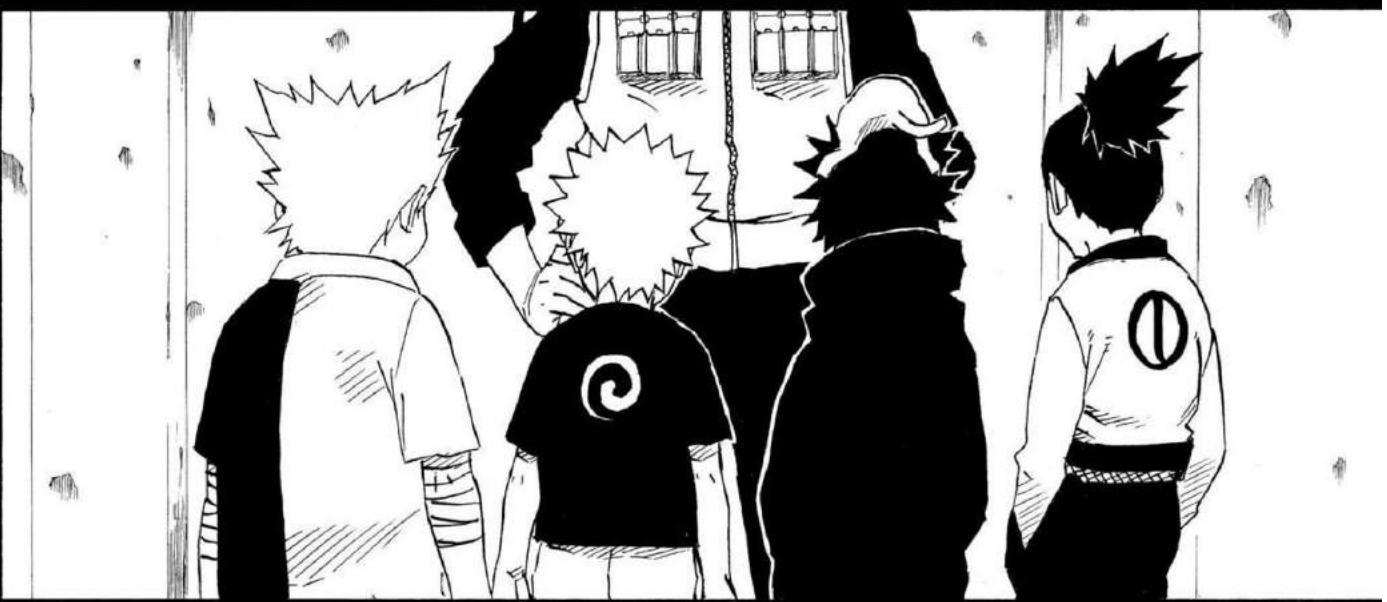






READ
THIS WAY





YAAAW.../

YIP
!!

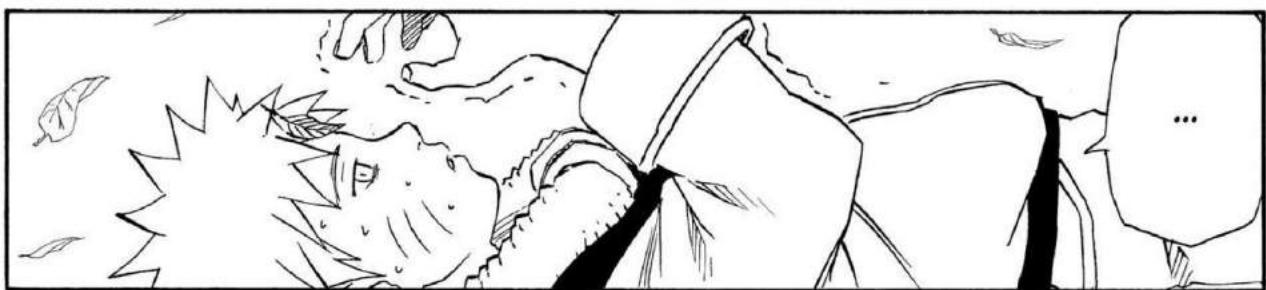
BUT IT'S
HARD
SITTING
STILL AT A
DESK. RIGHT,
AKAMARU?

YOU ALL HAVE
ABSOLUTE ZERO
CONCEN-
TRATION!!

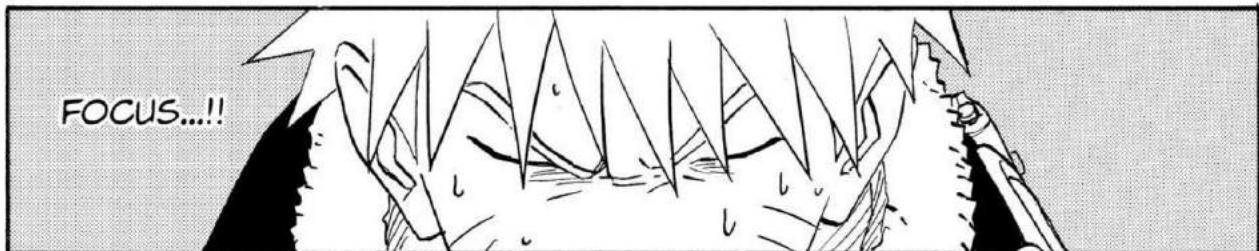
MASTER,
DO YOU
MIND
SHORTEN-
ING THE
LECTURE
...?

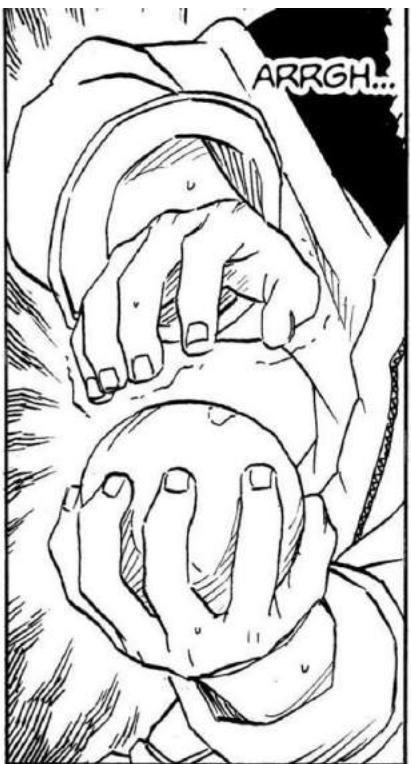
AT THIS RATE,
YOU'LL NEVER
BECOME
UPSTANDING
NINJA!

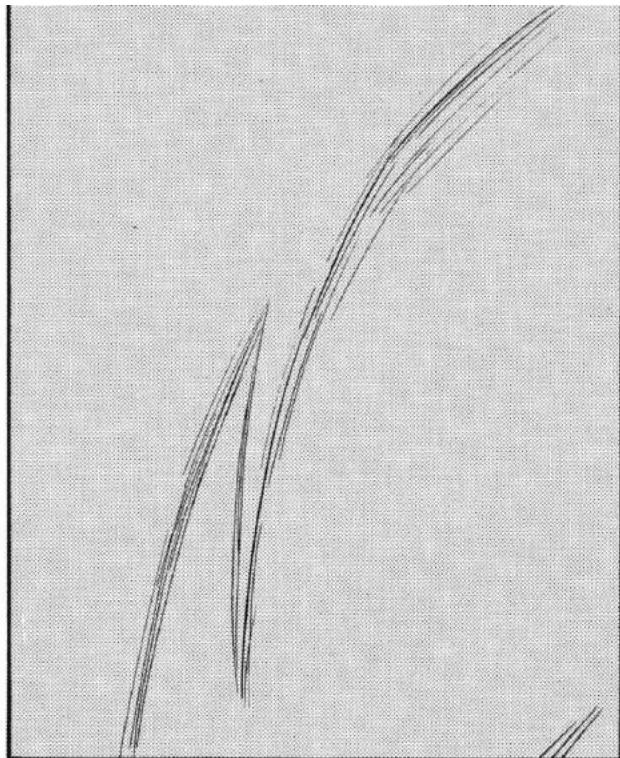




READ
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WAY









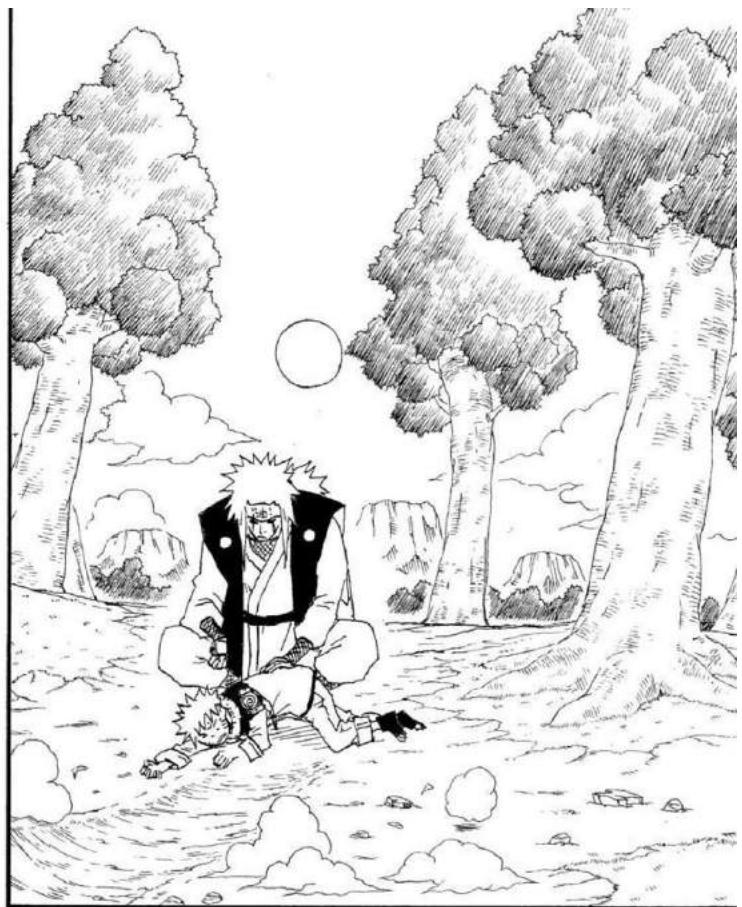
ooooooooAR!!





ROOOOOOOOO





READ
THIS
WAY

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

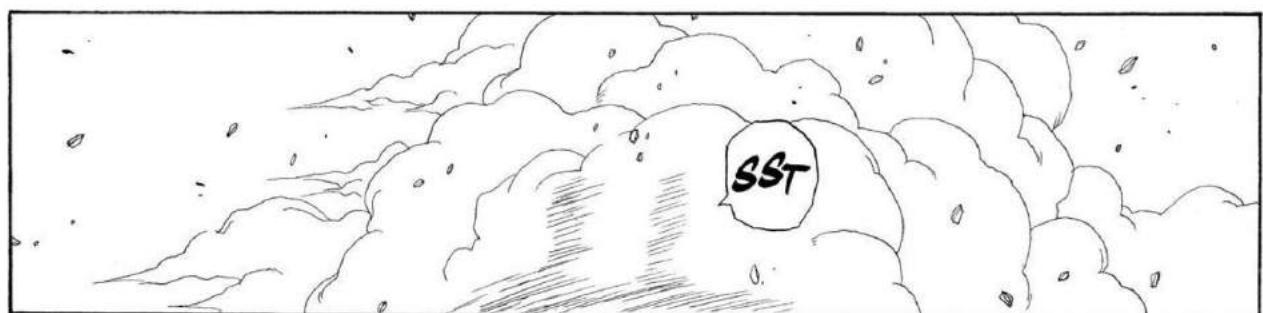
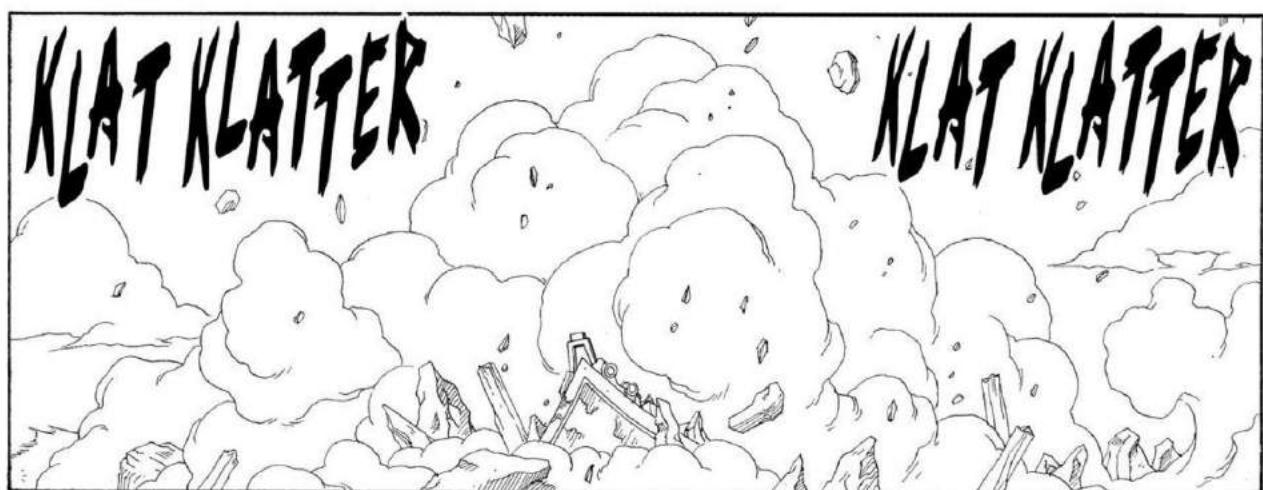
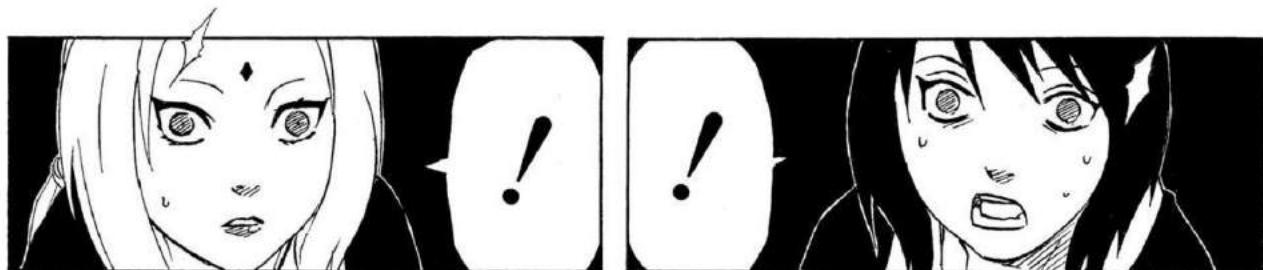
CALM DOWN,
SHIZUNE.

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...

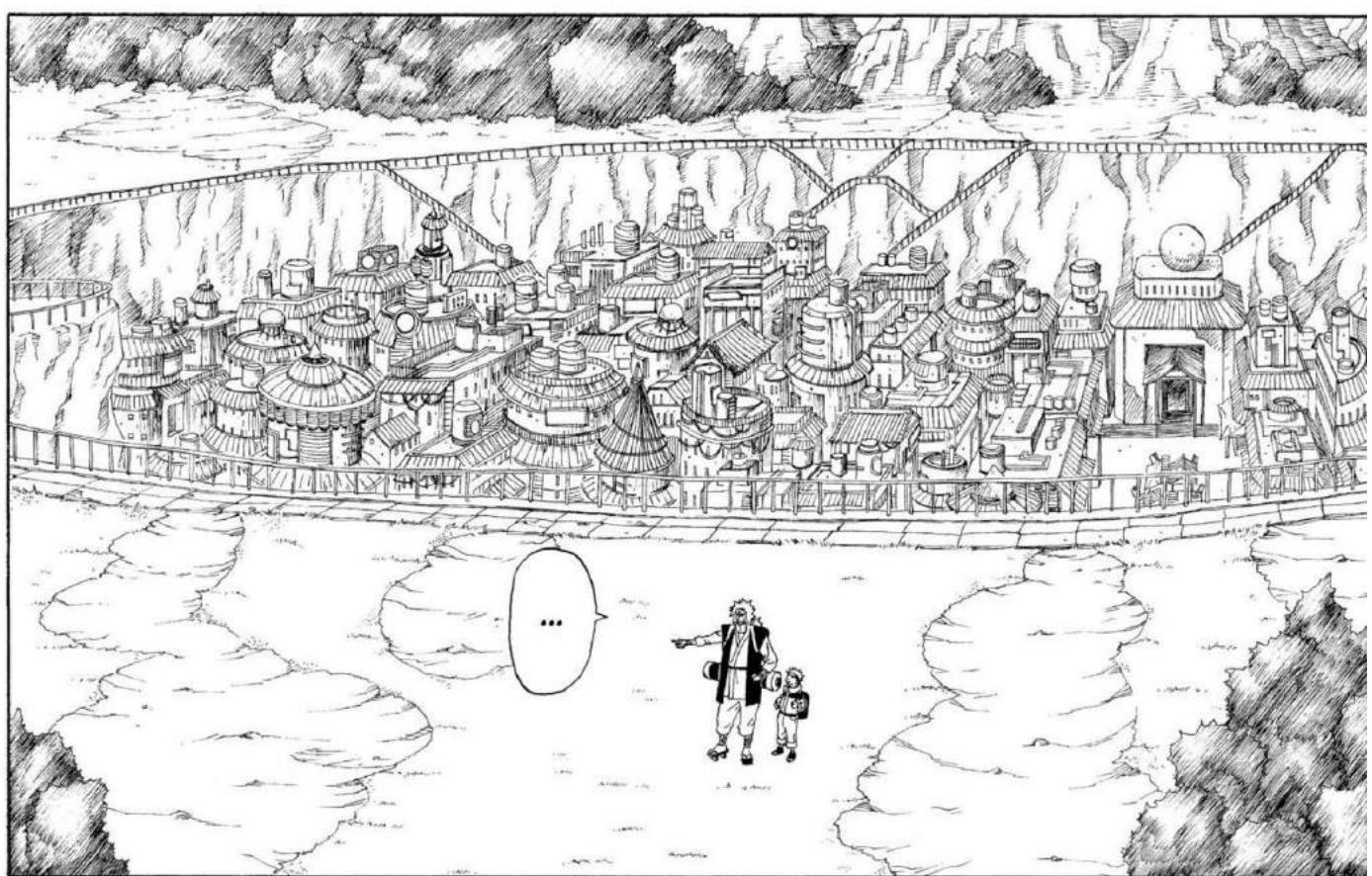
I WANTED TO SHOUT BACK, I CAN'T HELP IT IF I CAN'T AFFORD MORE PAINT TUBES! BUT ACTUALLY, AT THAT POINT I DIDN'T REALLY CARE ANYMORE...THAT'S BECAUSE THE CONSTANTLY MONEY-GOBBLING OIL PAINTING BUSINESS HAD LOST ITS APPEAL, AND I WAS ALSO TIRED OF THE WHINING, HIGH-NOSED ART WORLD. I'D RATHER SPEND WHAT 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)

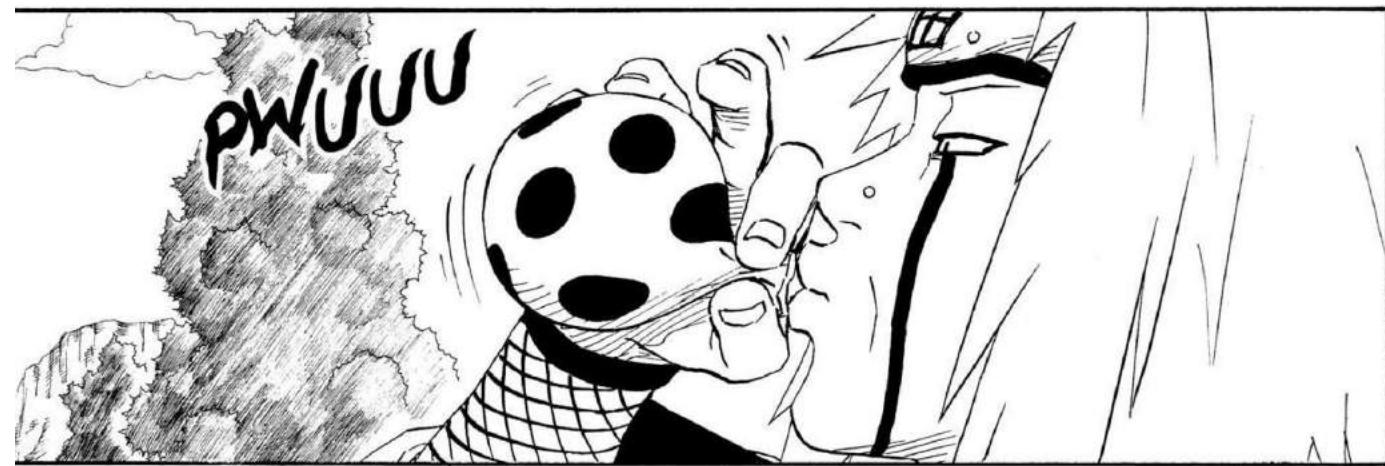


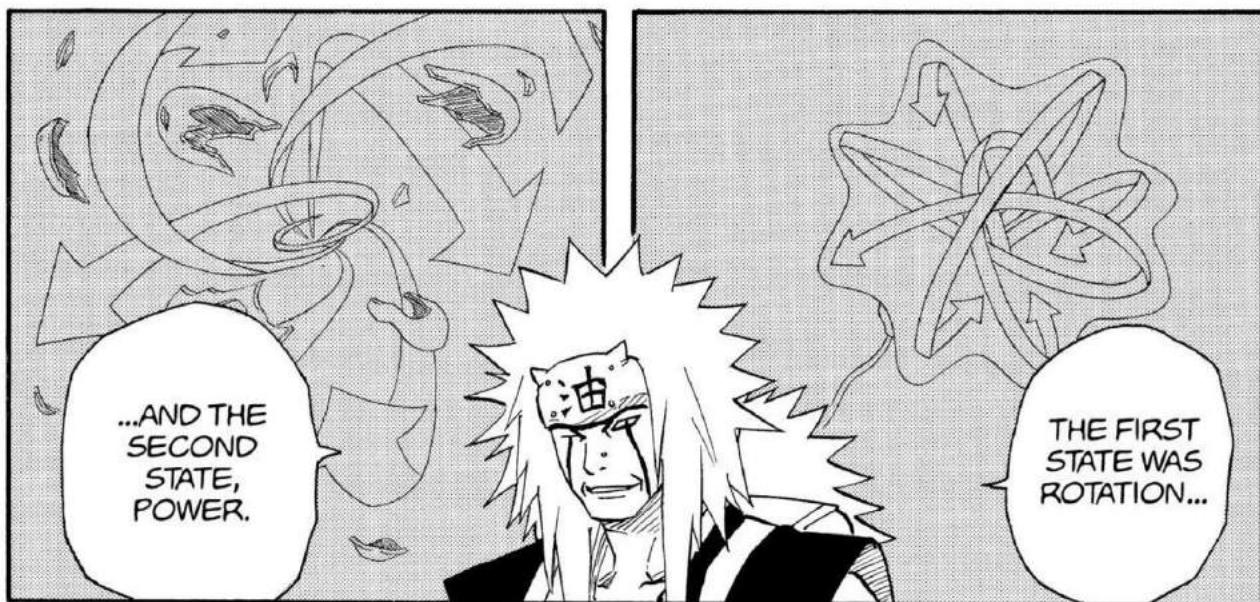
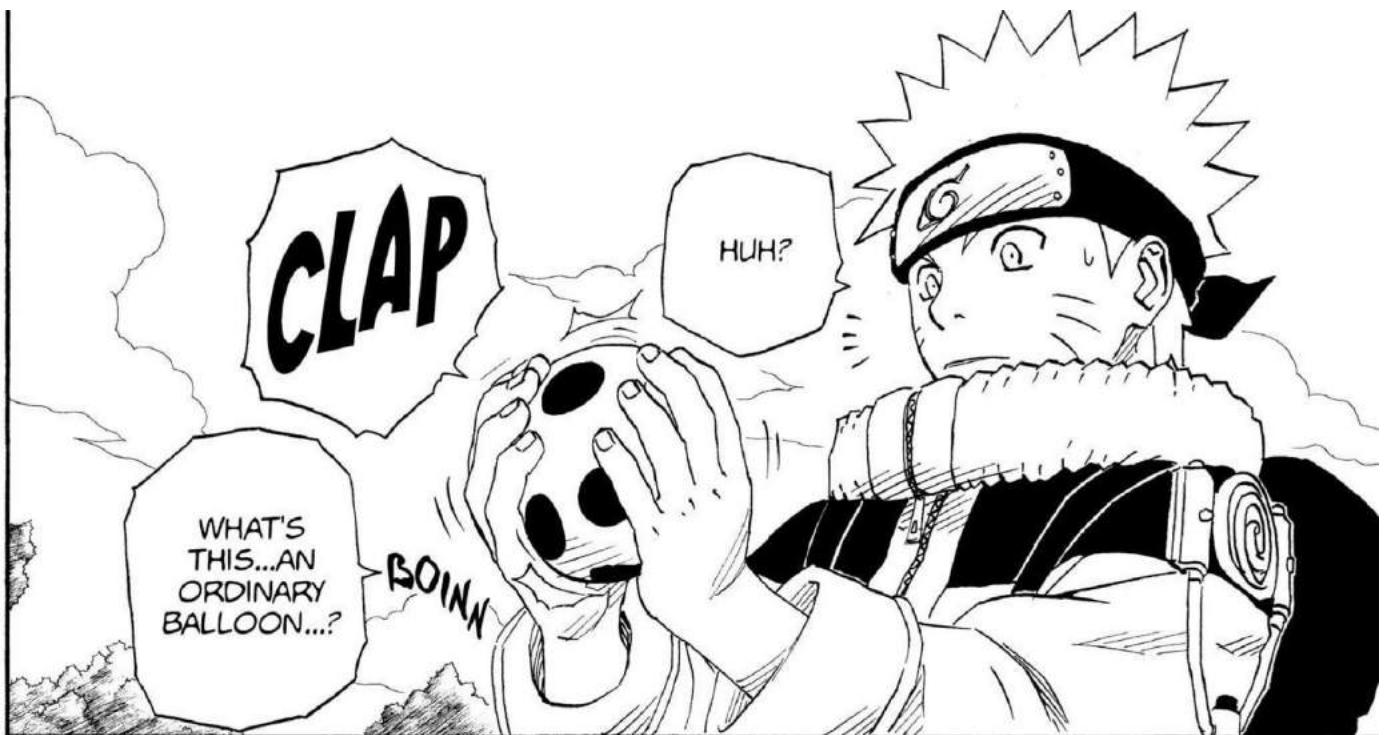
Number 155: The Third State



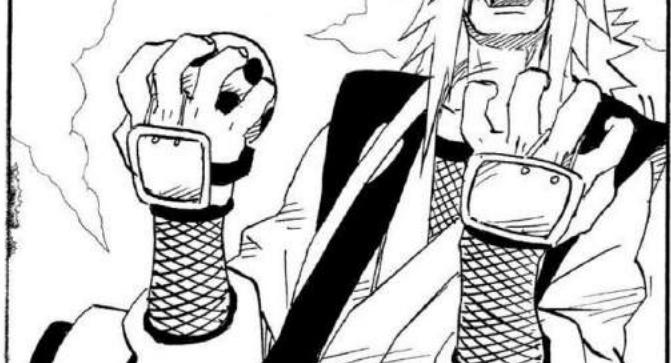
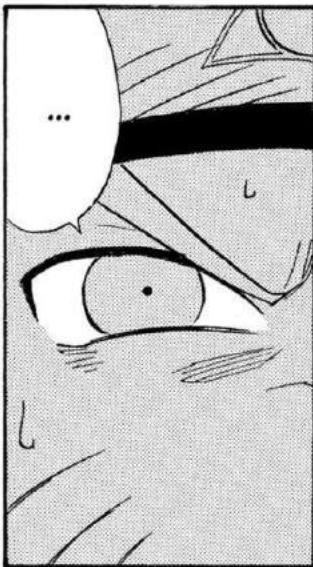


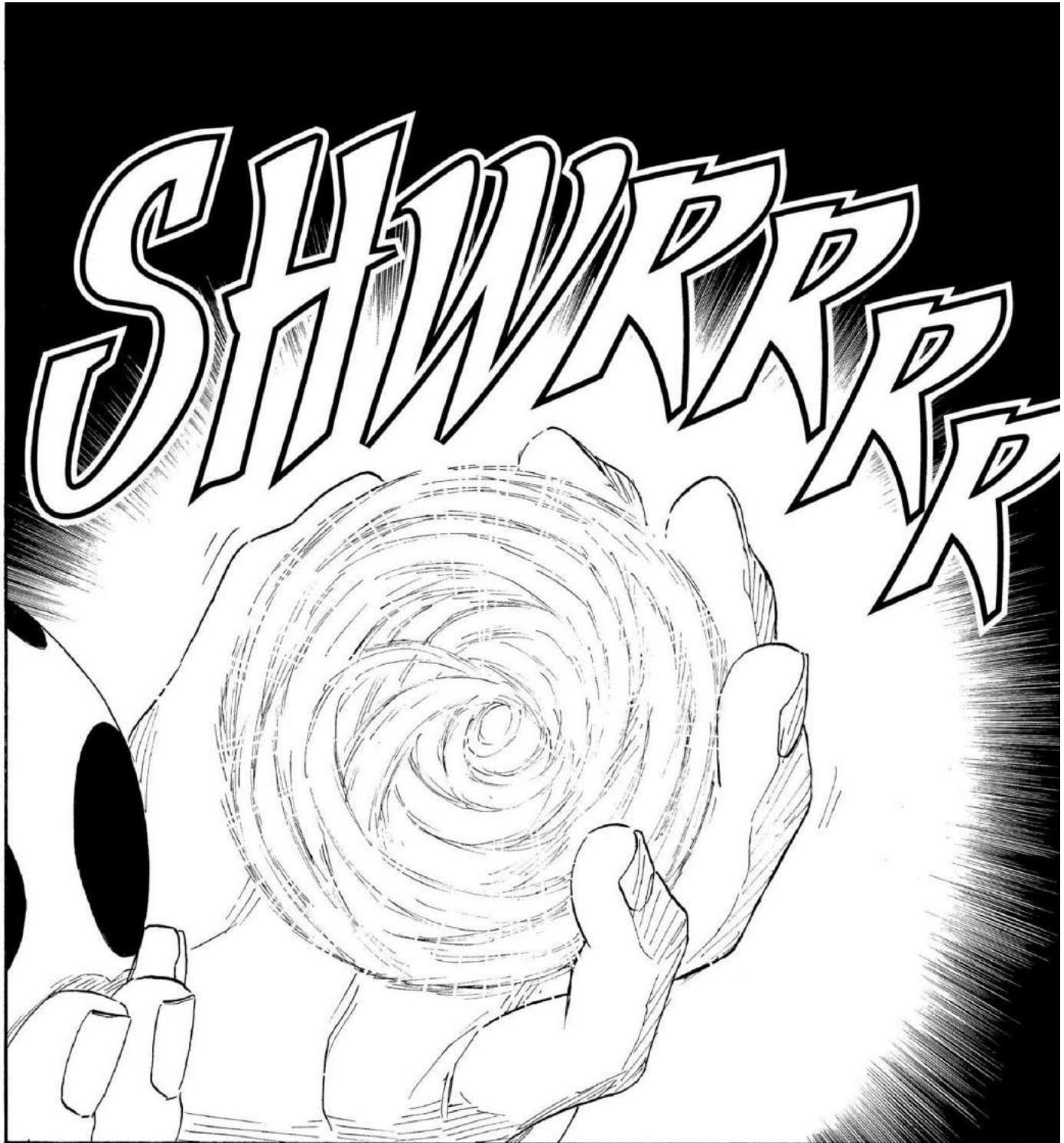
READ
THIS
WAY

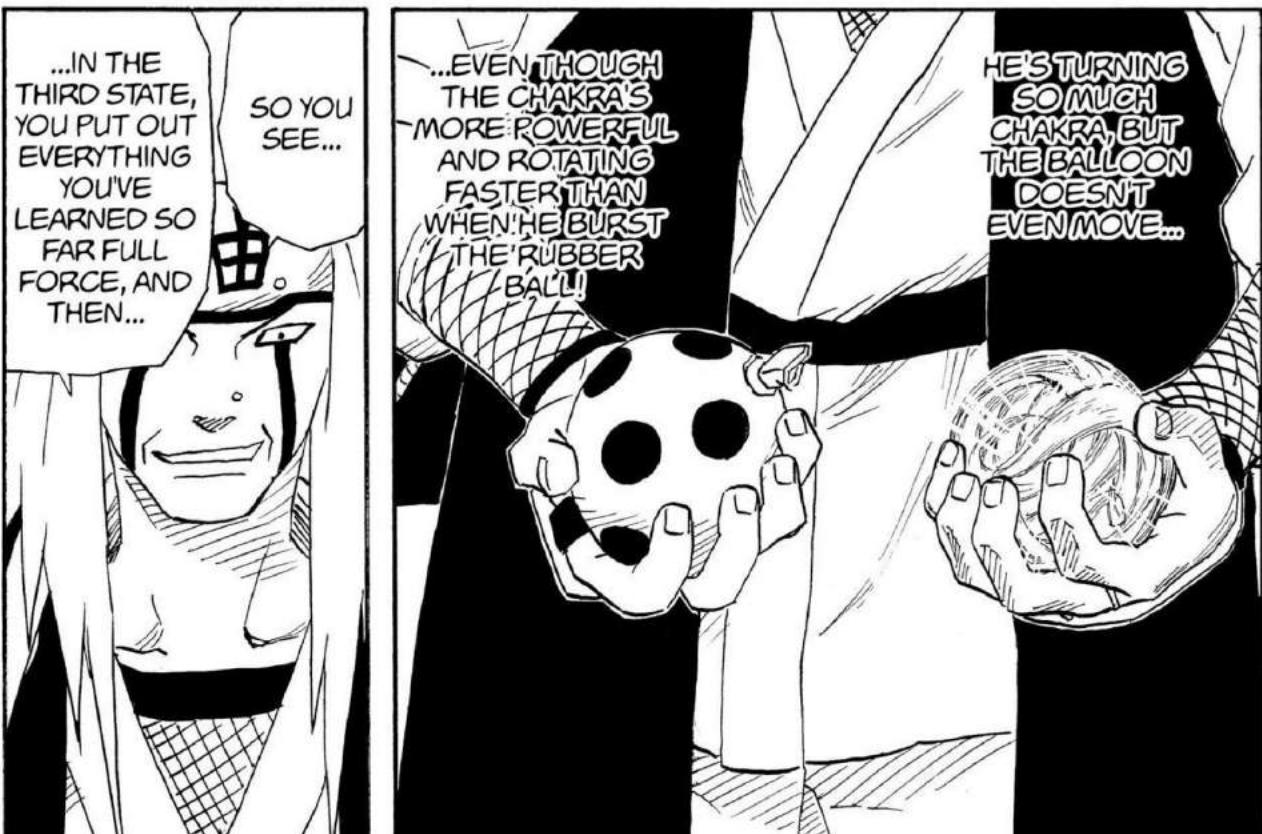
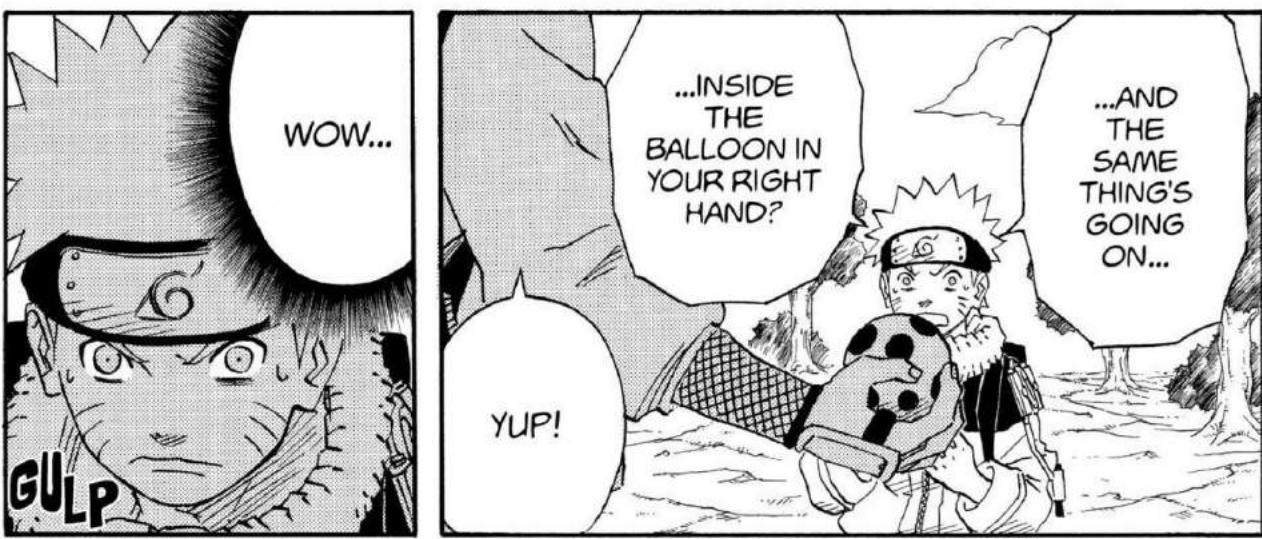


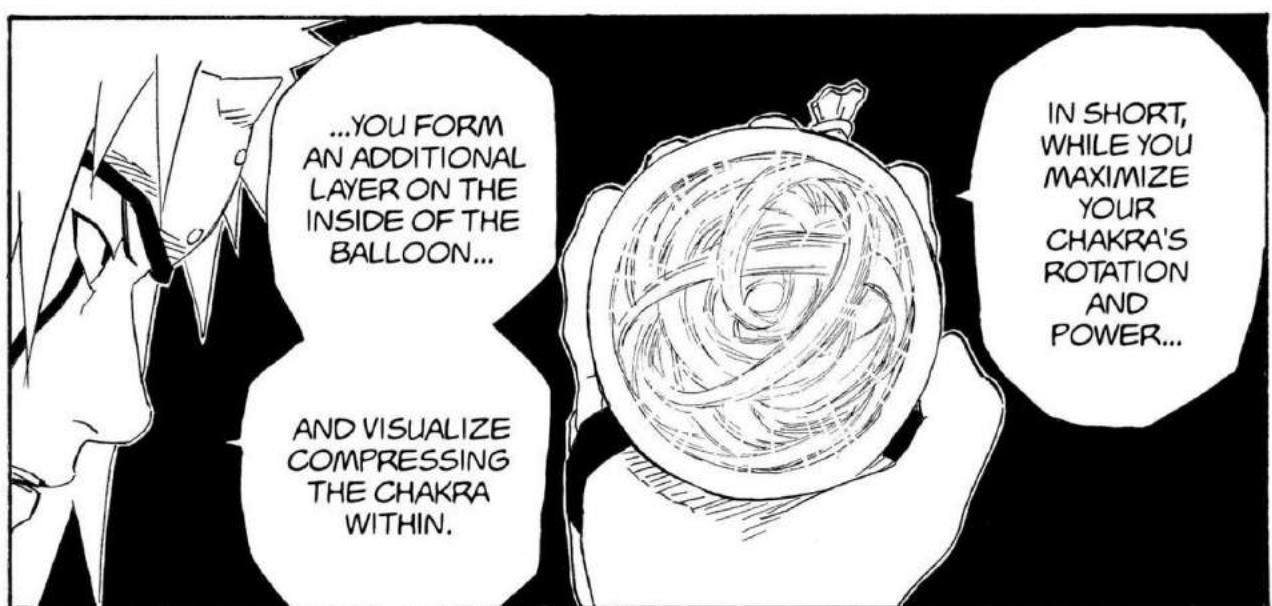


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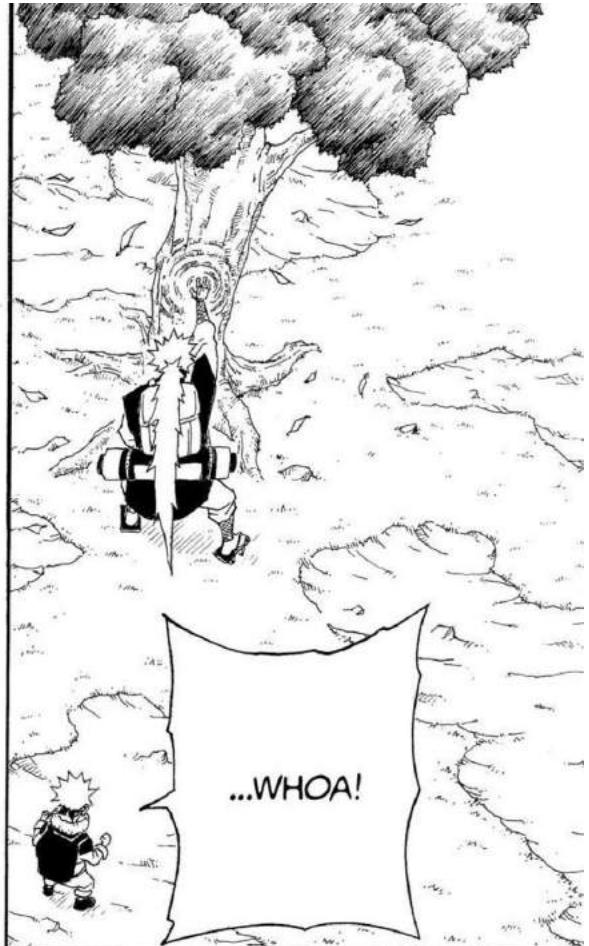
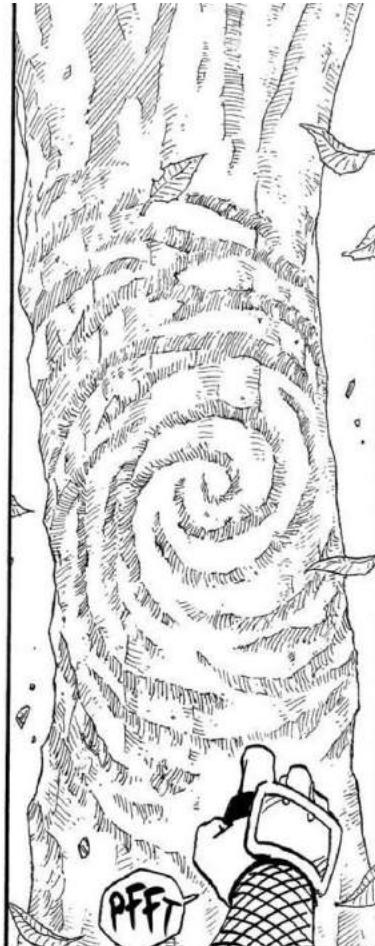






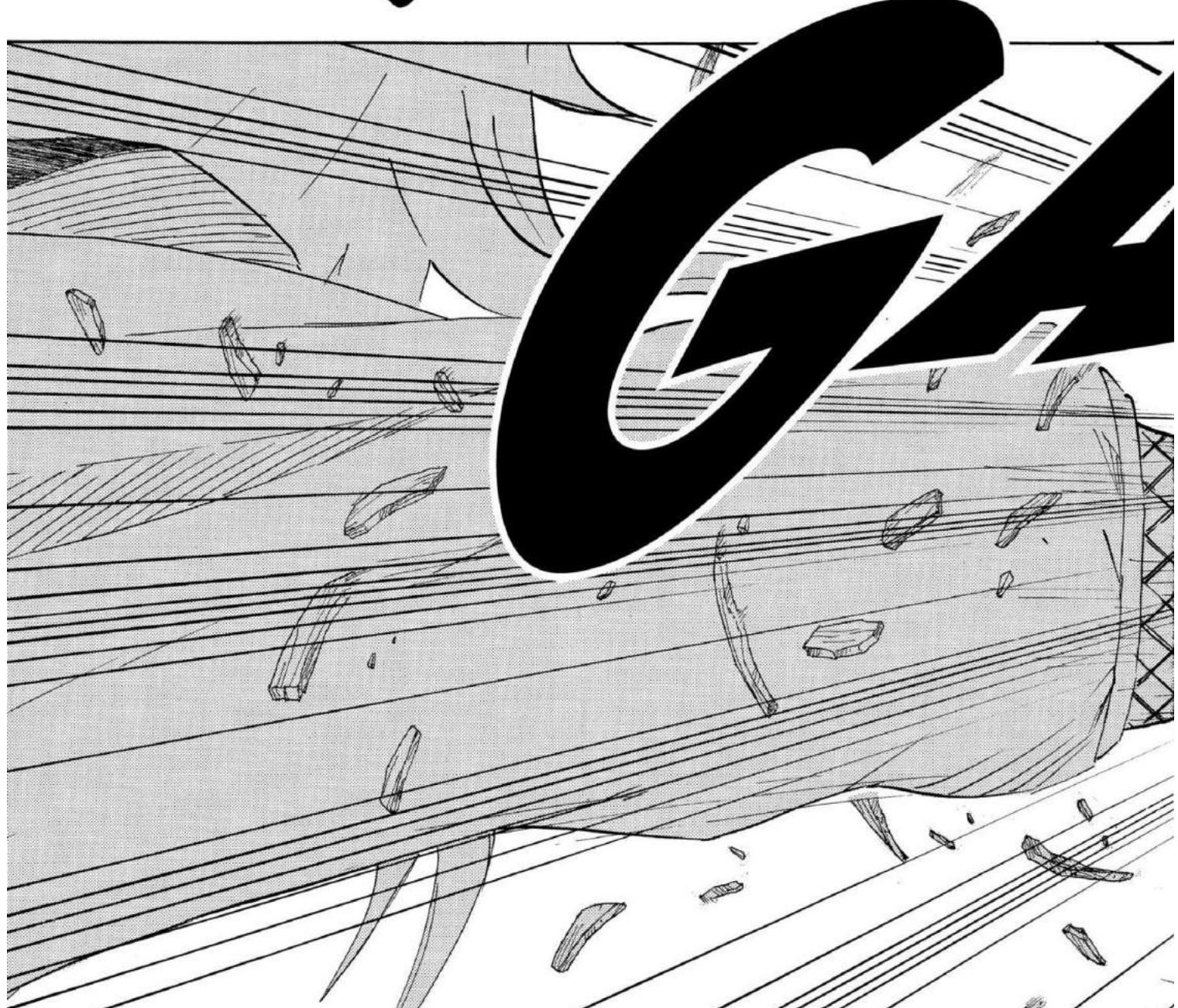
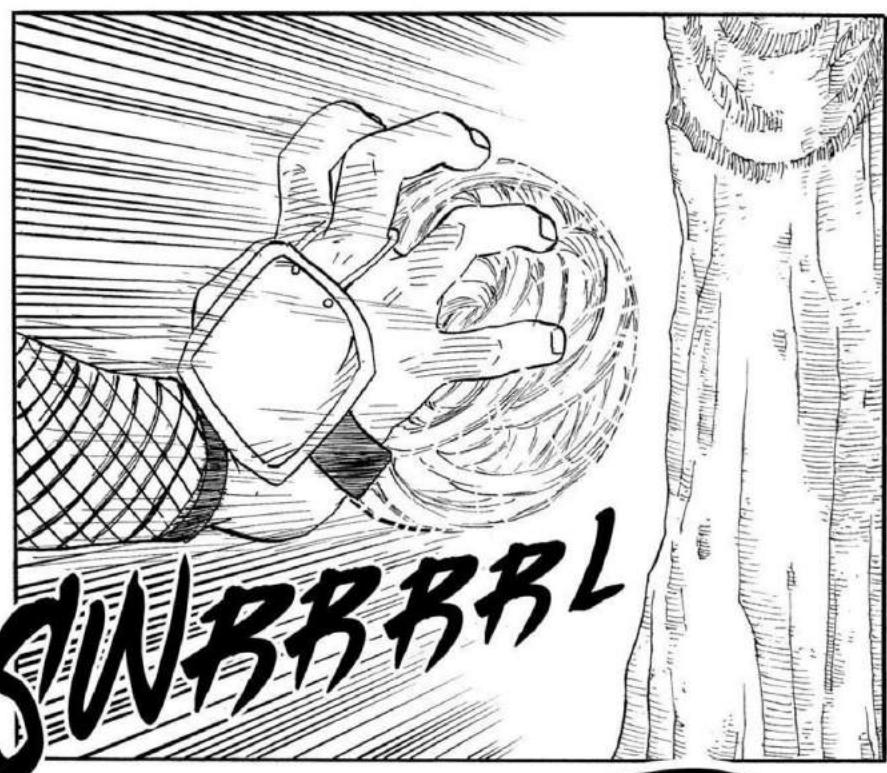


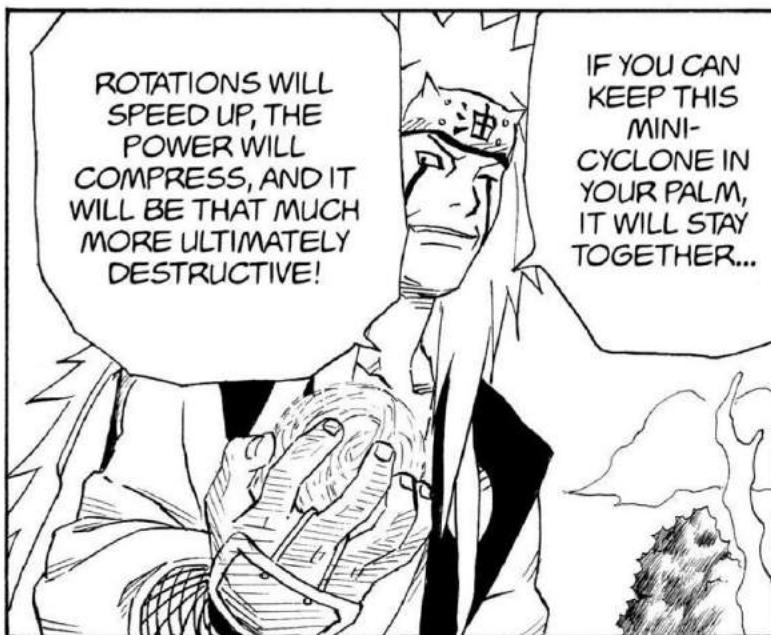
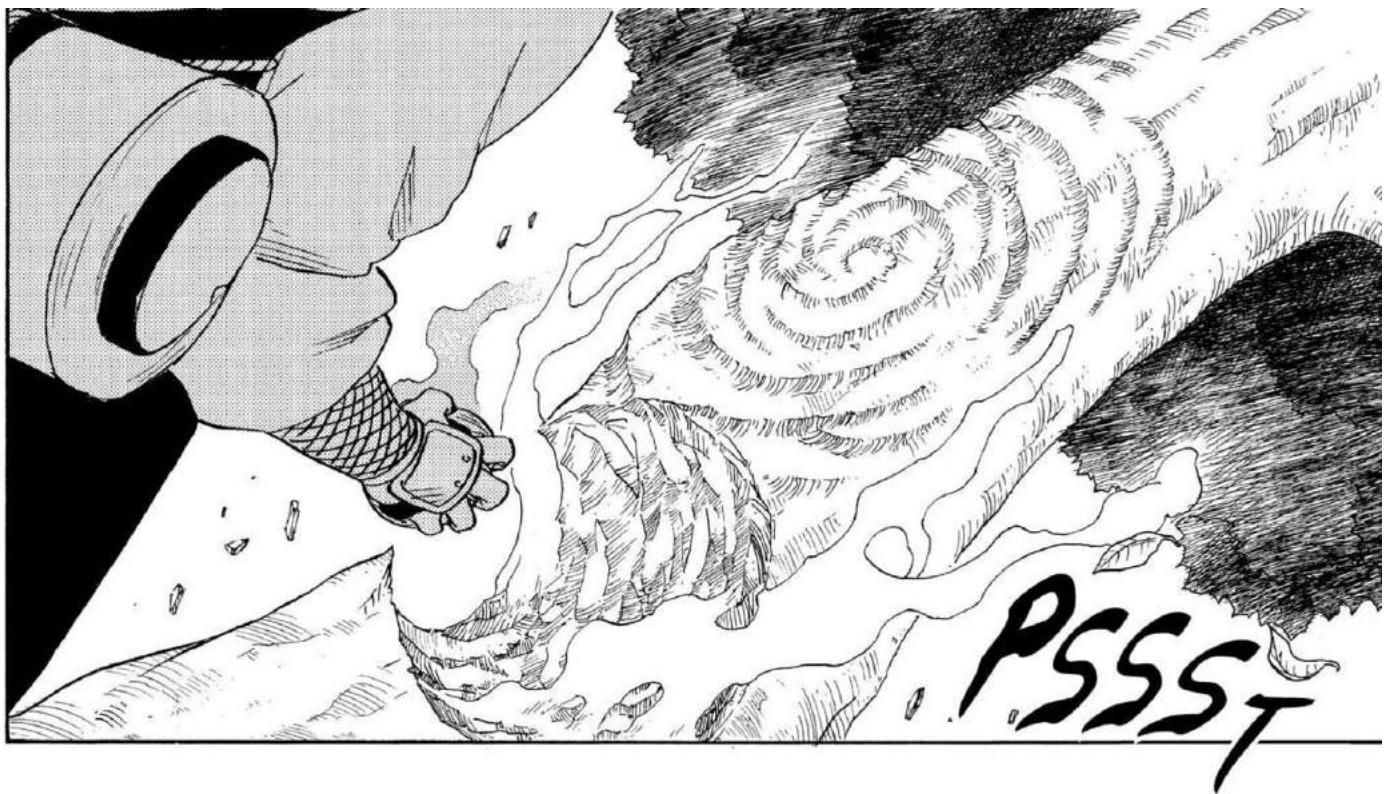




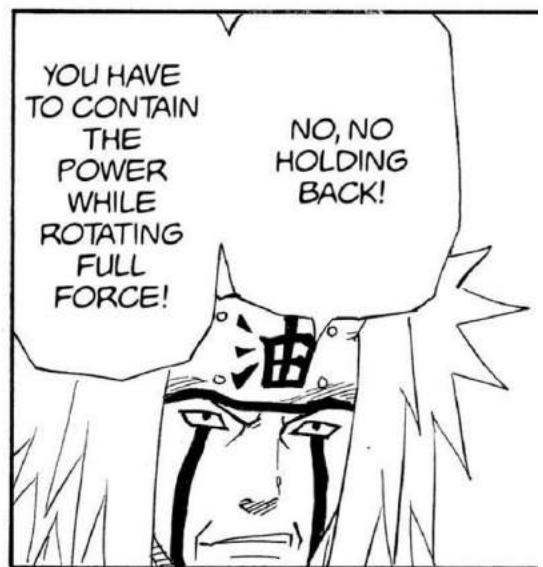
SHF



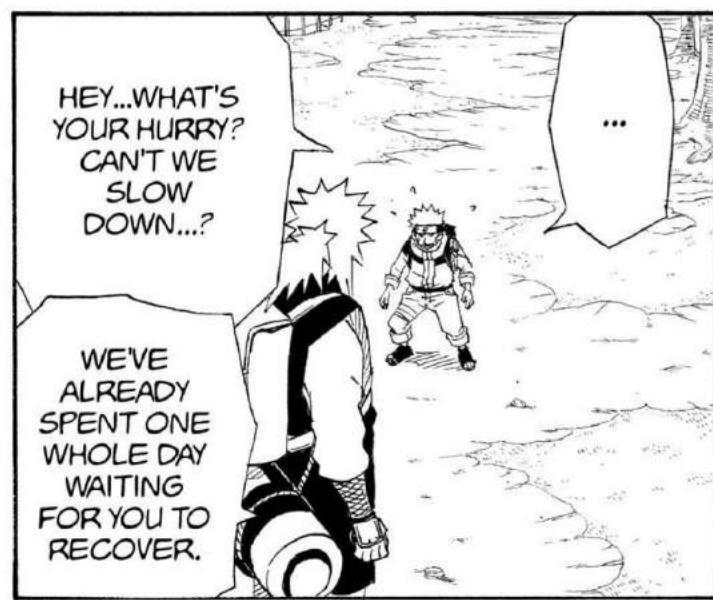
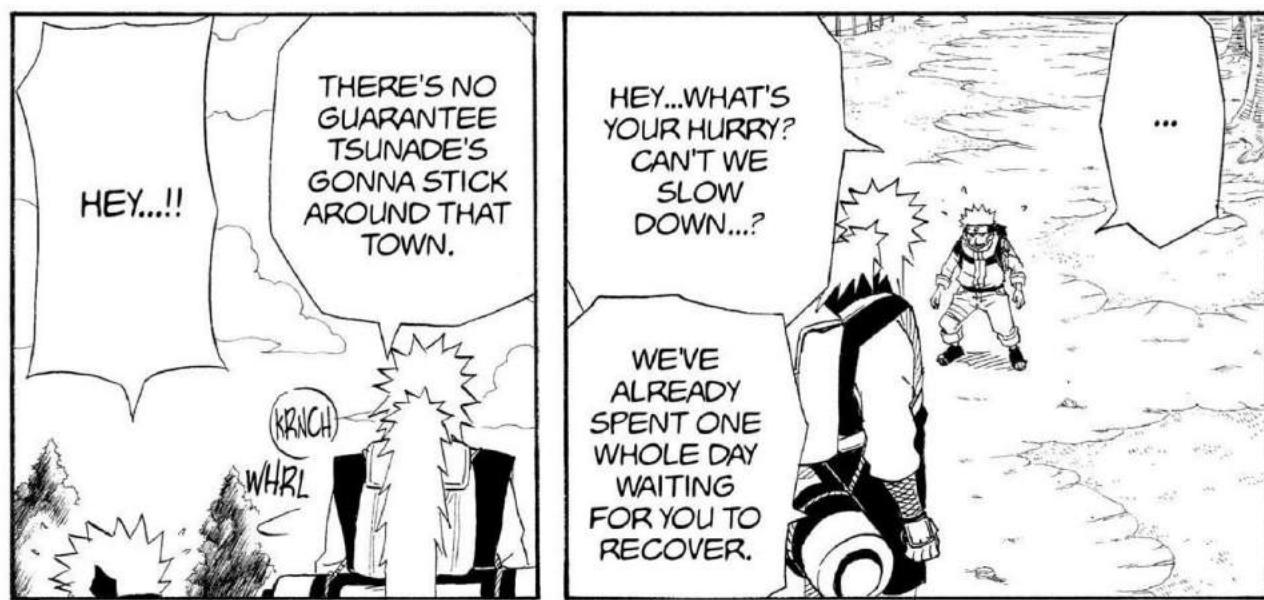


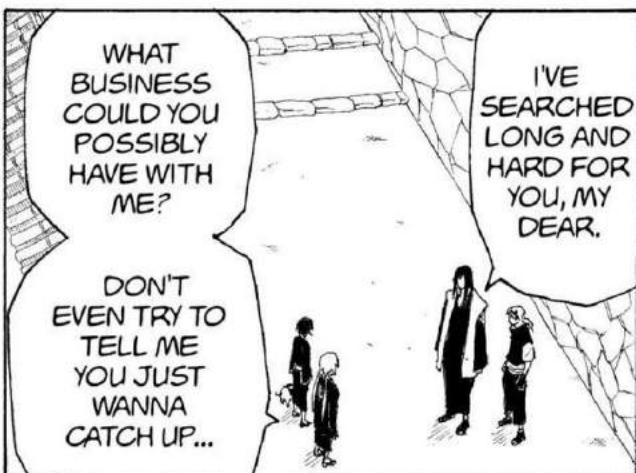
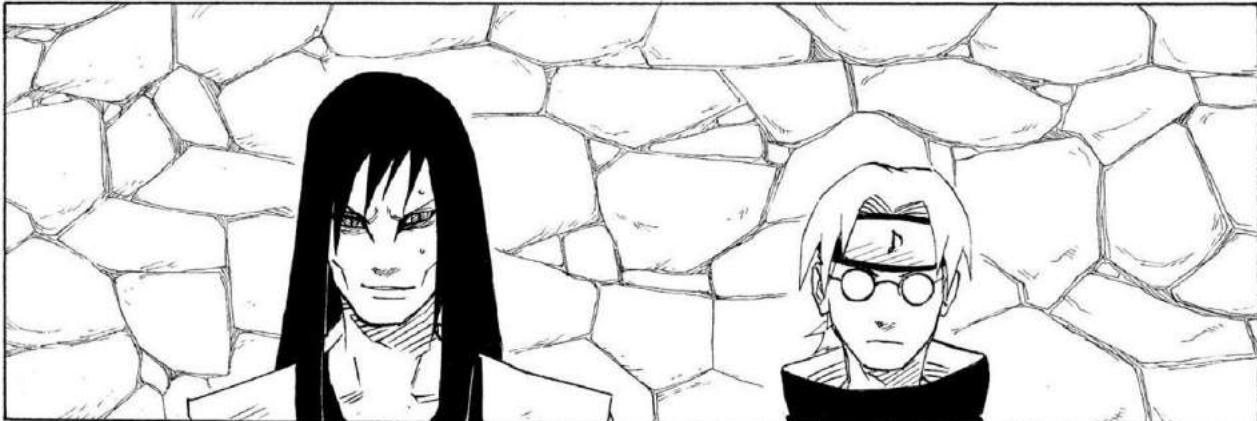
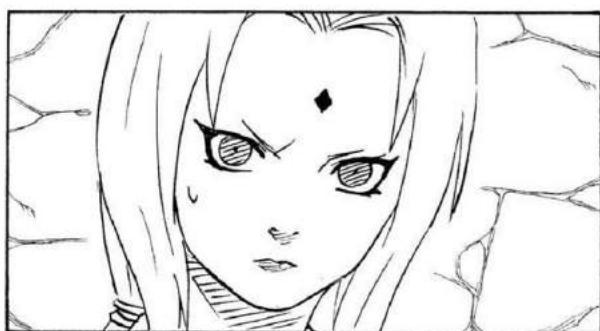
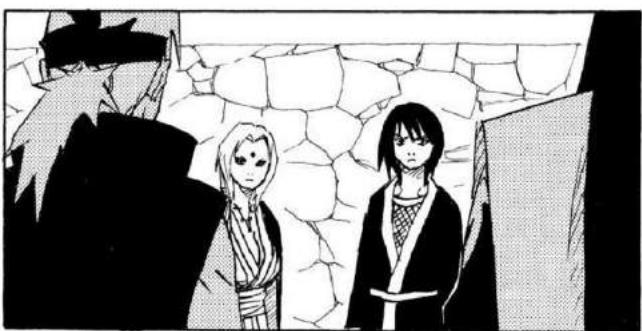
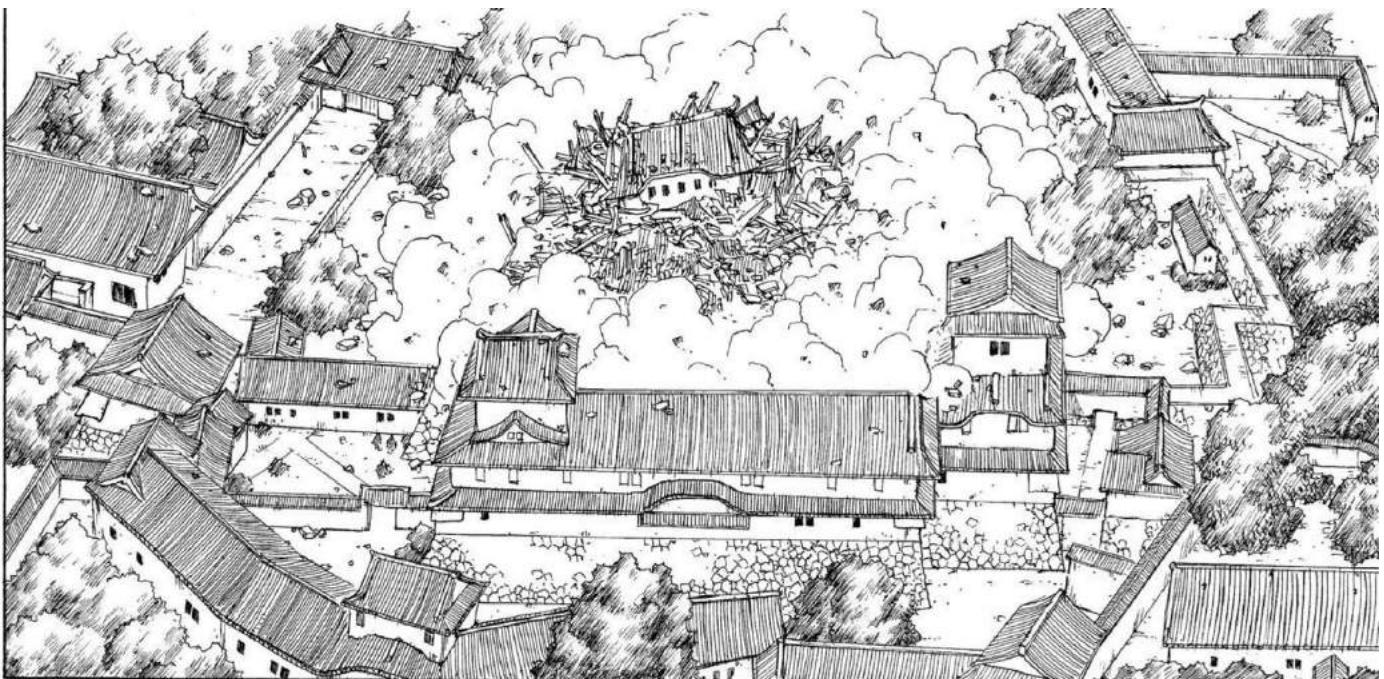


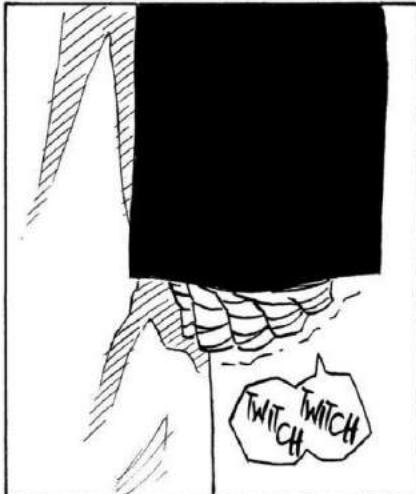


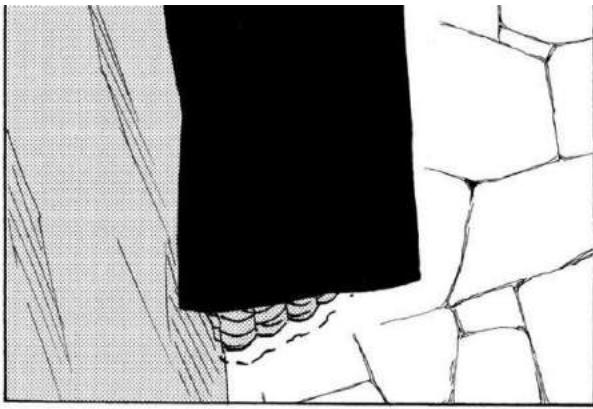


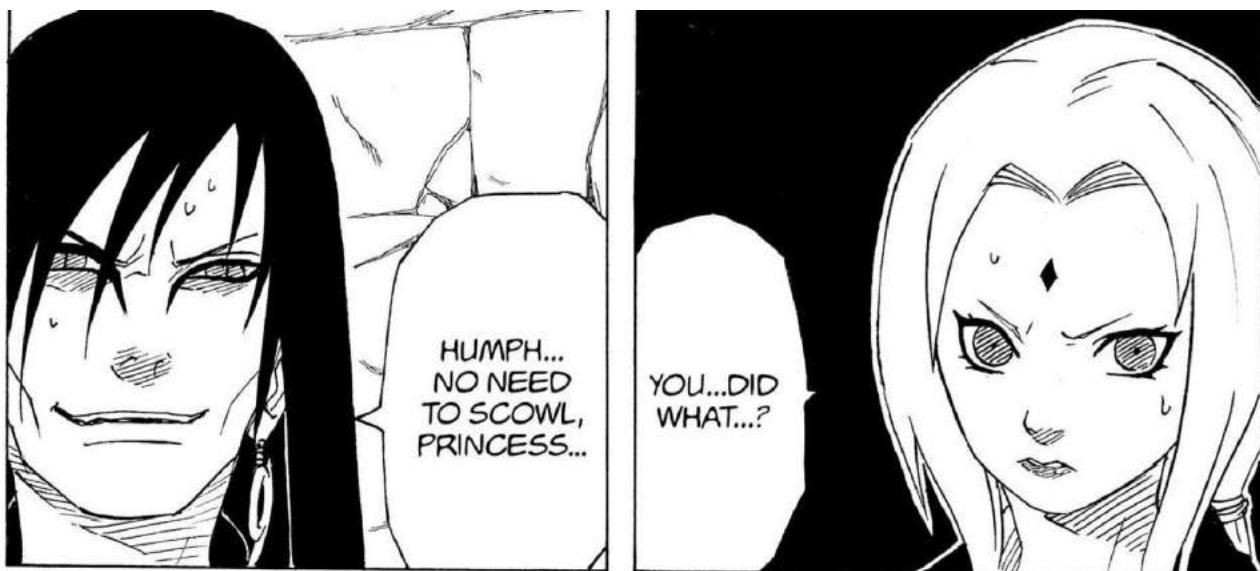
READ
THIS WAY







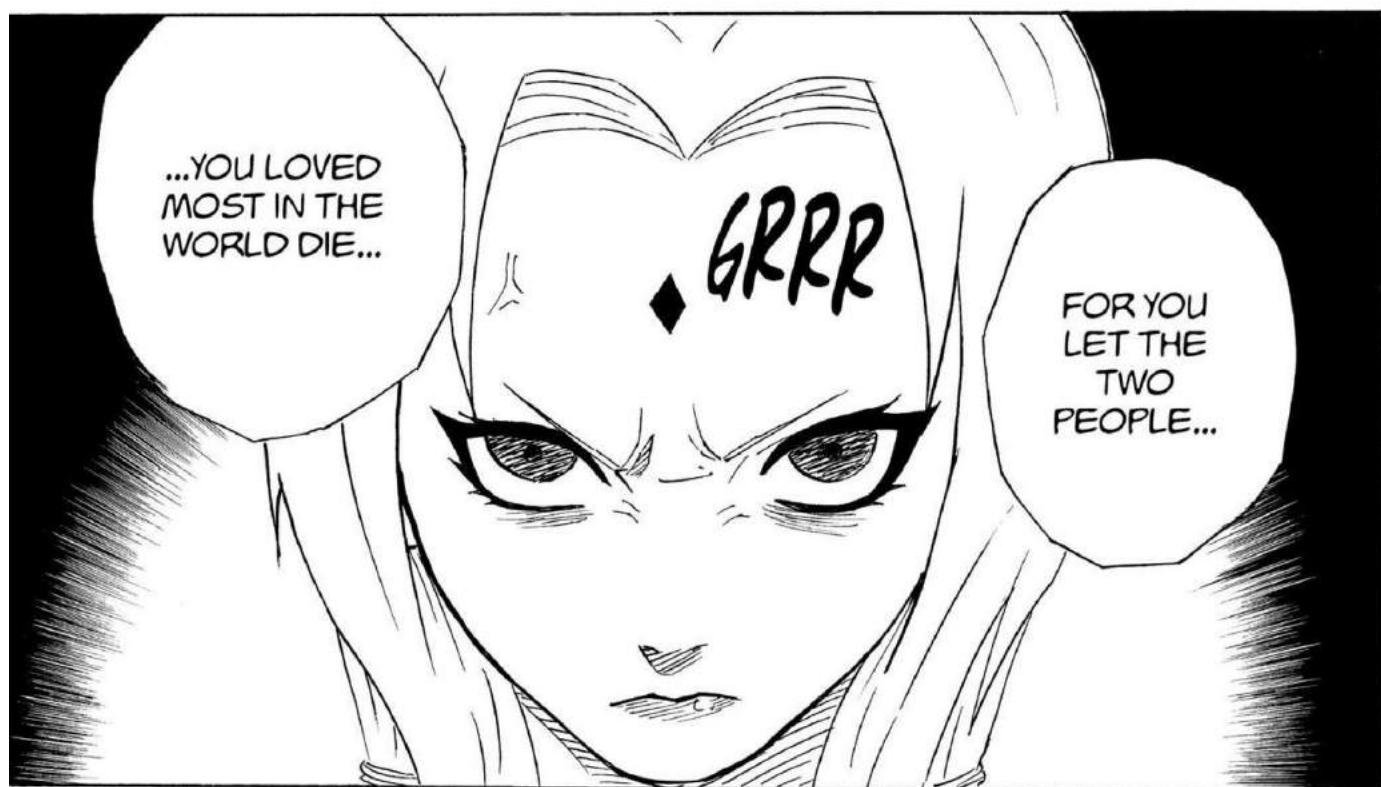




YOU...DID
WHAT...?



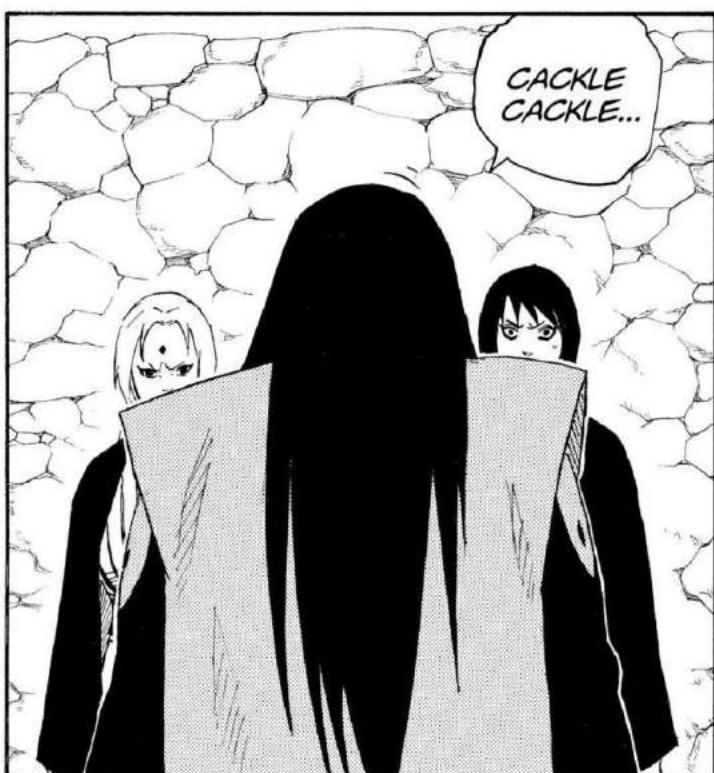
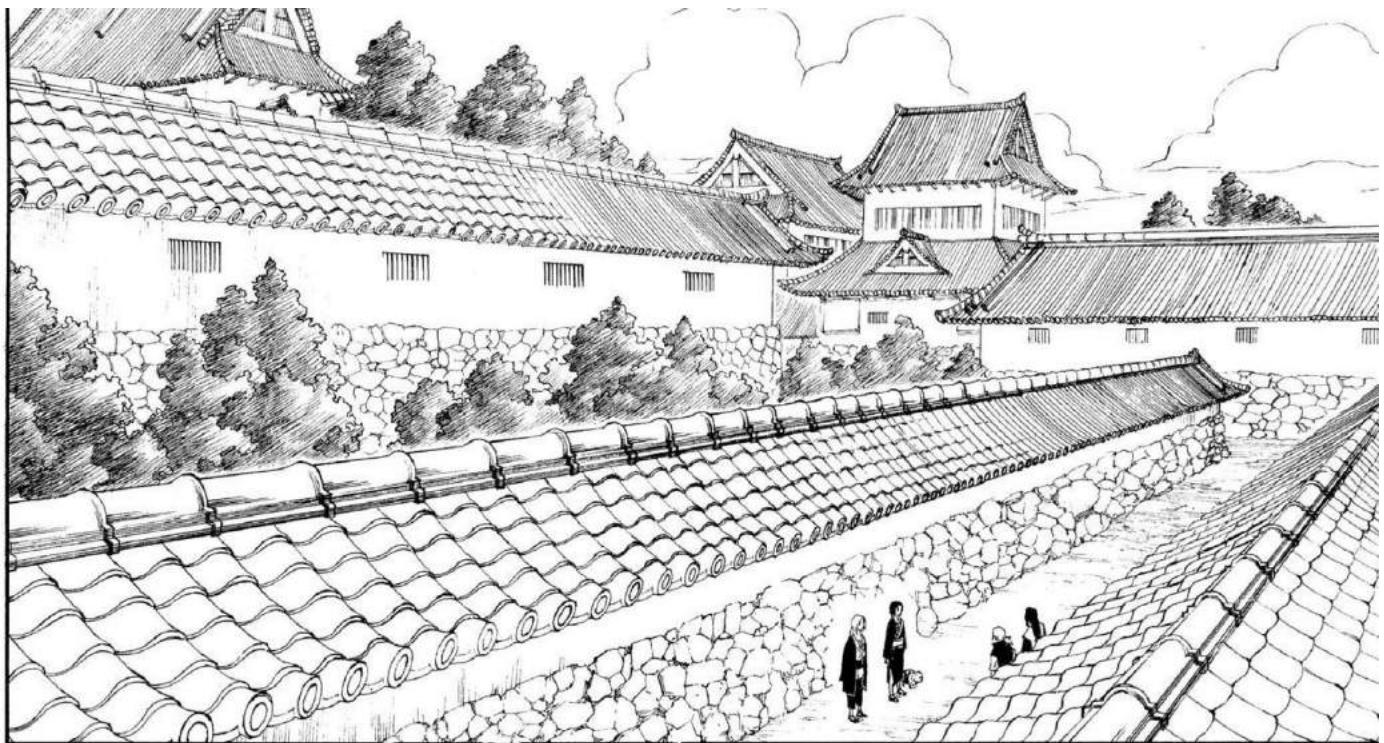
YOU
OUGHT TO
KNOW...

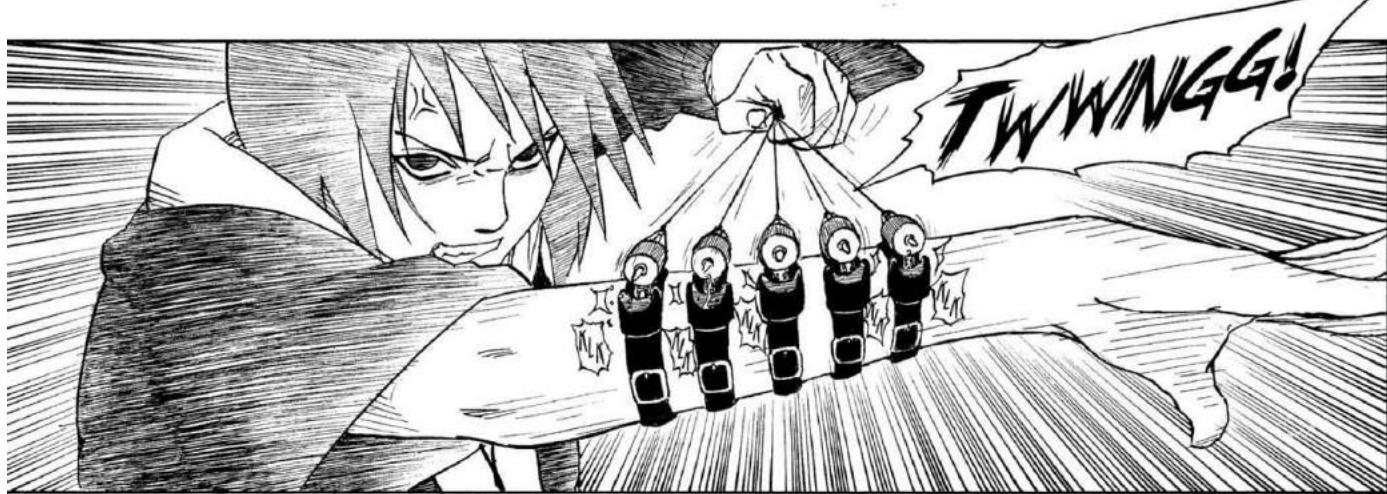




Number 156: The Offer

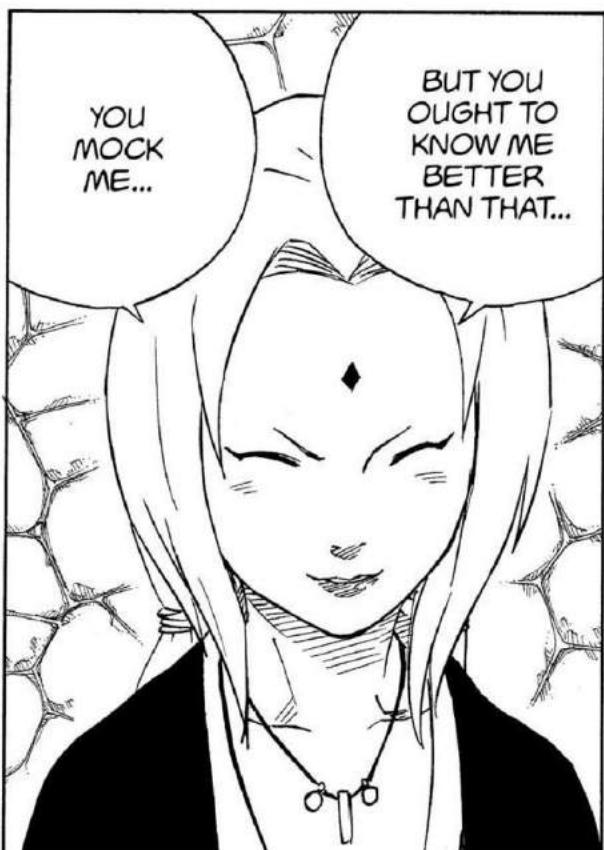
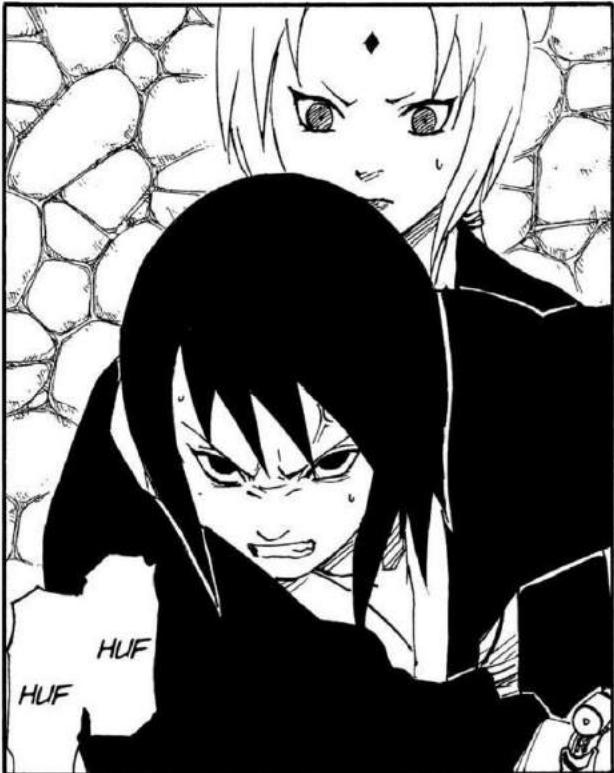








READ
THIS
WAY





...AND
I'LL KILL
YOU!

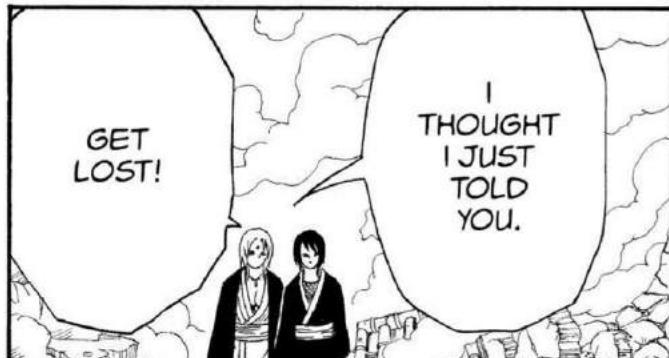
OKAY?!



(Sign: Tanzaku Town)

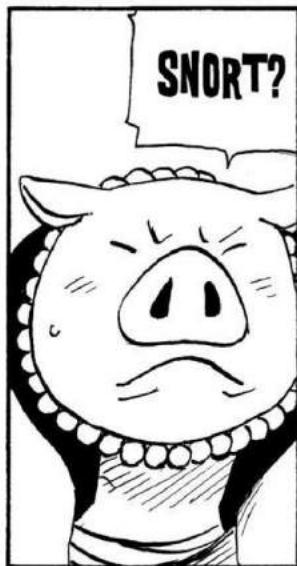


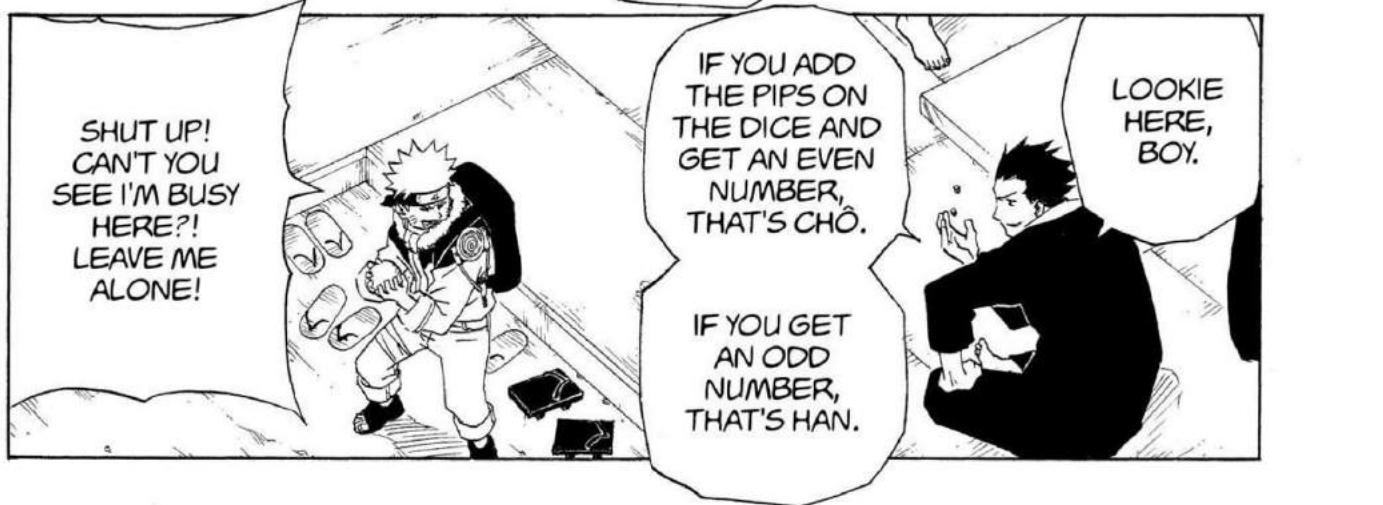
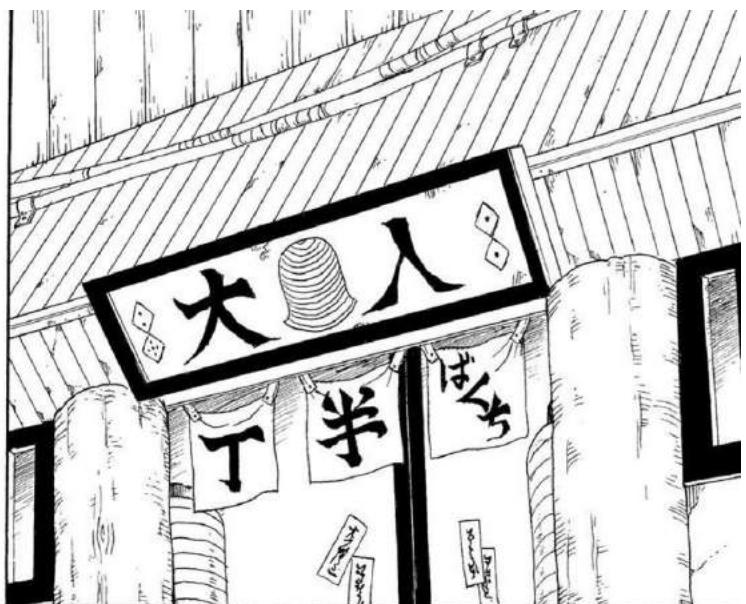
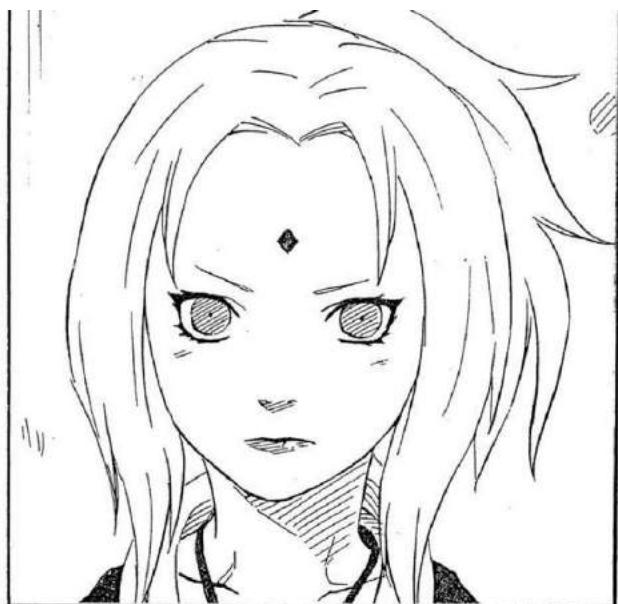
READ
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READ
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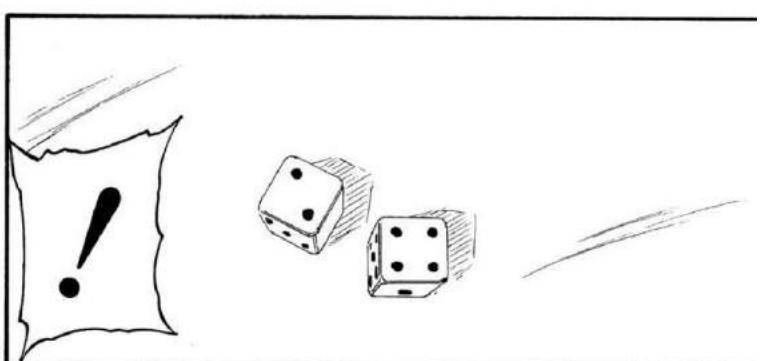
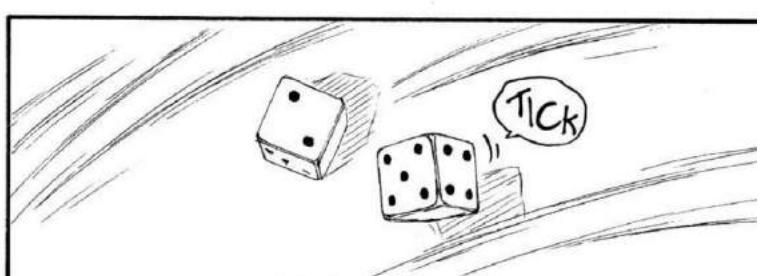
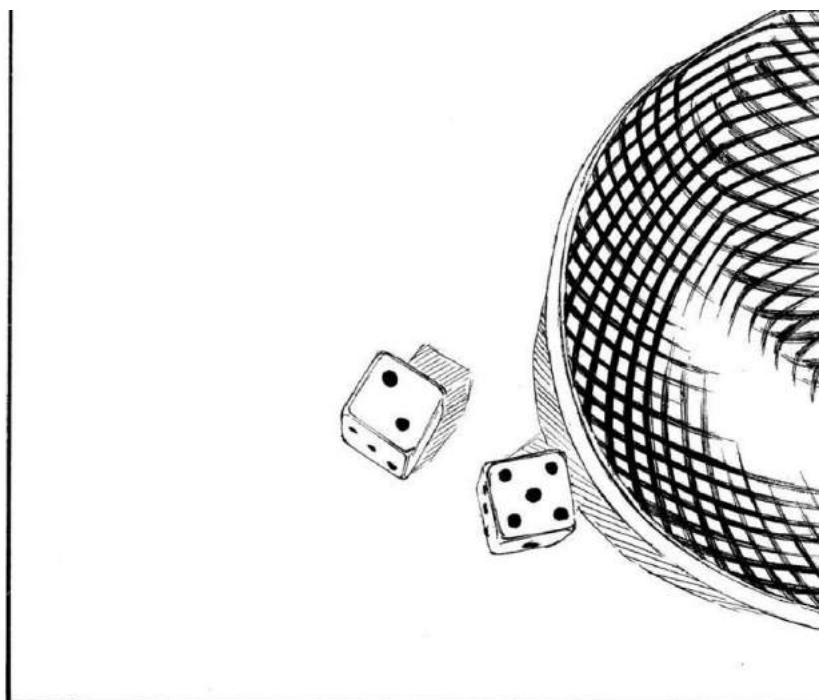


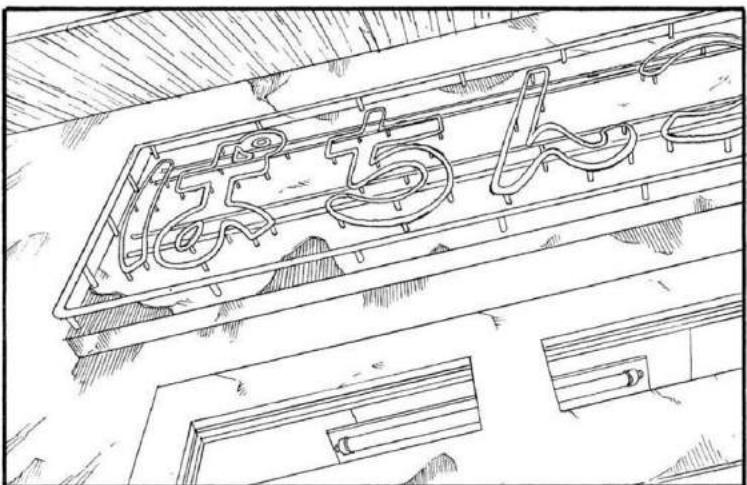


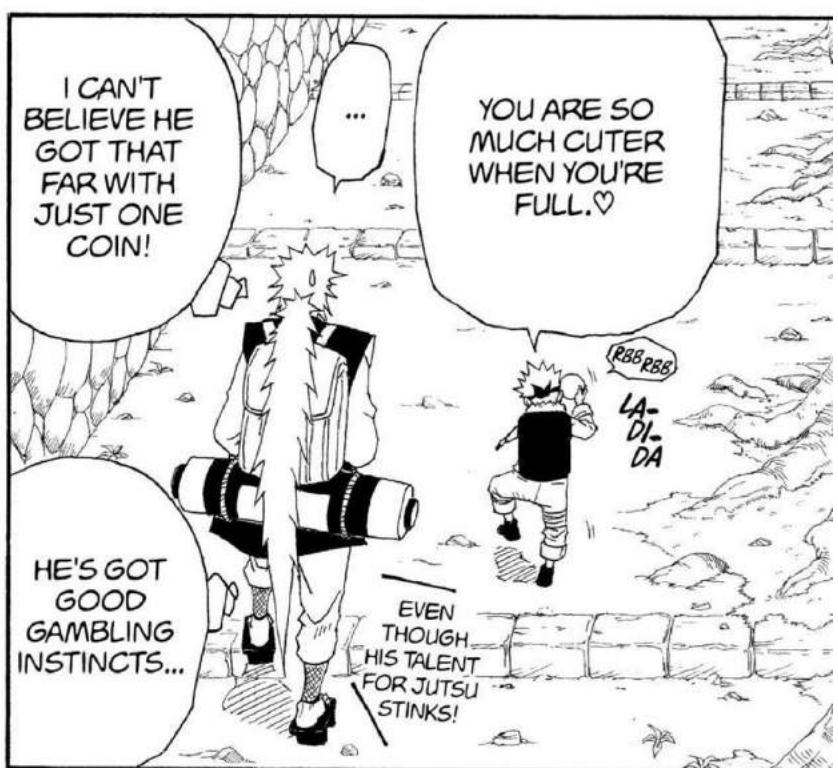


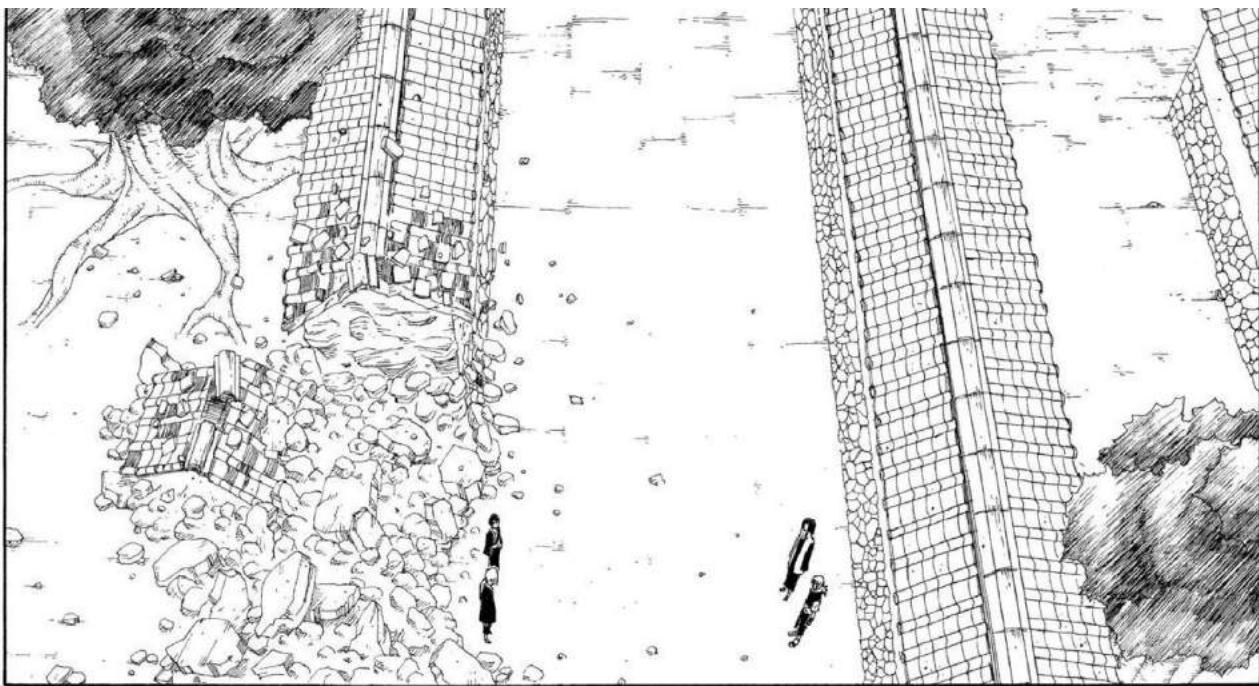
(*1,000 ryo is roughly 10,000 yen, or \$100.)

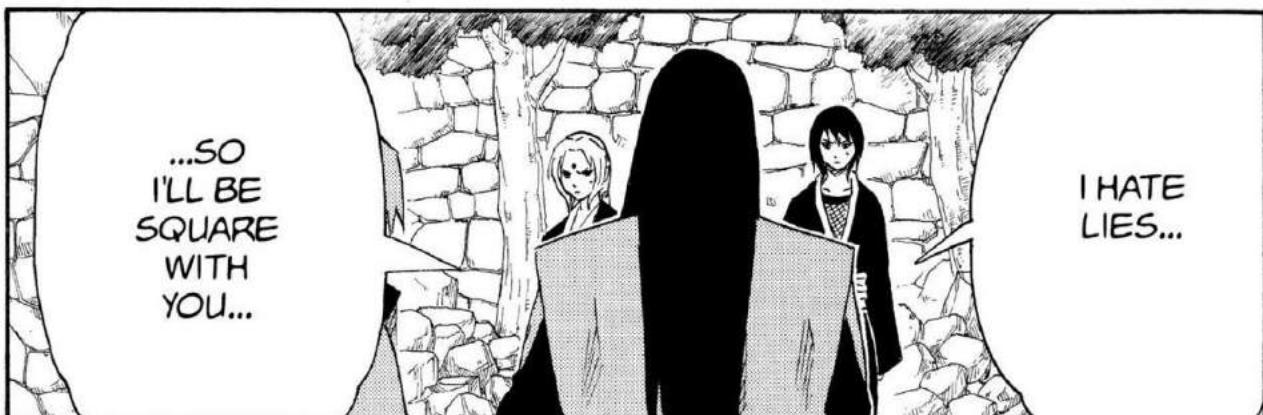














THE WORLD OF KISHIMOTO MASASHI MY PERSONAL HISTORY, PART 27-B

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 HOPE 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.

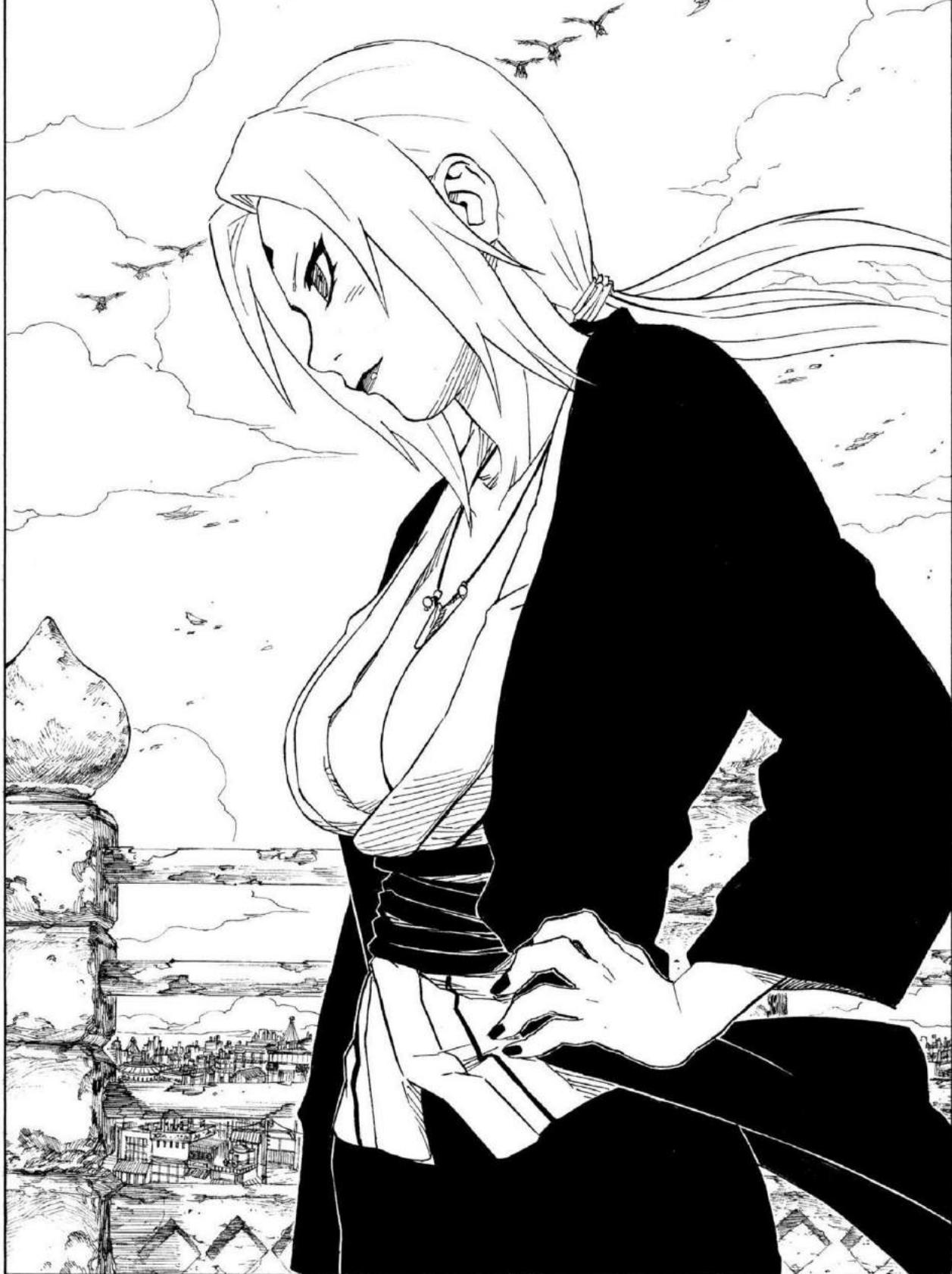
I THINK MANGA IS AN AMAZING MEDIUM BECAUSE NOT ONLY IS IT LOW-COST IN TERMS OF PRODUCTION, DEPENDING ONLY ON INK PRICES, BUT IT IS HIGH-QUALITY ENTERTAINMENT WHERE IT IS EASY TO CONVEY ONE'S SELF-EXPRESSION THROUGH THE USE OF DIALOGUE, STORYBOARDING, AND CHARACTERS.

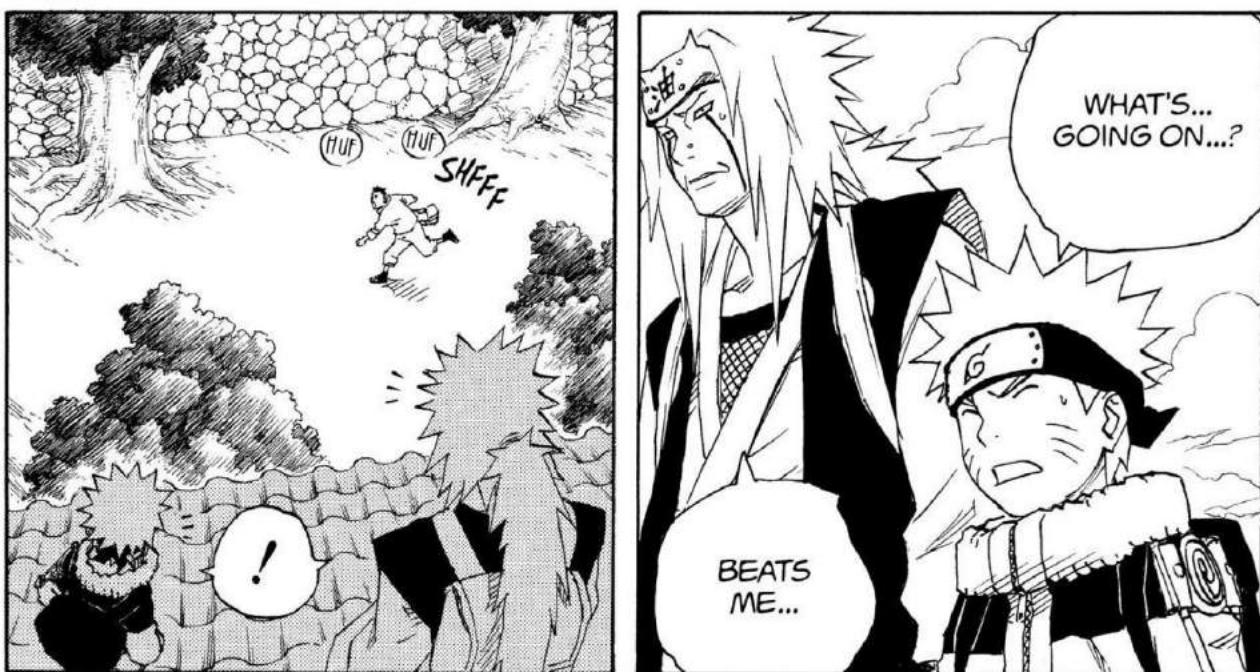
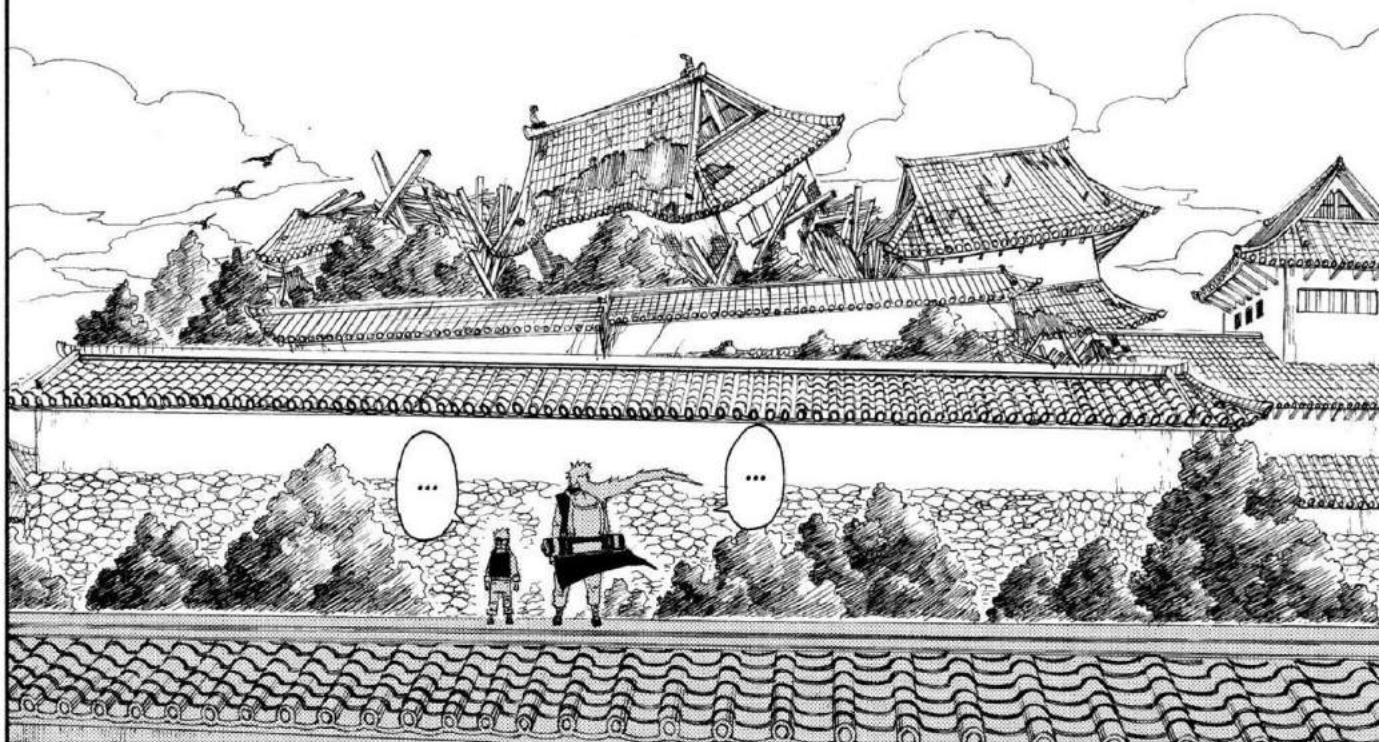
...I LOVE FINE ART, DON'T GET ME WRONG. AND I REALLY ADMIRE THOSE WHO PRODUCE FINE ART. IT'S JUST THAT I AM WARY OF THOSE ARTISTS WHO TRY TO JUDGE FINE ART AGAINST ENTERTAINMENT. IT IS THOSE ARTISTS WHO ARE NEITHER ARTISTS NOR ENTERTAINERS, BUT JUST PLAIN CRUD. ♡

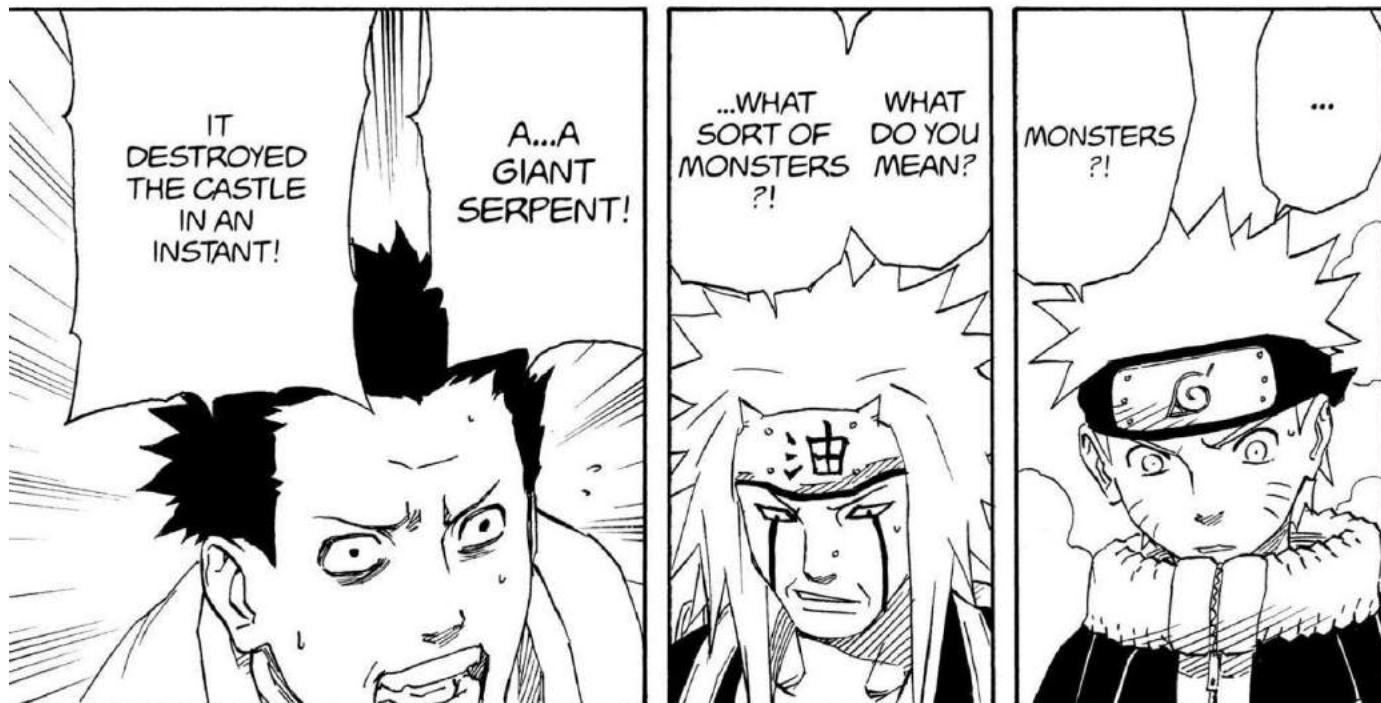
...HUH, I HADN'T REALLY INTENDED TO WRITE ABOUT THIS... BUT I GUESS OLD RAGE DIES HARD...A-HA-HA.

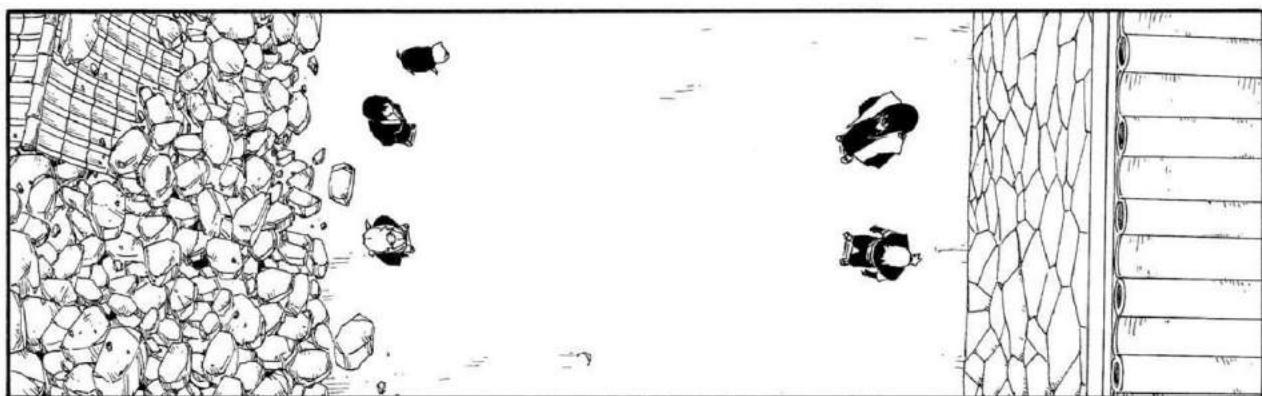
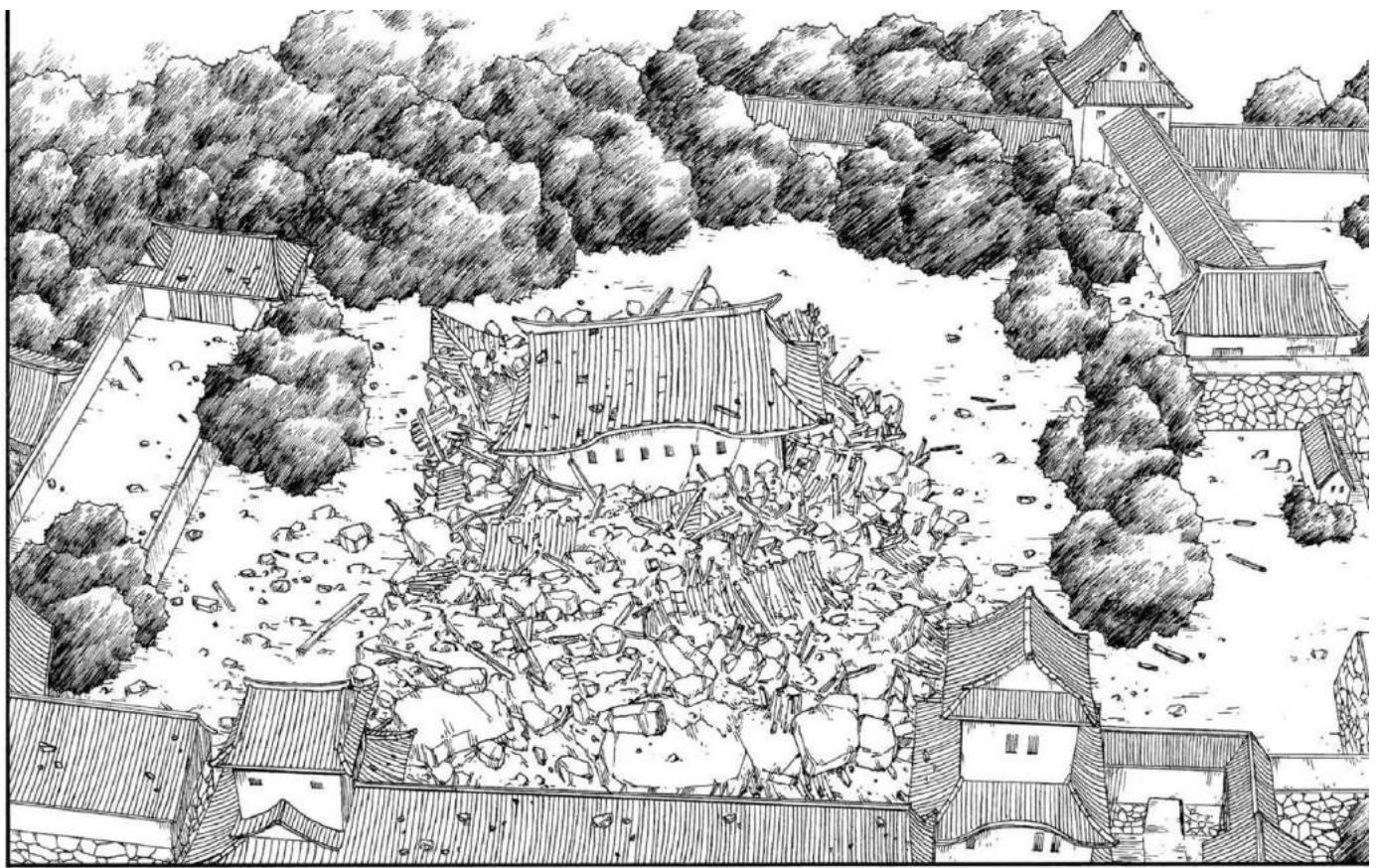
Number 157:

Tsunade's Answer...?!

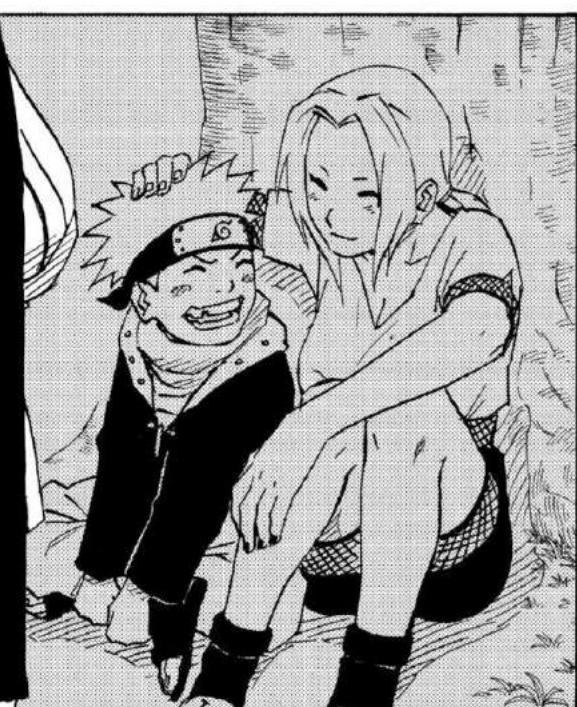




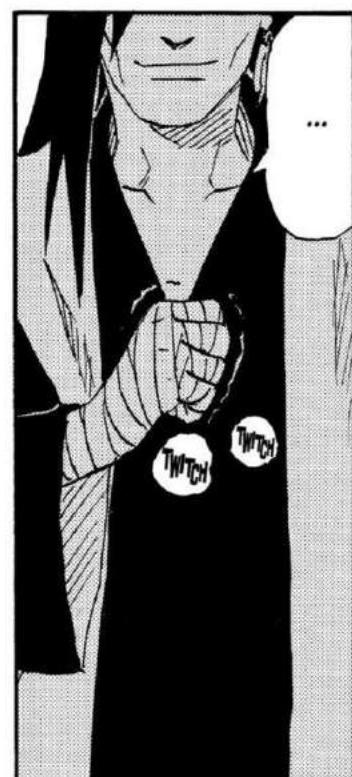
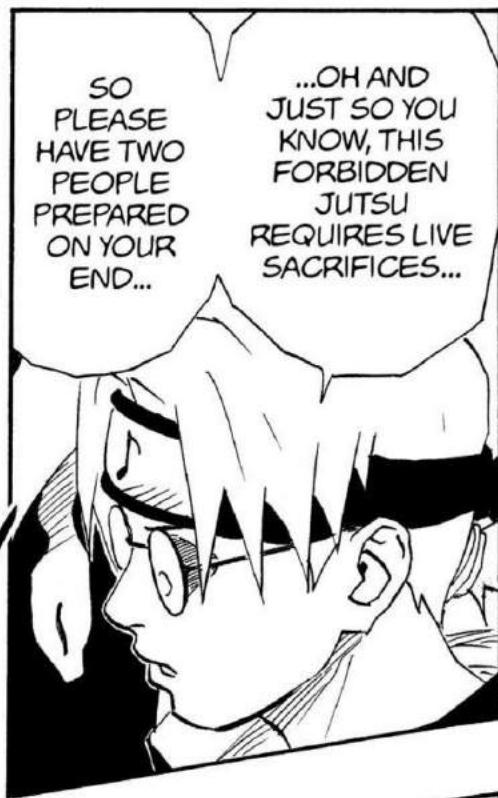




READ
THIS WAY

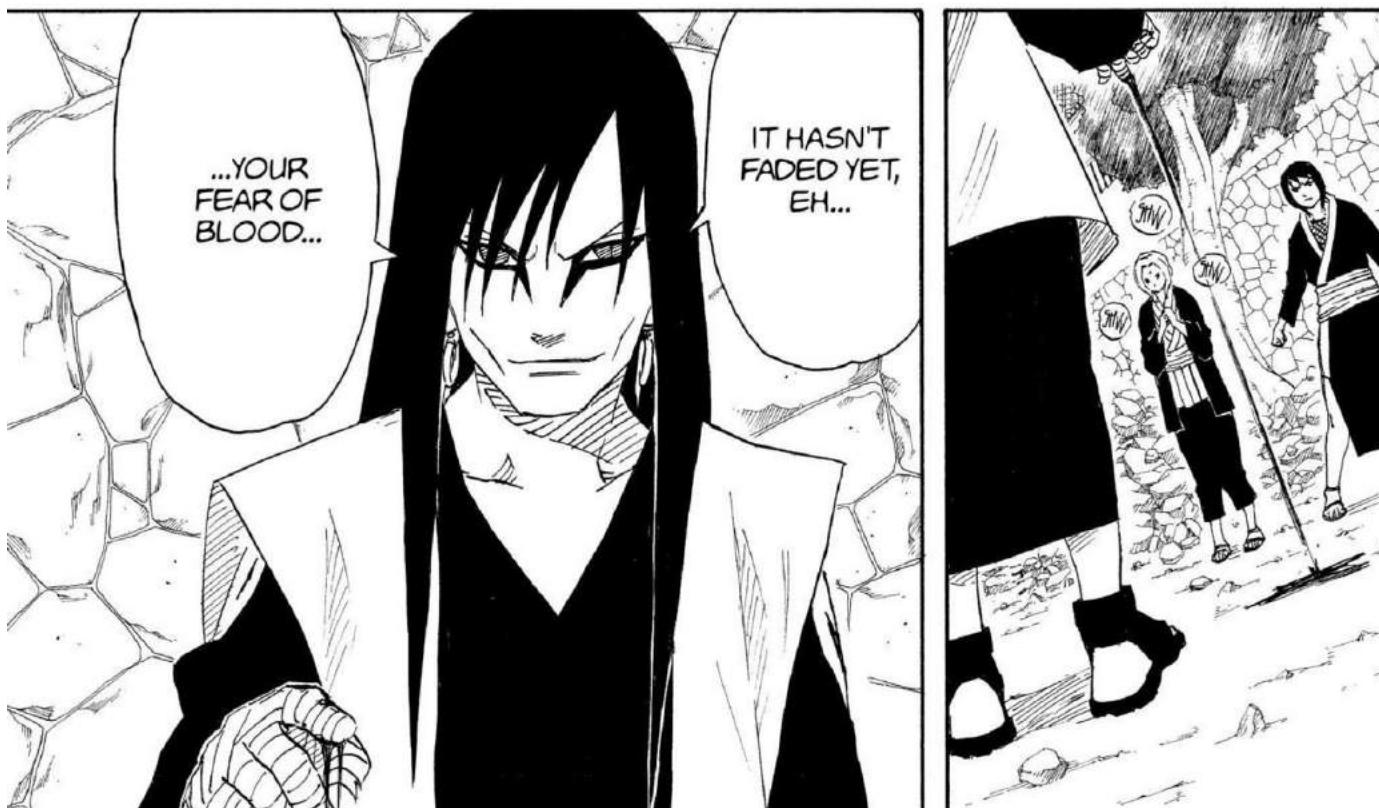
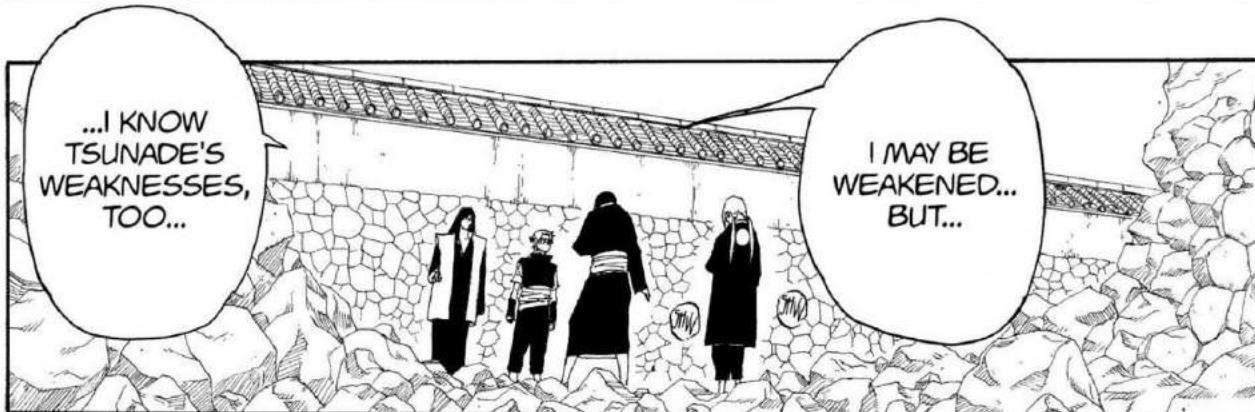


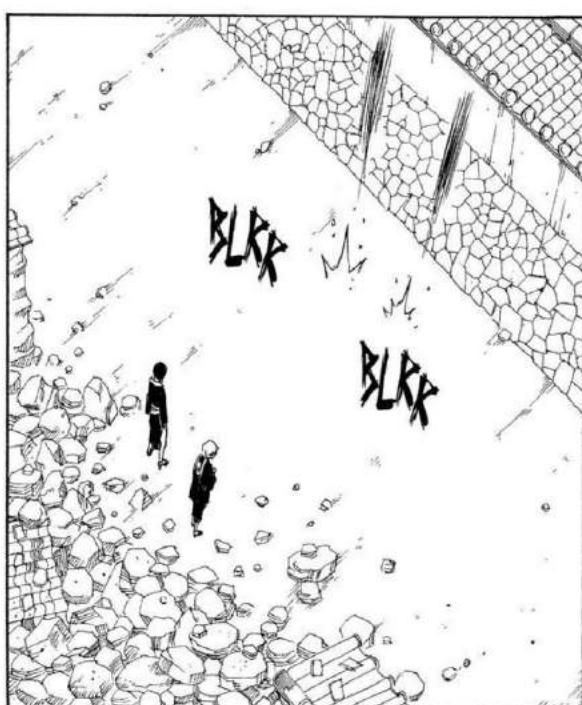
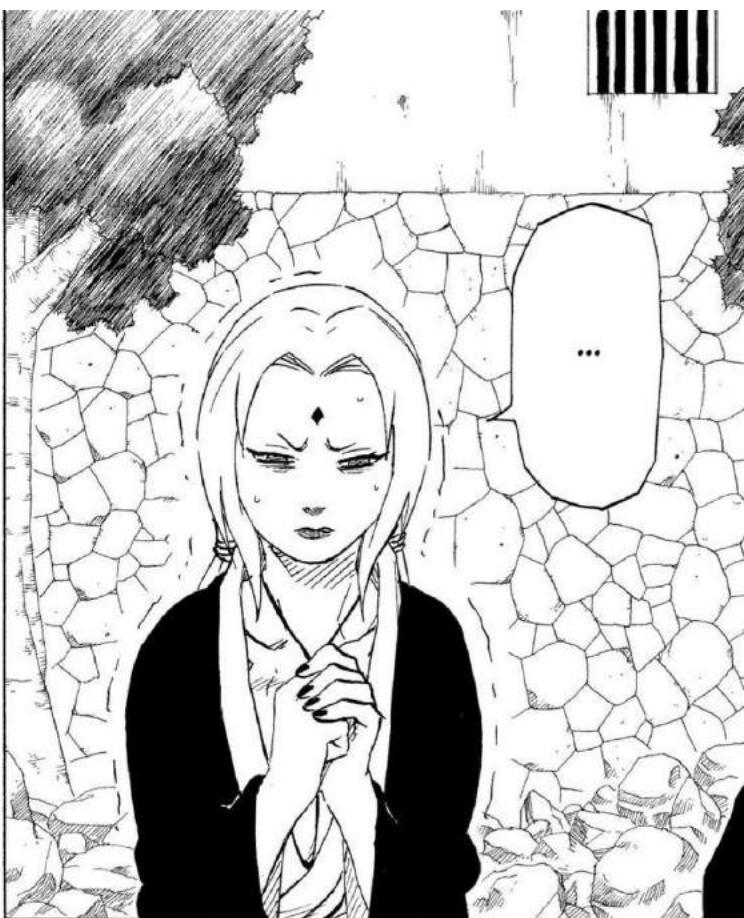


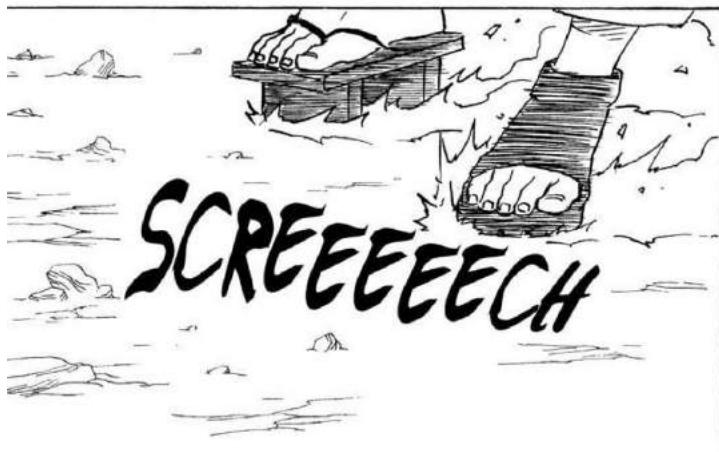
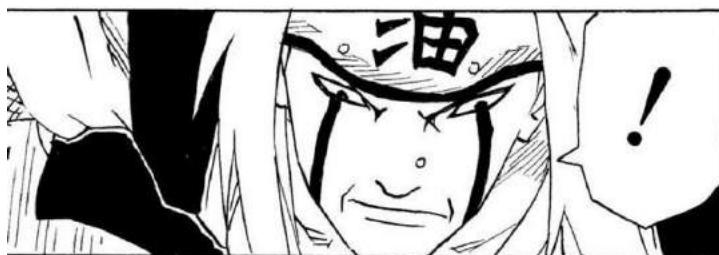


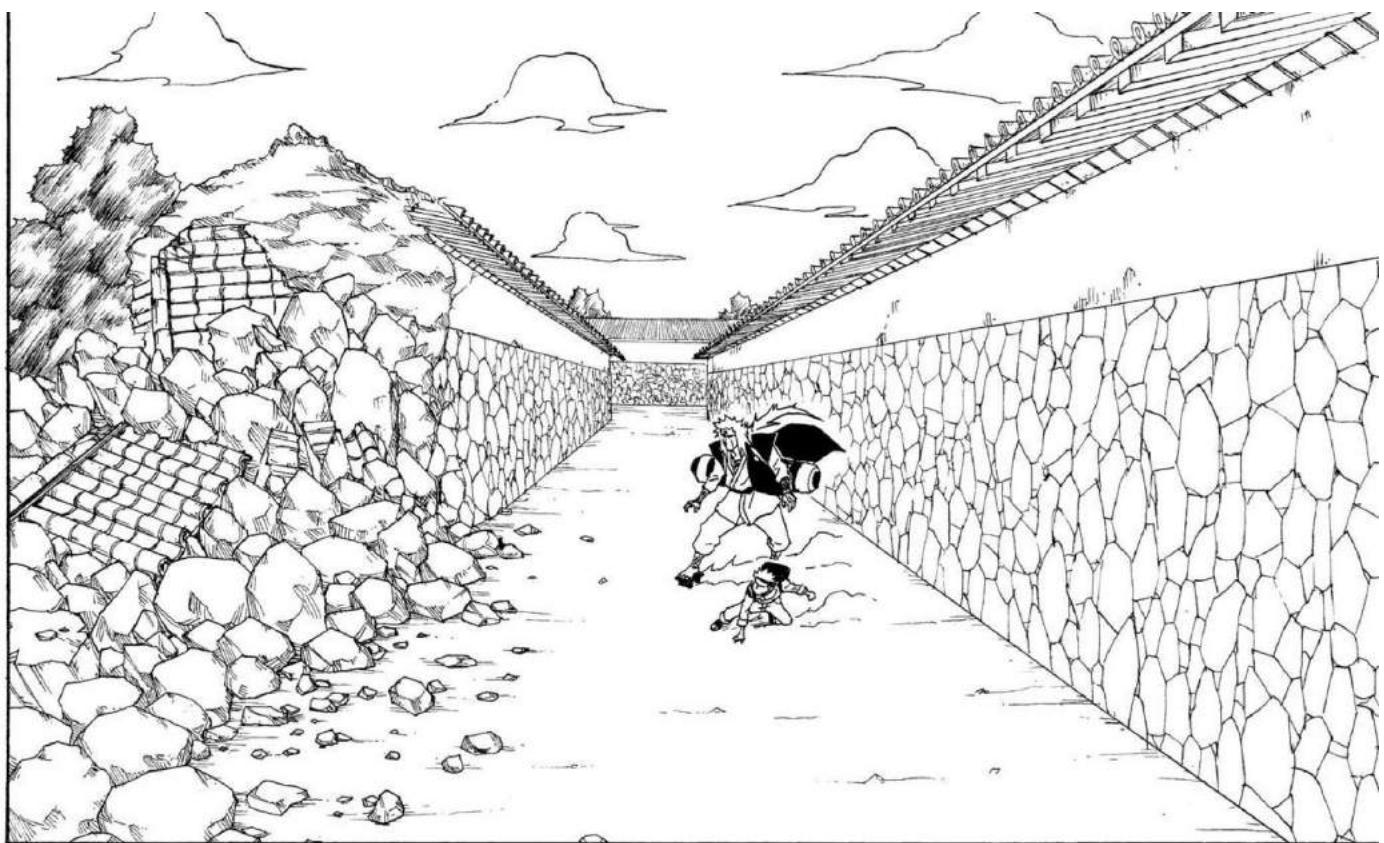


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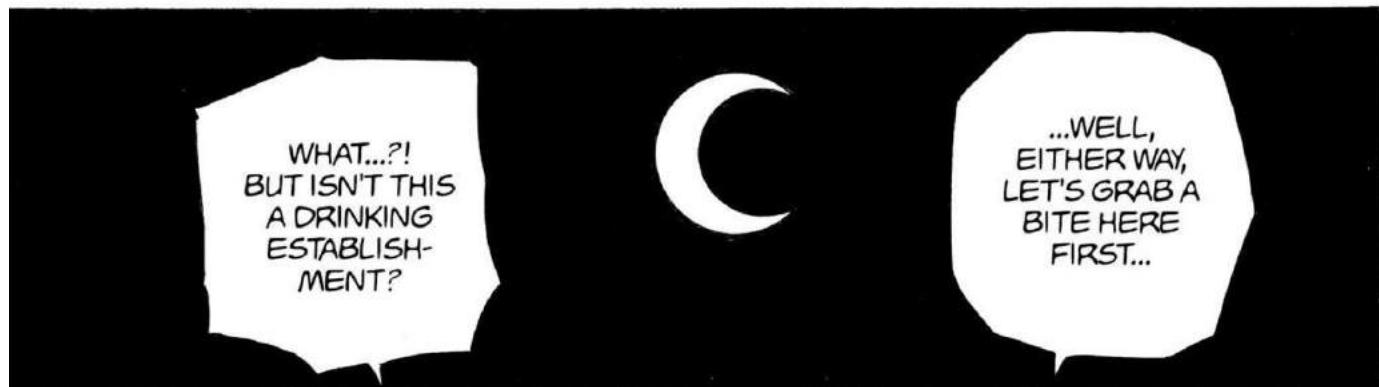


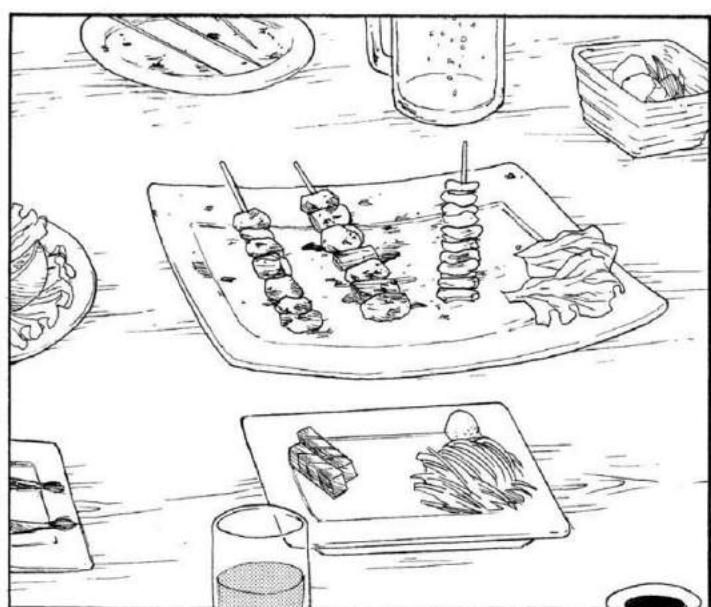




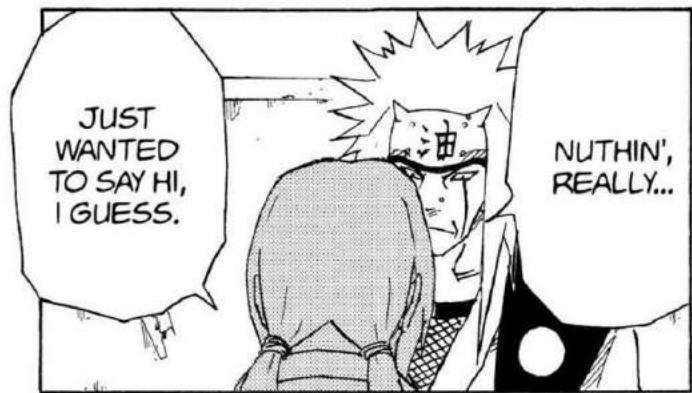
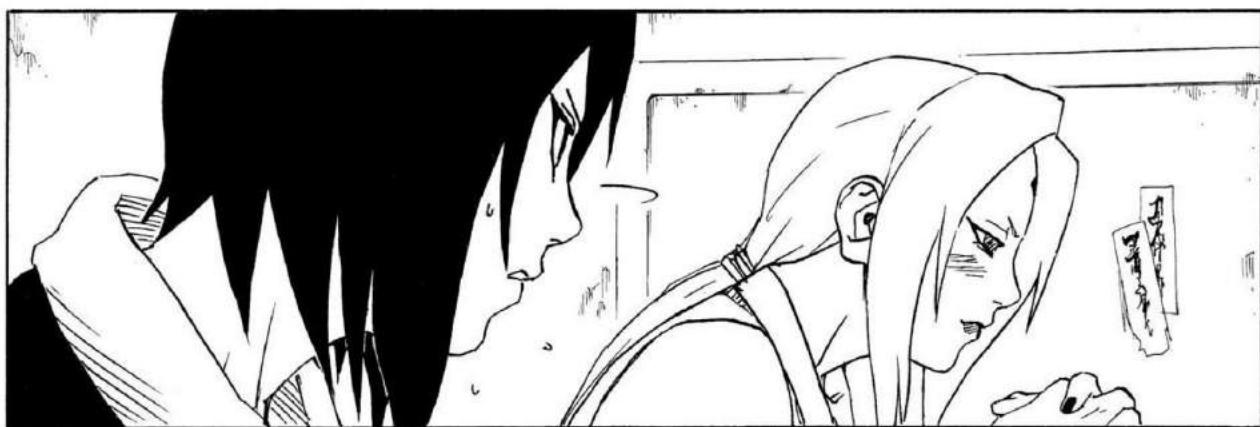
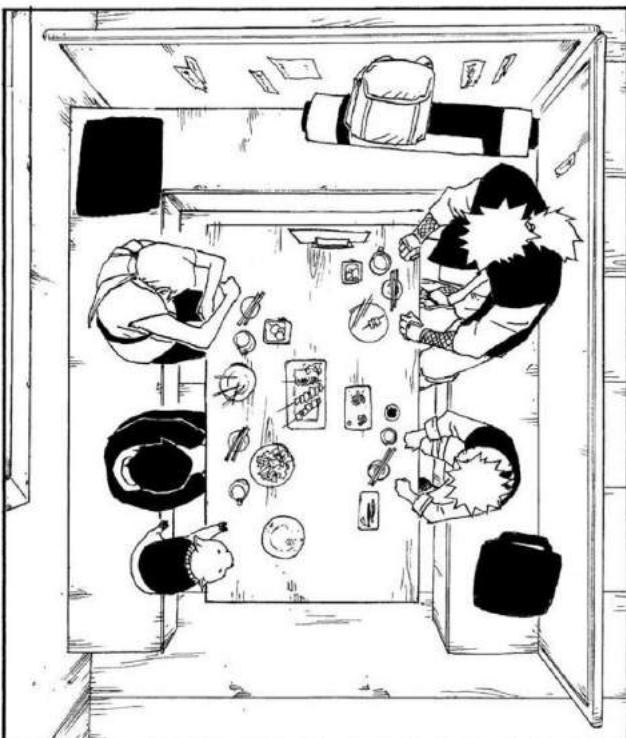


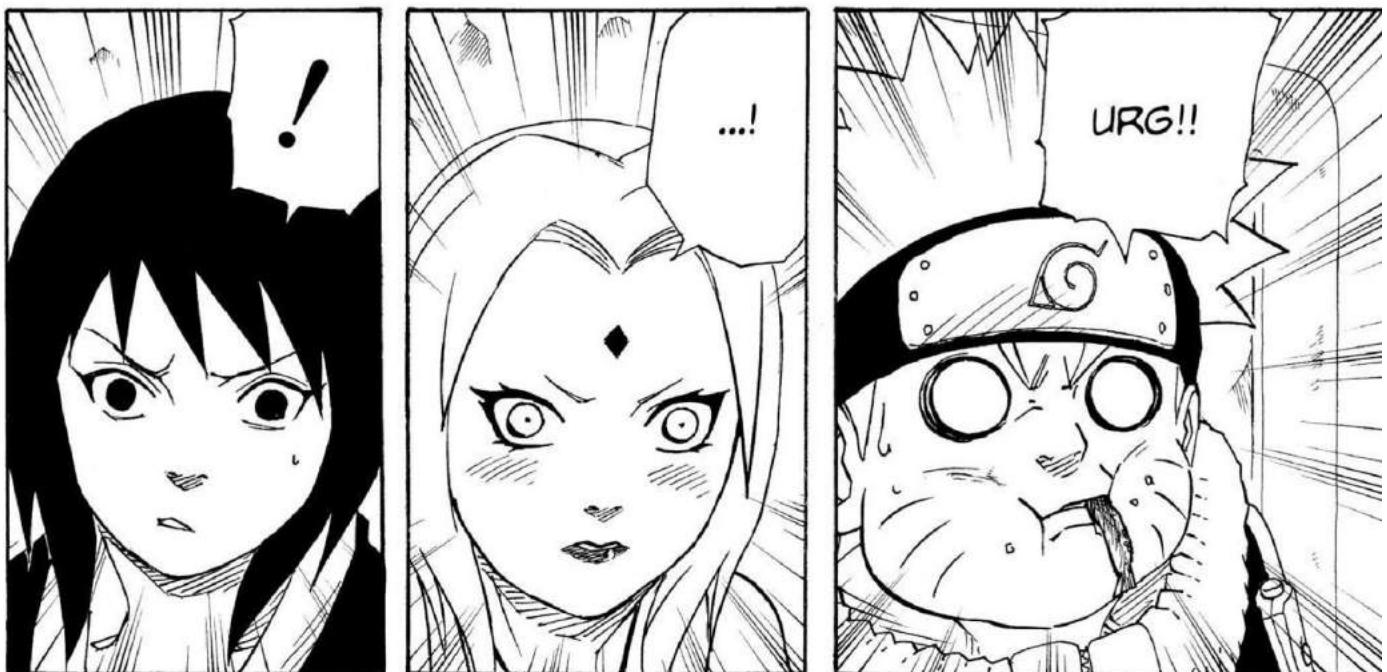
READ
THIS
WAY





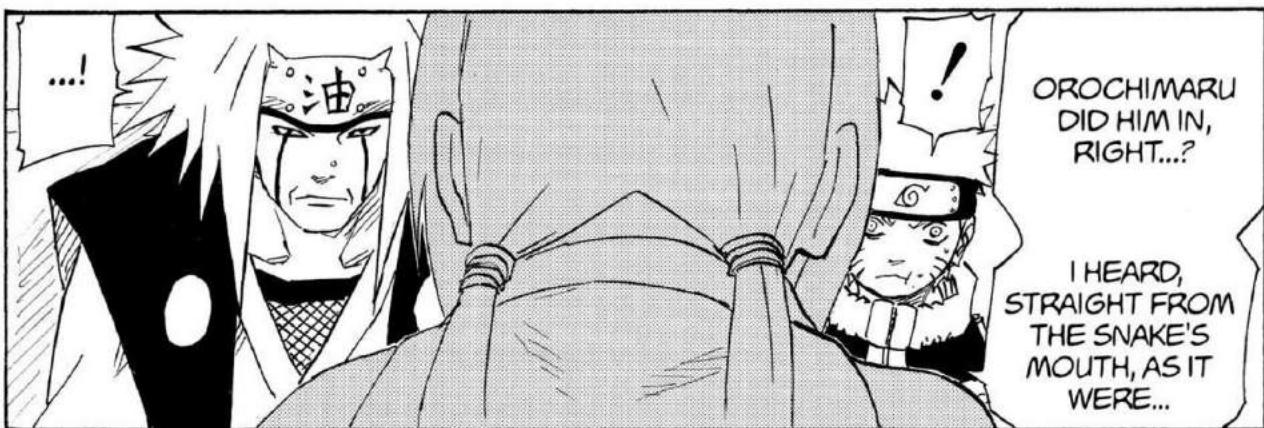
READ
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WAY

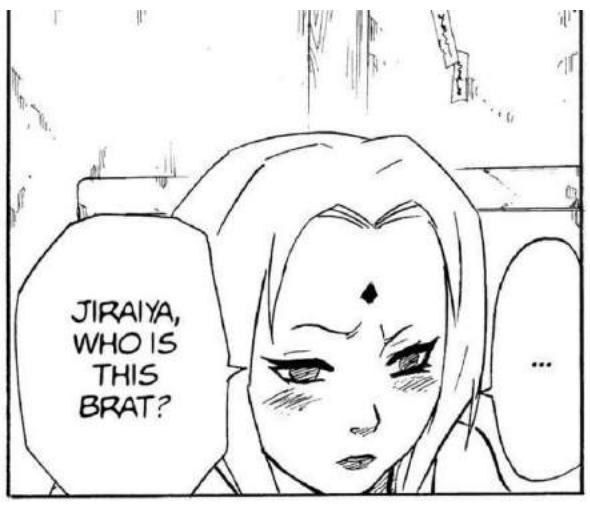






....!
WHERE THE HECK DID THAT COME FROM?!!
WHAT'S GOING ON?!





BUT I
THOUGHT
THE
THREE
GREAT
SHINOBI
WERE ALL
FROM
KONOHA!

WHAT?!

...THE THIRD
MEMBER
OF OUR
PRODIGAL
THREE.

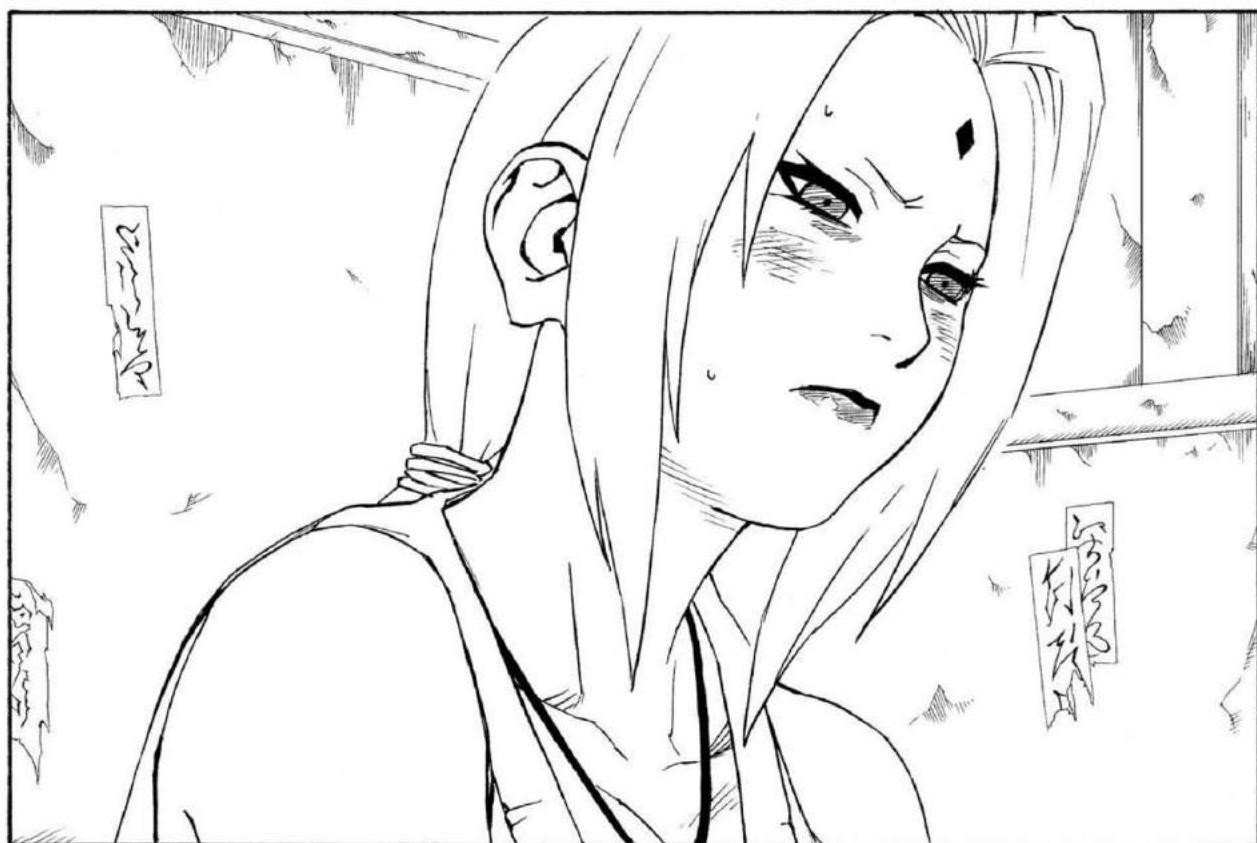


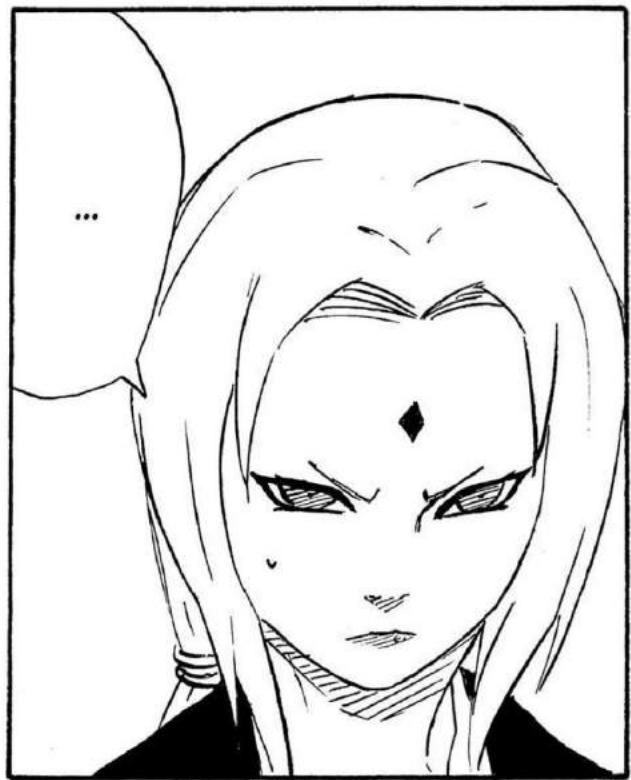
SO
WHY?!



...SO!



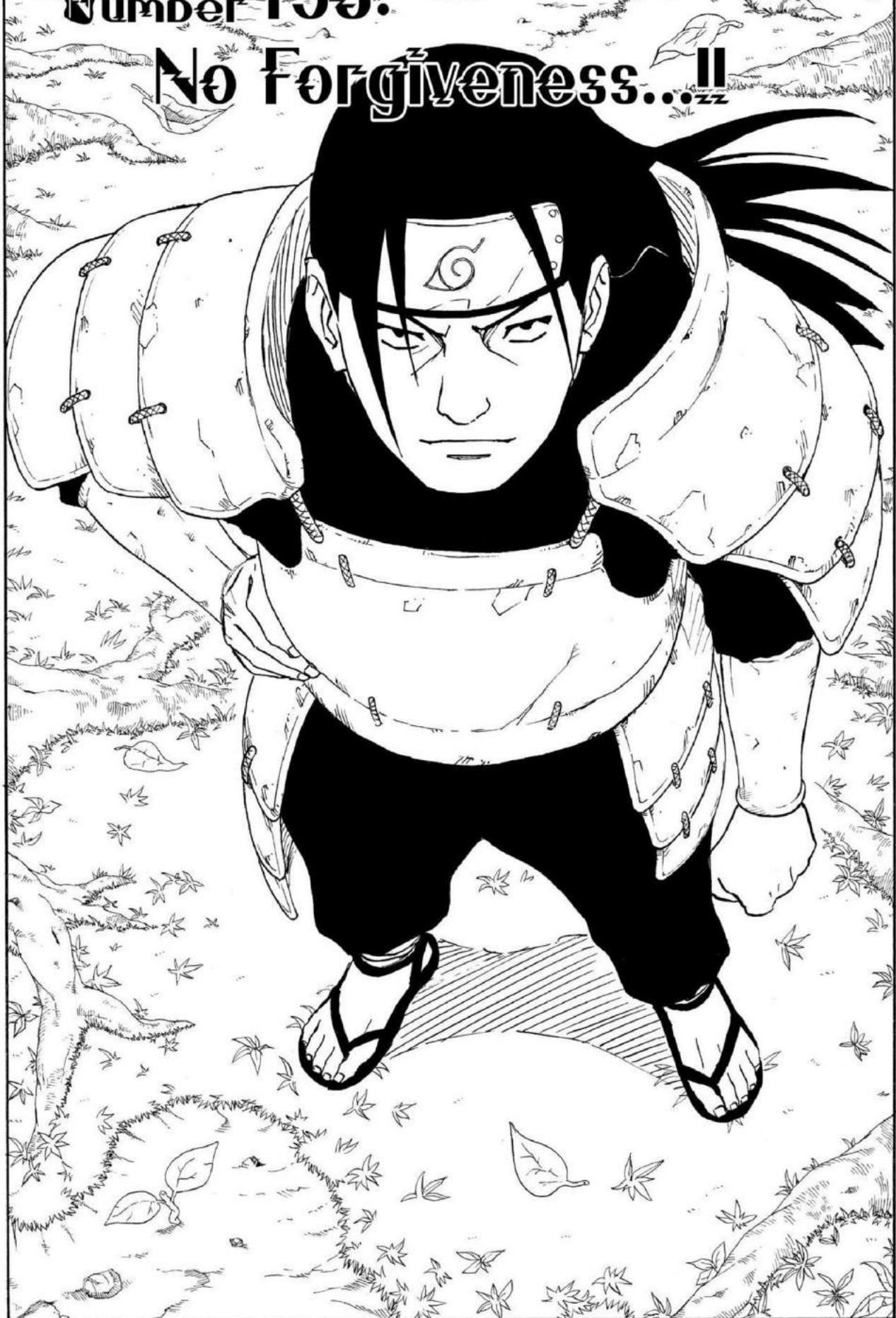


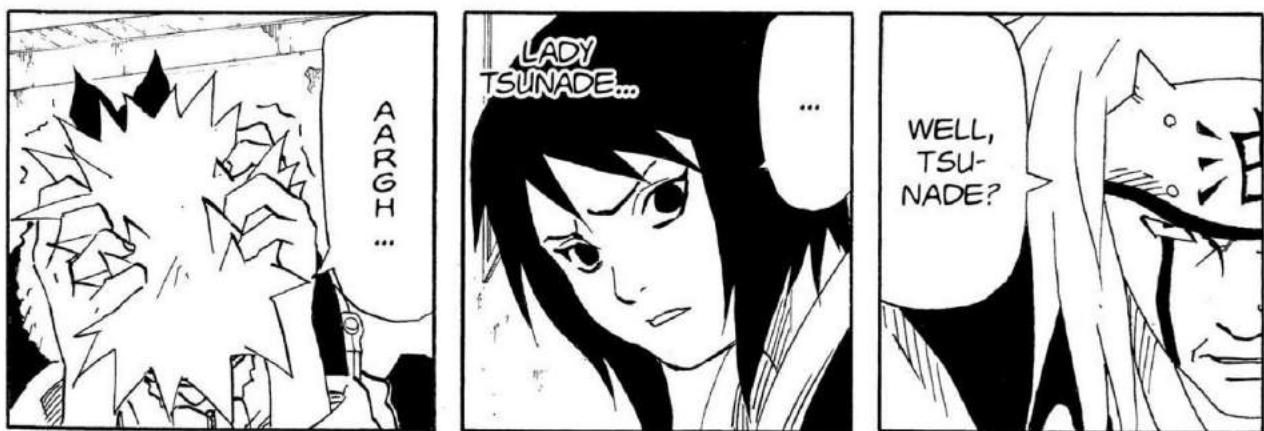
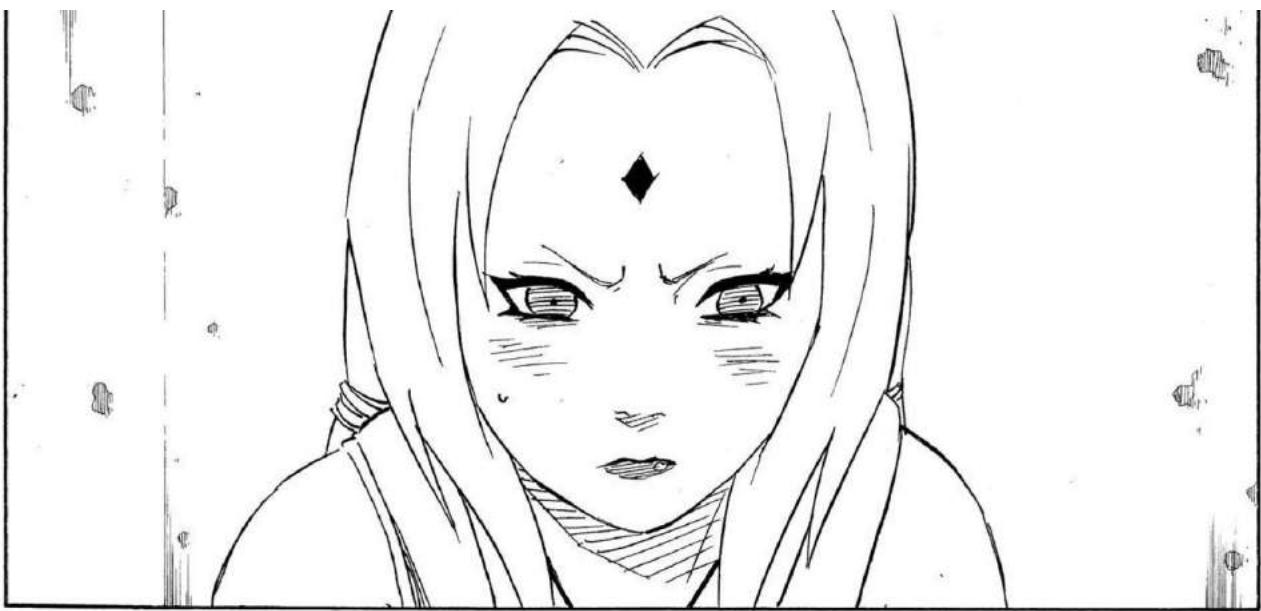




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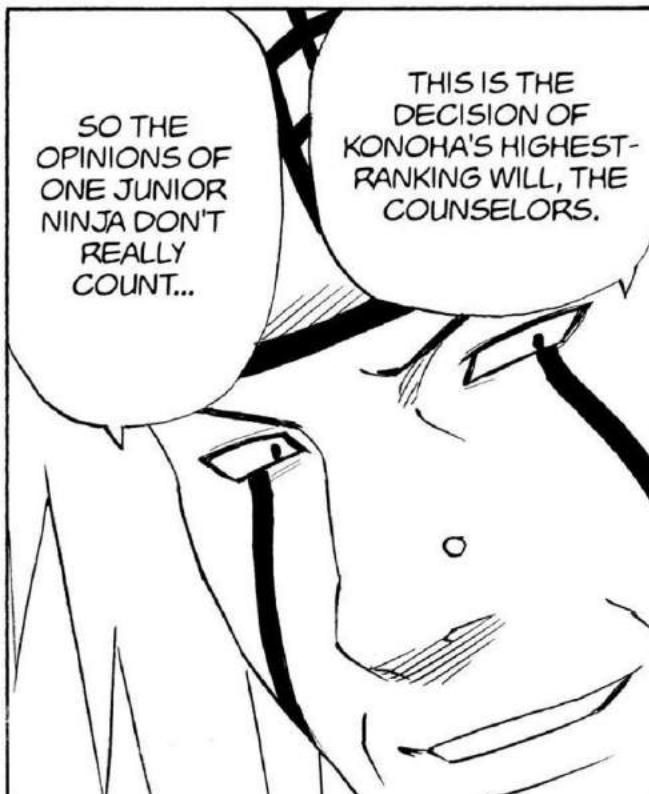
No Forgiveness...!!





READ
THIS
WAY





AW,
COME ON,
EVERYBODY
PALES IN
COMPARISON
TO THE
FOURTH
LORD.

WHAT
?!

...UNLIKE
YOUR LAST
DISCIPLE, THIS
KID'S GOT
WORSE MOUTH,
BRAINS...

HEH...
JIRAIYA.

AND
EVEN
MUG.

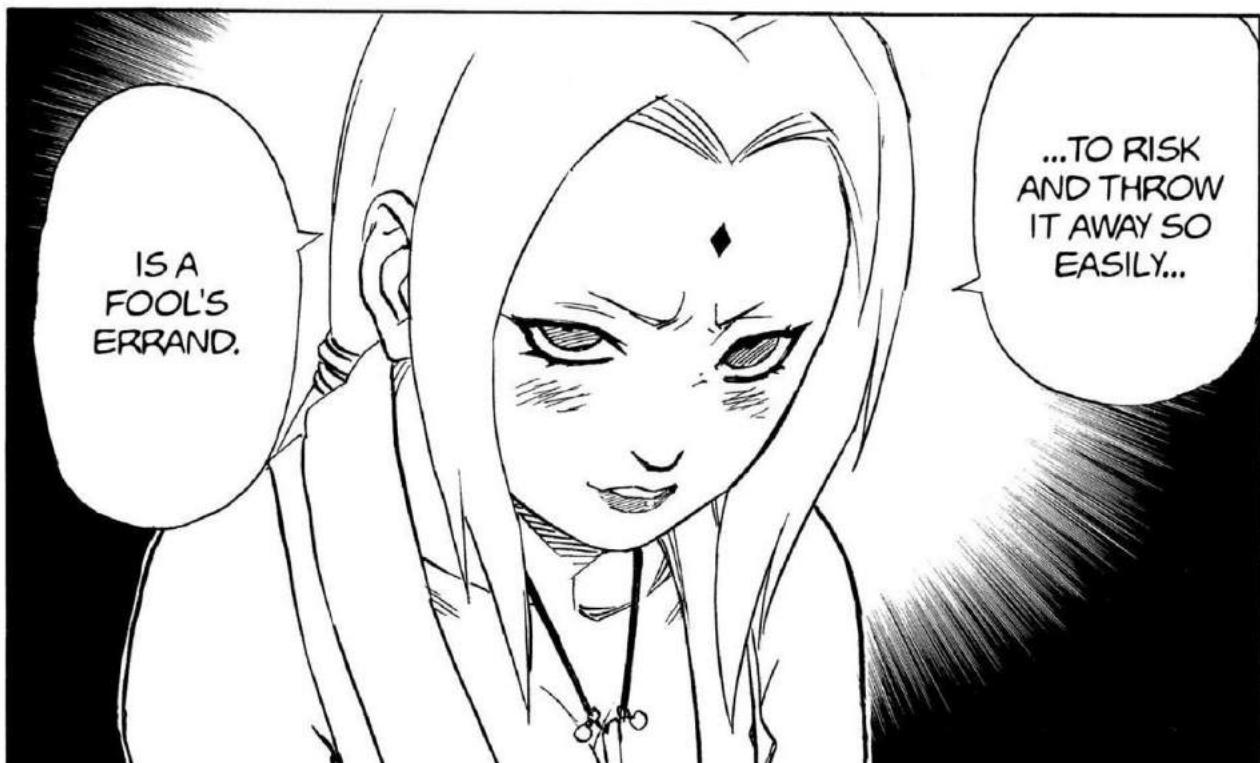
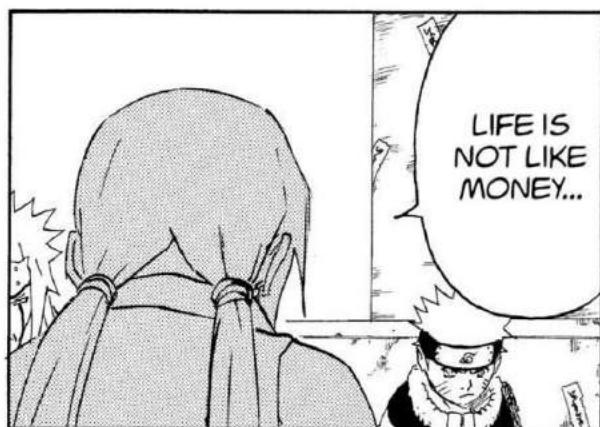
HMPH

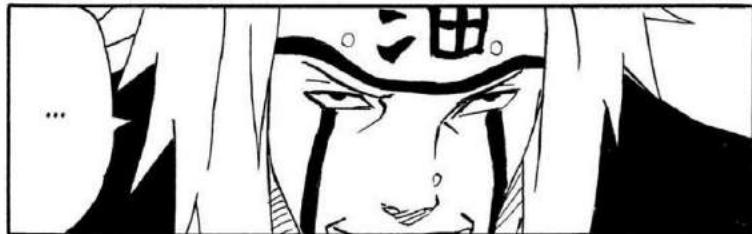
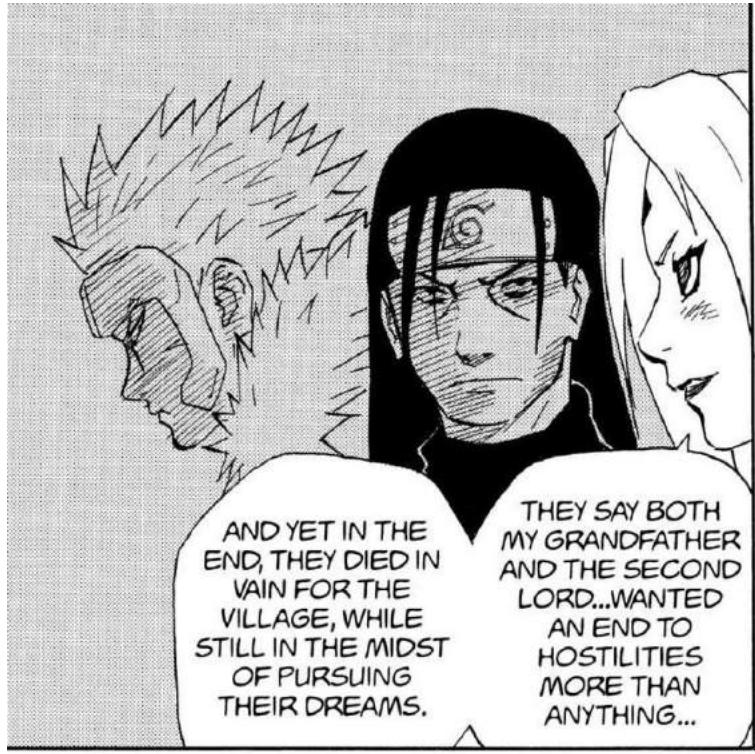
HE WAS
OVERFLOWING
WITH TALENT FOR
JUTSU AND
INTELLIGENCE...
HE WAS SOCIALLY
POPULAR...AND
WELL, HE WAS
QUITE A LOOKER,
JUST LIKE ME.

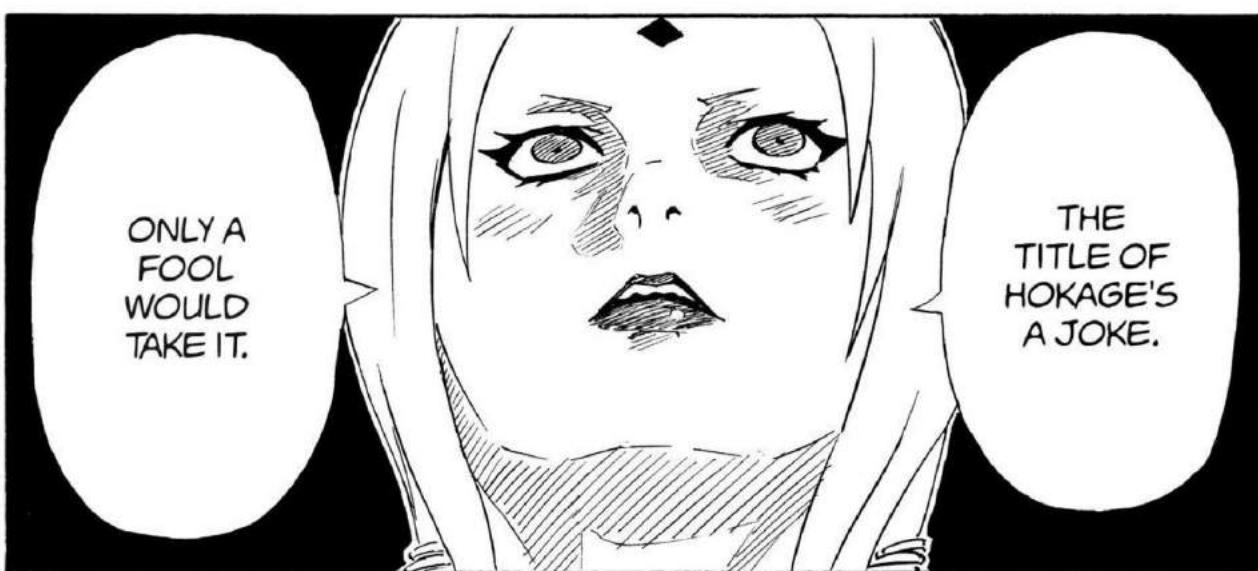
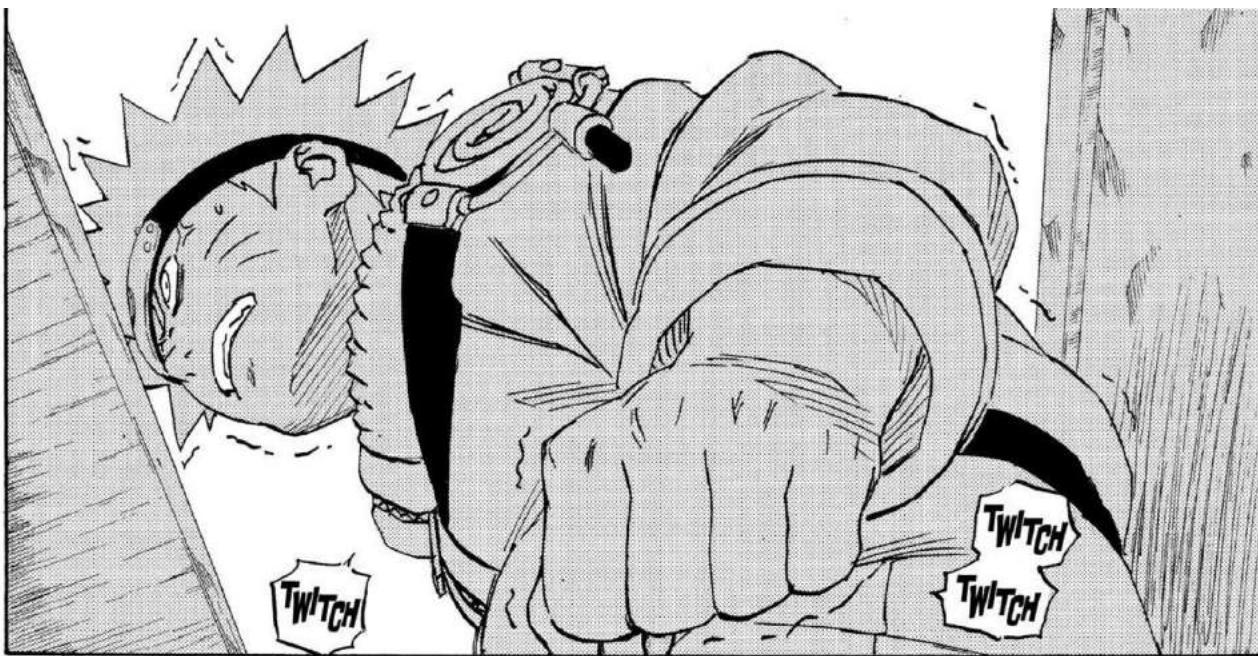
AS A
SHINOBI, HIS
CAPACITY WAS
UNPARALLELED,
A TRUE ONE-
OF-A-KIND...

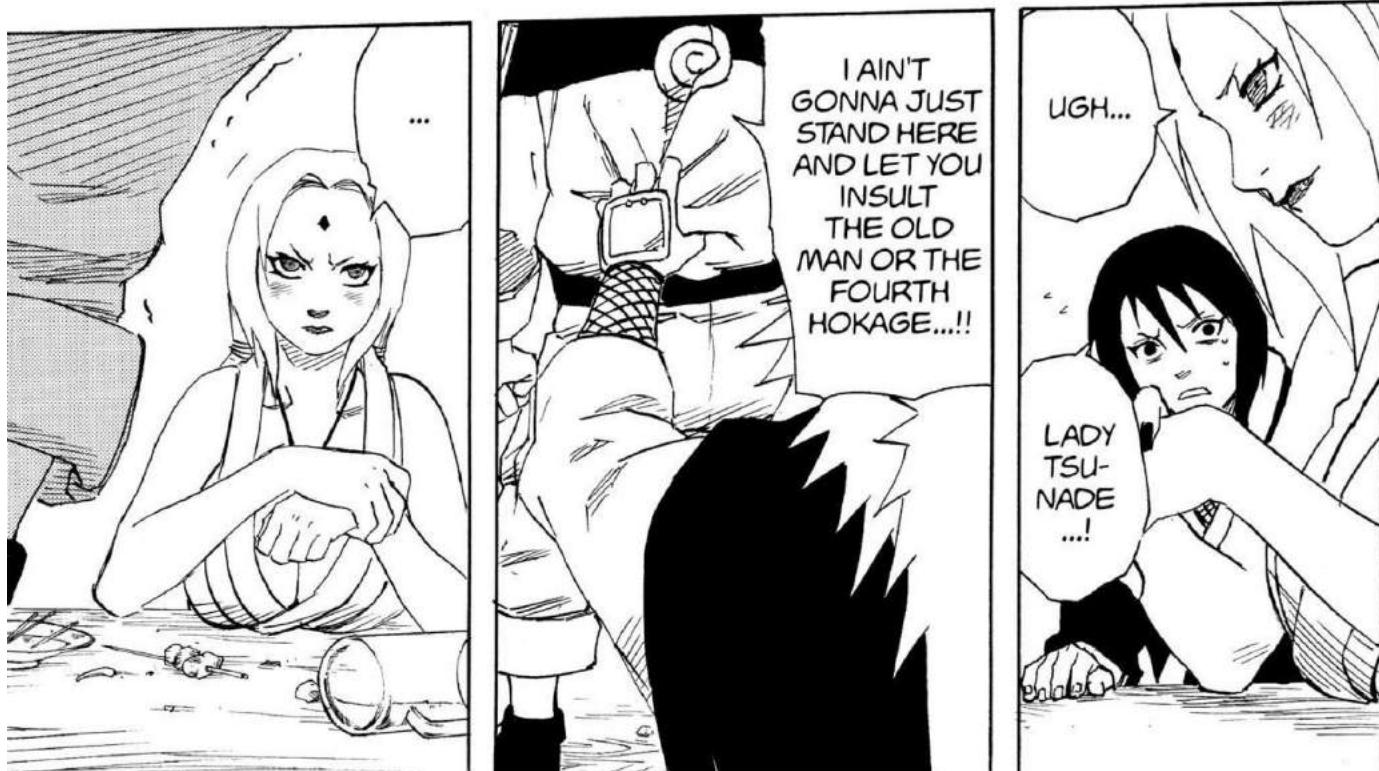
...BUT EVEN
WITH ALL THAT
GOING FOR
HIM, HE DIED
PREMATURELY...









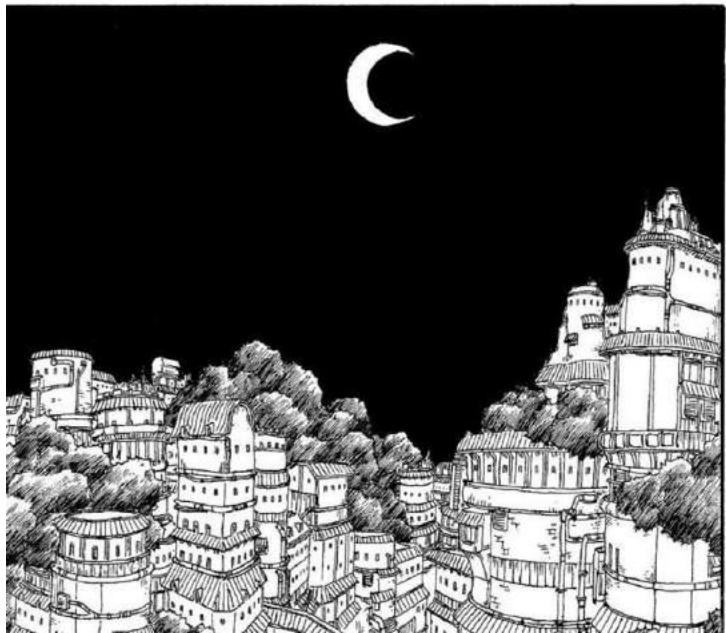
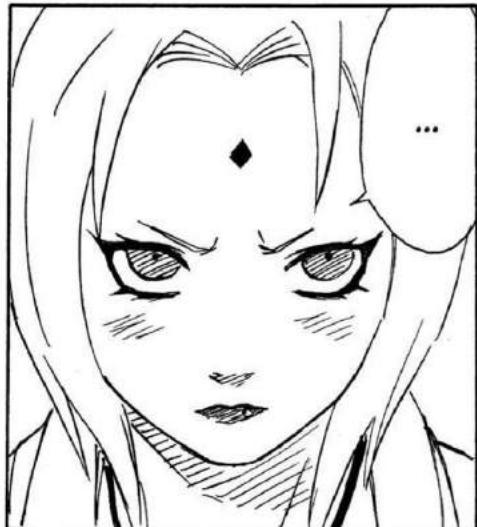
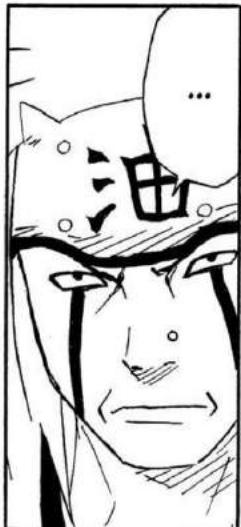
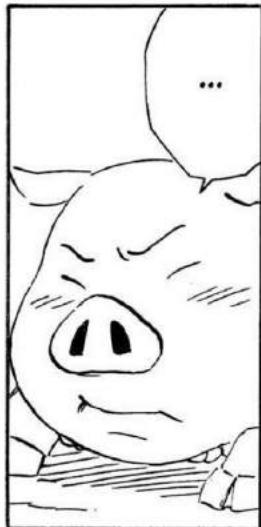


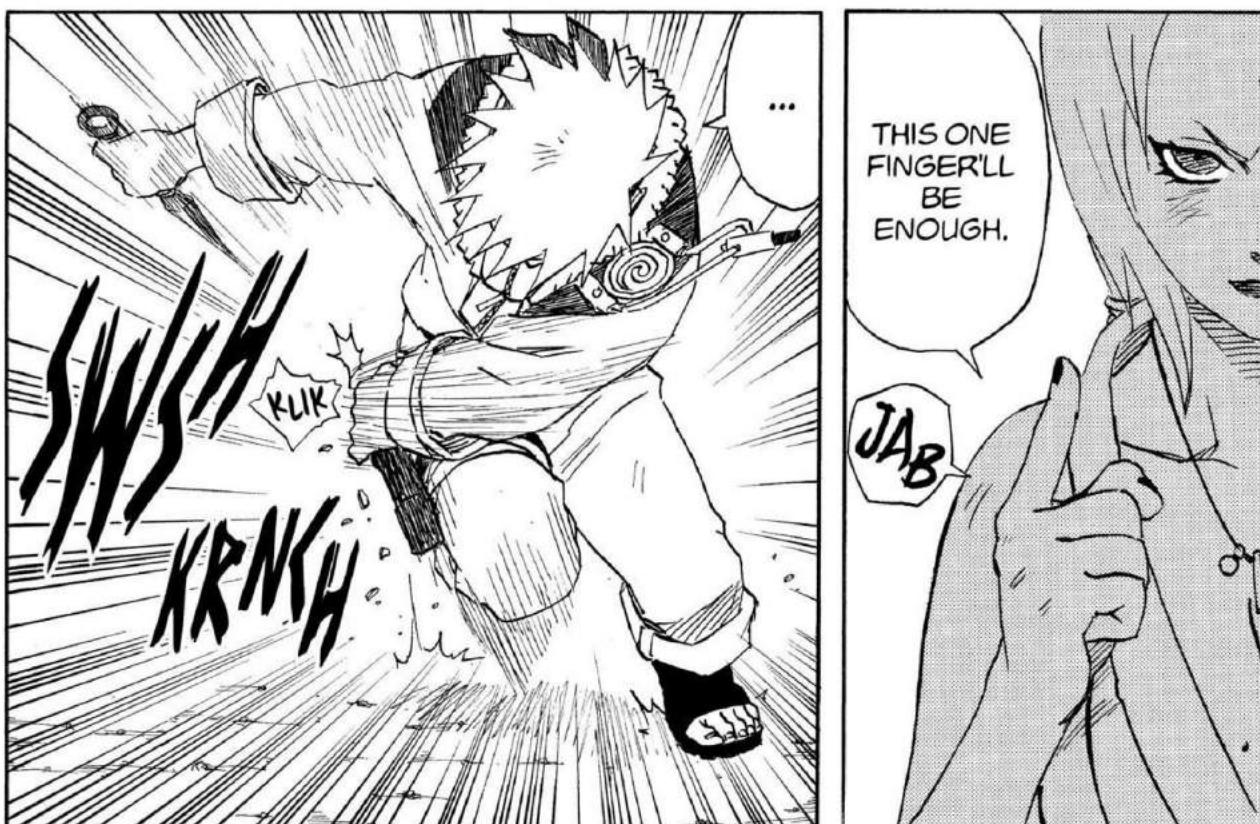
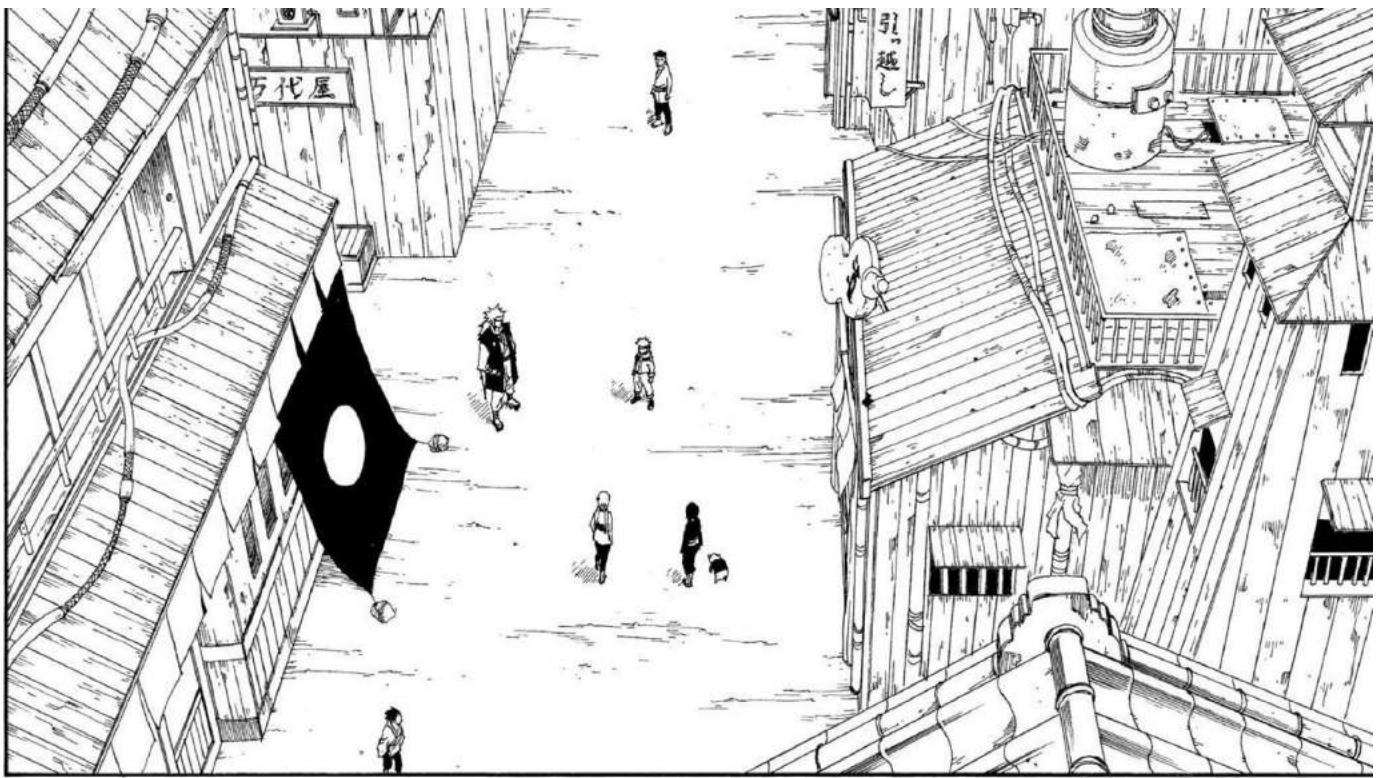
I'LL SLUG
YOU WITH
ALL I'VE
GOT!!!

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

BA **MM**

READ
THIS
WAY





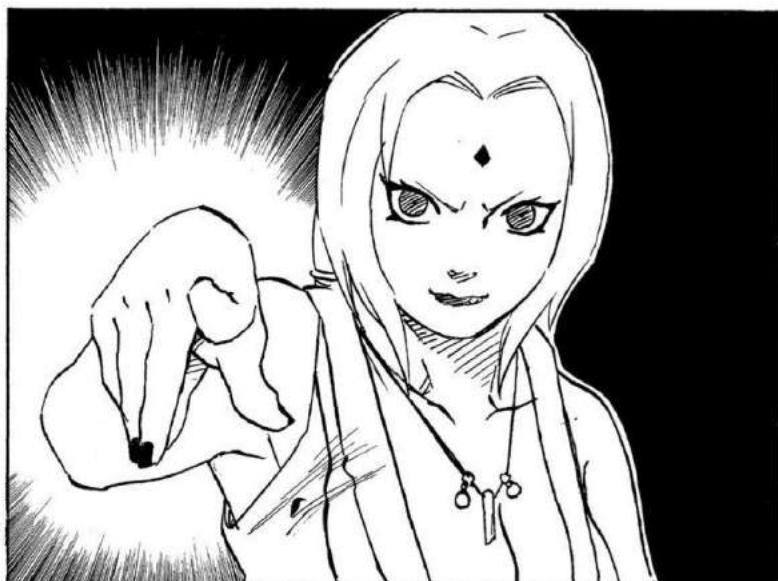
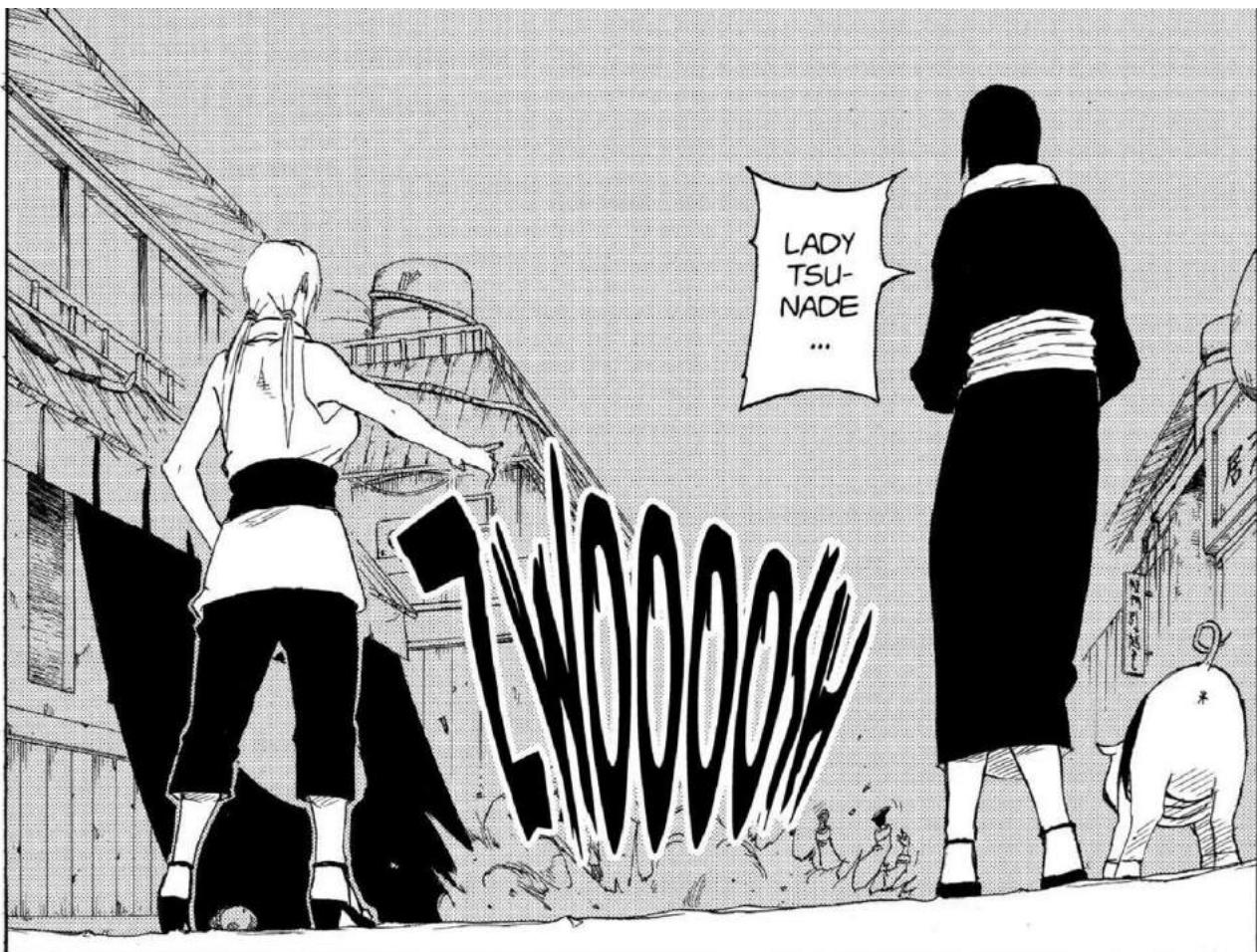


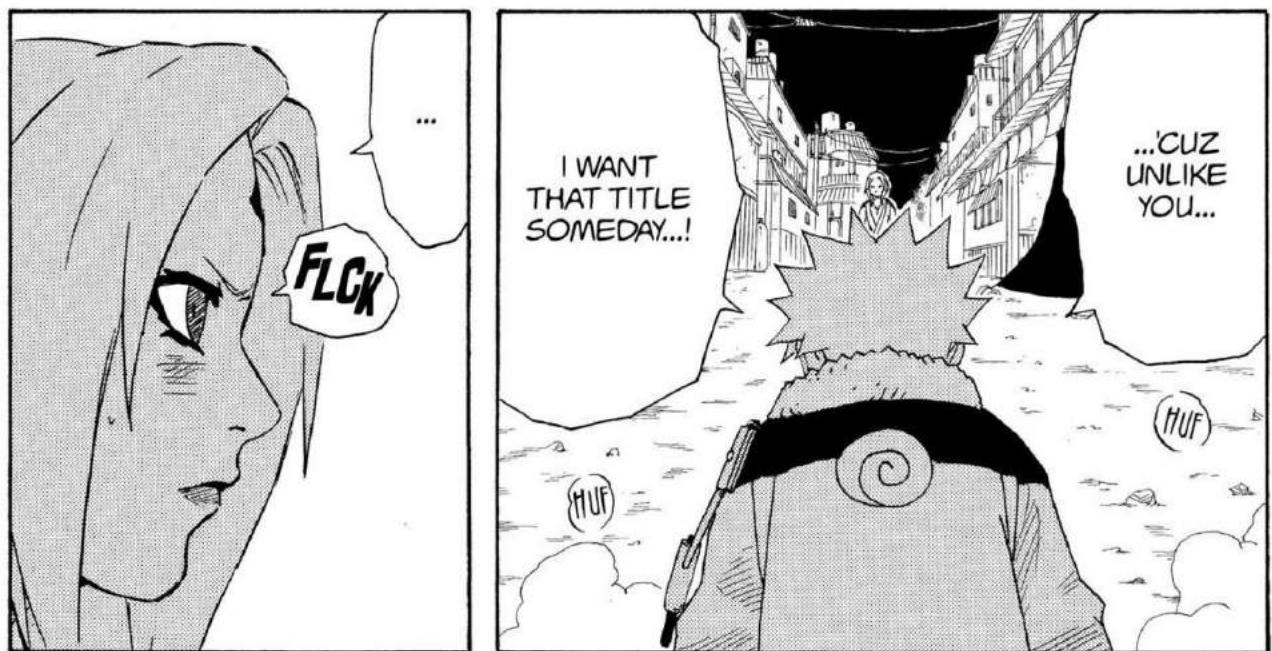


WH

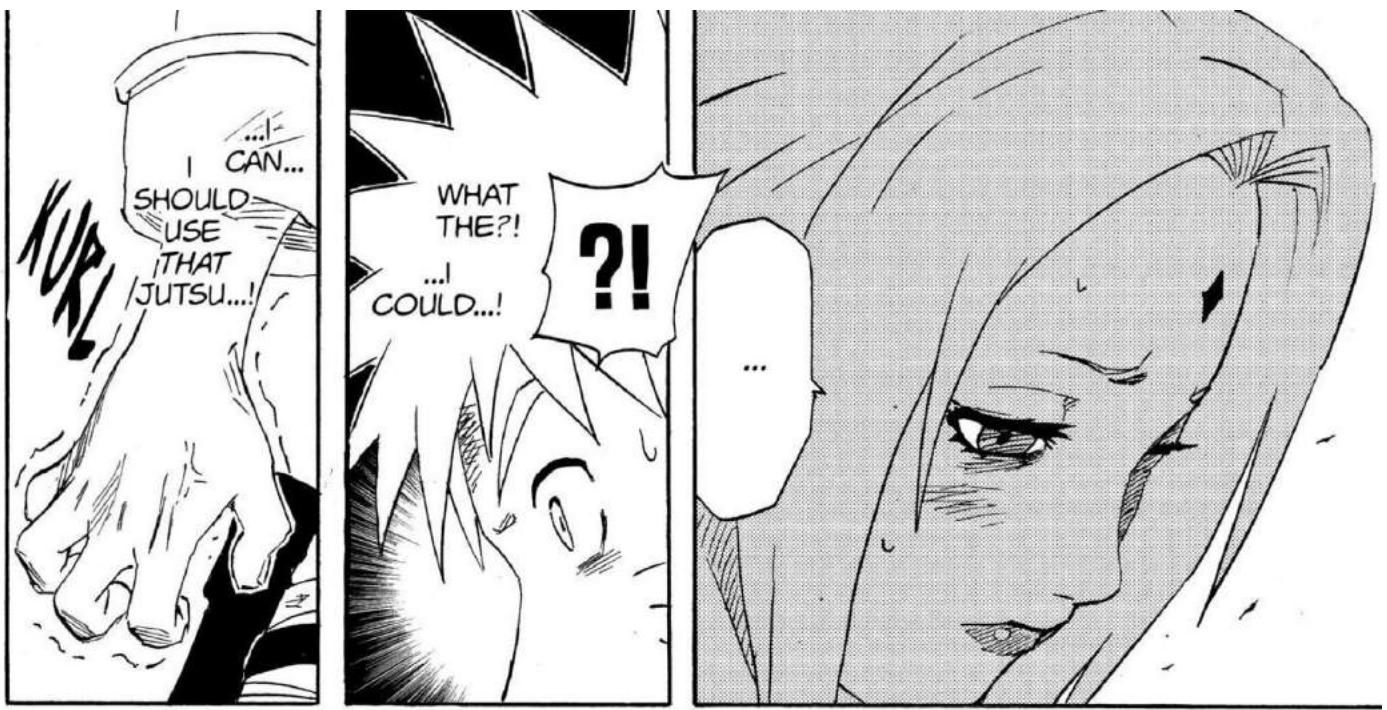
App











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*.

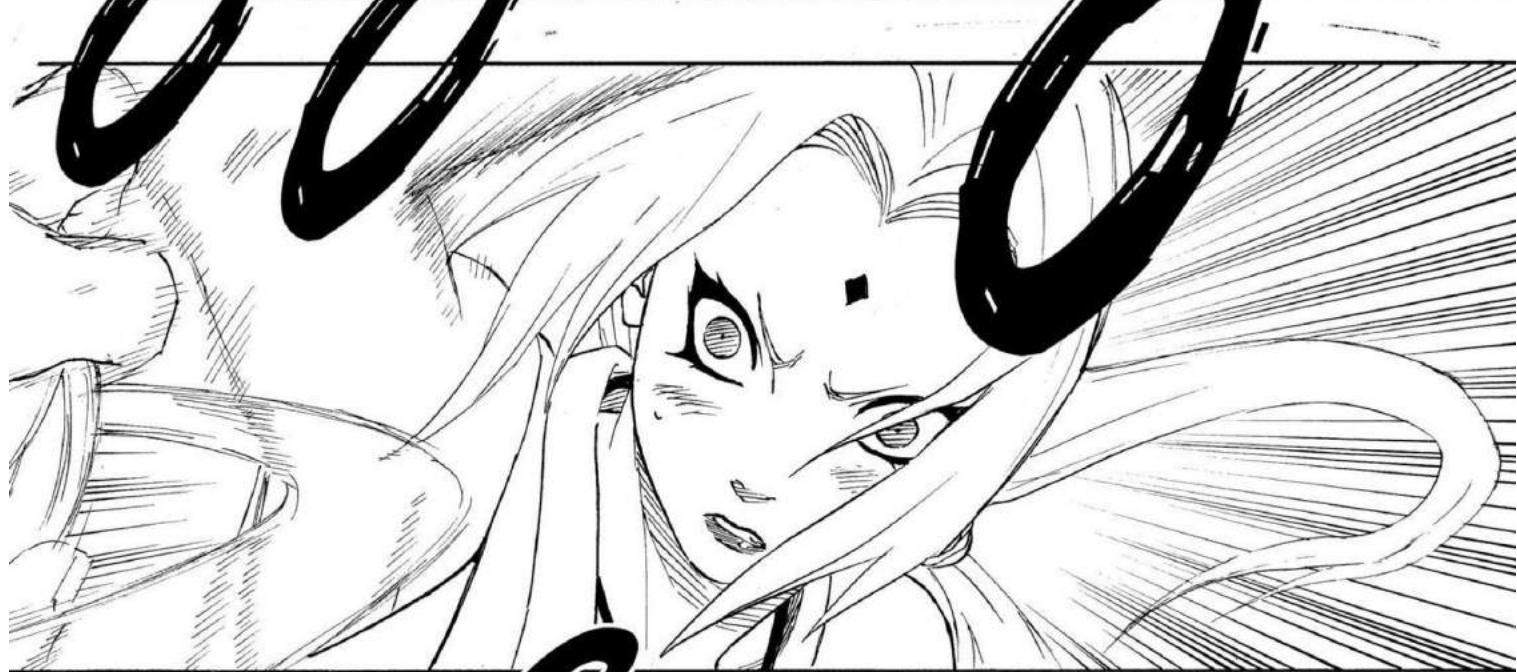
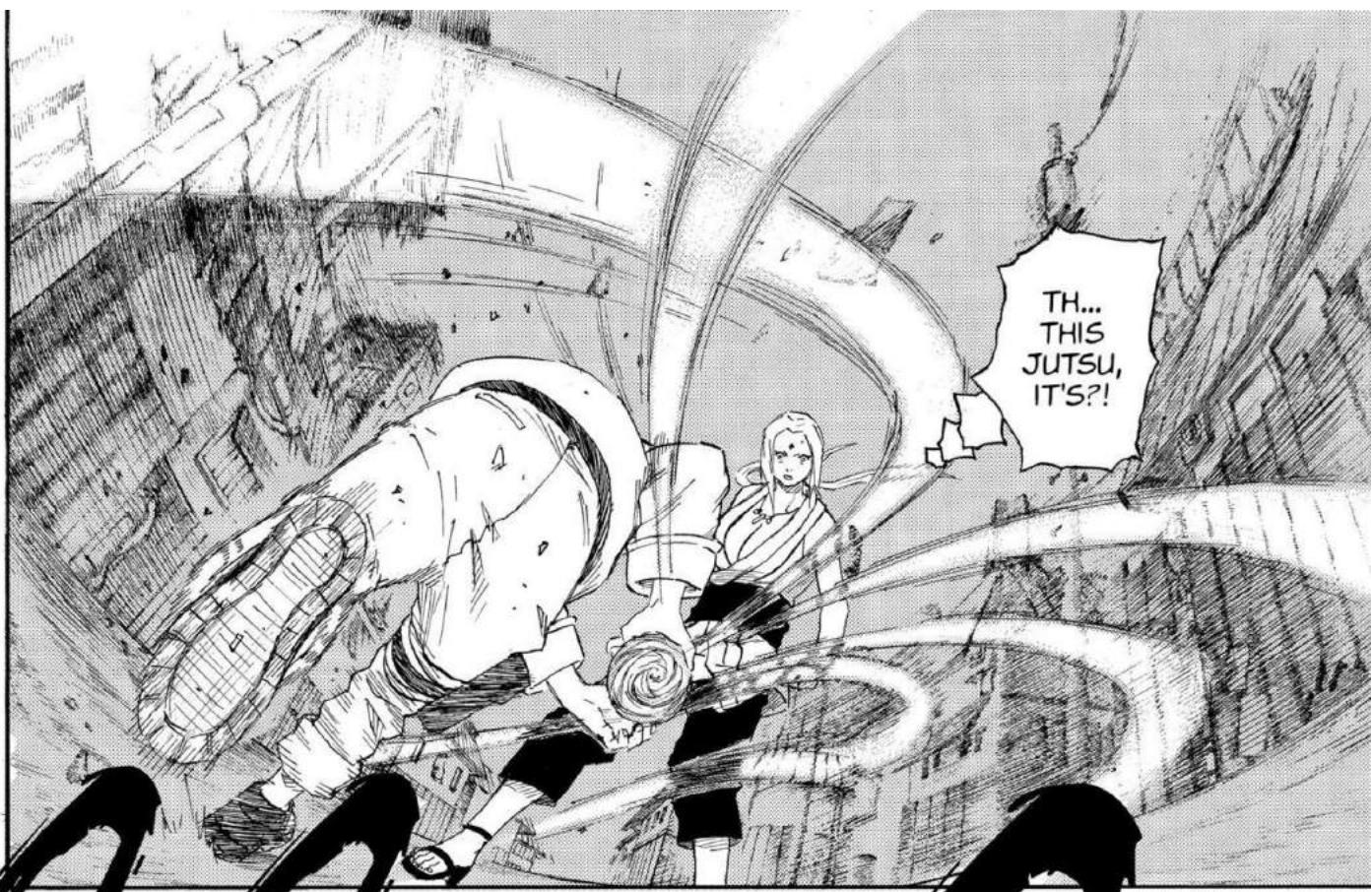
FIRST, EVEN THOUGH THE SUBJECT CHARACTERS AND PERSPECTIVE KEEP RAPIDLY CHANGING, THE BACKGROUND SHIFTS ACCORDINGLY AND IN SYNC. AND THE NARROW SENSE OF SPACE AND DEPTH WAS SO REALISTIC. AT FIRST I WONDERED, HOW DID HE DO THIS? BUT BECAUSE I KNEW HE COULDN'T HAVE DRAWN THE BACKGROUNDS BY HAND, I REALIZED 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.

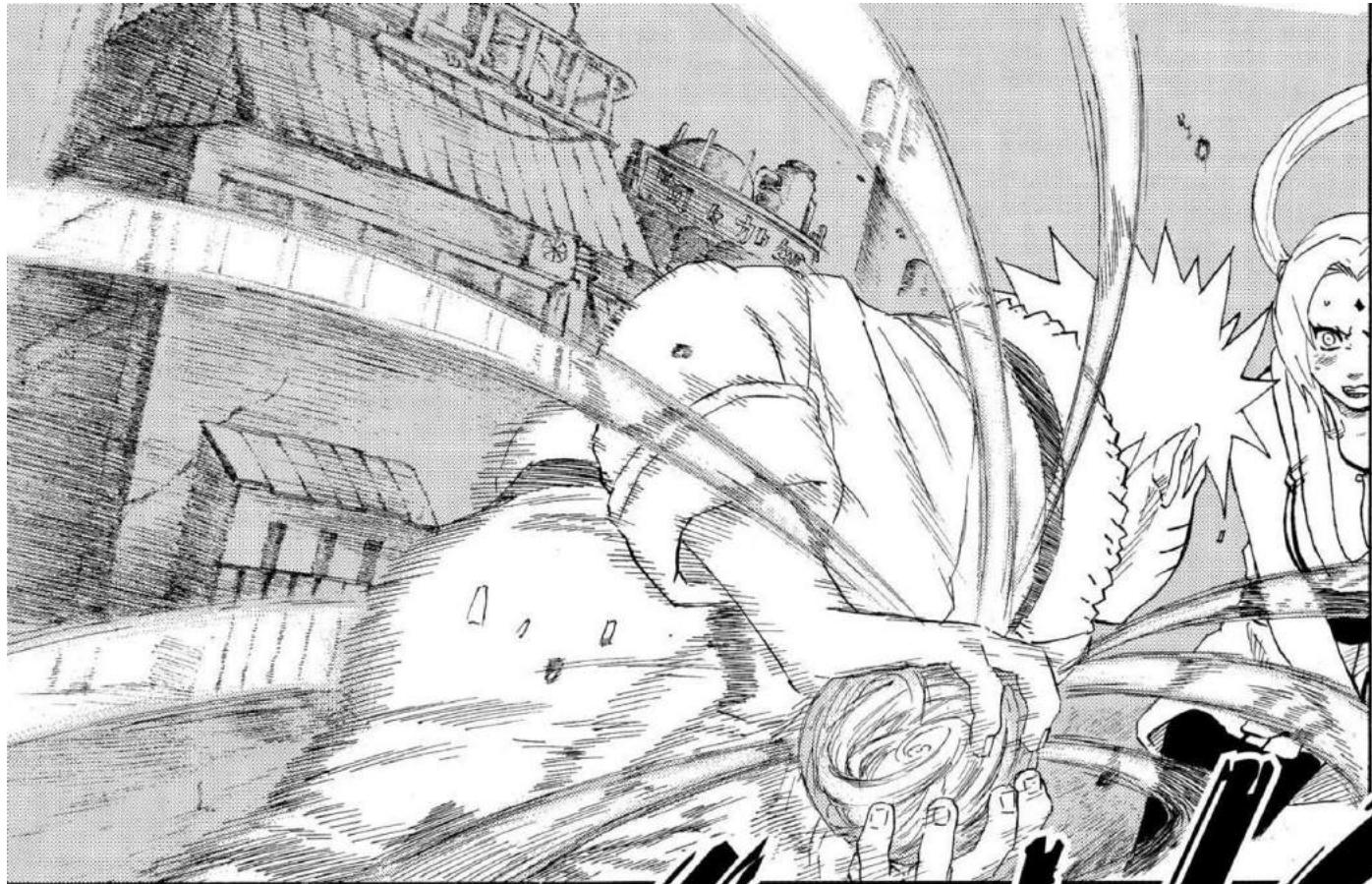
NOW THAT ANIME HAS ENTERED THE DIGITAL AGE AS WELL, SUCH MOVING BACKGROUNDS ARE NO LONGER NOVELTIES. IN FACT, THERE ARE WORKS NOW WHERE EVEN THE CHARACTERS ARE RENDERED FROM POLYGONS AND ONE NO LONGER HAS TO DRAW EACH CELL INDIVIDUALLY. JUST...WHEN ONE USES THE COMPUTER, THE LINES ARE TOO CLEAN... IT 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).

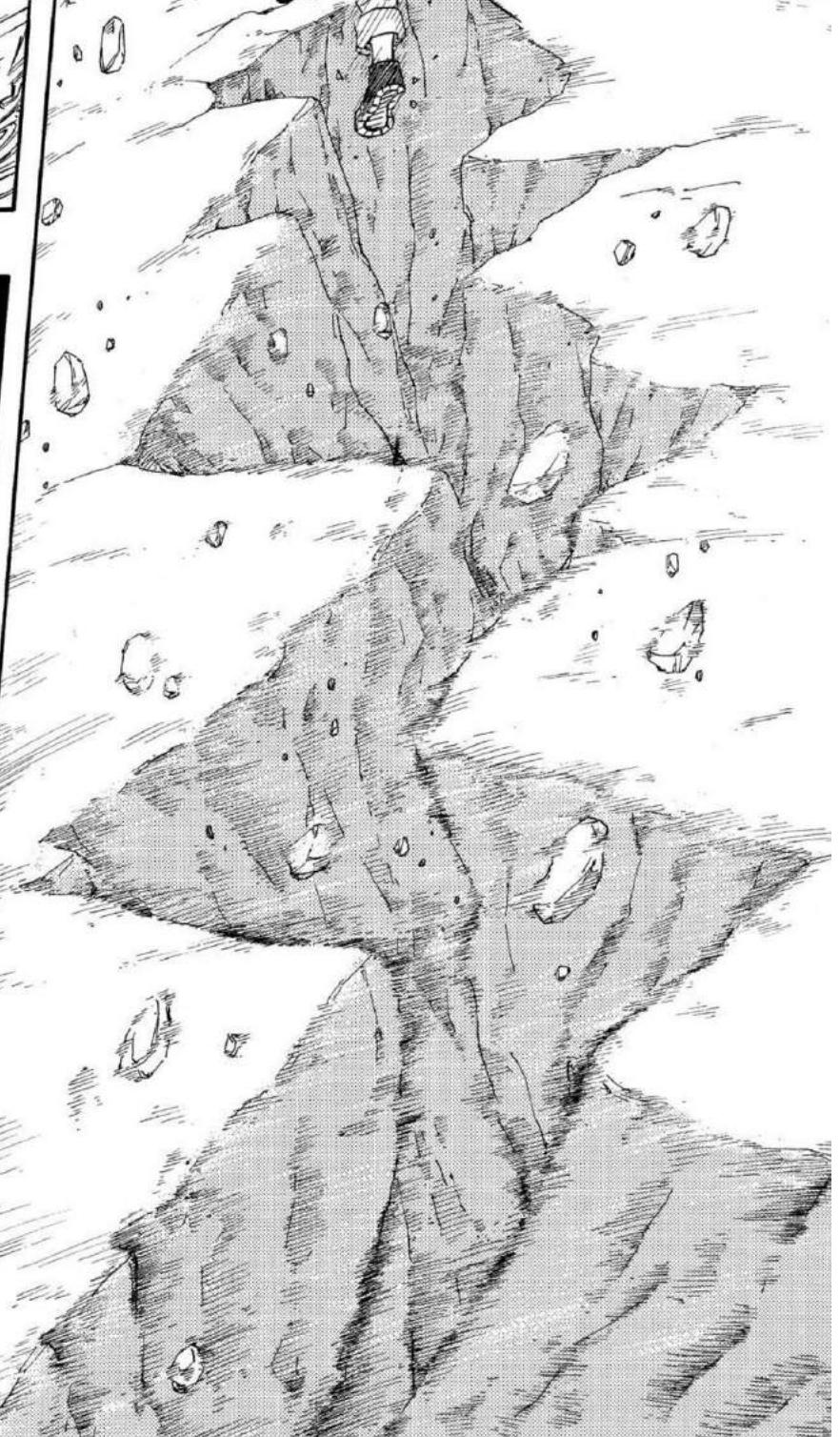
I WISH THIS FEEL-GOOD STUFF COULD BE EXPRESSED BY THE COMPUTER AS WELL; THAT WOULD MAKE THINGS PERFECT... IT SEEMS LIKE MANGA ARE ALSO GETTING MORE AND MORE DIGITIZED, BUT I WONDER IF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY STILL COSTS TOO MUCH TIME AND MONEY...?

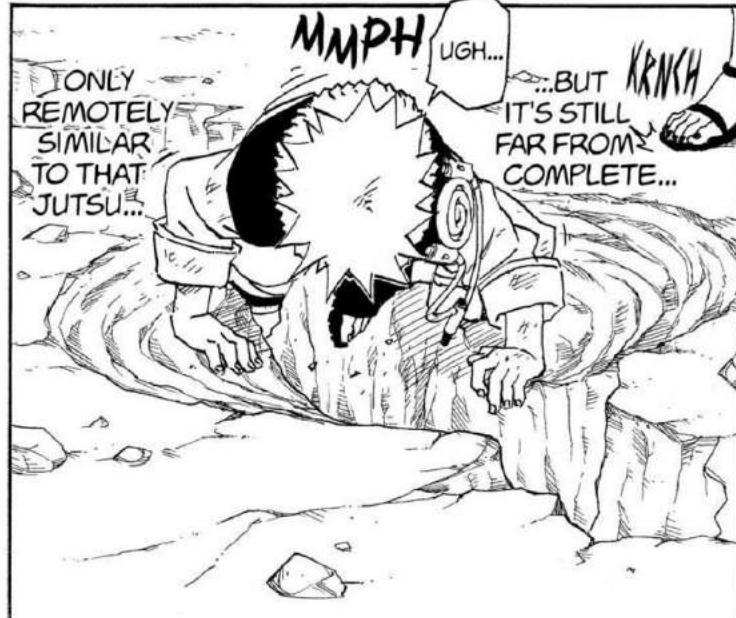
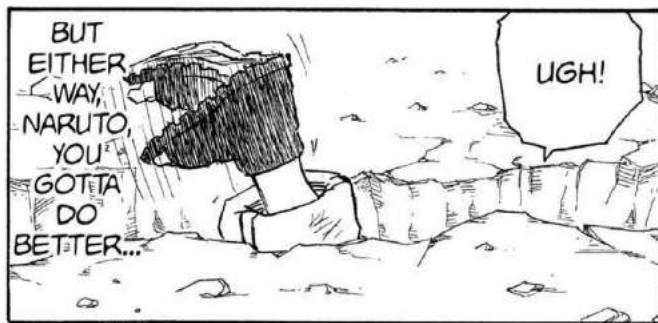
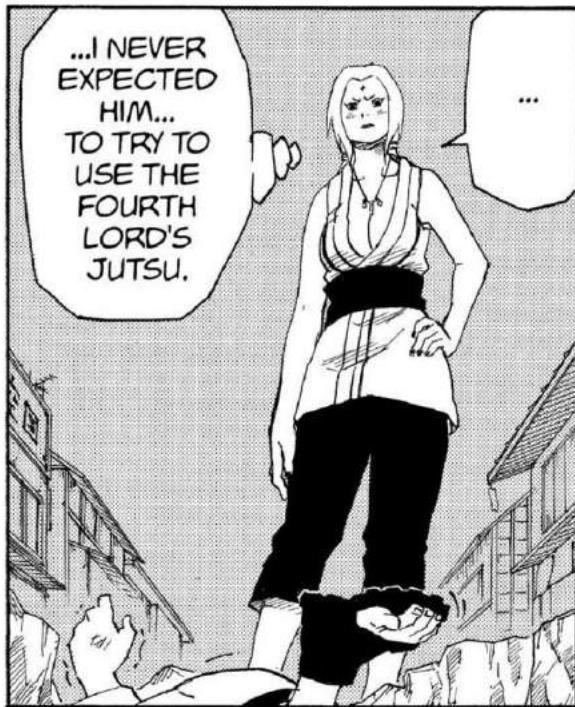
Number 159: The Wager...!!

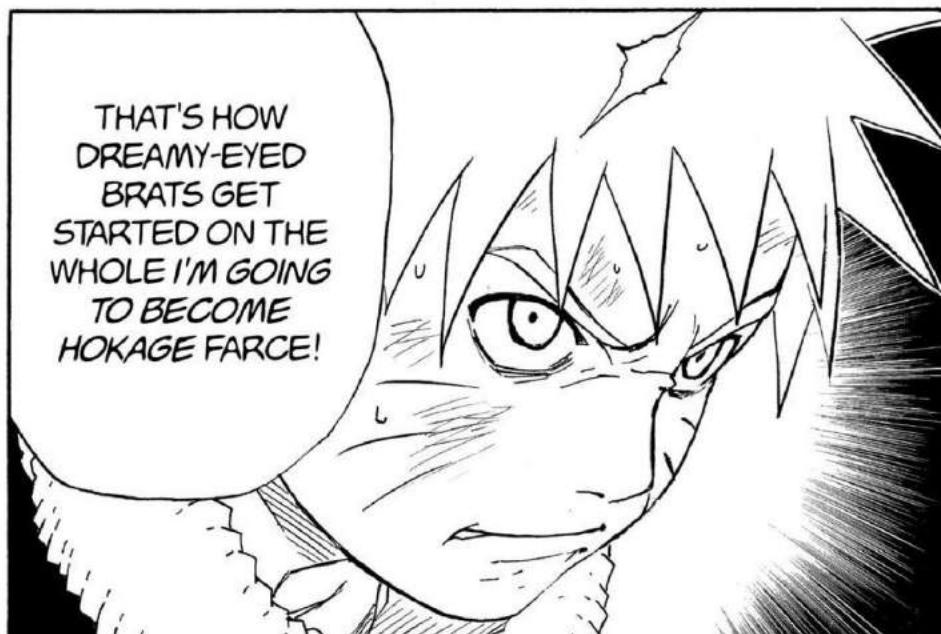












SHUT UP!
SHUT UP!!

IT'S NOT
A FARCE!!

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

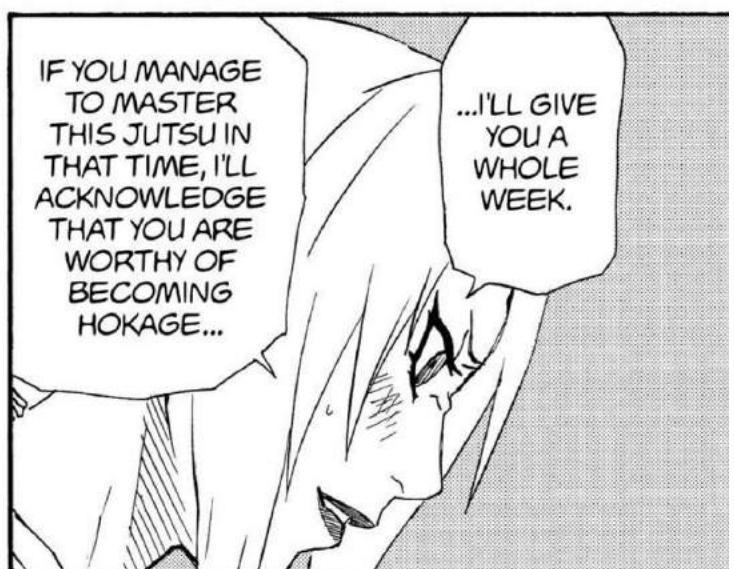
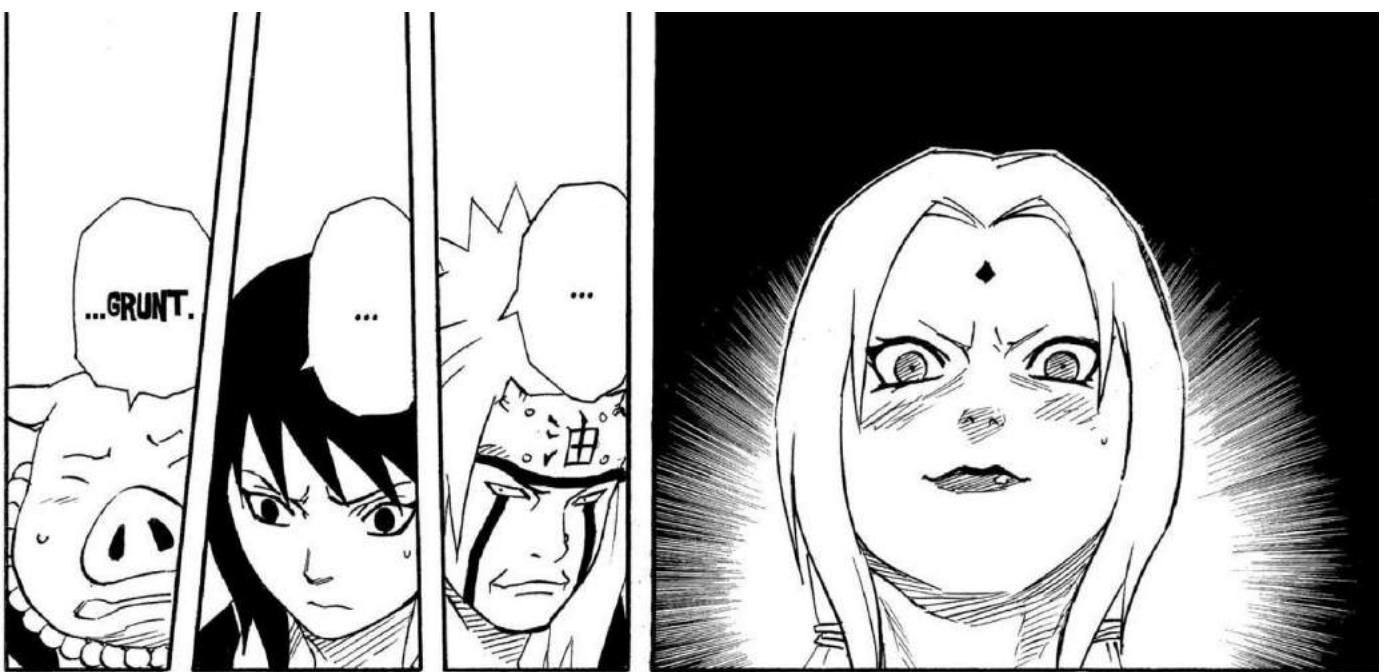
HEH!

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

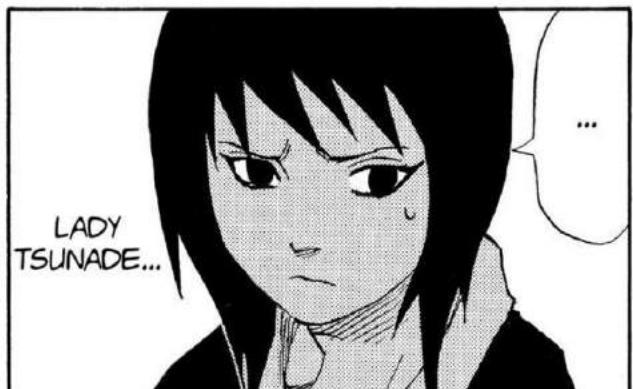
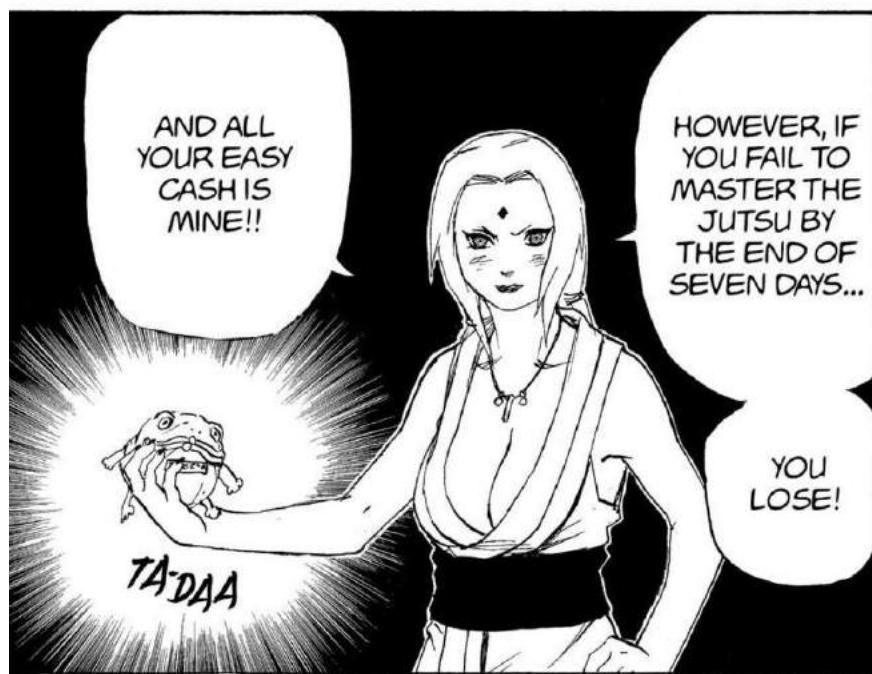
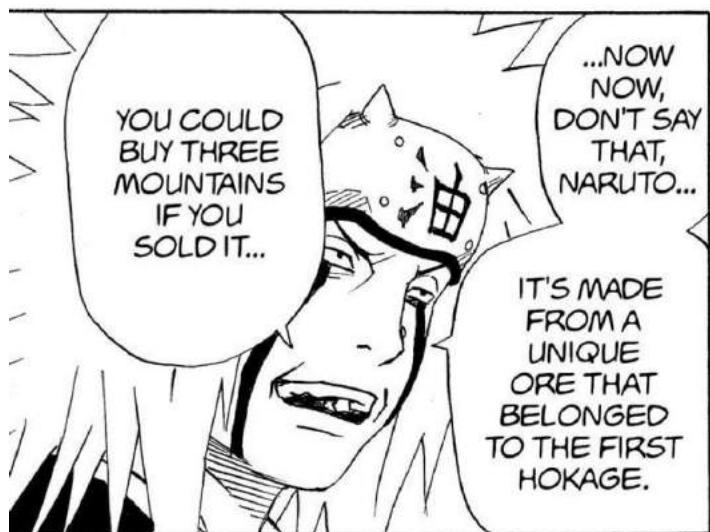
FEH...
NICE
WORDS,
BRAT...

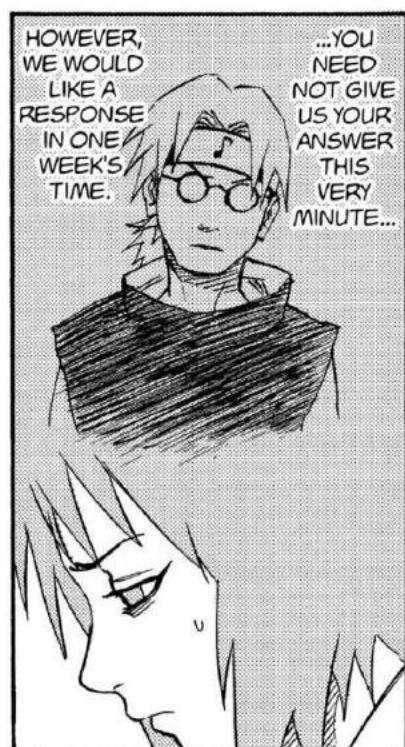
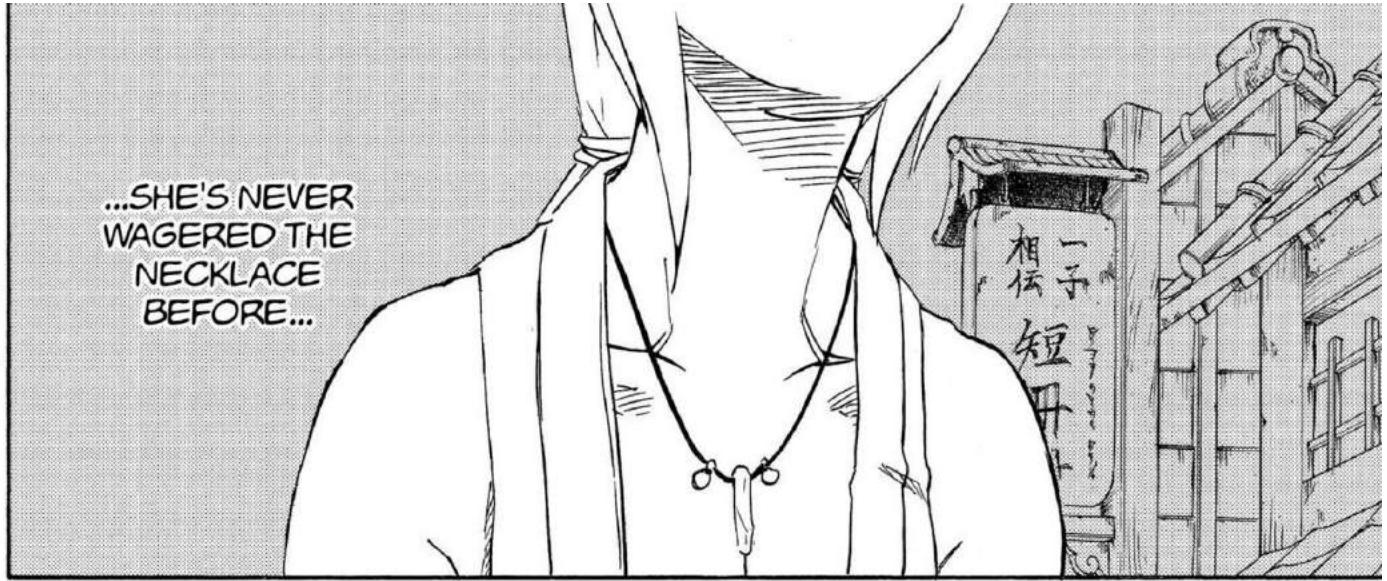
...THAT'S MY
SHINOBI
WAY!

I NEVER
GO BACK
ON MY
WORD...

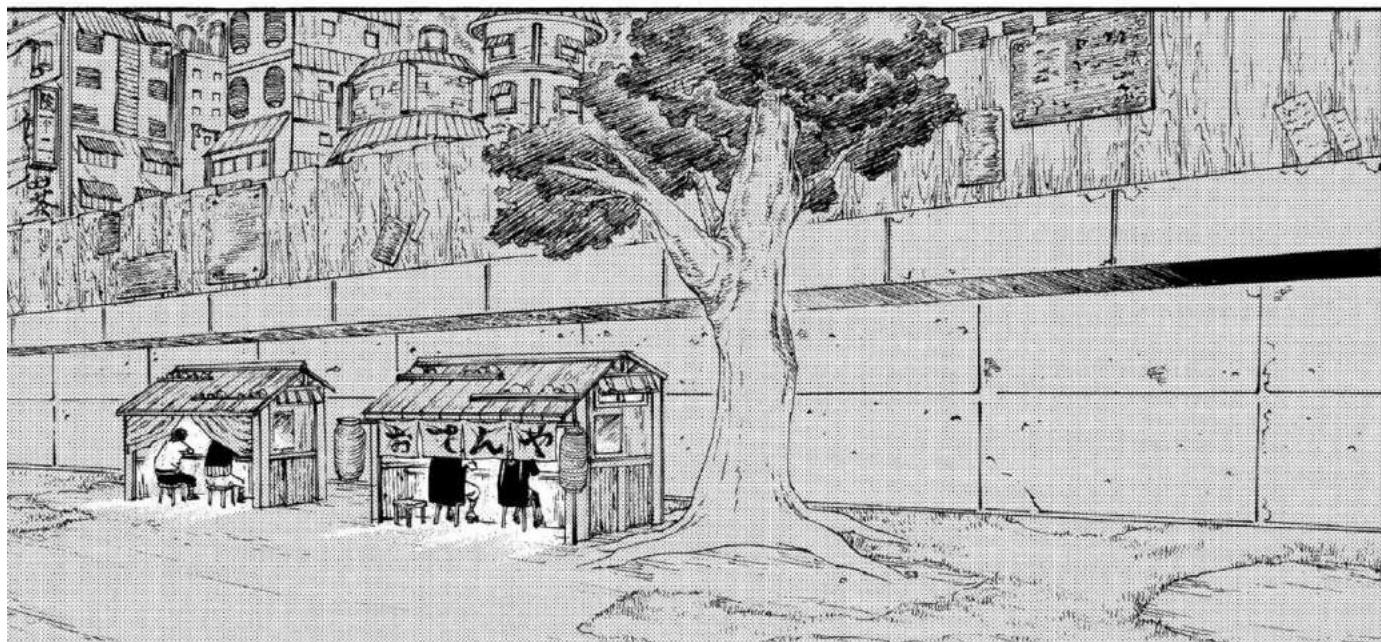


READ
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WAY



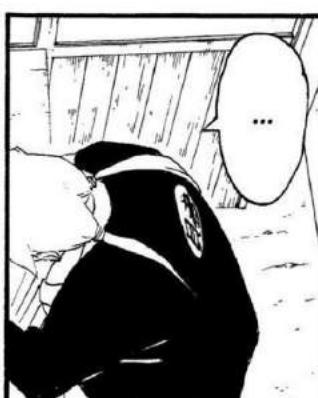


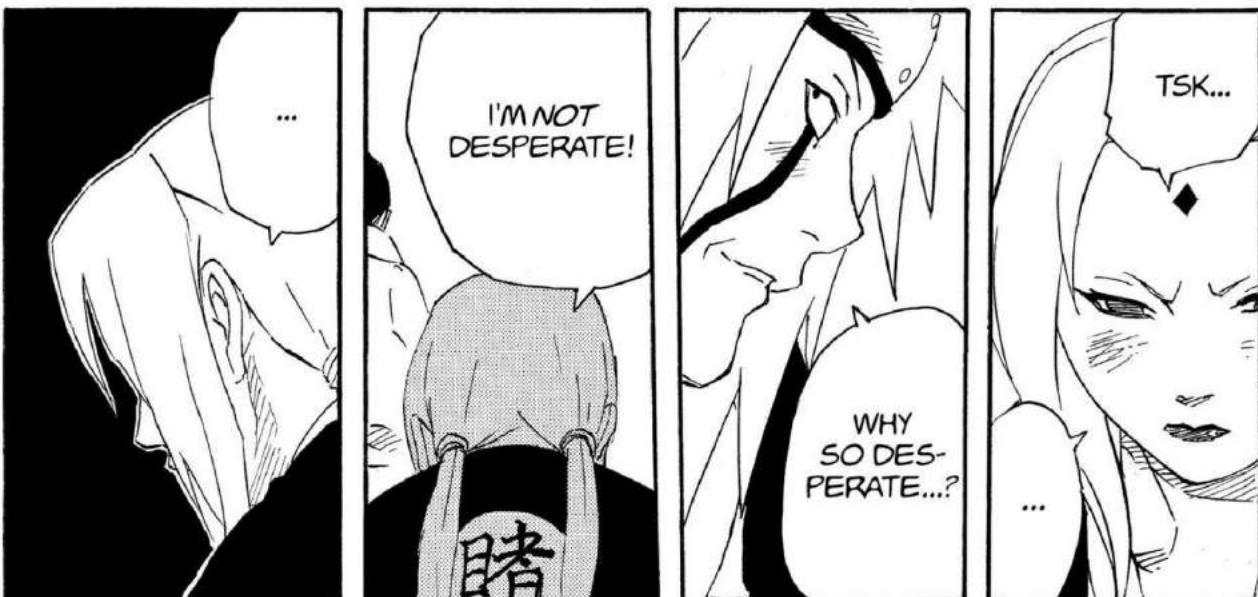
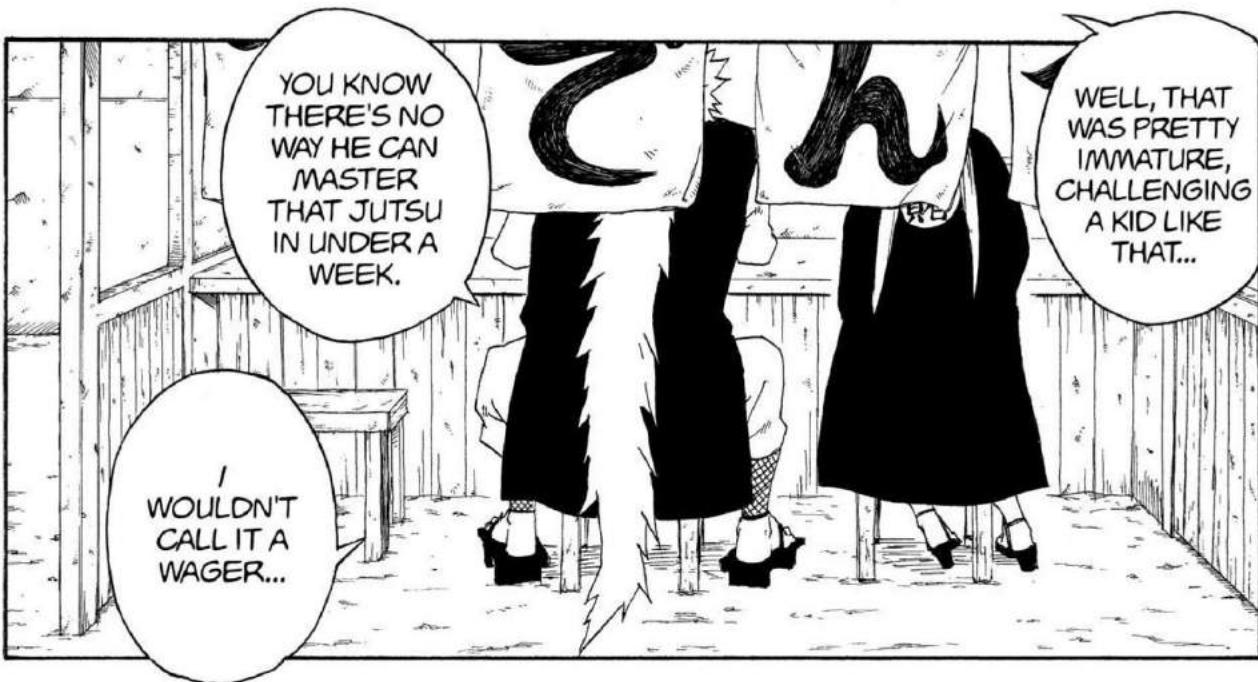
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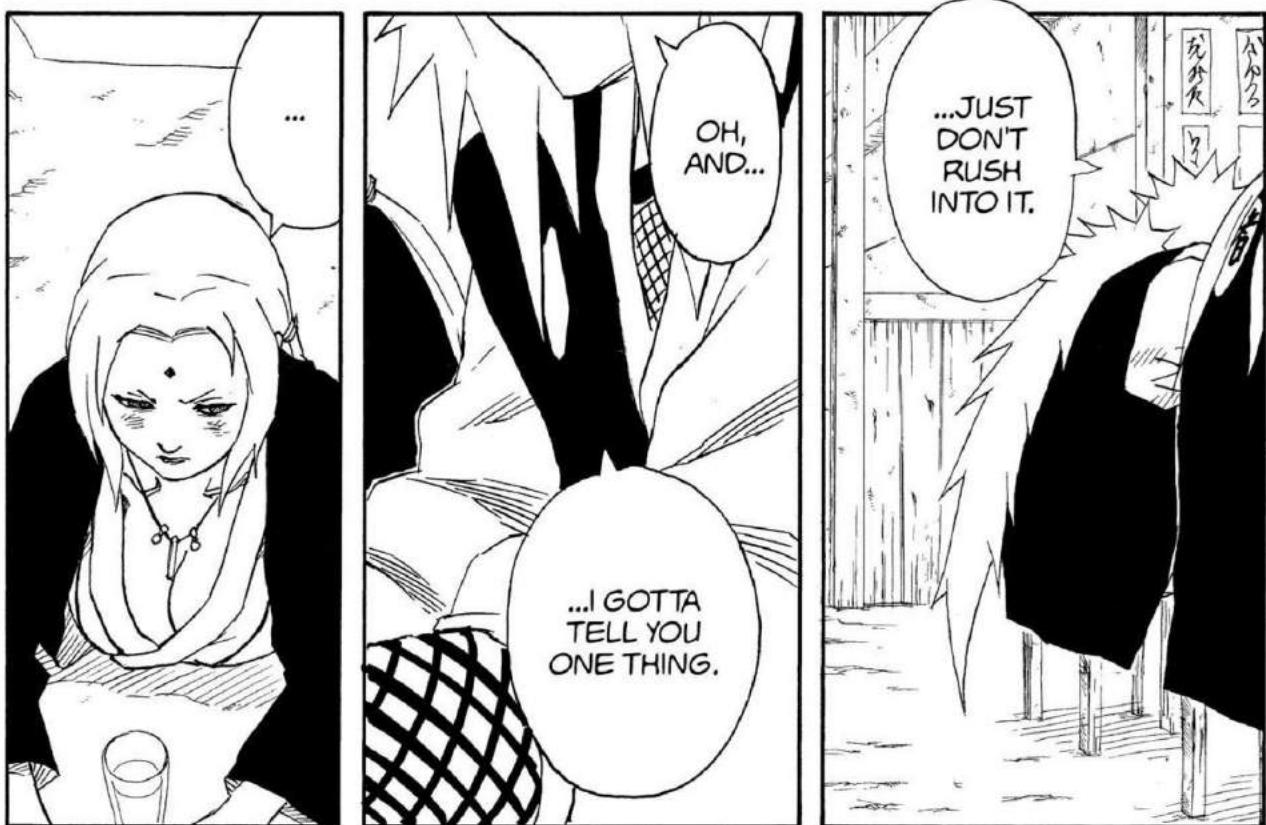
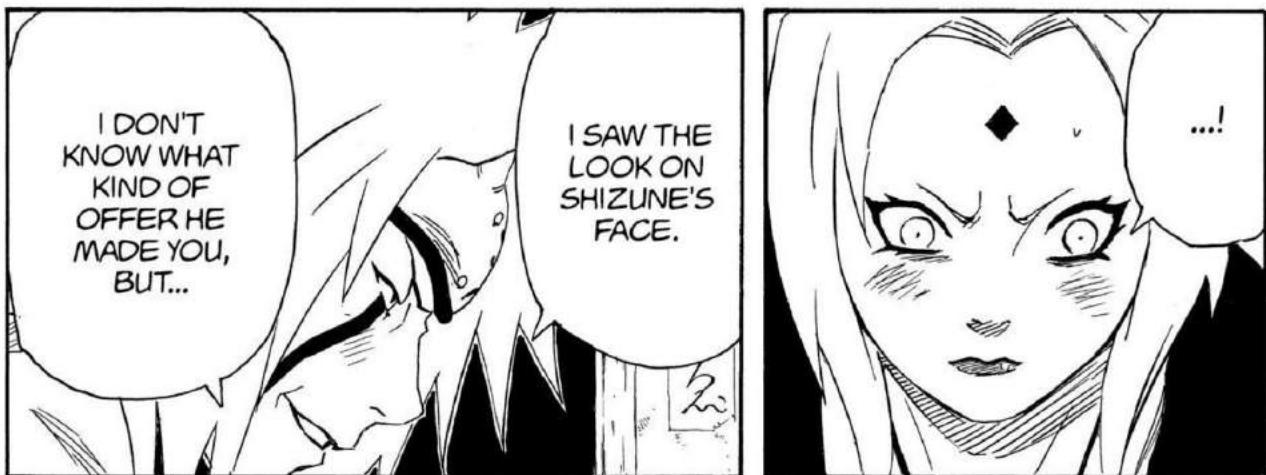




LET ME
MAKE THIS
CLEAR:
I STILL HAVE
NO INTEREST
IN YOU.







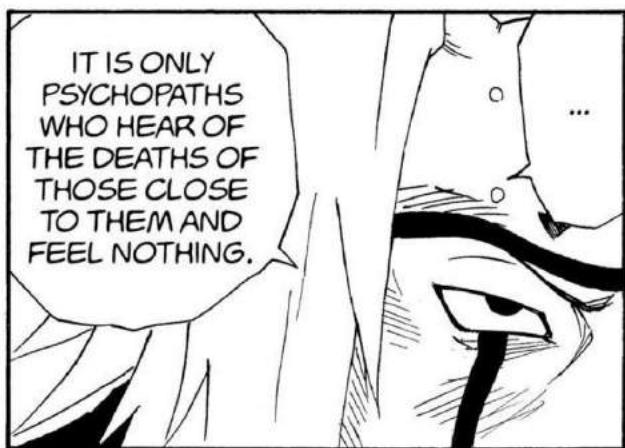
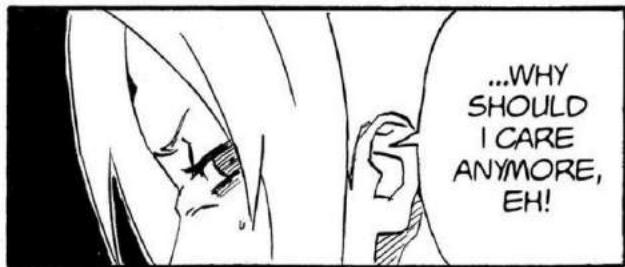


...THAT
WAS THE
DREAM THEY
FOUGHT
FOR!

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

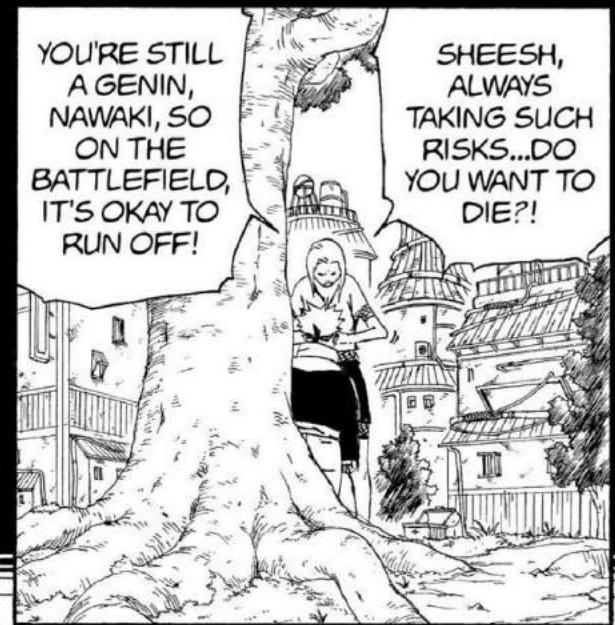
EVERY ONE OF
THE PREVIOUS
HOKAGE RISKED
THEIR LIVES TO
PROTECT THE
VILLAGE OF
KONoha AND
ALL THOSE WHO
LIVE THERE...

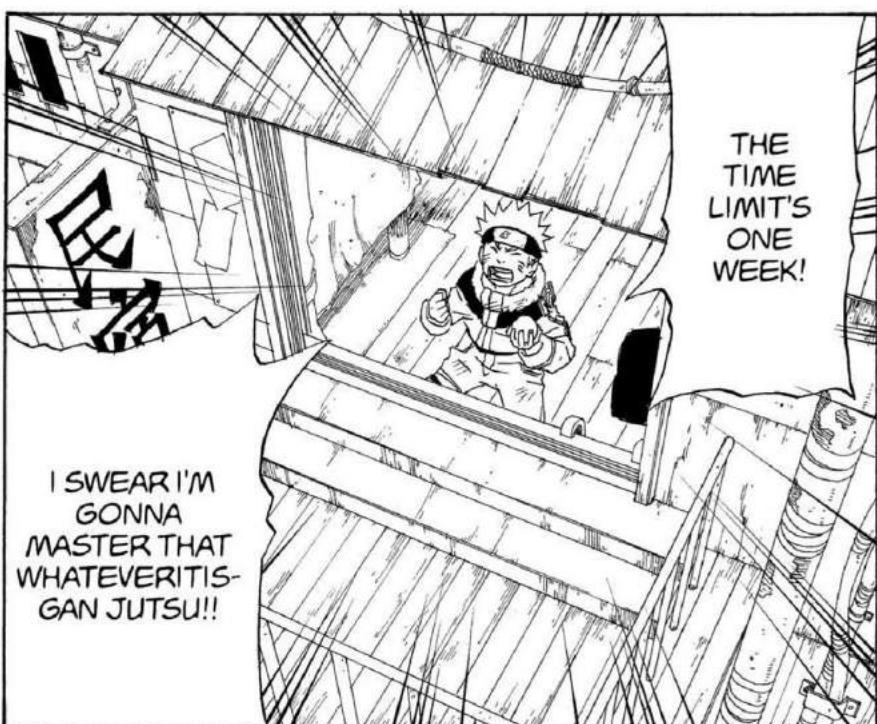




READ
THIS
WAY



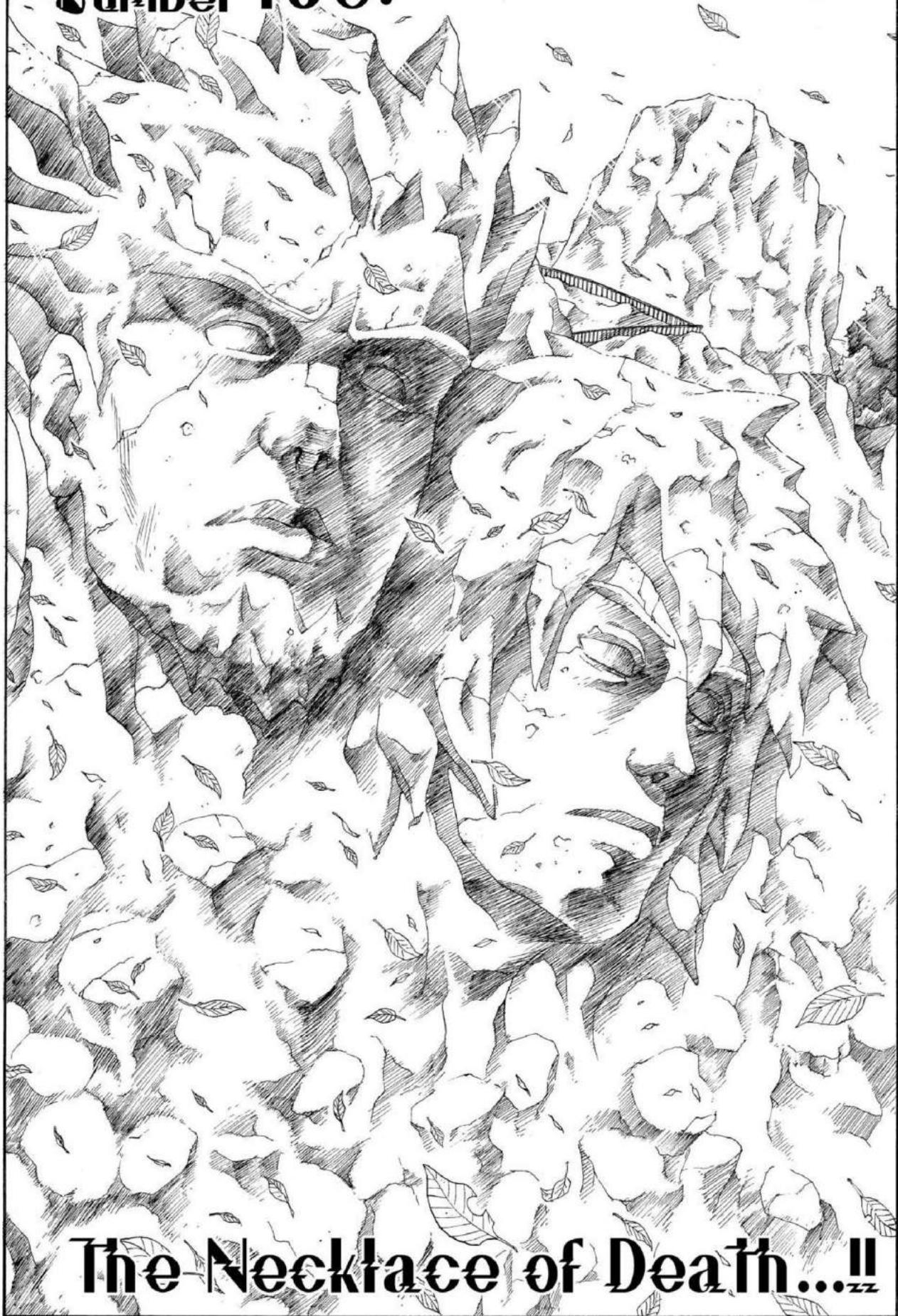




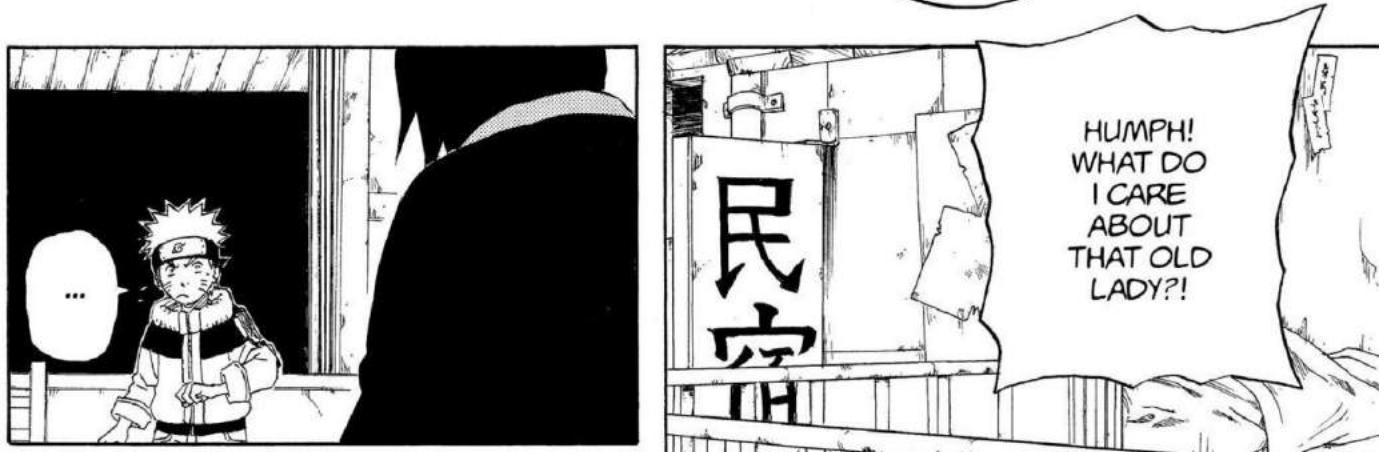




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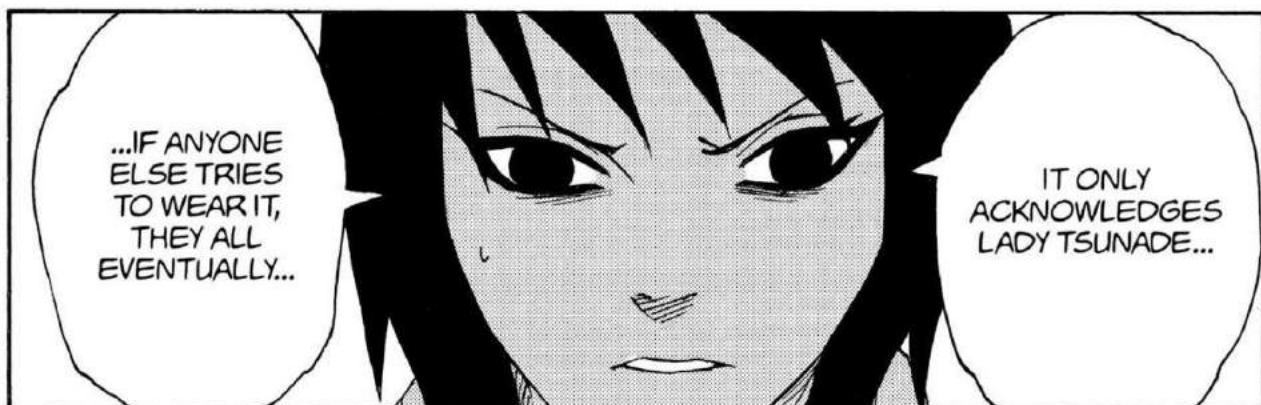
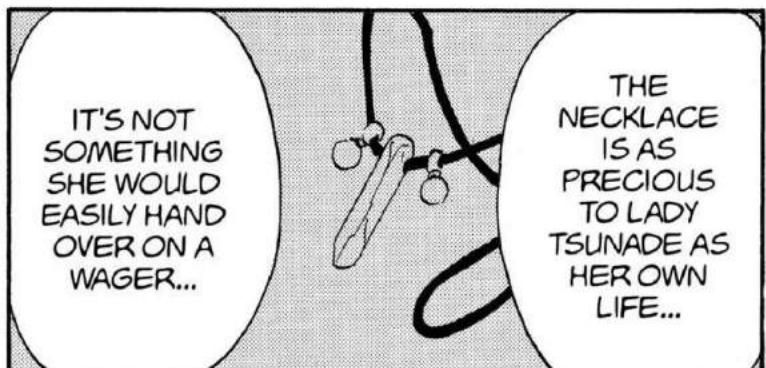


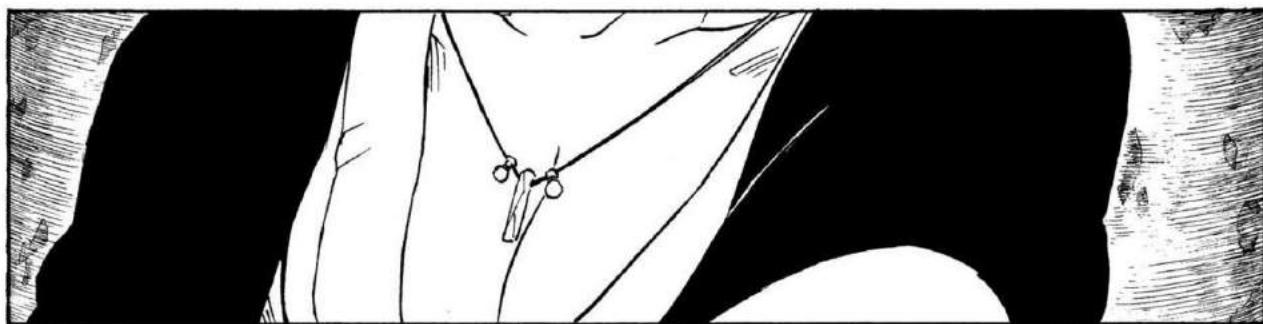
The Necklace of Death...!!

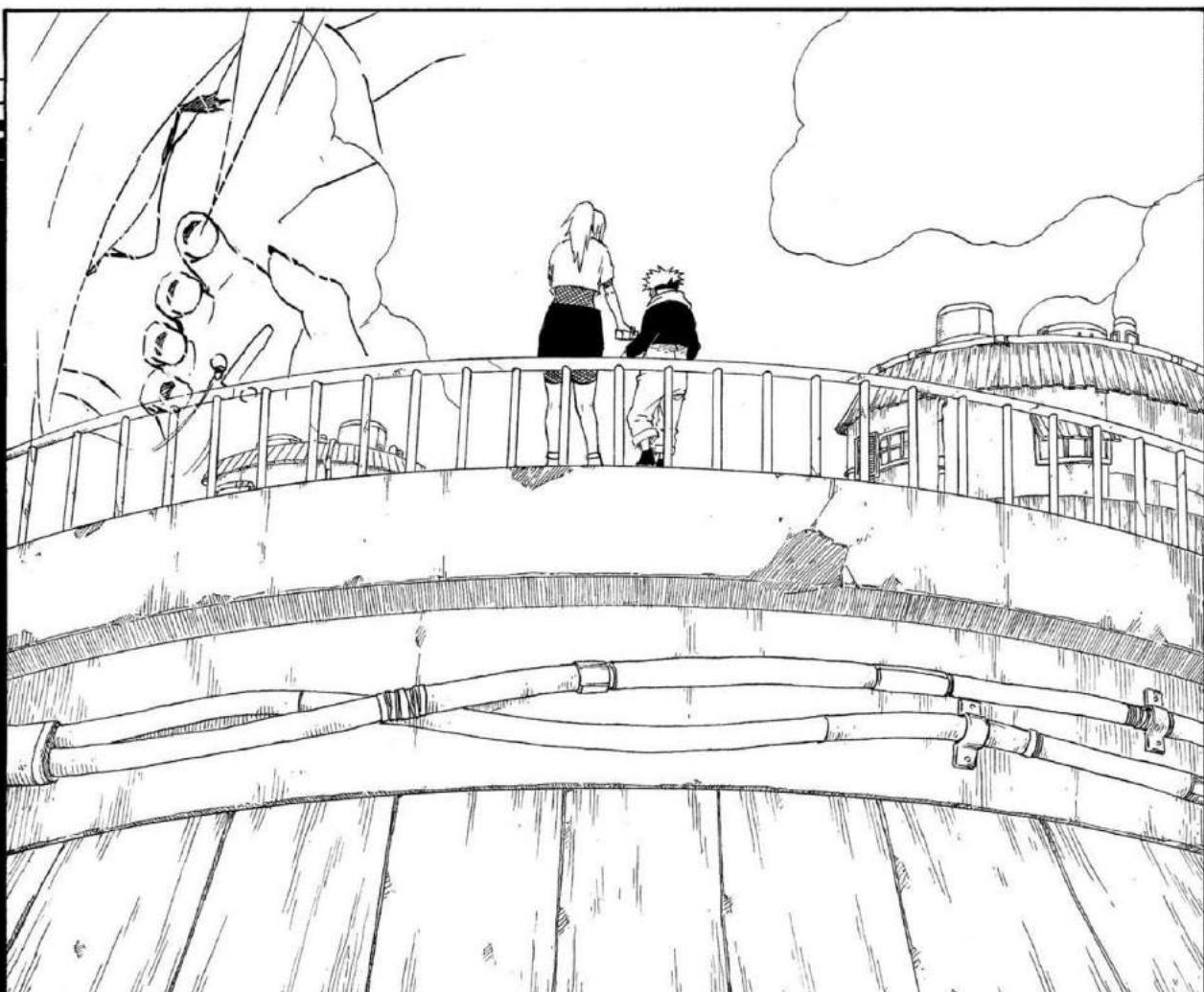


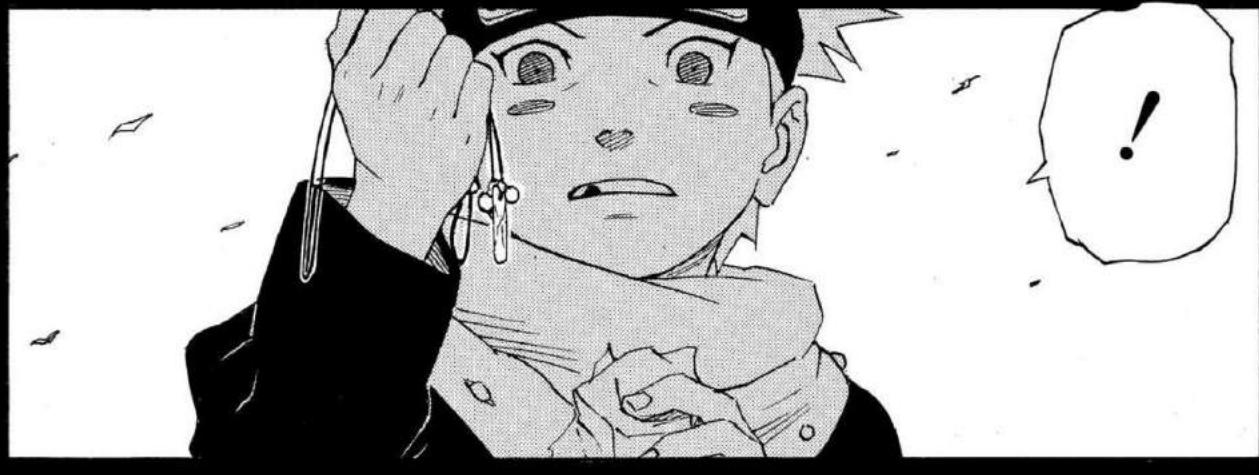
READ
THIS
WAY

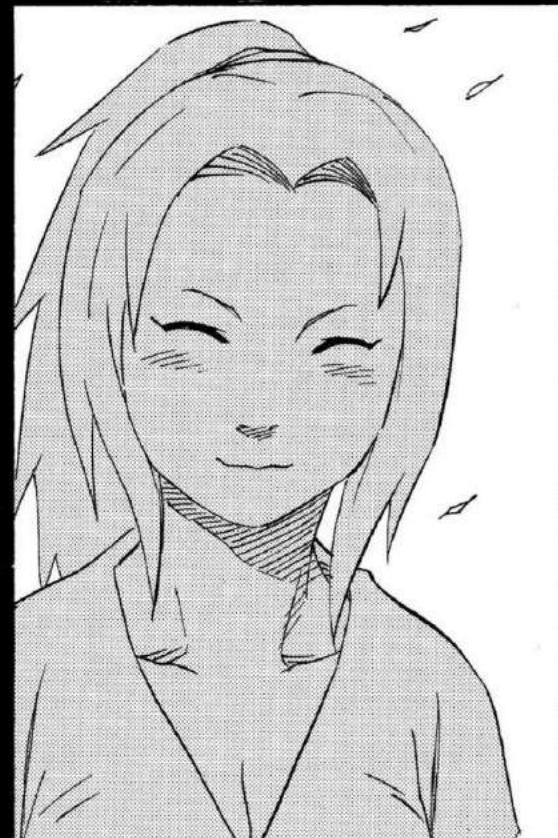


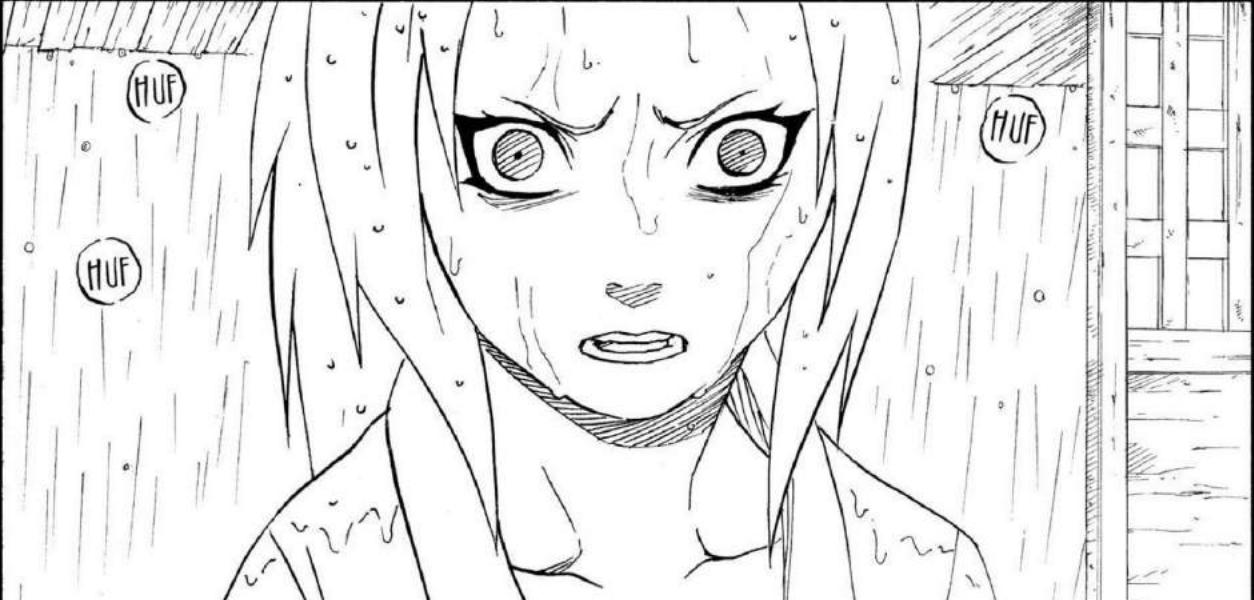
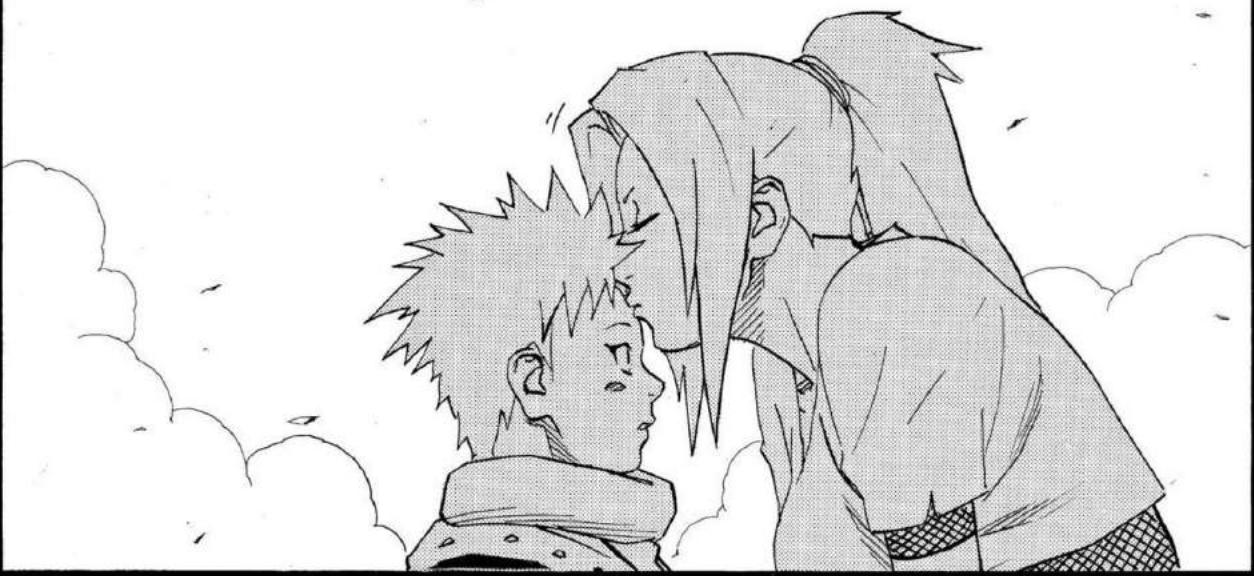


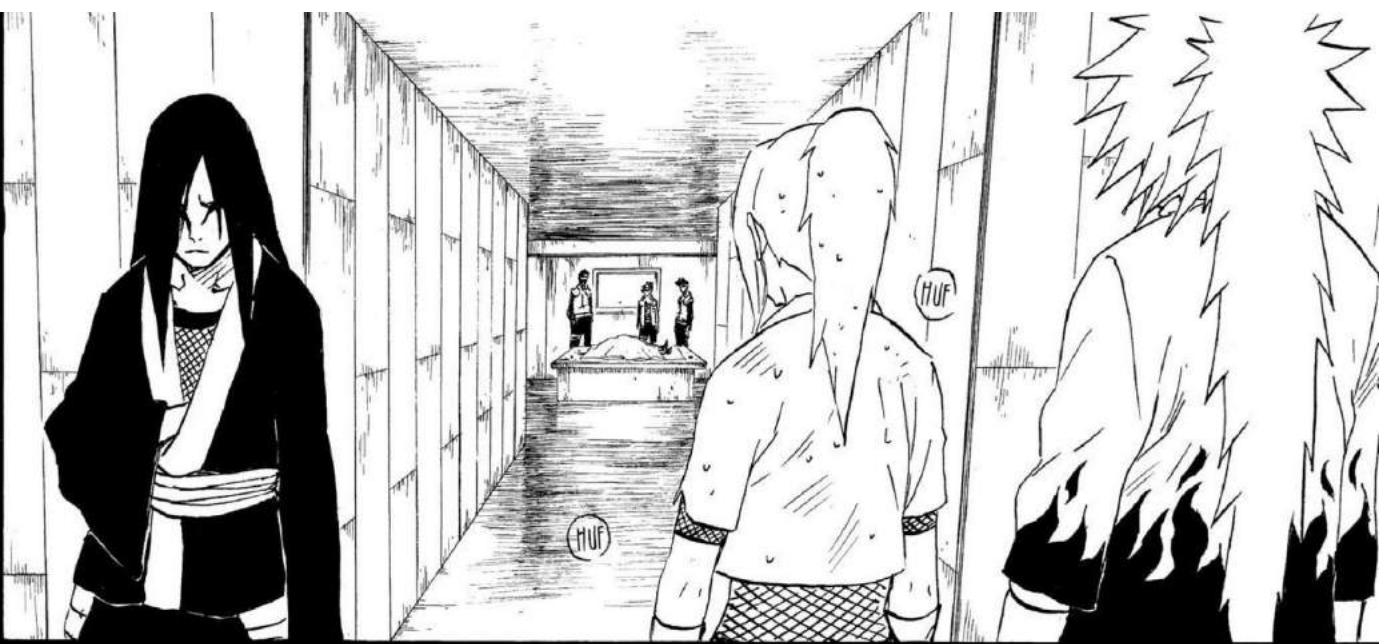




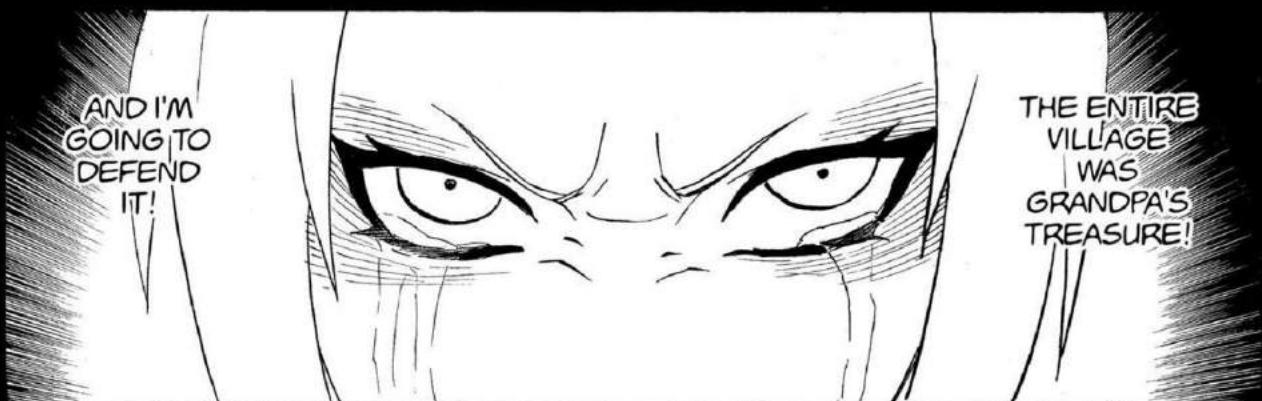
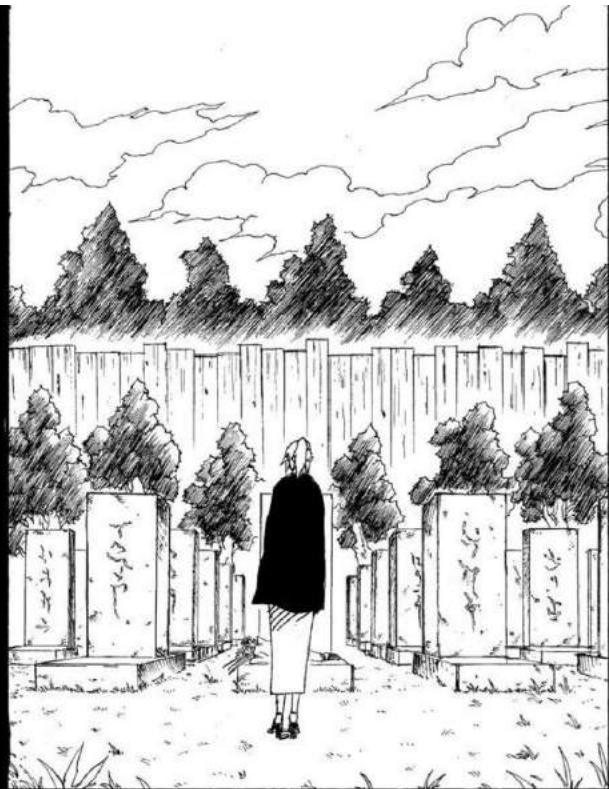


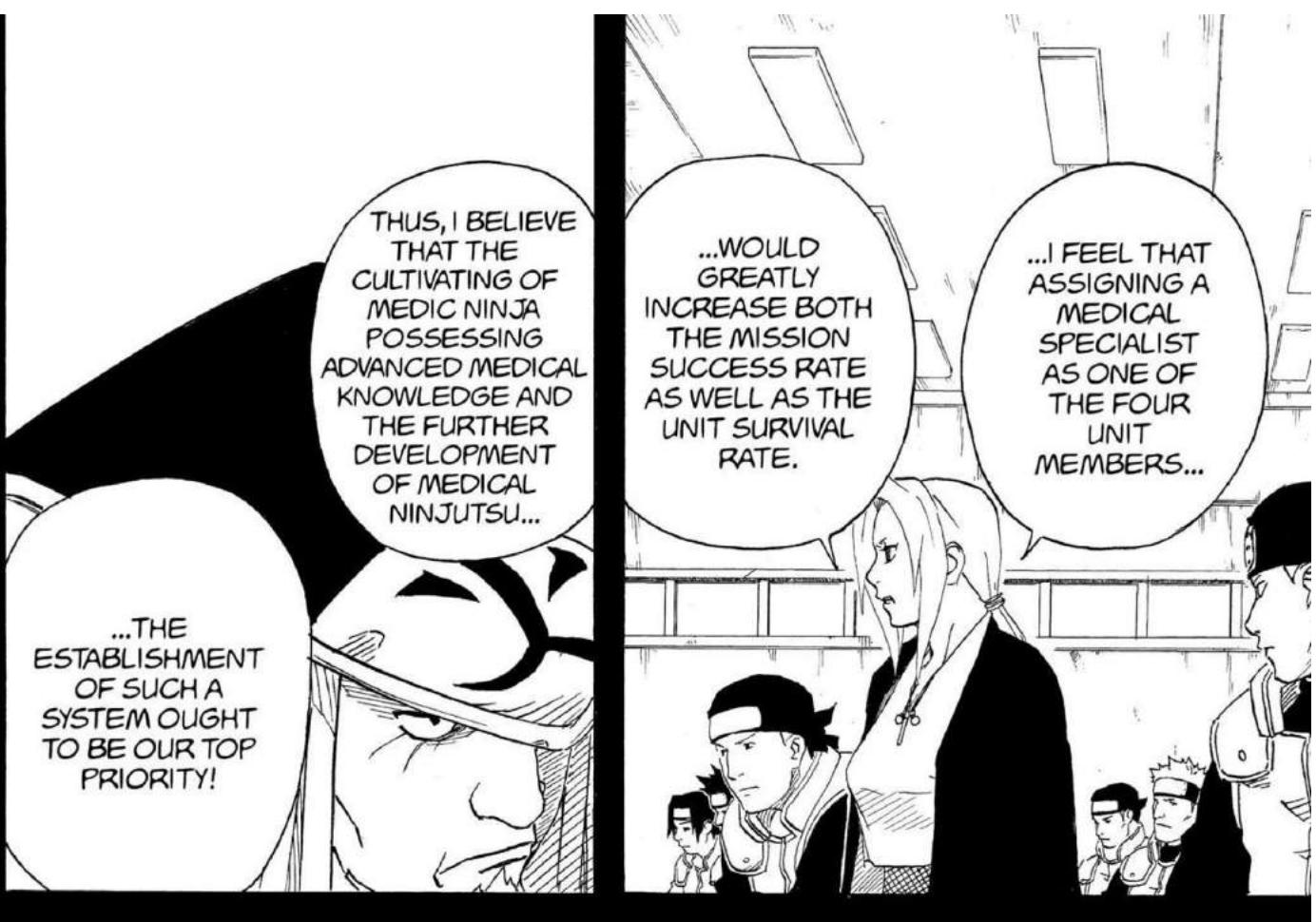


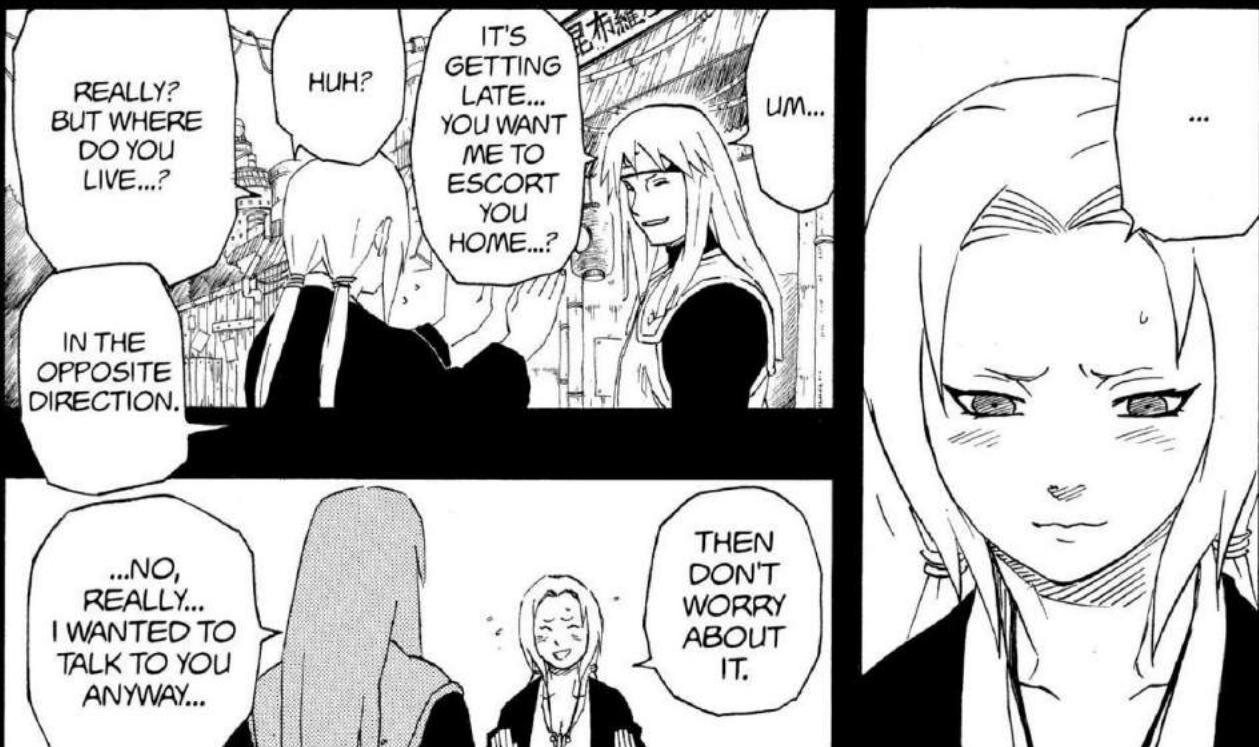


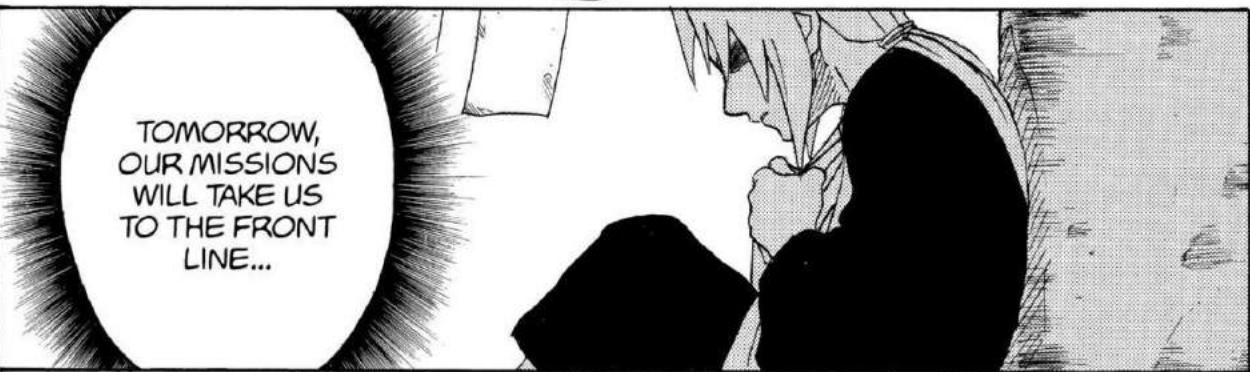
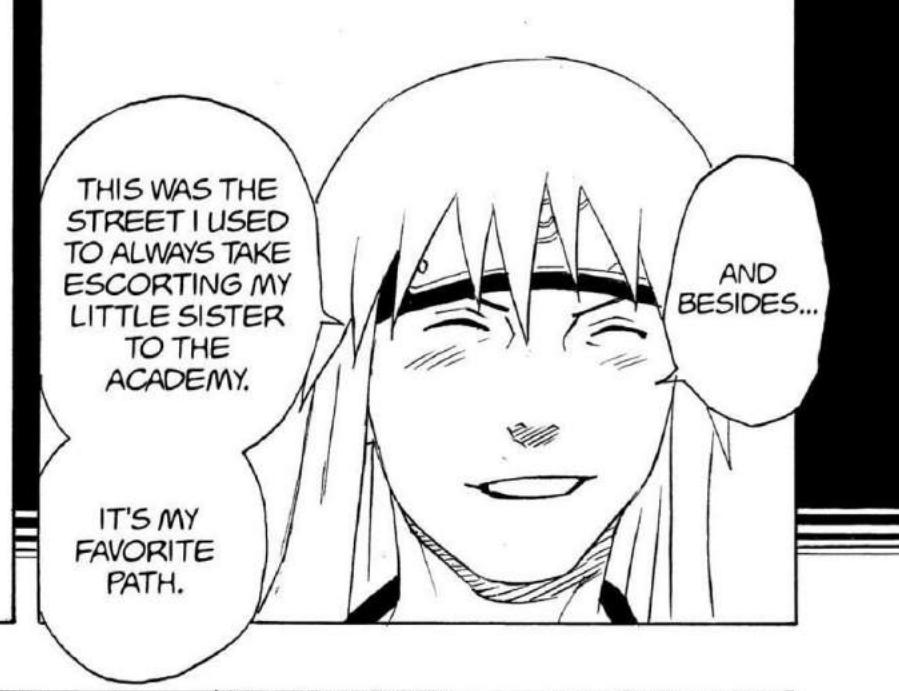


READ
THIS WAY







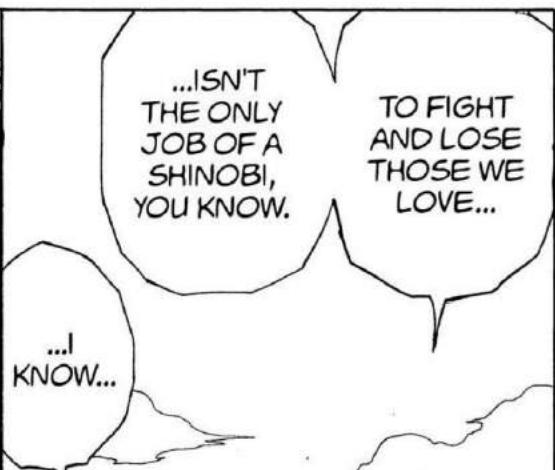


IT'S BECAUSE I LIVE IN THE WORLD OF SHINOBI, CONSTANTLY SHADOWED BY DEATH...

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...



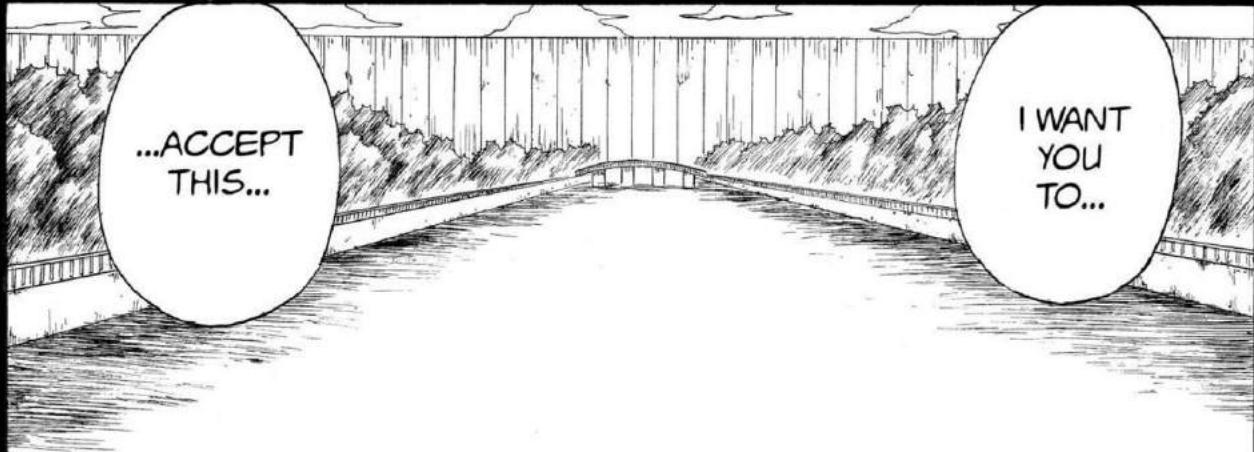
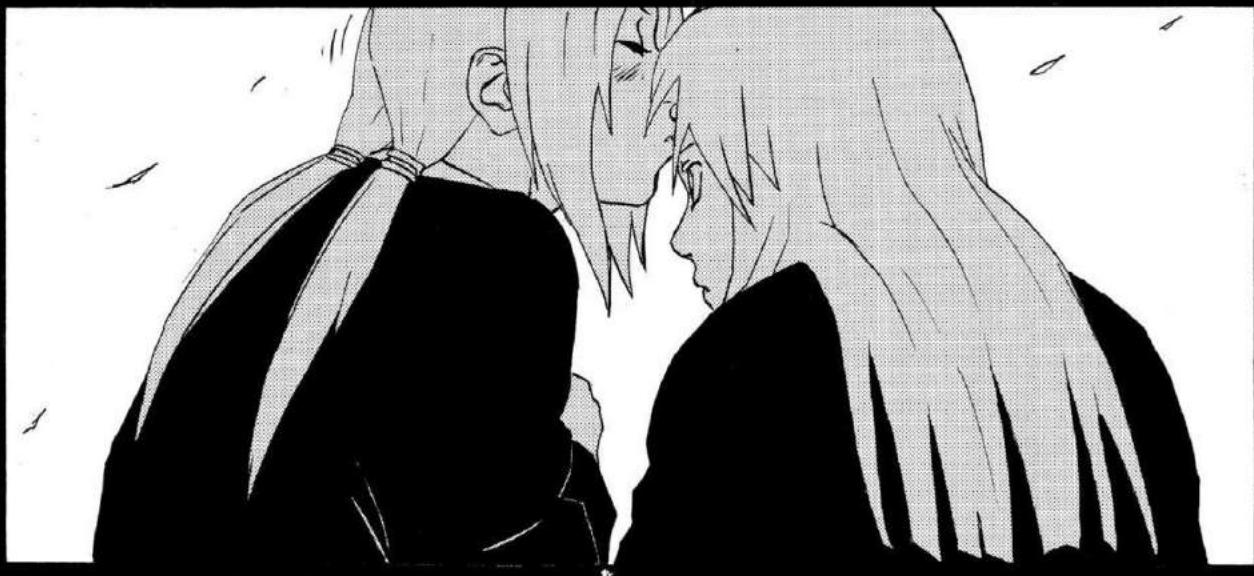
SINCE THE DAY MY LITTLE SISTER DIED...

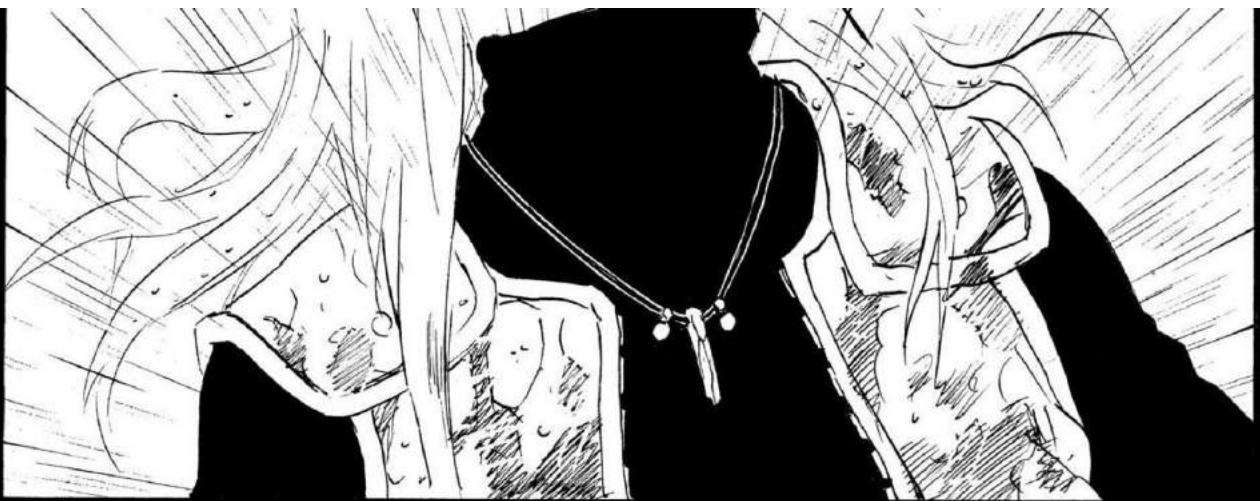
THIS THOUGHT IS THE ONLY THING THAT'S BEEN KEEPING ME GOING.





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









KURPLA
SHH

STOP!

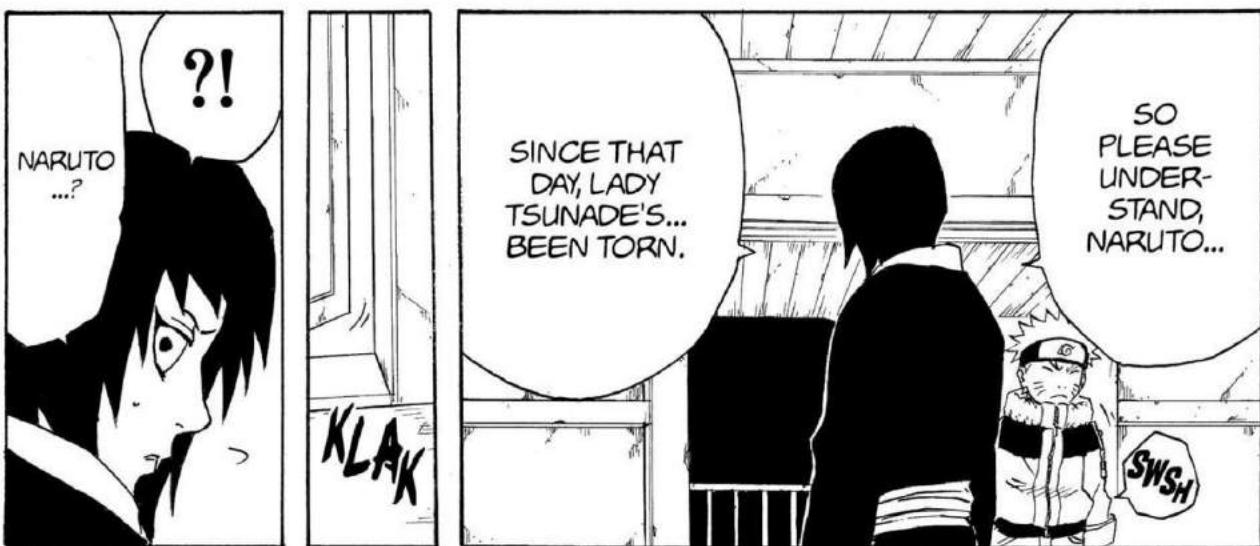
STOP
IT...!

STOP
IT...
STOP
SPURT-
ING....!

STOP!

STOP!





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 4, PAGE 26'S KISHIMOTO MASASHI'S FIRST MANGA REJECT SPECIAL).

LATER ON, MR. YAHAGI ENCOURAGED ME WITH WHY DON'T YOU DRAW A MORE SHÔNEN-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."

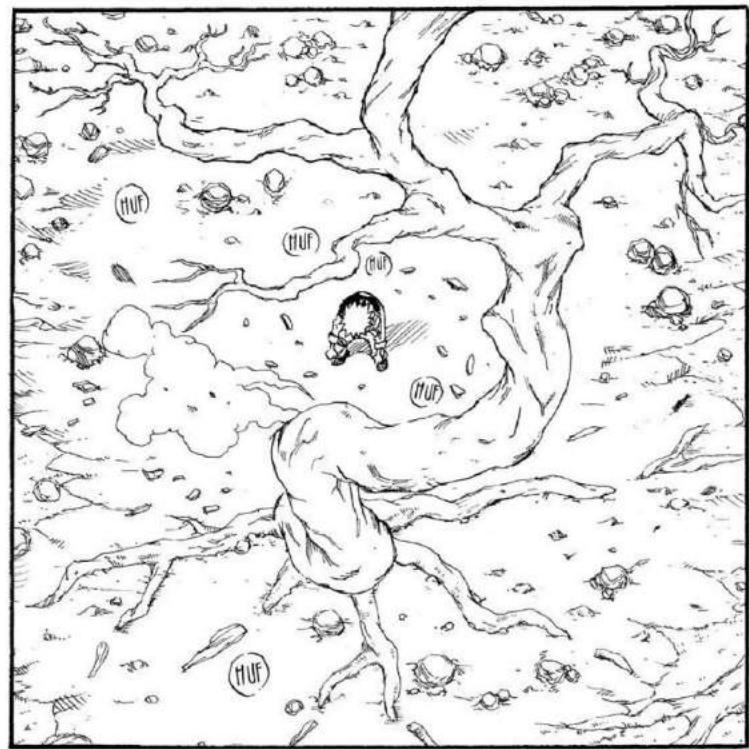
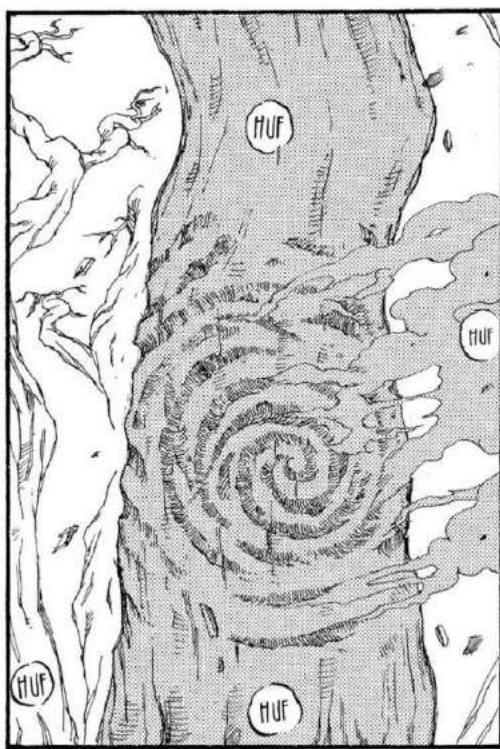
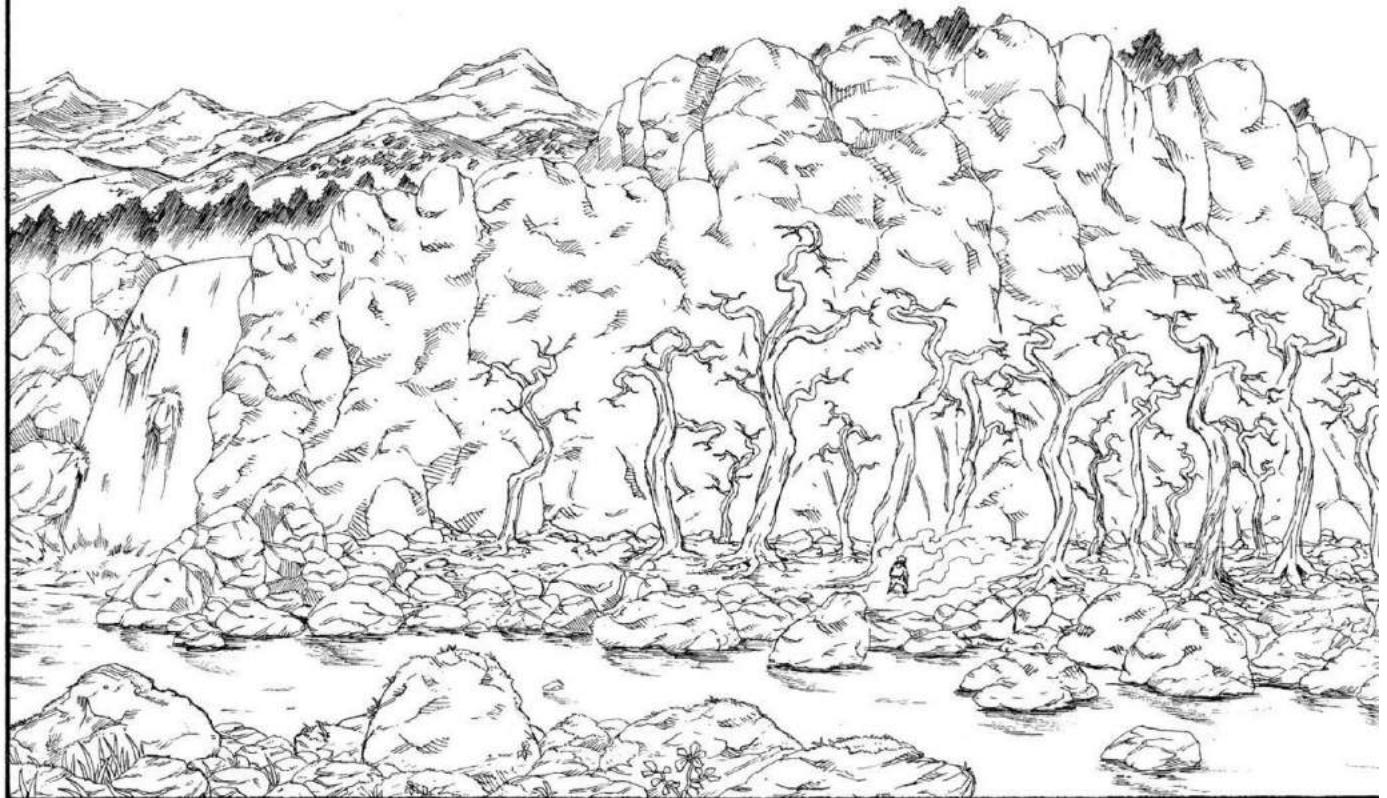
EVEN IF IT WERE A LIE OR FLATTERY, IT STILL MADE ME HAPPY! I HAD BEEN DEPRESSED, BUT IT RENEWED MY DETERMINATION! IMMEDIATELY, I STARTED DRAWING A DRAFT. AND THEN, WHEN I FOUND OUT THAT MR. YAHAGI HIMSELF WAS PLANNING TO PAY ME A PERSONAL VISIT TO MY HOUSE (IN KYUSHU) TO GO OVER IT, I PUT GREAT DRIVE 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..."

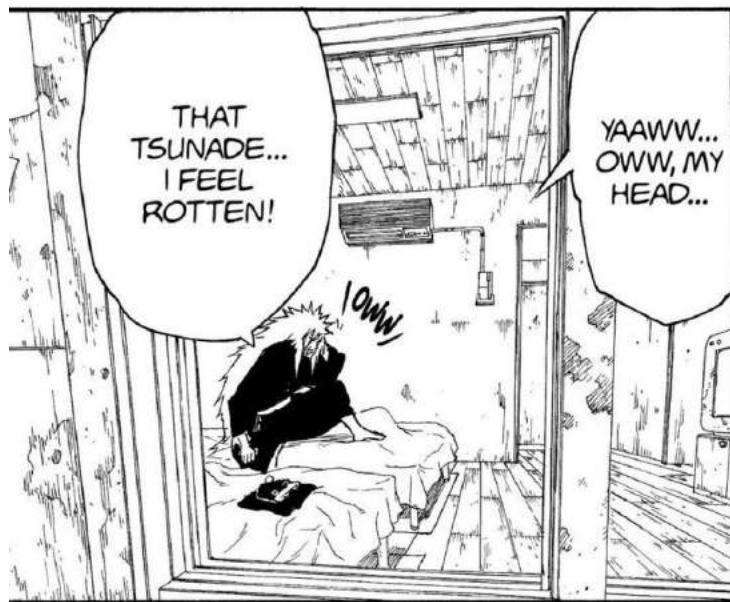
I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY ANYMORE... SINCE THEN, I'VE GOTTEN DEPRESSED COUNTLESS TIMES, BUT EACH TIME I WOULD PULL OUT THAT LETTER AND REREAD IT TO THE END AGAIN... IT'S A PRECIOUS LETTER THAT I STILL PEEK AT FROM TIME TO TIME EVEN NOW.

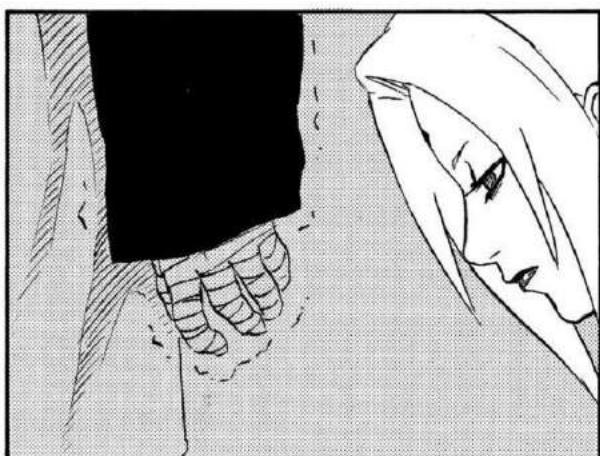
Number 161: Tsunade's Choice!!





READ
THIS
WAY





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

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



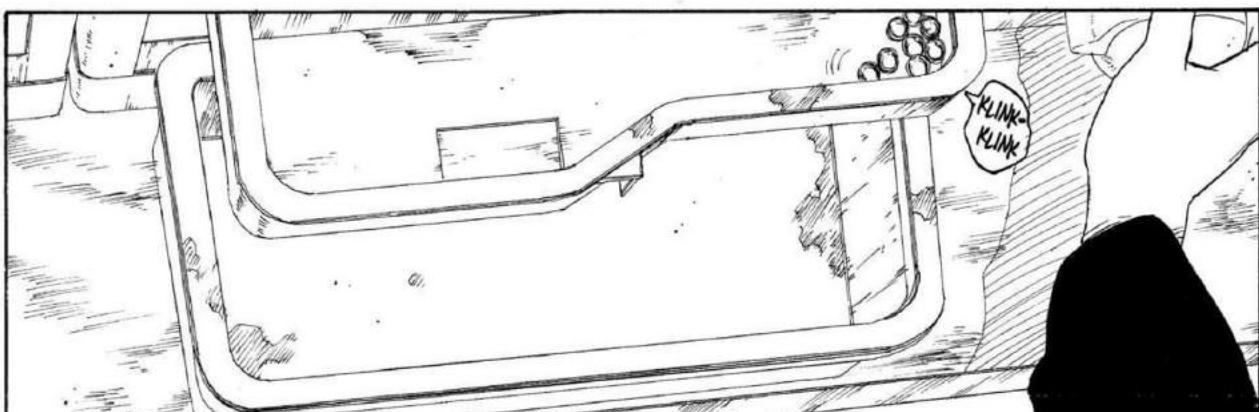
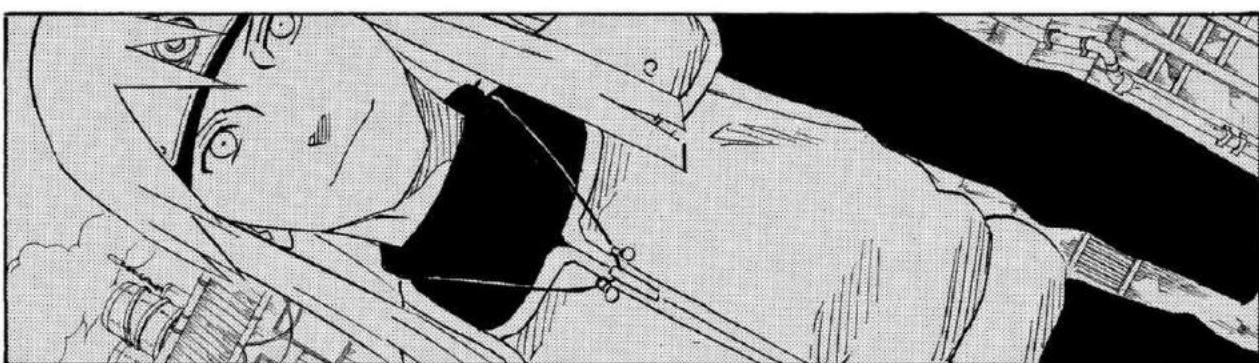
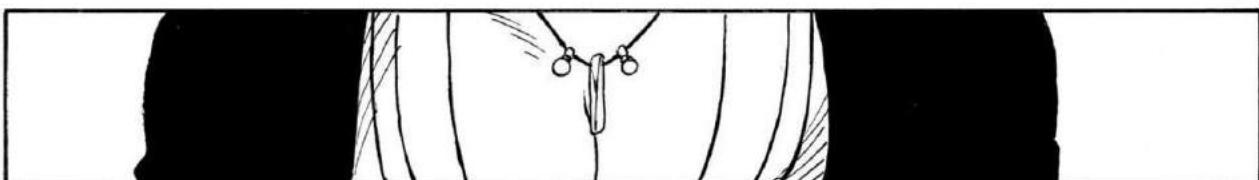
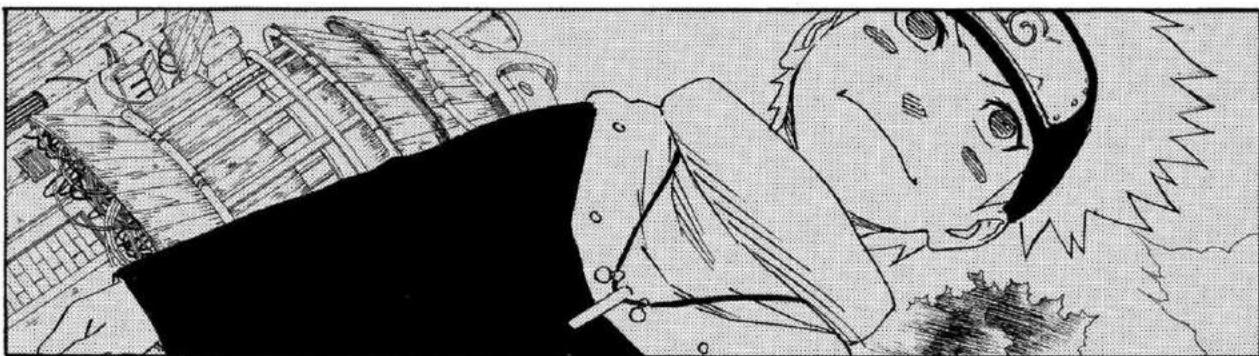
HAVE YOU
FORGOTTEN
THEIR
WISHES...
OR EVEN
YOUR WISH...
YOUR DREAM,
LADY
TSUNADE?!

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.

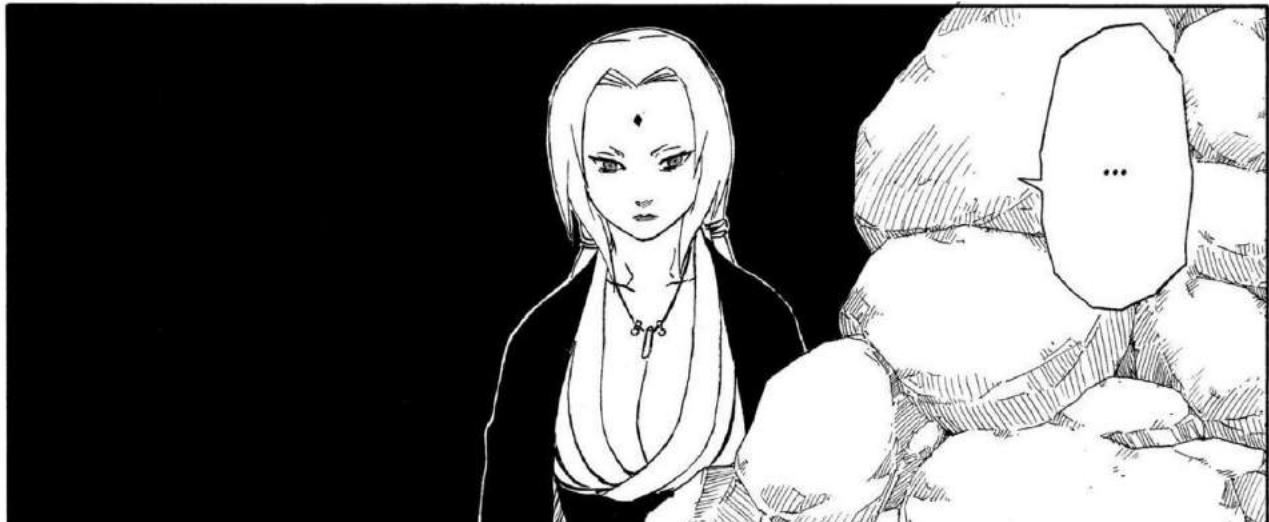
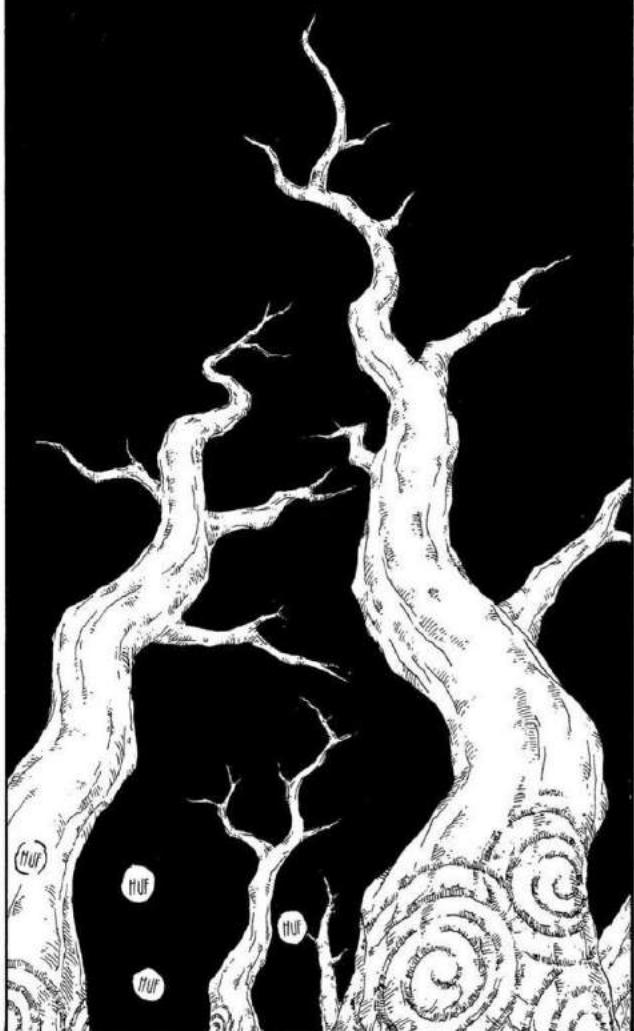
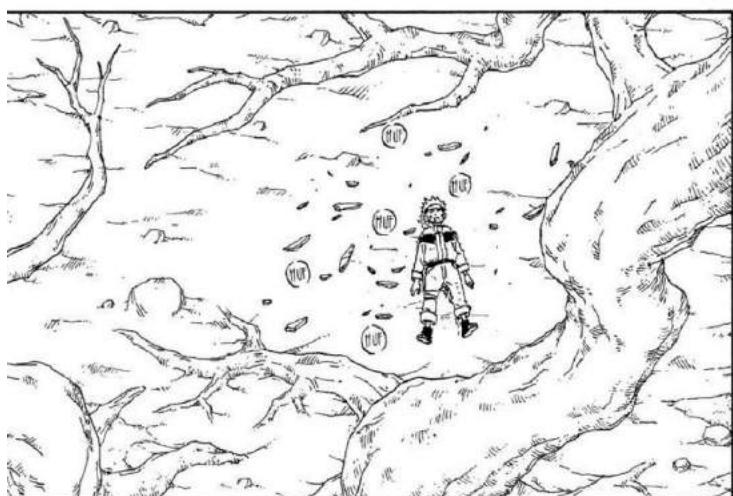
I'LL LAY IT
STRAIGHT,
TSUNADE...

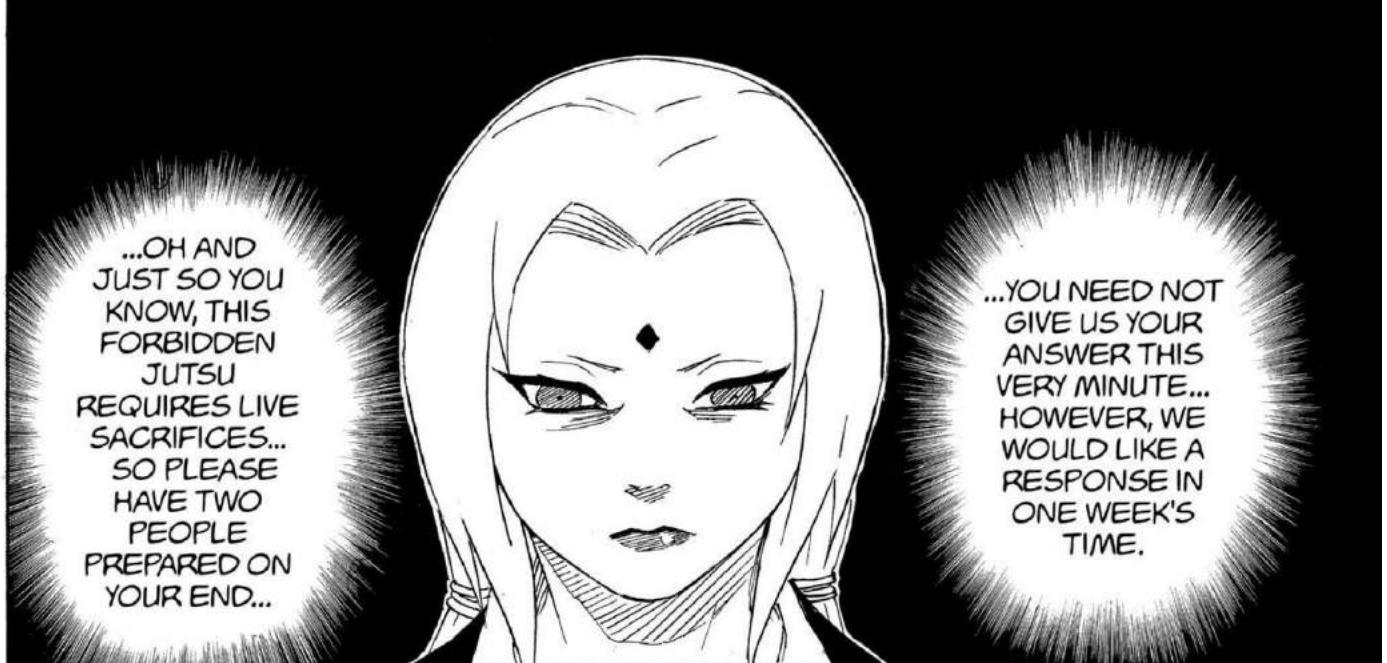


READ
THIS
WAY



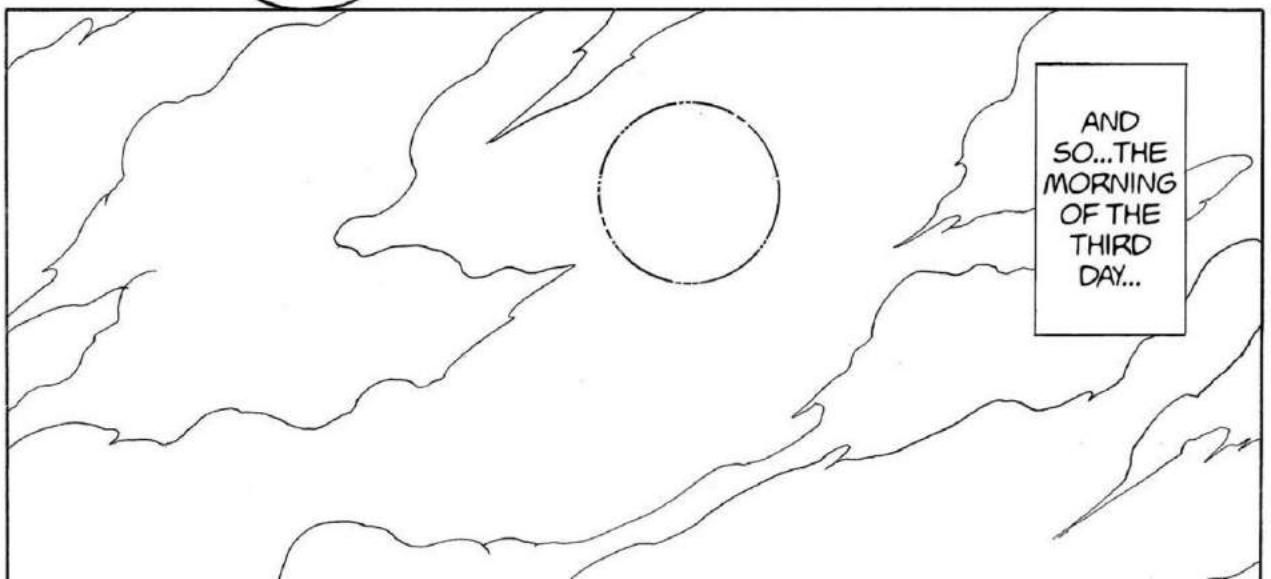
THE
SECOND
NIGHT
AFTER THE
WAGER
WITH
TSUNADE...





READ
THIS
WAY





HAH!



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...

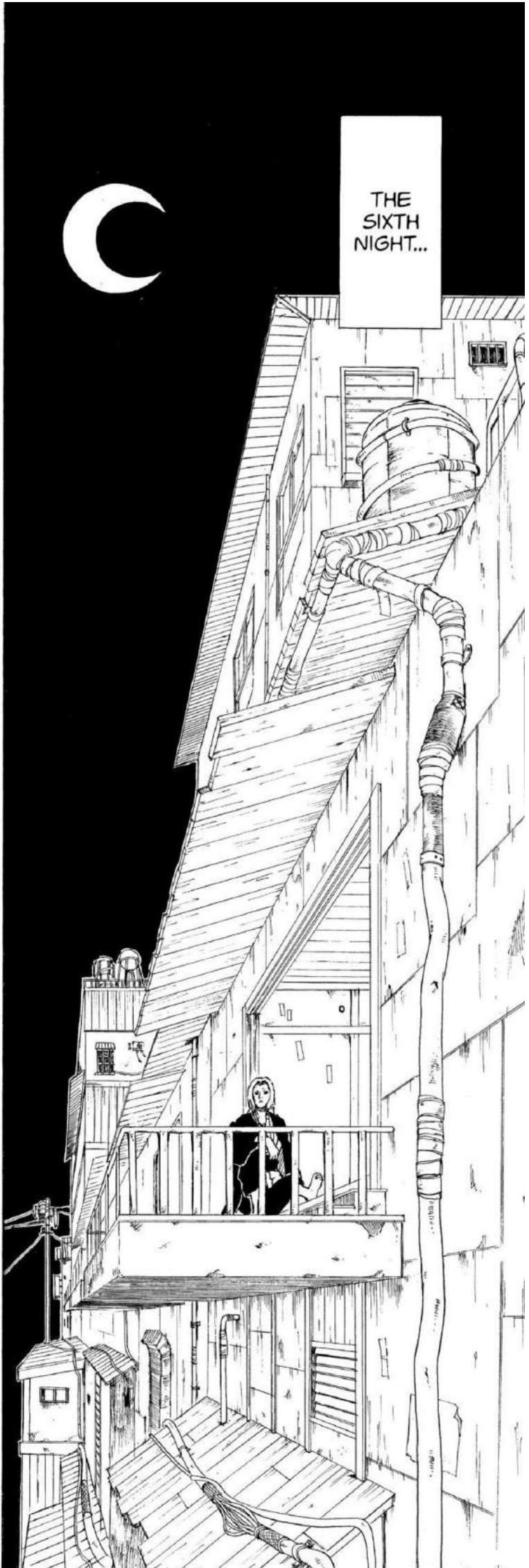
...BUT I CAN'T SEEM TO COMPRESS MY FULL CHAKRA AND CONTAIN IT IN THE SHAPE OF A PERFECT SPHERE...

WHAP!! AP GLARE

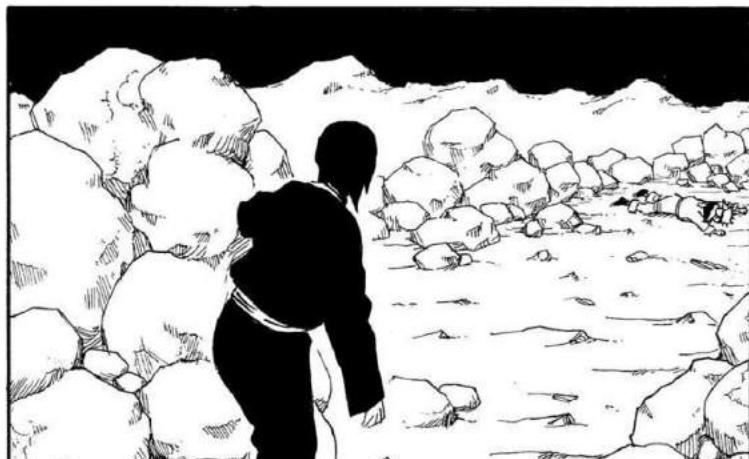
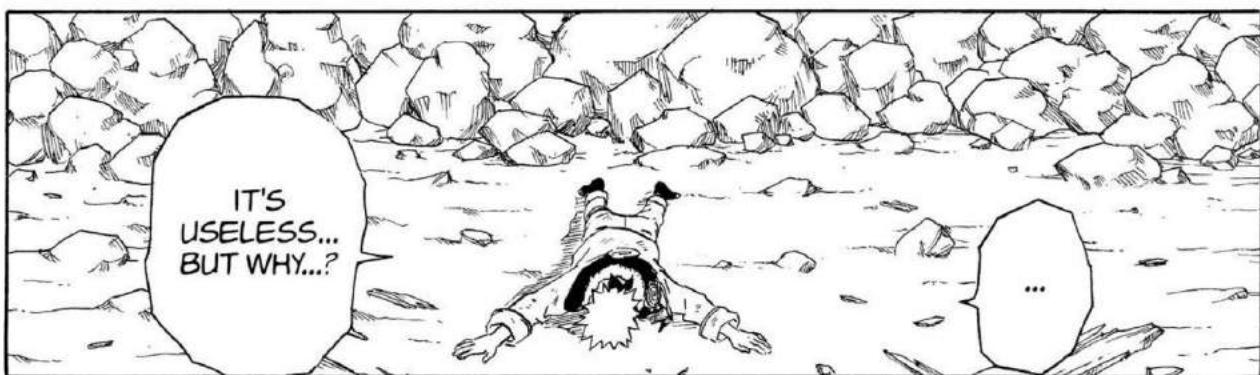


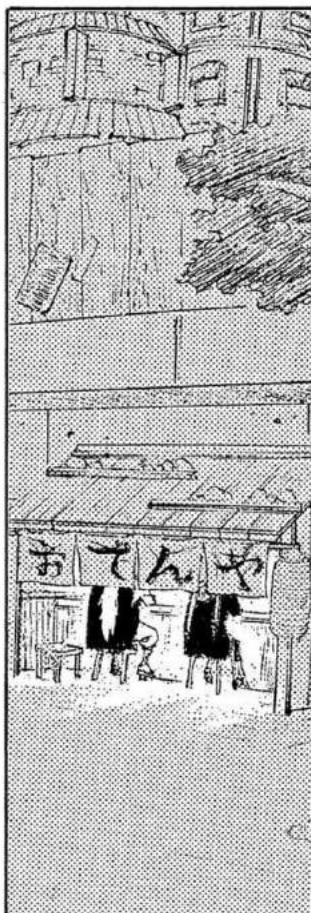
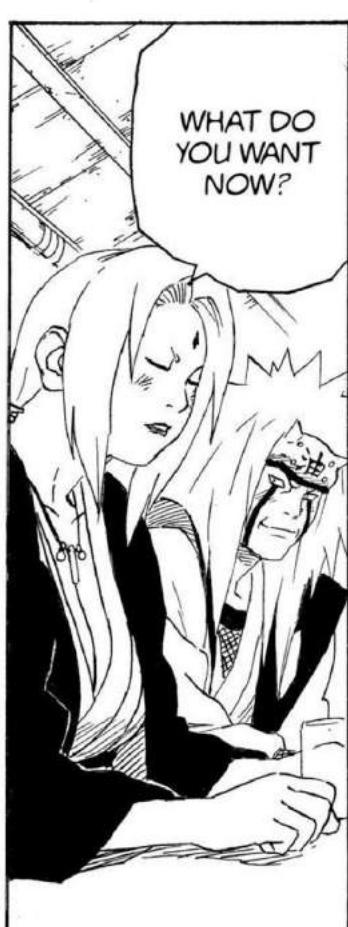
PLAYING MIGHTY MENTOR BY TEACHING HIM JUTSU HE HAS NO HOPE OF MASTERING?

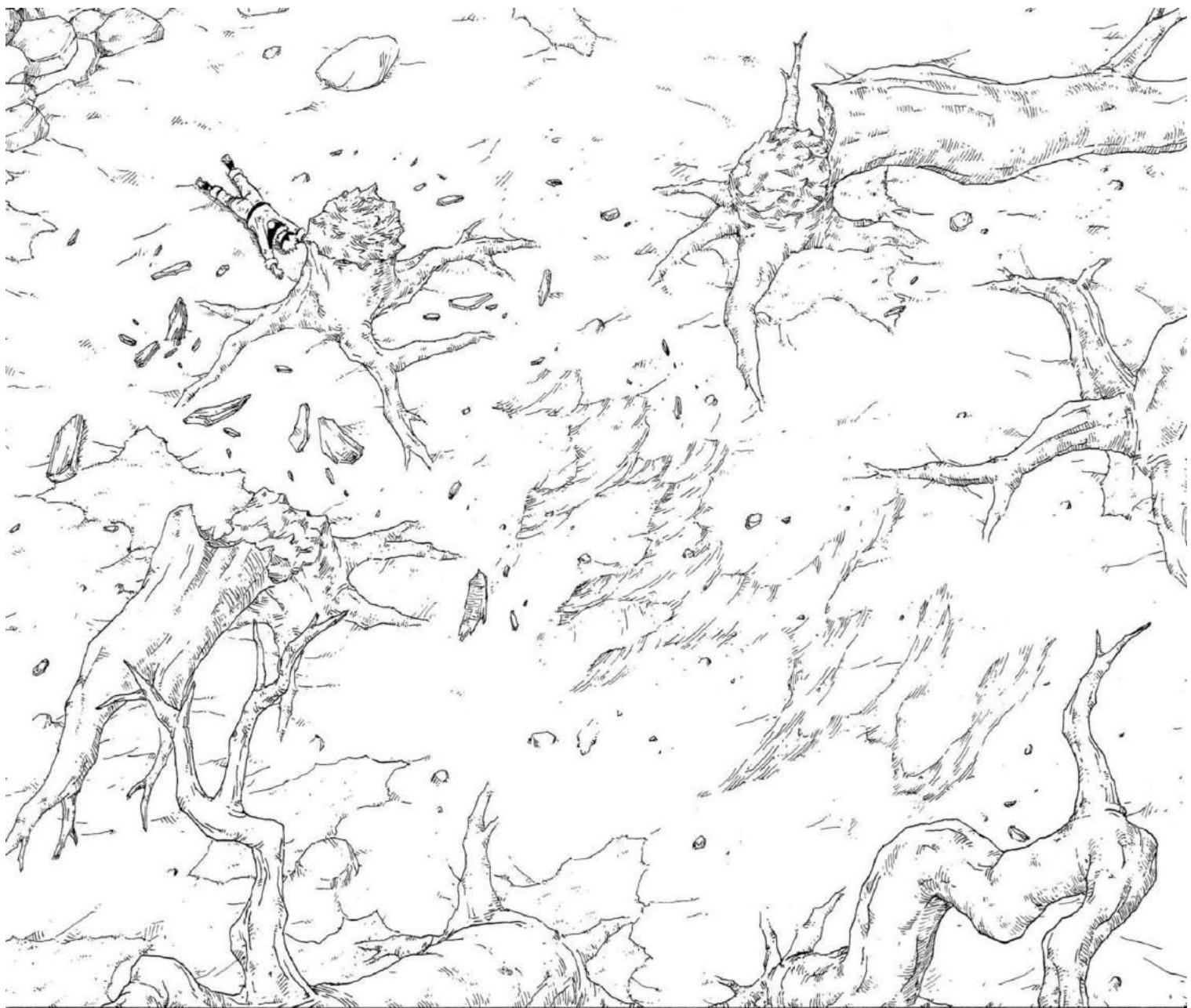


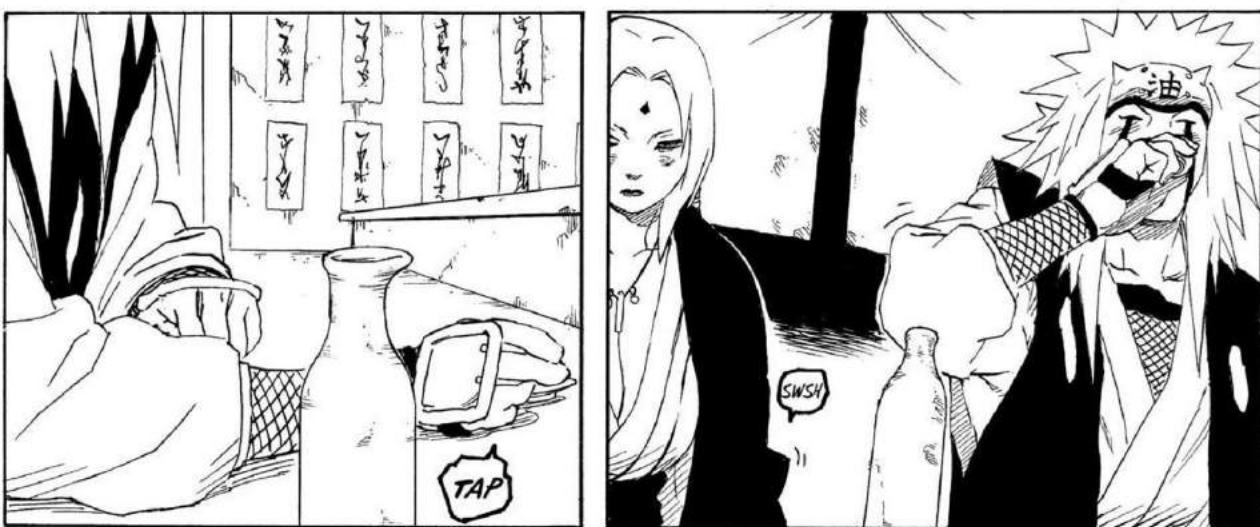
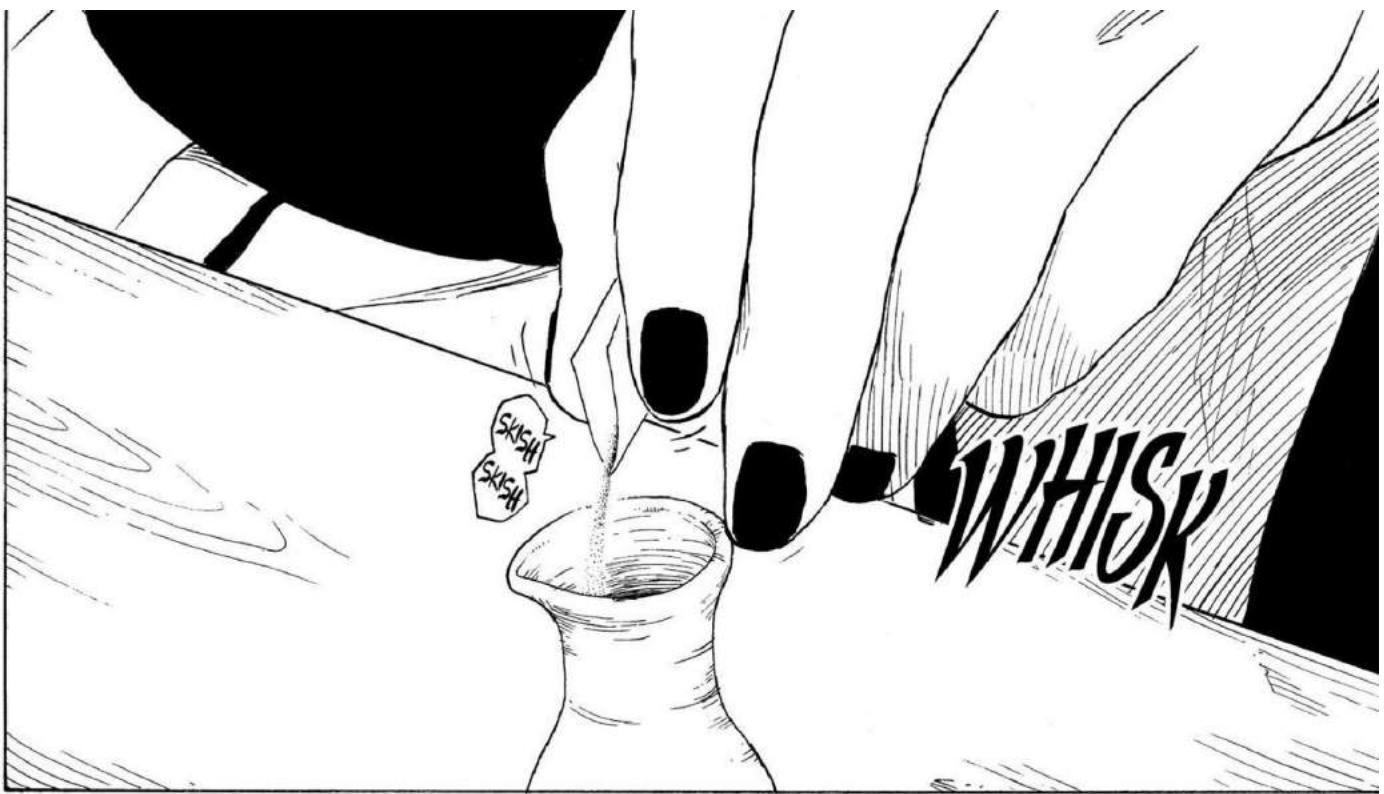


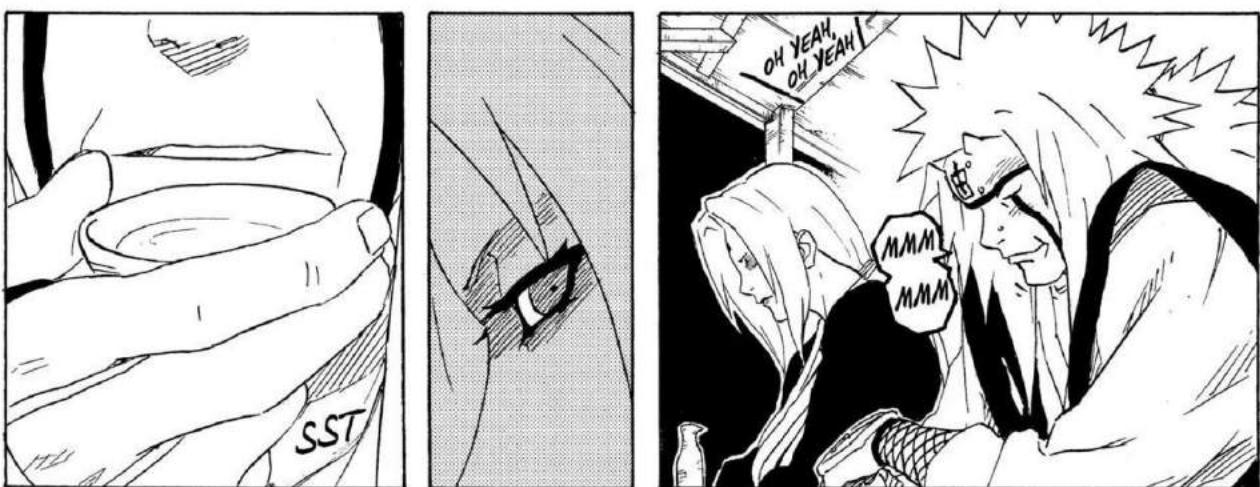
READ
THIS
WAY

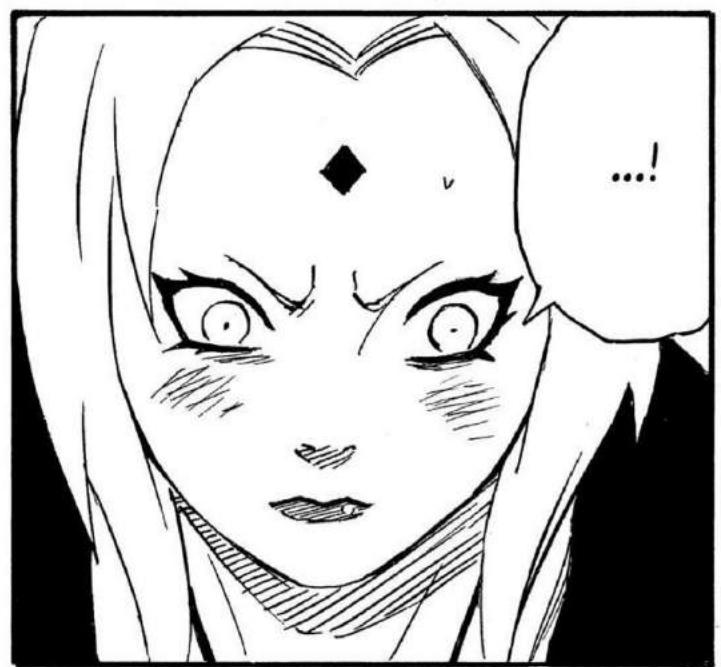


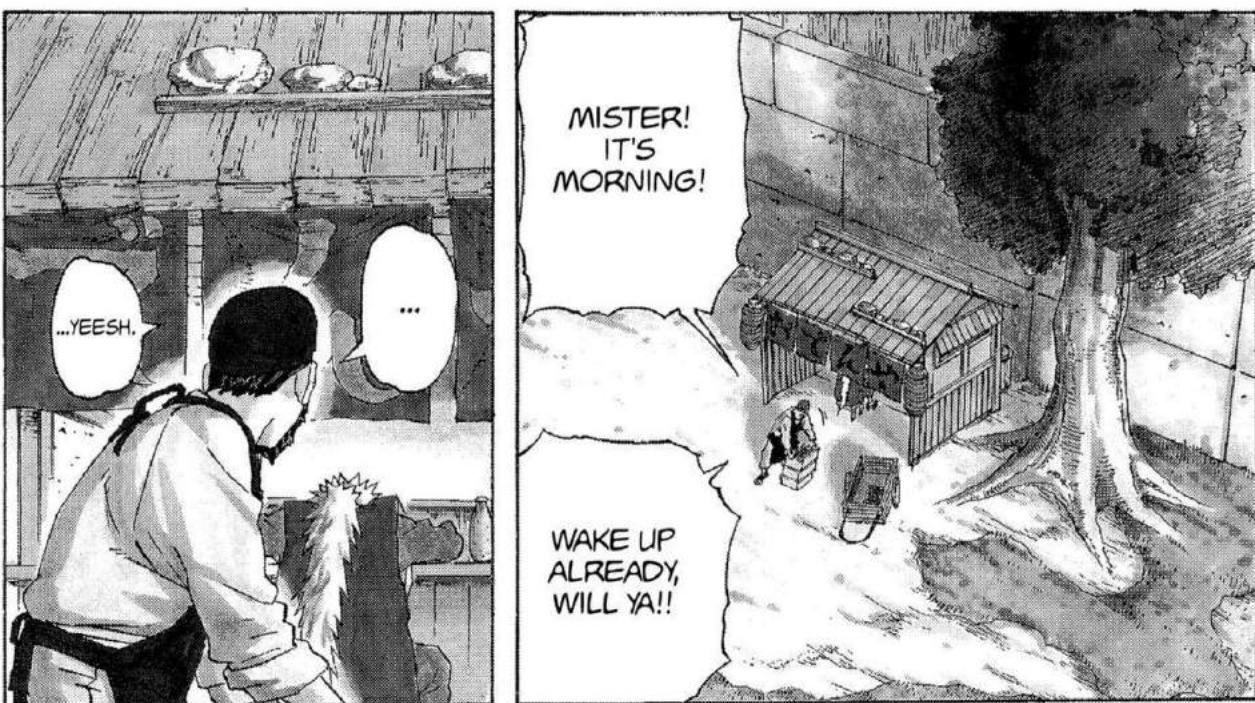
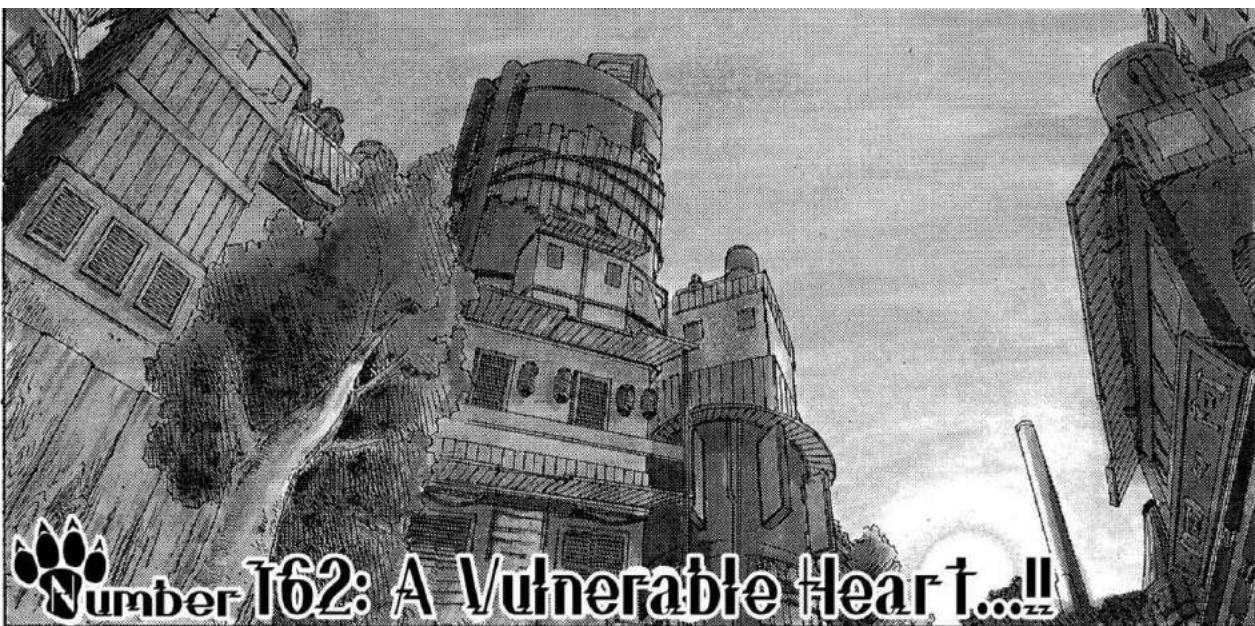














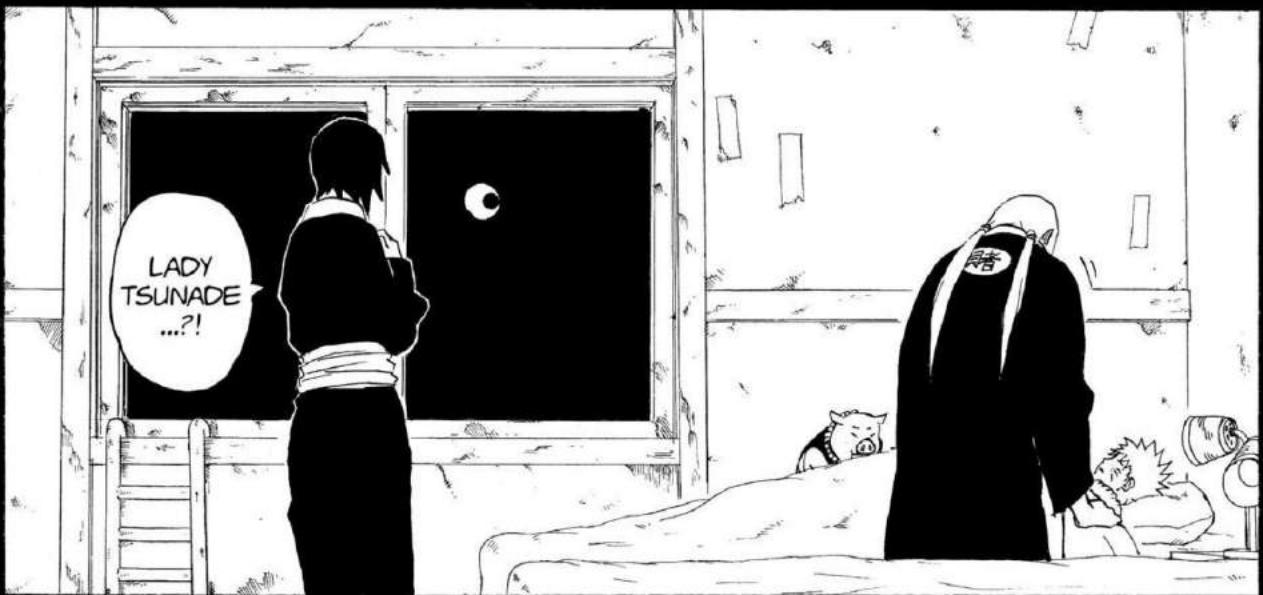
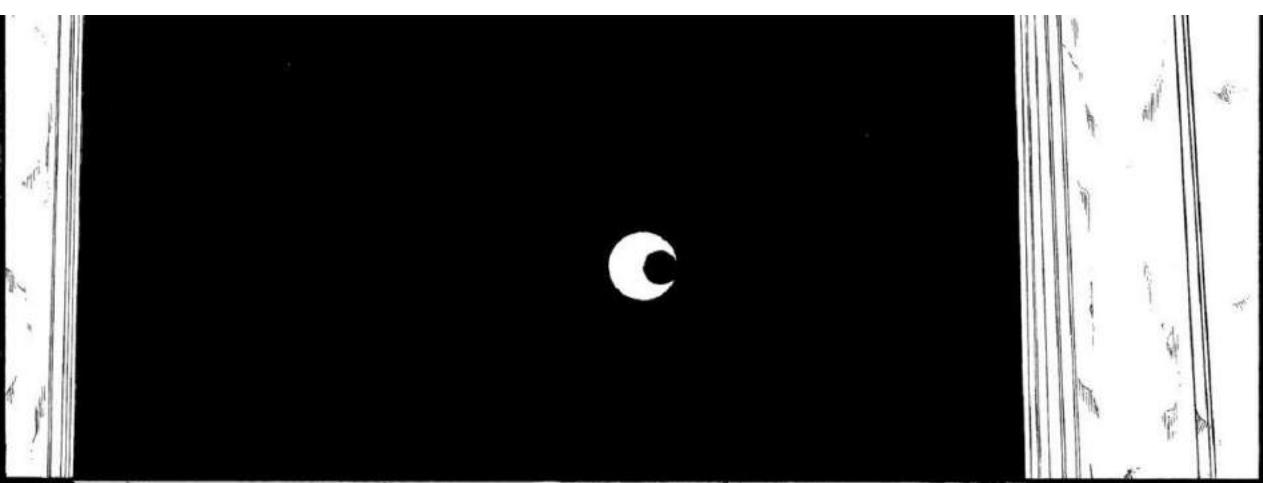
Number 162:
A Vulnerable Heart...!!

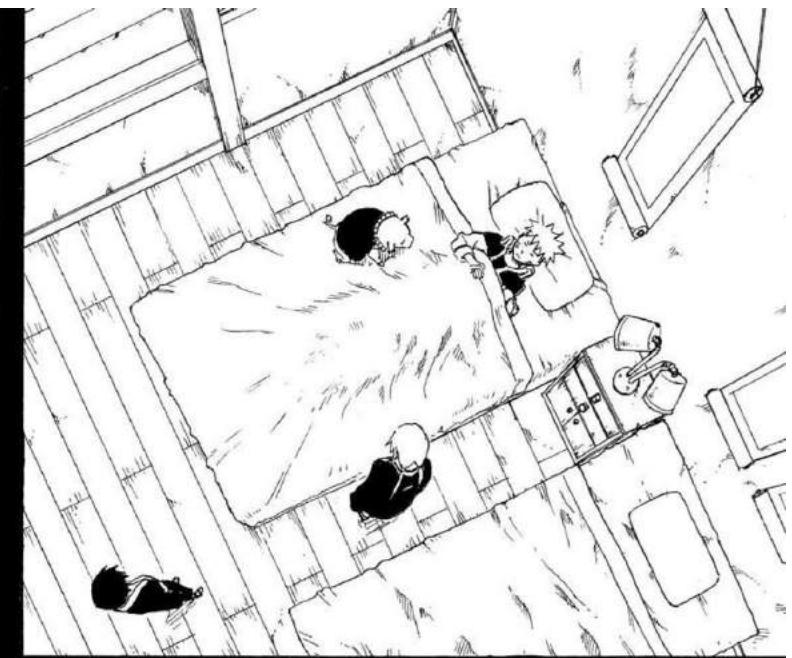


NARUTO

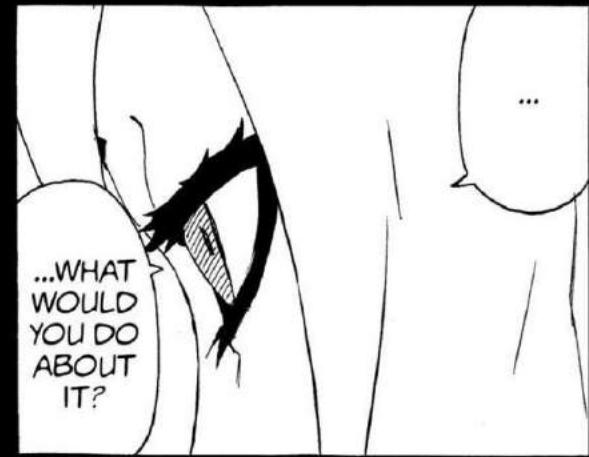
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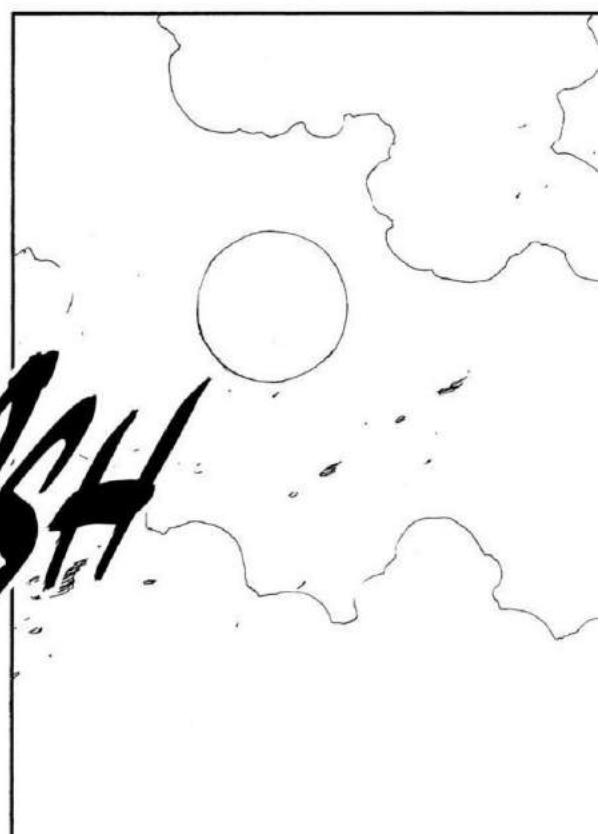




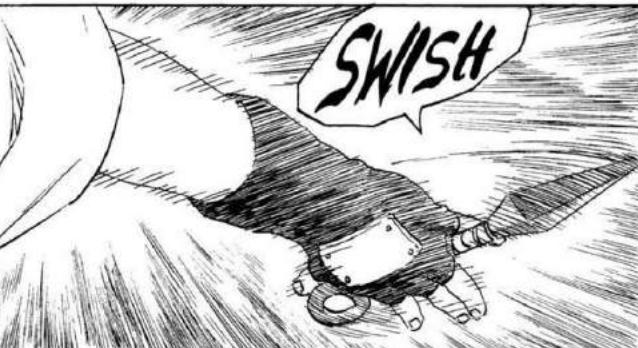


READ
THIS
WAY





READ
THIS WAY





THAT'S
RIGHT...
WE'VE GOT
NO TIME
TO LOSE!

TODAY'S
THE
PROMISED
DAY!

WHERE'S
THAT
ANNOYING
OLD
LADY?!
BUT
NEVER
MIND
ME...

I MAY
NOT HAVE
PERFECTED
IT IN TRAINING
YET, BUT
THERE'S
NOTHING LIKE
GAME DAY
PRESSURE...

THAT'S
RIGHT...
THIS BOY
HOSTS
THE
NINE
TAILED...

CRACK
OWW...

NARUTO,
YOU STAY
HERE!!

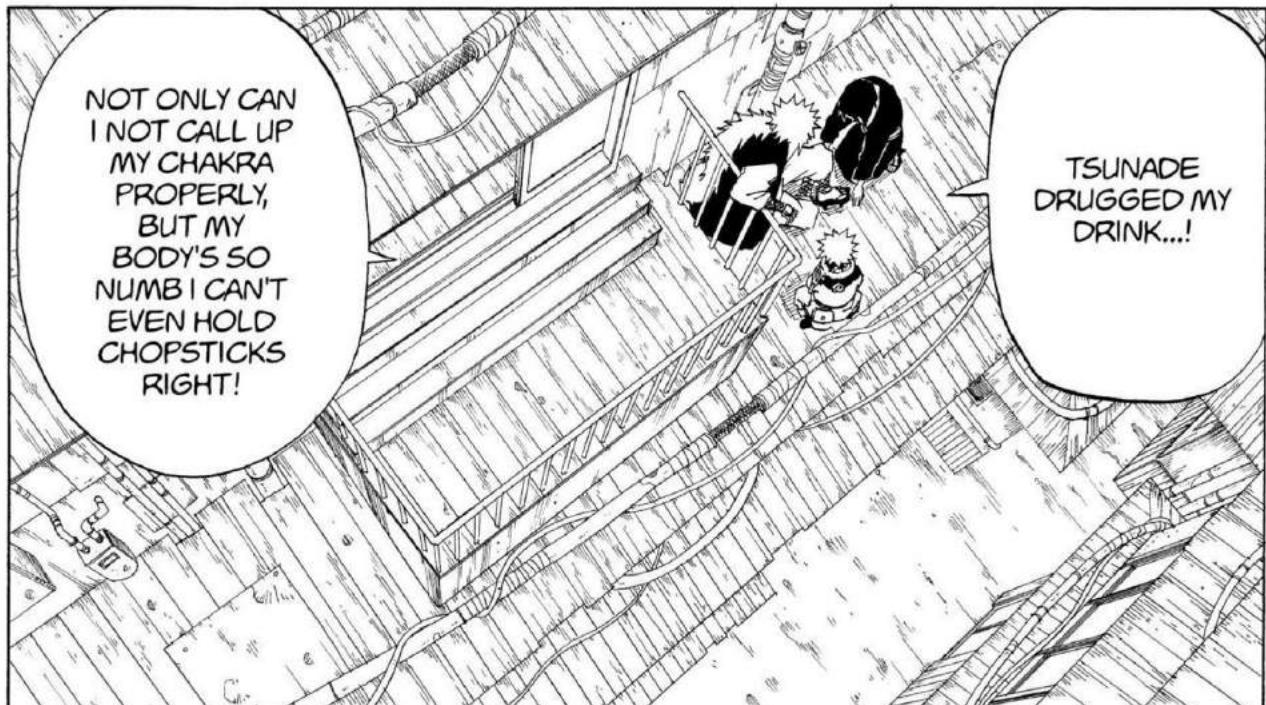
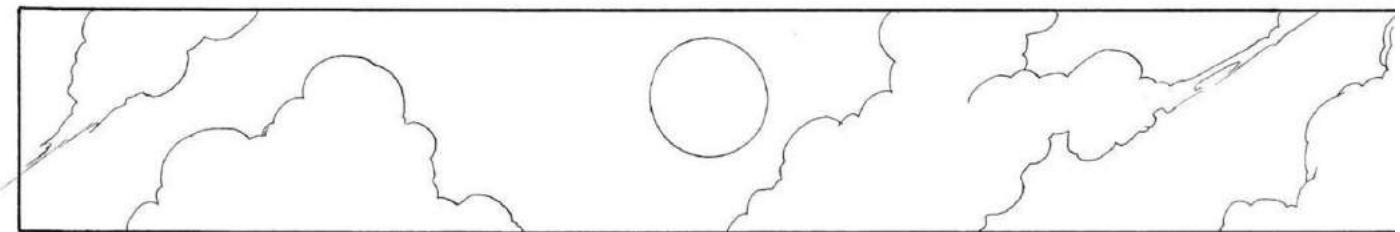
DASH



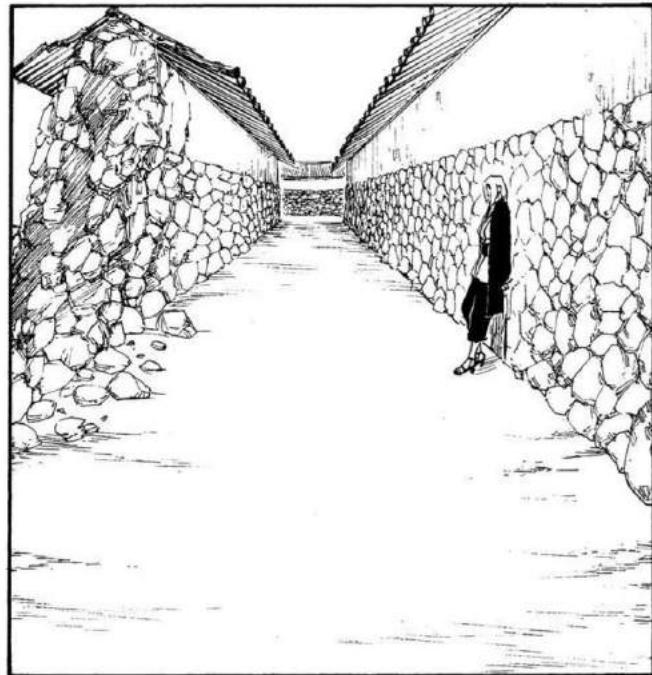
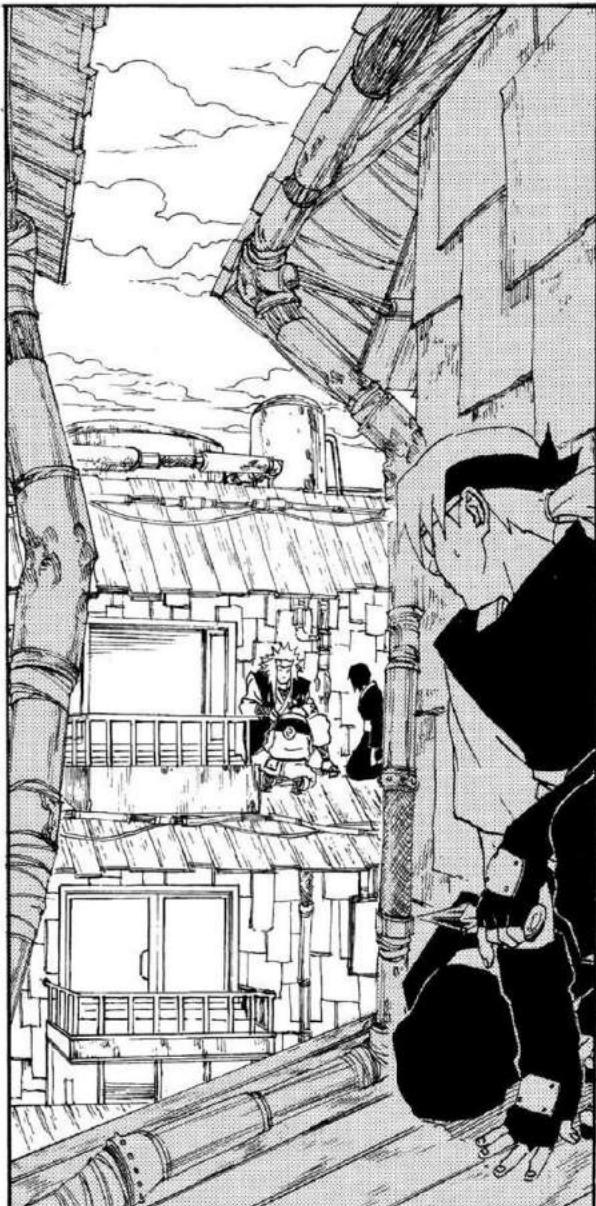
POP
WHAT...?!

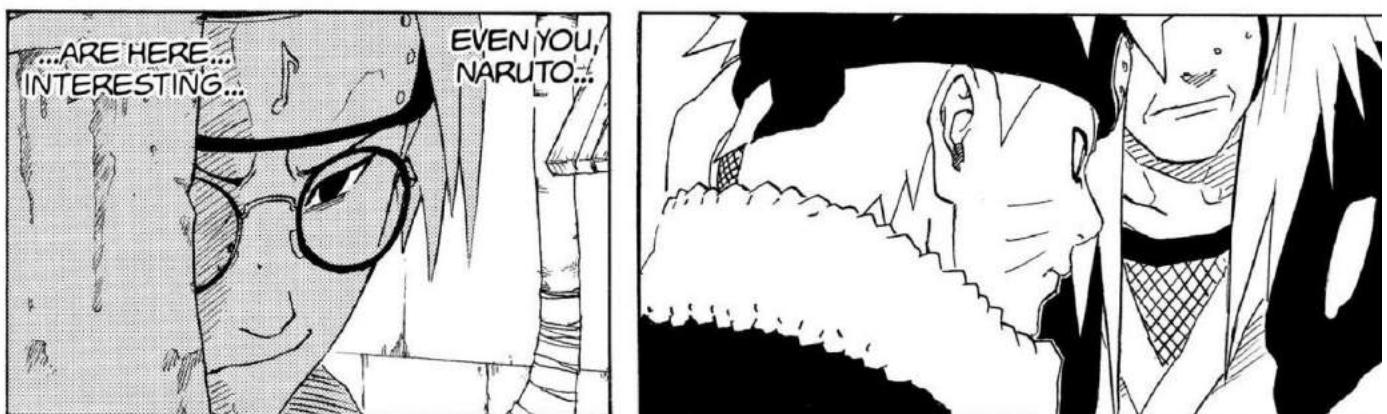
YOU'RE...!

THUNK!



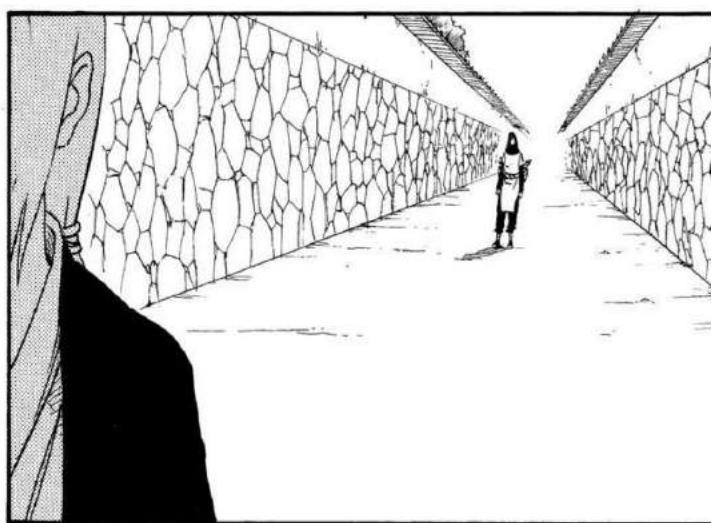
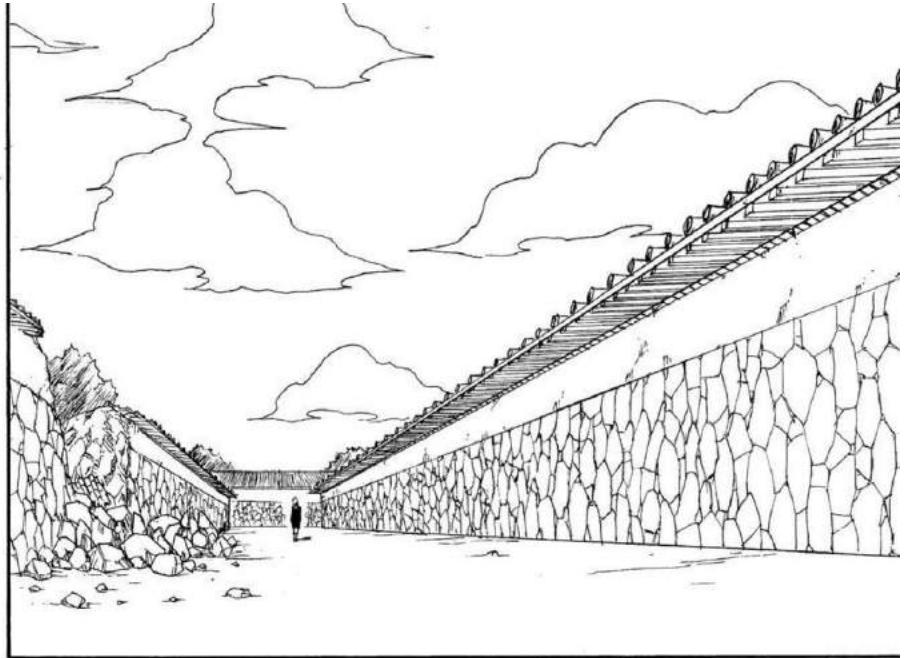
READ
THIS
WAY



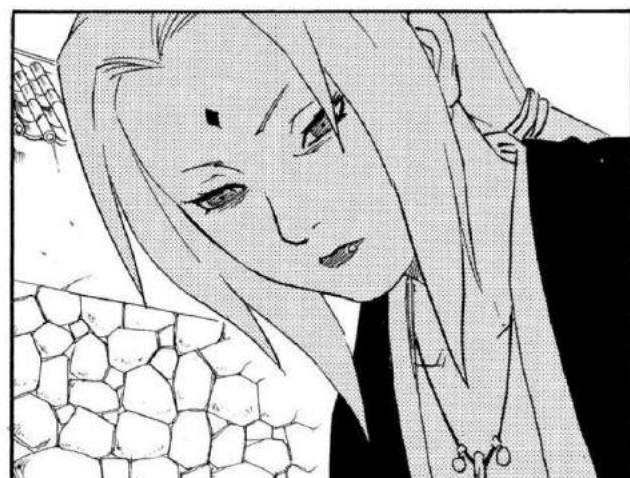
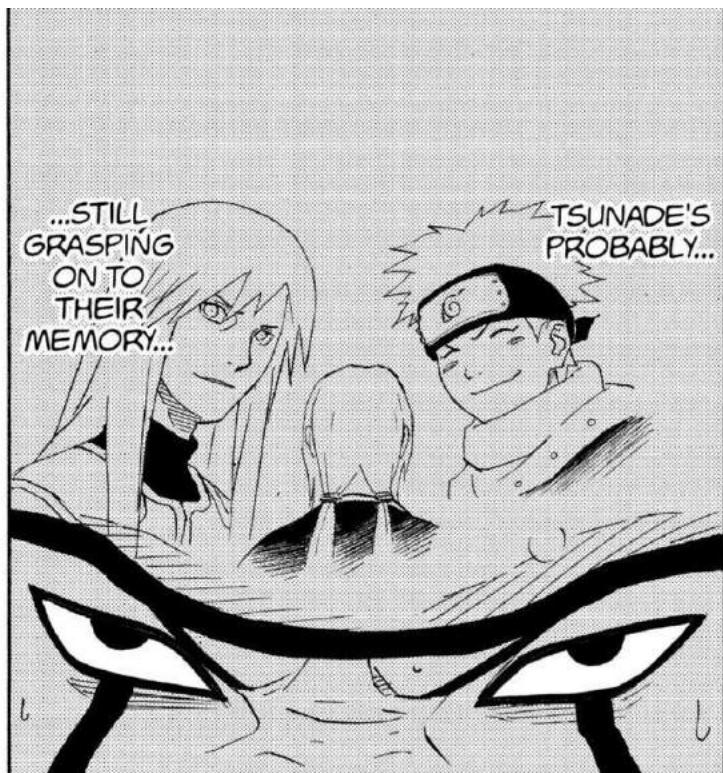
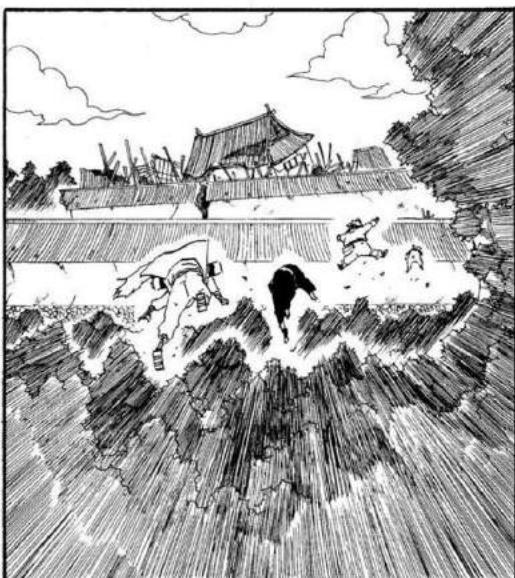


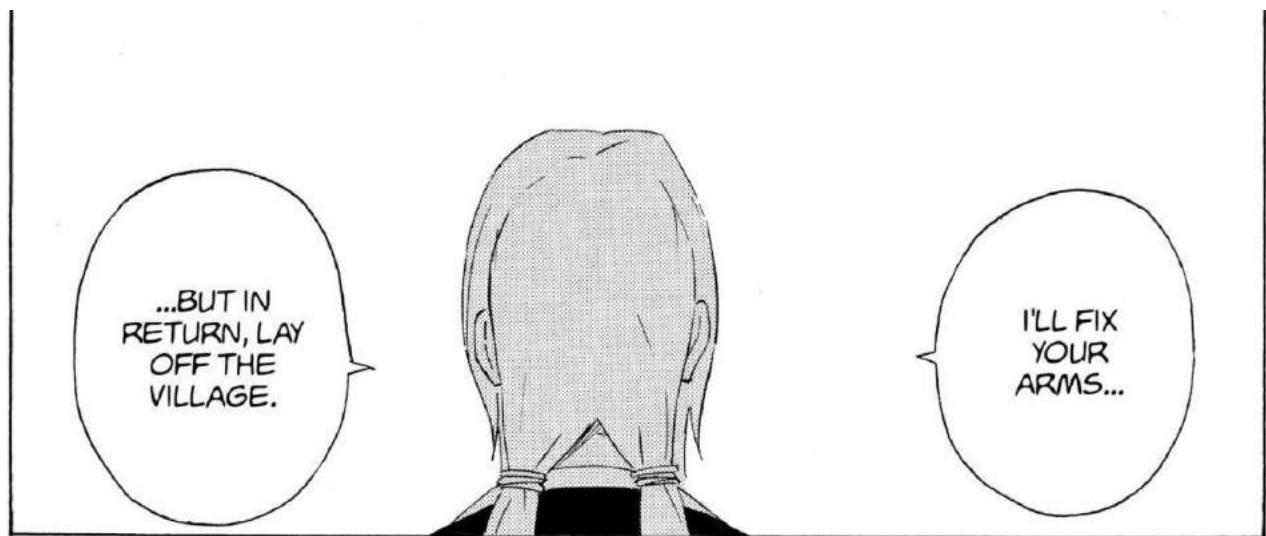
READ
THIS
WAY



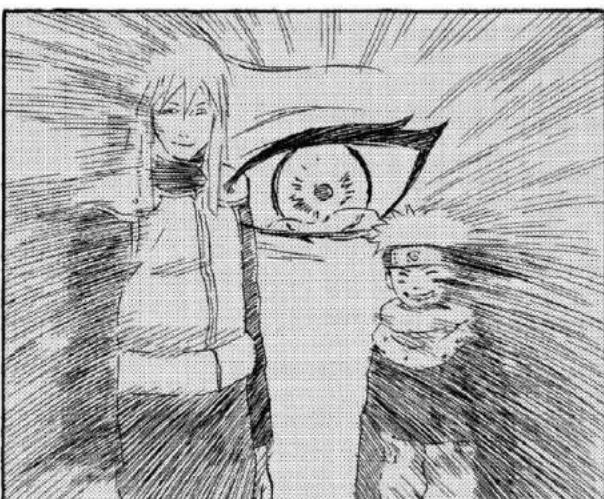
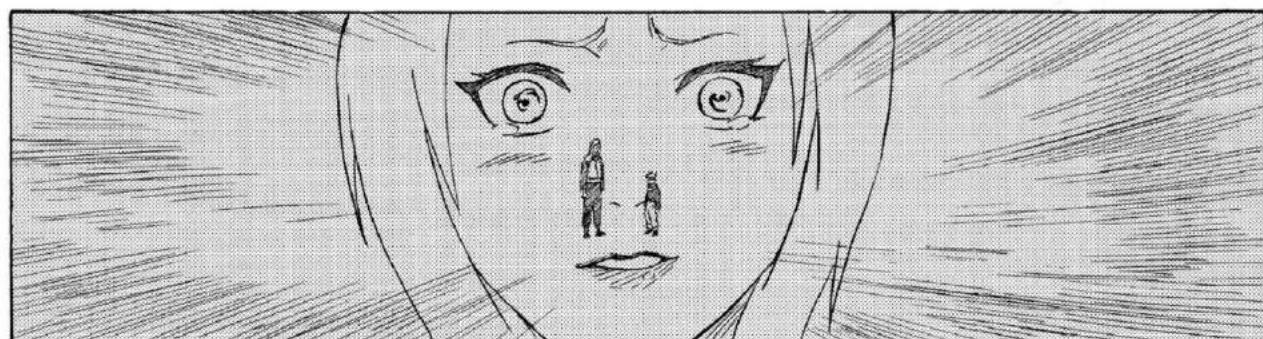
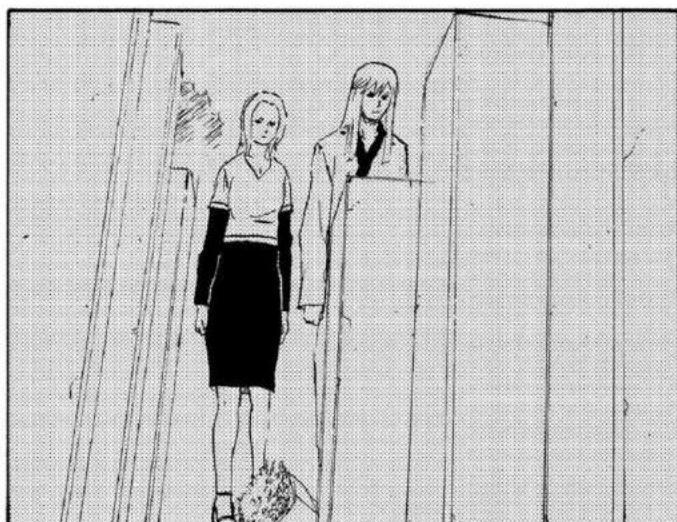
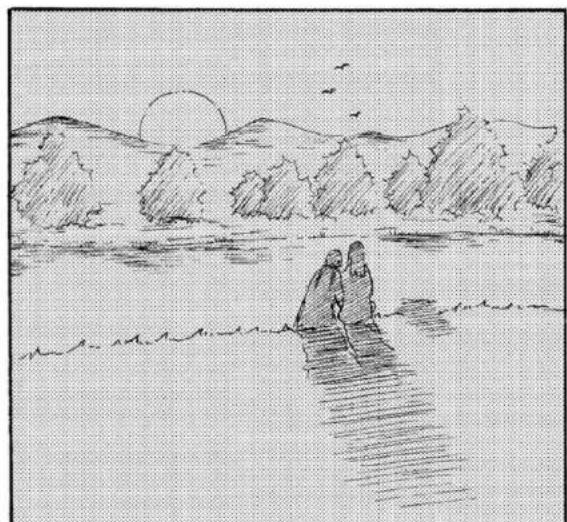
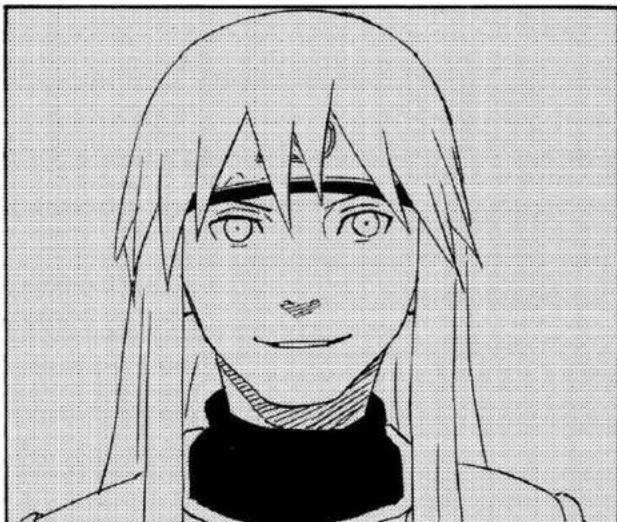
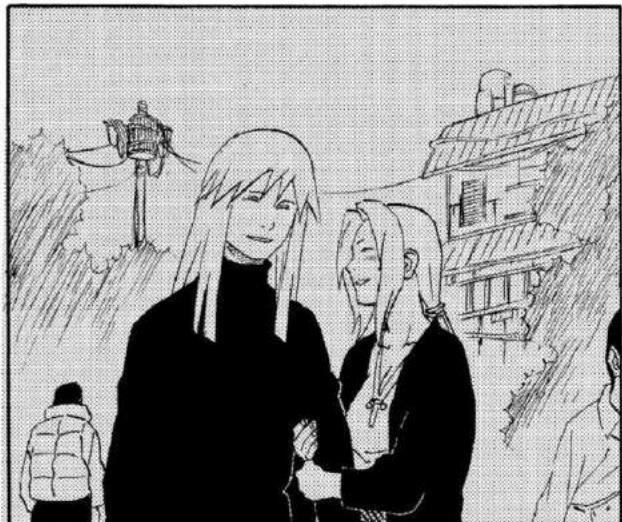


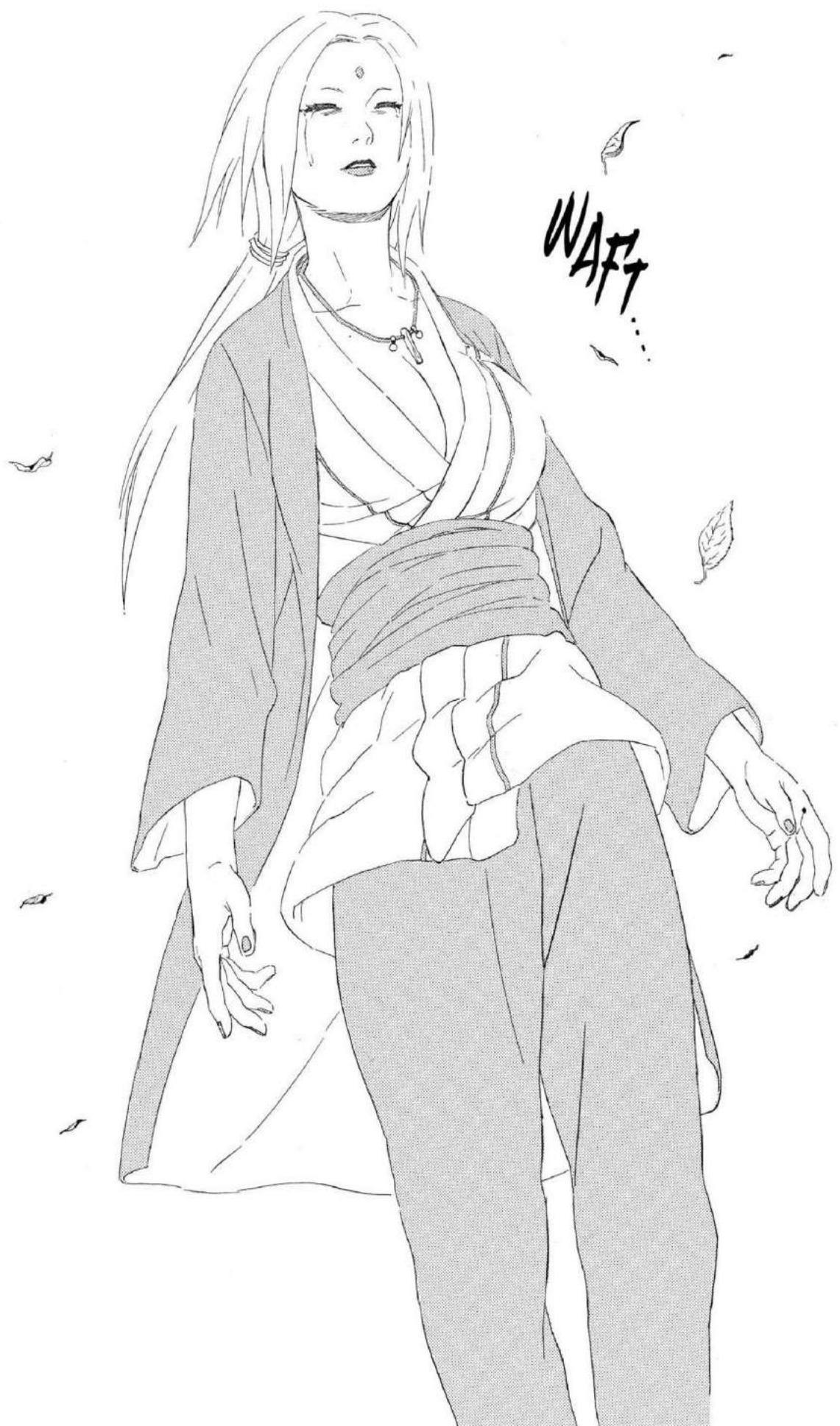
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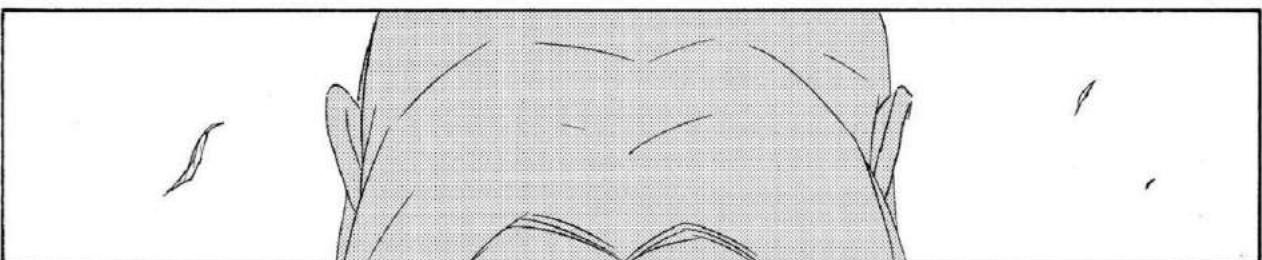
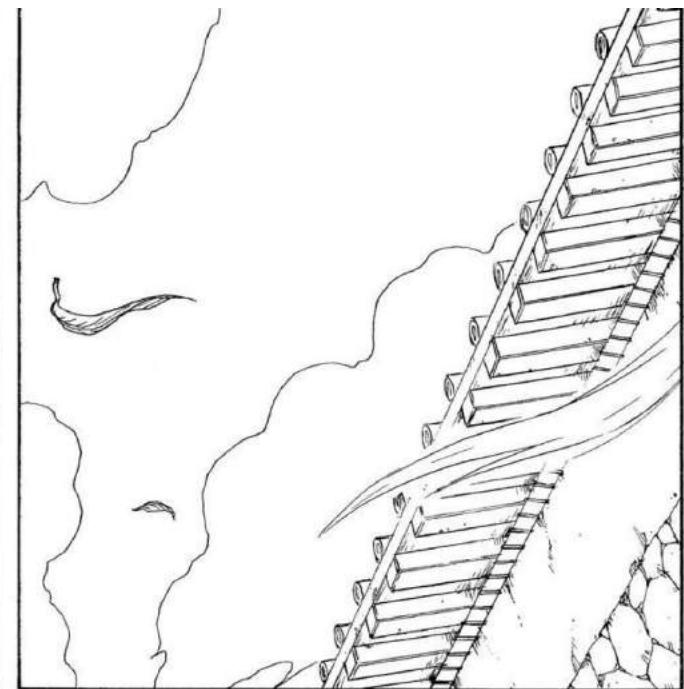
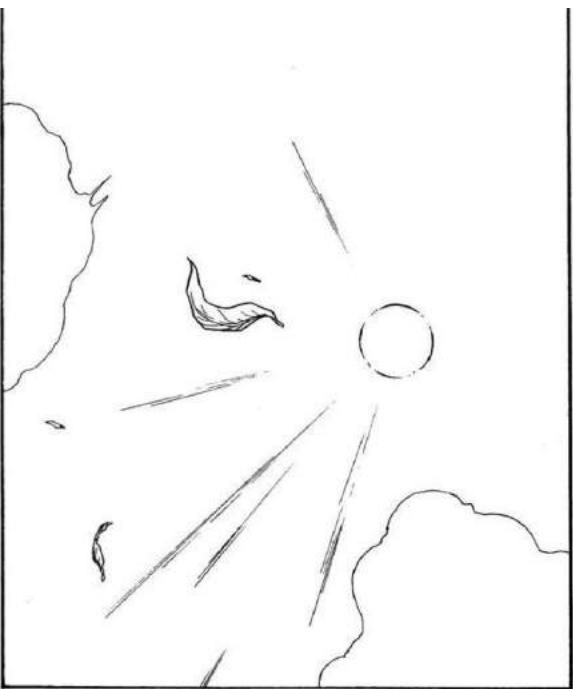




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