NARUTO

SHONEN JUMP MANGA

Story & Art by

Masashi Kishimoto

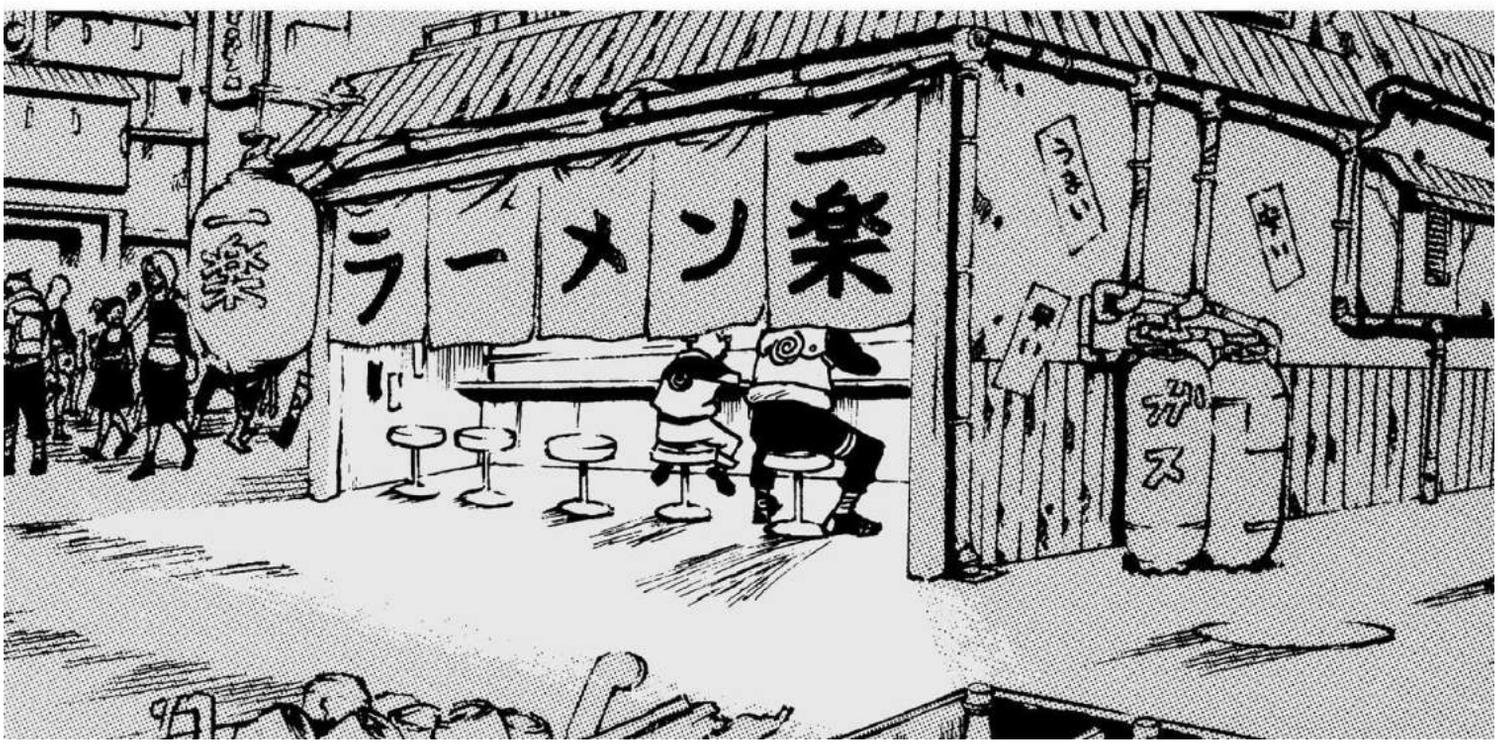
volume 9

岸本斉史

One day, after I bought a book for background research, I noticed it had a special feature on the artist Claude Monet. I actually have very little interest in paintings and painters, but ever since my student days, I loved the grand old man Monet—I went to exhibits of his work and owned several books of his paintings. I envy Monet because, although in his later years he was virtually blind, he kept on painting right up until his death, and was able always to paint whatever he wanted. I would love to keep drawing whatever I want for the rest of my own life, too.

—Masashi Kishimoto, 2001

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. 9
SHONEN JUMP Manga Edition

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STORY AND ART BY MASASHI KISHIMOTO

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PARENTAL ADVISORY
NARUTO is rated T for Teen and is recommended for ages 13 and up. This volume contains realistic & fantasy violence.
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SHONEN JUMP MANGA EDITION

NARUTO

VOL. 9

NEJI VS. HINATA

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 trouble-maker. 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.

Yamanaka Ino 山中いの

Though Ino and Sakura were once close friends, their bitter rivalry for Sasuke's affection has turned them against each other.

Hyuga Neji 日向ネジ

Neji shares many traits with Hinata, including the all-seeing Byakugan eye. But what is their relationship?

Hyuga Hinata 日向ヒナタ

This shy young kunoichi (female ninja) has a monster crush on Naruto.

Gekko Hayate 月光ハヤテ

As the proctor of the third portion of the exam, Hayate has the job of stepping in and stopping any fight where there's a clear winner…to prevent unnecessary bloodshed.

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.

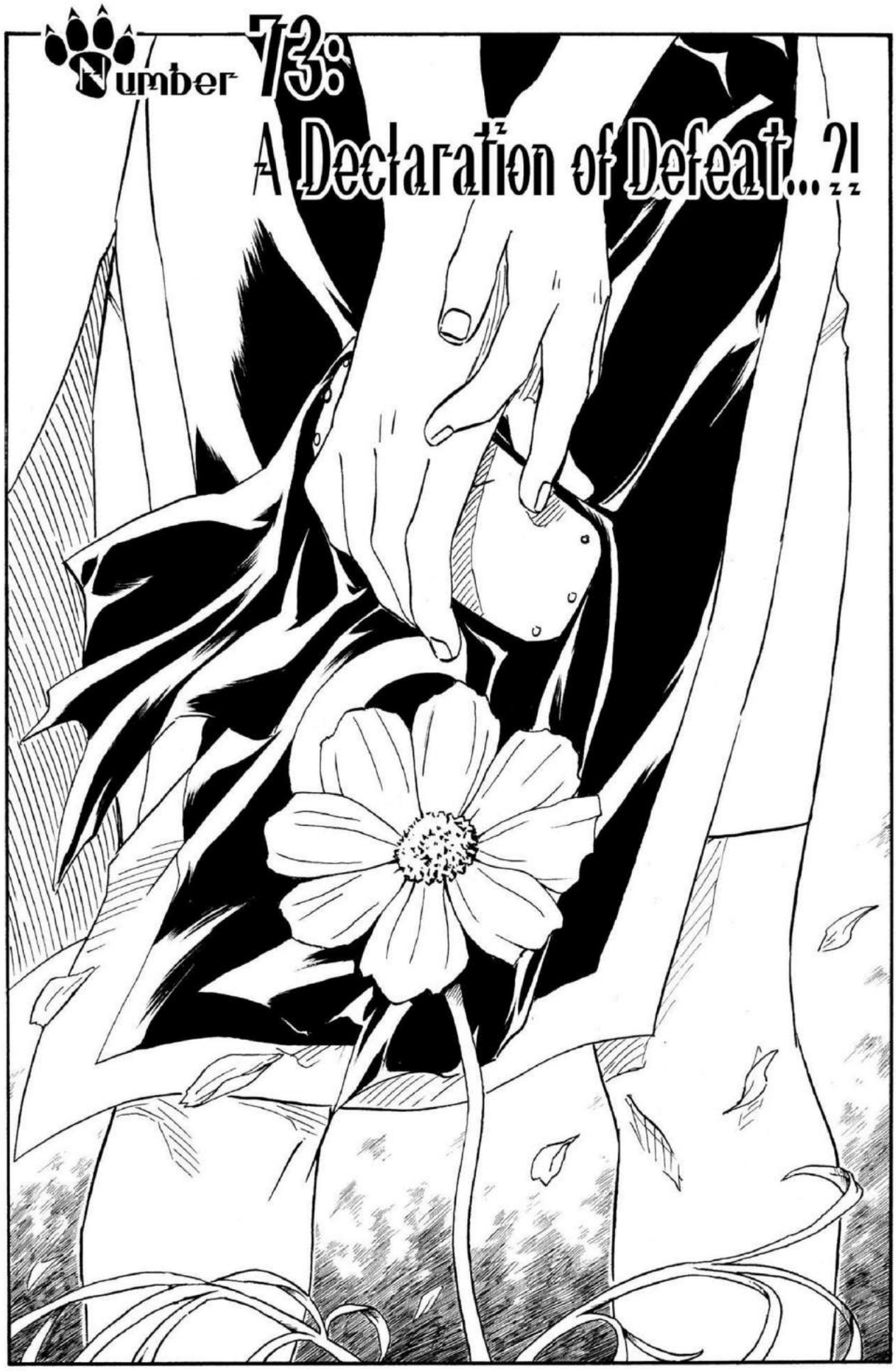
Naruto, Sasuke and Sakura (along with six other teams of student ninja) have moved on to the third portion of the Chûnin (Journeyman Ninja) Selection Exam—a series of no-holds-barred, one-on-one bouts that begin with a set of preliminary matches. As the preliminaries continue, Sakura faces off against her rival, Ino! Although strategic taunting by Sakura seems to have sent her opponent over the edge, Ino craftily distracts Sakura long enough to trap her into succumbing to the Mind Transfer Technique (Shintenshin no Jutsu), Ino's signature move! With Sakura under her control, Ino has all but won the match…or has she?!

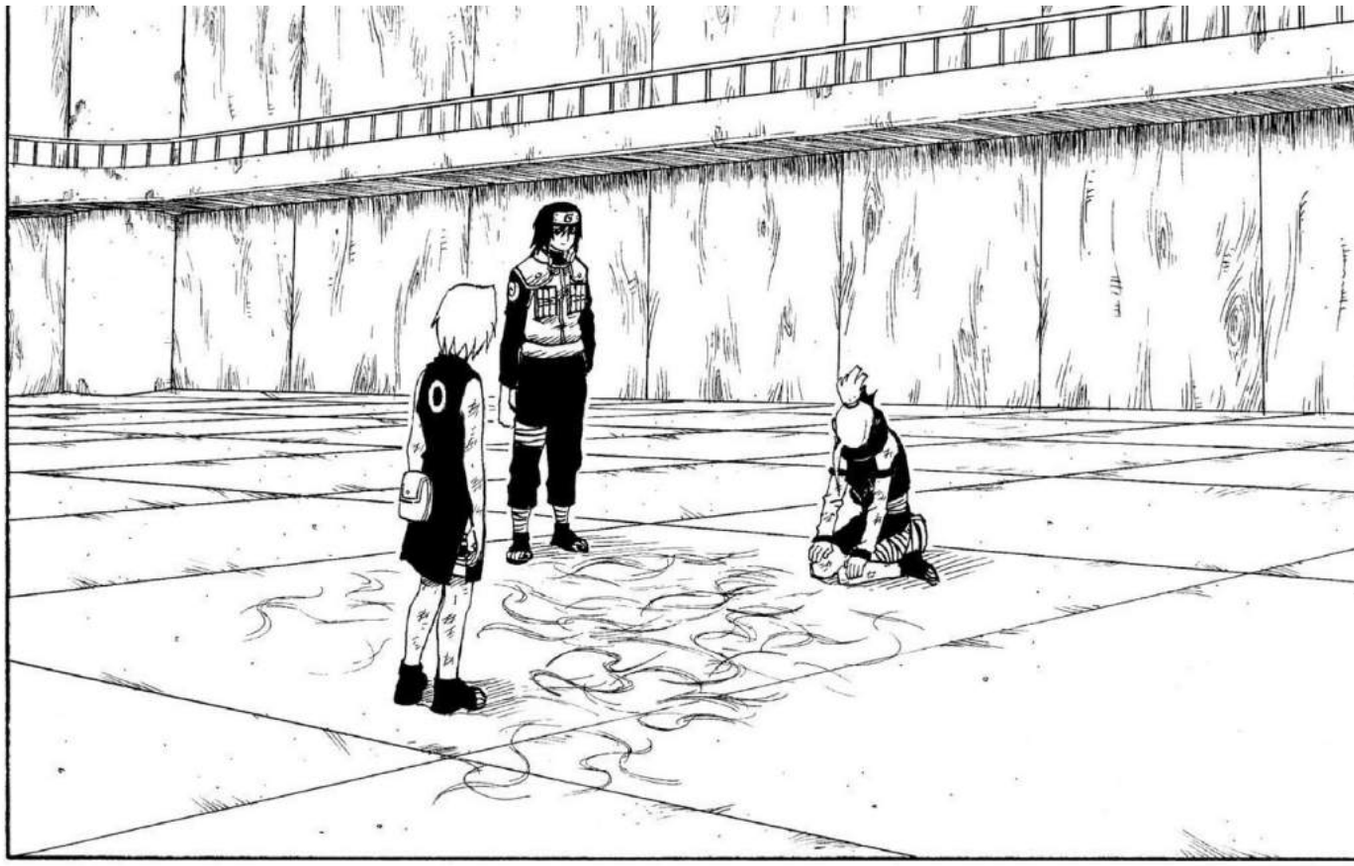
NARUTO

VOL. 9
NEJI VS. HINATA

CONTENTS

NUMBER 73:	A DECLARATION OF DEFEAT...?!	7
NUMBER 74:	THE SIXTH ROUND MATCH, AND THEN...!!	27
NUMBER 75:	NARUTO'S COMING-OF-AGE...!!	47
NUMBER 76:	KIBA TURNS THE TABLES... ...AND SO DOES NARUTO?!	67
NUMBER 77:	NARUTO'S CLEVER SCHEME!!	87
NUMBER 78:	NEJI VS. HINATA	105
NUMBER 79:	THE HYUGA CLAN	123
NUMBER 80:	THE OUTER LIMITS	143
NUMBER 81:	GAARA VERSUS...	163
PREVIEWS		182


Number 73:
A Declaration of Defeat...?!



GO GET HER, SAKURA! GO!!
DOESN'T SHE SEE...? THIS IS HER CHANCE!!

AND... AND...
WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO SAKURA TO MAKE HER ACT SO WEIRD?!
WHAT? WHAT JUST HAPPENED TO INO?

THEN... SAKURA'S NOT EVEN...
MIND TRANS-FER ...?!

THE ENERGY FROM INO'S SHINTENSHIN MIND TRANSFER TECHNIQUE STRUCK HER HEAD-ON. SHE'S FINISHED.
!

IT'S OVER.

RIGHT NOW, INO IS INSIDE SAKURA.
...!!

EXACTLY...
SAKURA'S PSYCHE HAS BEEN OVERTAKEN AND SUPPLANTED BY THAT OF INO.

SO...
HER GOAL IS PROBABLY TO...

SEE YA, SAKURA!
IT'S OVER...

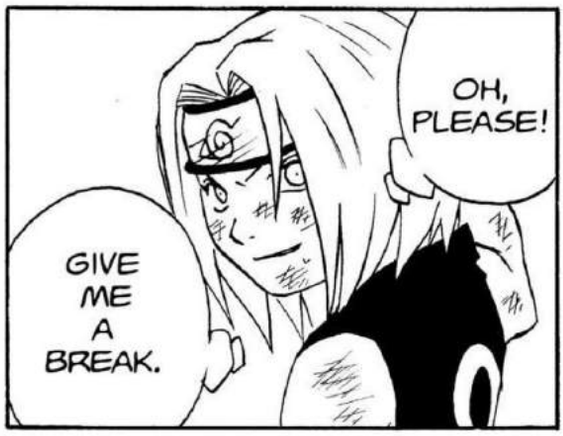
...

!
SHF

ULP!

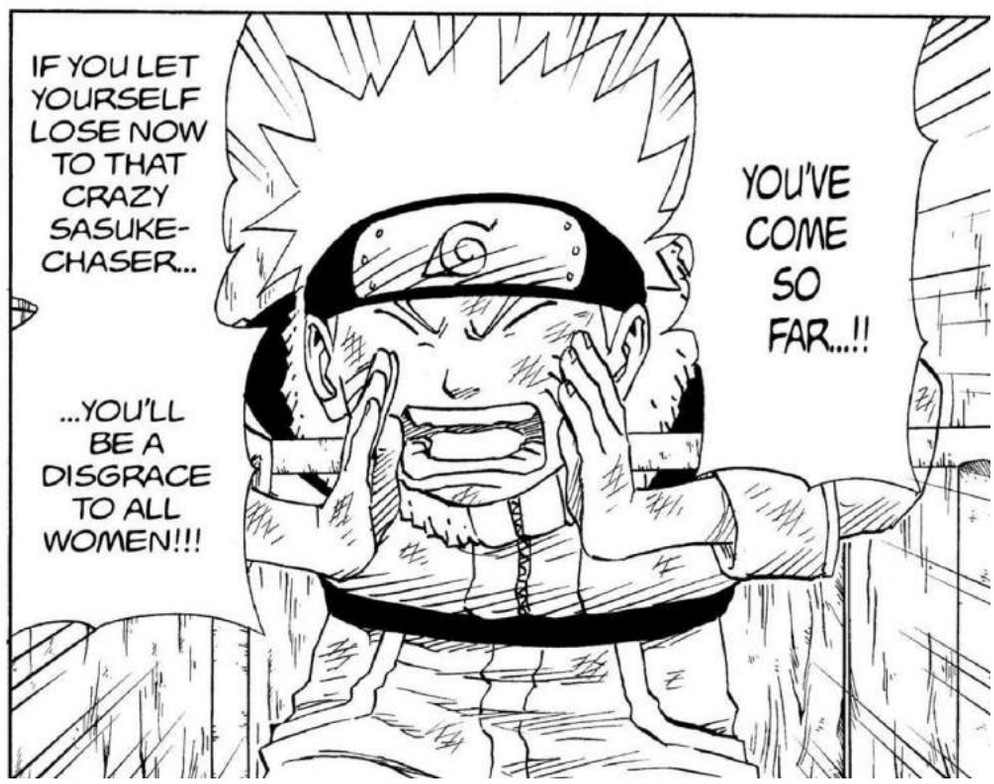
...WISH TO WITHDRAW... FROM THE MATCH...
I... HARUNO SAKURA...

!
!
!
!


OH, PLEASE!
GIVE ME A BREAK.

COME ON, SAKURA!!
DON'T DO IT!!!
!

SHUT UP, YOU IDIOT. YOU CAN'T HELP HER.


IF YOU LET YOURSELF LOSE NOW TO THAT CRAZY SASUKE-CHASER...
...YOU'LL BE A DISGRACE TO ALL WOMEN!!!
YOU'VE COME SO FAR...!!

I FEEL SO COLD...
SHAKE
SHAKE
SHIVER

SHIVER
WHAT...?
SHIVER

BLINK
!!

NARUTO IS SO LOUD!

ARE YOU WITH-DRAWING FROM THE MATCH?
WHAT'S WRONG?
SHIVER
SHIVER
SHIVER

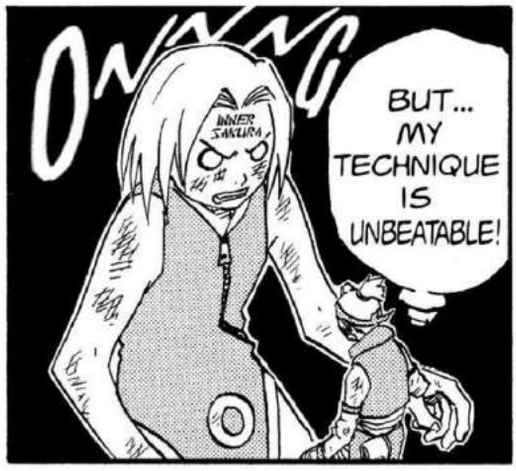
BUT... THAT'S CRAZY...
SAKURA?!

AND HE'S RIGHT... I CAN'T LET THIS WITCH BEAT ME!
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
OW...

WHO'S WHO NOW?!

WHAT THE HECK...?!
WHA--?

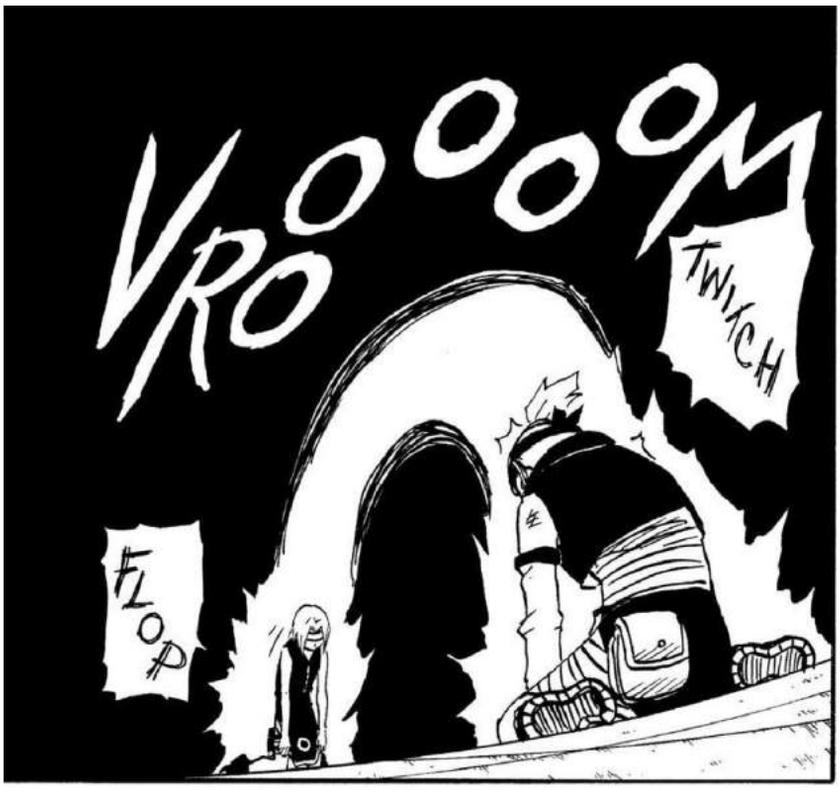
SAKURA...?!
!!!


ONNNG
INNER SAKURA
BUT... MY TECHNIQUE IS UNBEATABLE!

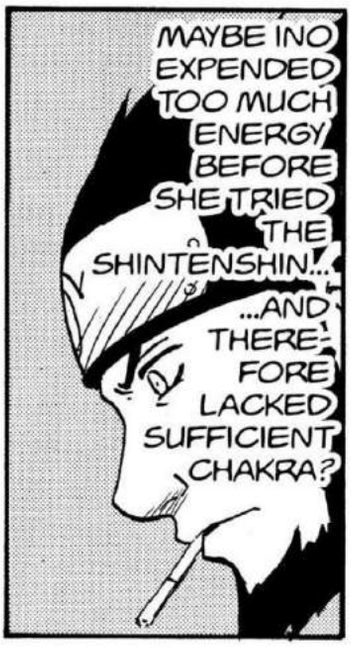
OHYEAH!
INNER SAKURA
NO WAY DO I WITH-DRAW!
ARE YOU KIDDING? I'M STAYING IN!!
OHH!

WHAT'S UP WITH INO?!
WHAT'S GOING ON?!
NO...!!

...IF YOU DON'T HURRY UP AND GET OUT OF MY BODY, YOU'RE GONNA REGRET IT!!
GOO
INO...
INNER SAKURA
ONG
CRUNCH


VROOOOM
TWITCH
FLOP

THE WAY THIS IS GOING, I'LL BE LUCKY IF I CAN EVEN HANG ON!
UGH...
KAI! RELEASE!


MAYBE INO EXPENDED TOO MUCH ENERGY BEFORE SHE TRIED THE SHINTENSHIN!... ...AND THEREFORE LACKED SUFFICIENT CHAKRA?

INCREDIBLE!
SHE WAS ACTUALLY ABLE TO BREAK INO'S HOLD!!

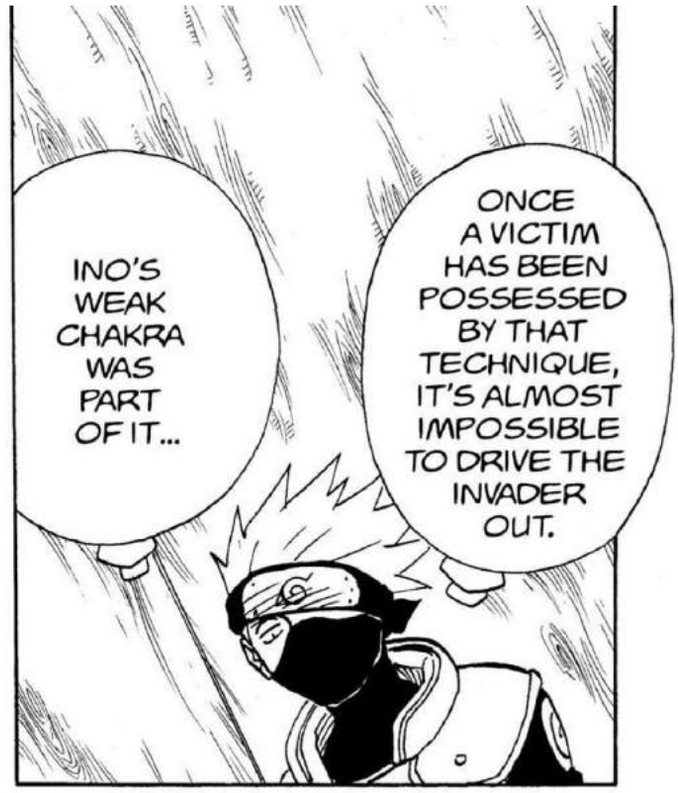
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF

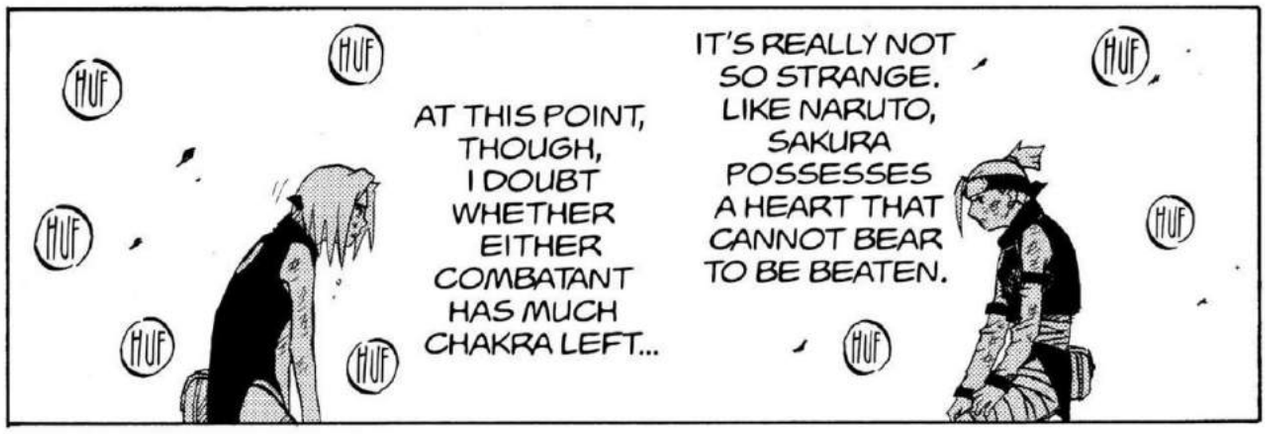
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF

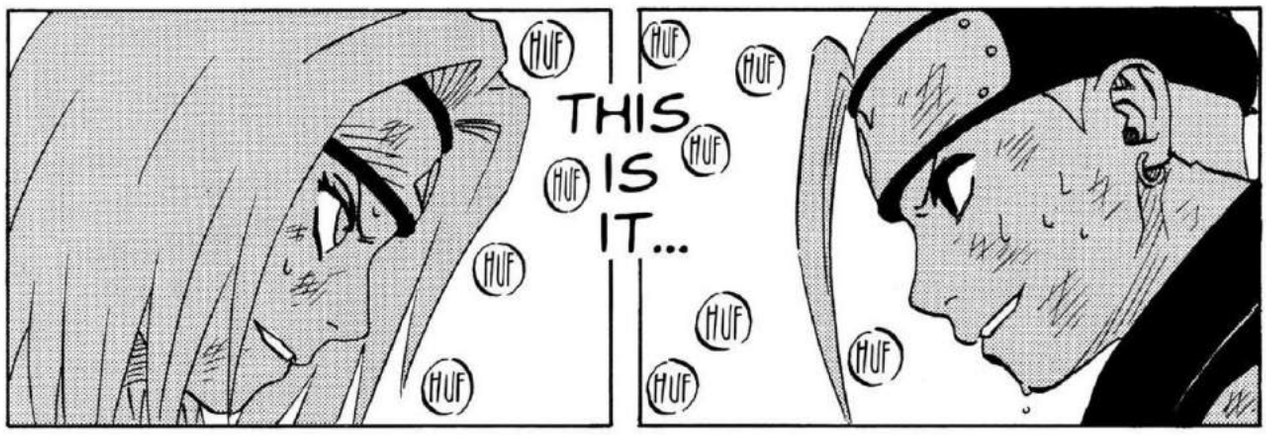
EVEN THE SWEETEST GIRL NEEDS A HARD CENTER, OR SHE'S NOT GONNA MAKE IT OUT THERE!!
HEH... DON'T YOU KNOW?
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF

WHAT... WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU?!
THERE WERE TWO DIFFERENT PSYCHES INSIDE YOU BEFORE I GOT THERE!
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF

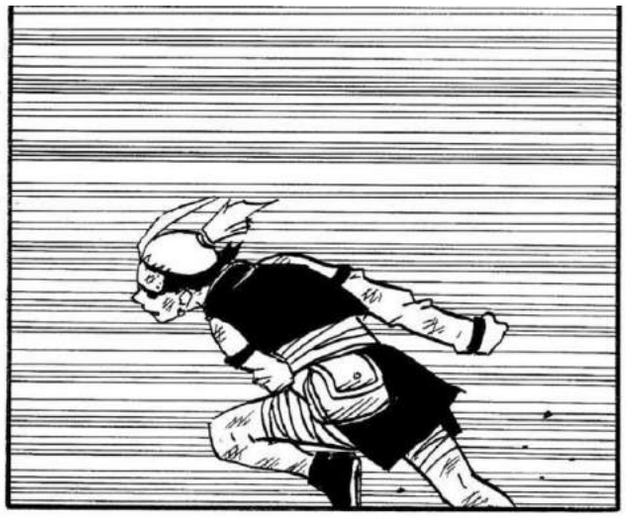
AND IT WAS NARUTO'S RAZZING THAT AWAKENED SAKURA'S DRIVE AND EGGED HER ON...
...TO CHASE INO OUT!
...BUT WHAT REALLY WON THE BATTLE WAS THE FIGHTING SPIRIT INO'S PRESENCE ROUSED IN THE HEART OF HER RIVAL!


INO'S WEAK CHAKRA WAS PART OF IT...
ONCE A VICTIM HAS BEEN POSSESSED BY THAT TECHNIQUE, IT'S ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO DRIVE THE INVADER OUT.

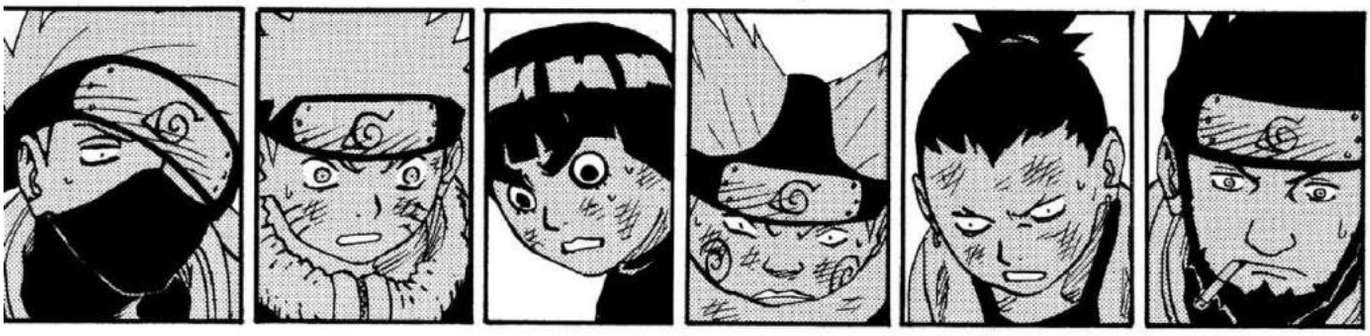

HUF
AT THIS POINT, THOUGH, I DOUBT WHETHER EITHER COMBATANT HAS MUCH CHAKRA LEFT...
IT'S REALLY NOT SO STRANGE. LIKE NARUTO, SAKURA POSSESSES A HEART THAT CANNOT BEAR TO BE BEATEN.

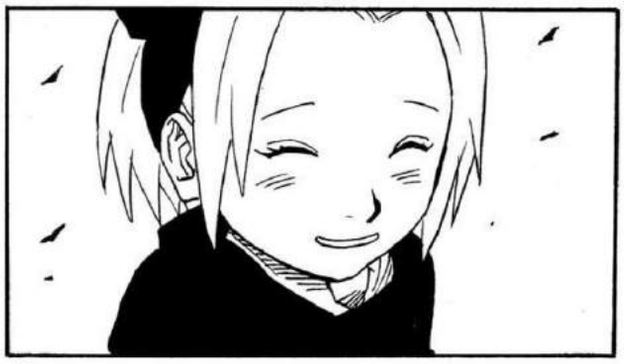

HUF
THIS IS IT...

TAK
TAK



THIS
IS
THE
END
!!!



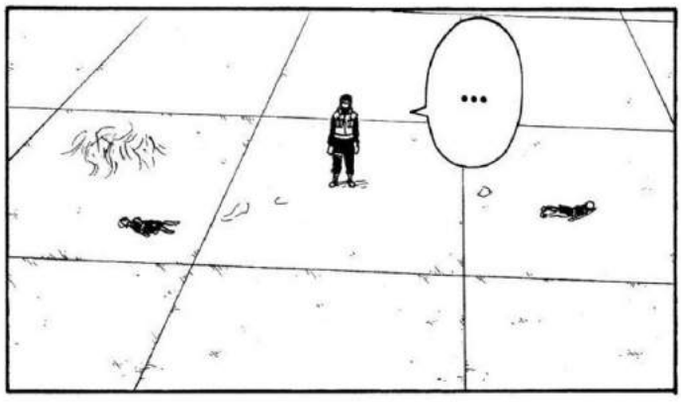


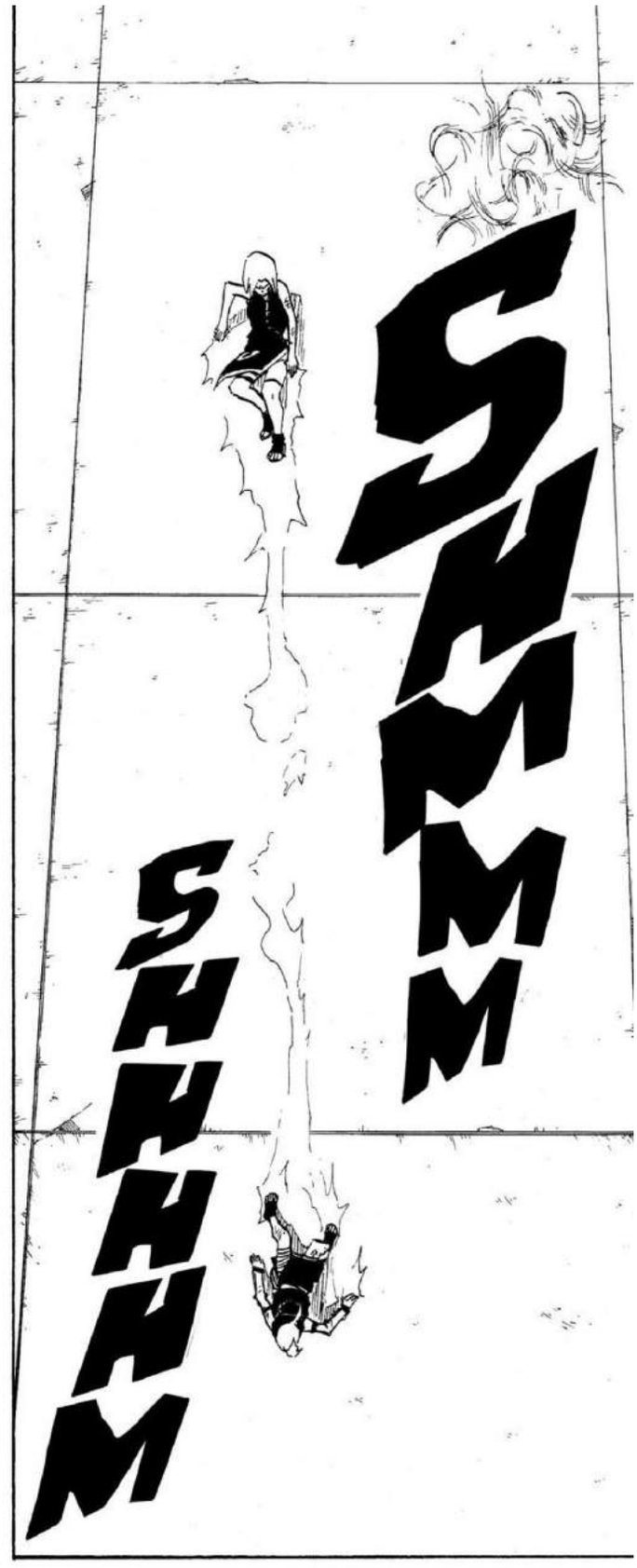
KLAT

TREMBLE
OHHH...
TREMBLE

WHOA!

FLUP FLUP


...


SHMMM
SHHHHM

WHAT?!
...NEITHER COMBATANT IN THE FOURTH BATTLE MOVES PAST THE PRELIMINARY ROUND!
NEITHER CANDIDATE IS ABLE TO CONTINUE. AS A RESULT OF SIMULTANEOUS KNOCKOUTS...

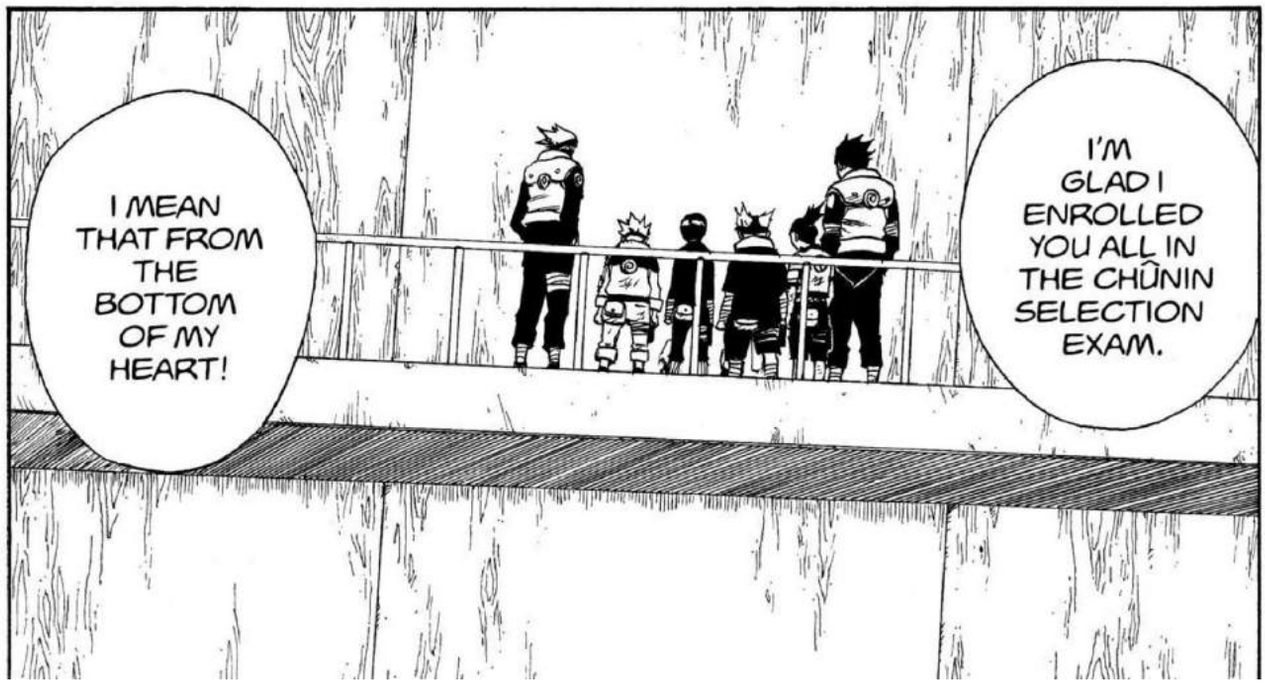
READ THIS WAY
Hop Hop
I'VE GOT YOU...
IT'S OKAY...
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, SAKURA?!
HEY... INO!
SHH!

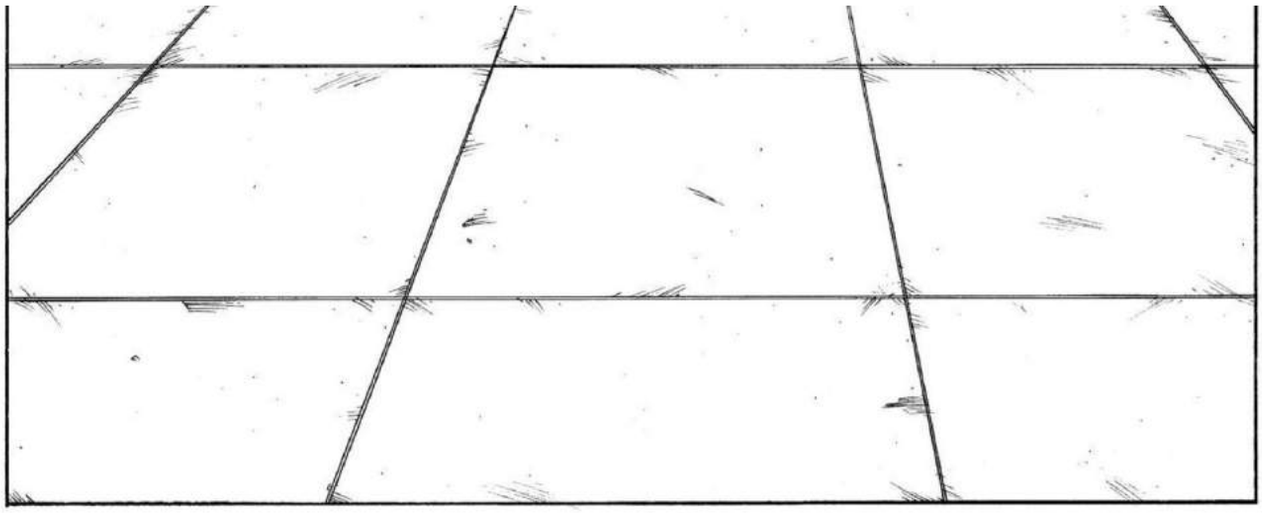
THEY SHOULD BOTH REGAIN CONSCIOUSNESS WITHIN THE NEXT HALF HOUR.
NEITHER ONE IS HURT BADLY ENOUGH TO NEED TREATMENT FROM THE MEDICAL CORPS...

I KNOW YOU'VE ALL BEEN THROUGH A LOT, BUT...

NARUTO AND SASUKE WERE BOTH DOING WELL... AND NOW EVEN FRAGILE LITTLE SAKURA...
...HAS SHOWN AMAZING GROWTH.

BUT... I'M IMPRESSED BY BOTH OF THEM.
YEAH...
?


I MEAN THAT FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART!
I'M GLAD I ENROLLED YOU ALL IN THE CHŪNIN SELECTION EXAM.



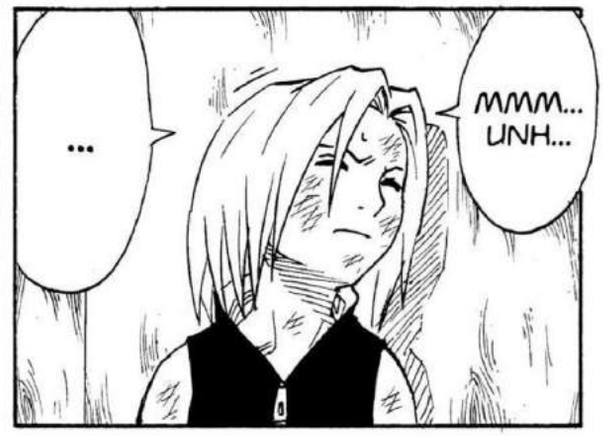
...TENTEN AGAINST TEMARI. PLEASE STEP FORWARD.
THE FIFTH MATCH OF THE PRELIMINARIES ...

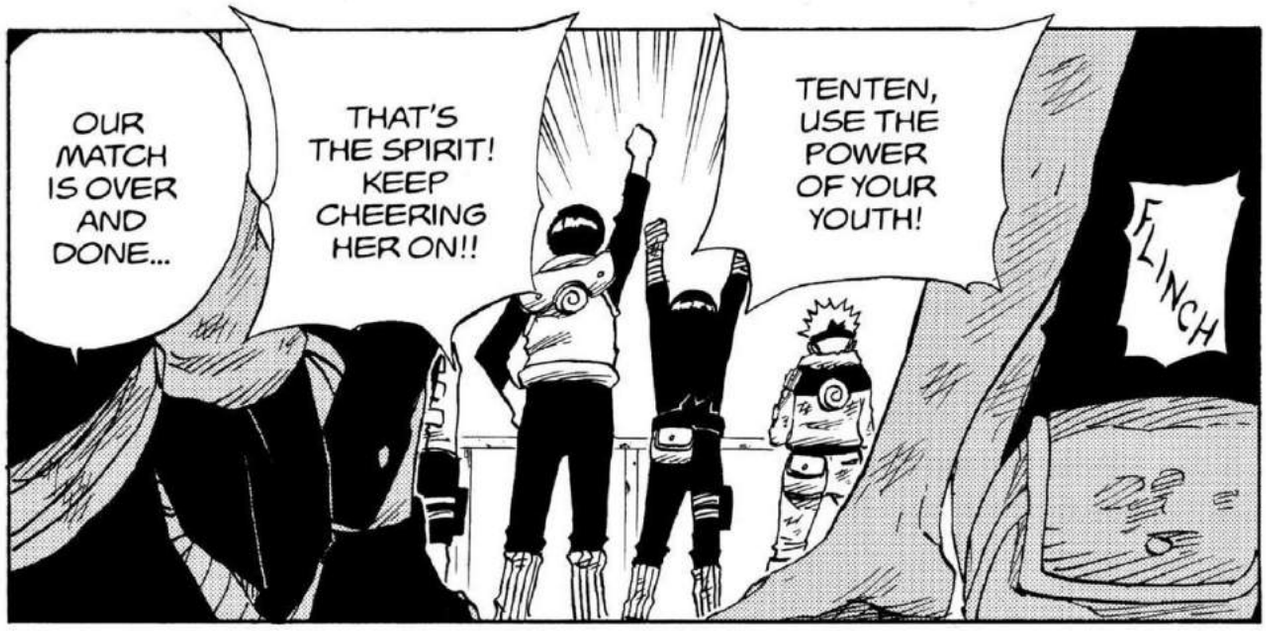
...

YEAH, TENTEN! GO!!
HEY, LOOK... ANOTHER CANDIDATE FROM THE LAND OF SAND! THIS SHOULD BE FUN!

BEGIN!

!
SO YOU FINALLY CAME TO, EH, SAKURA?

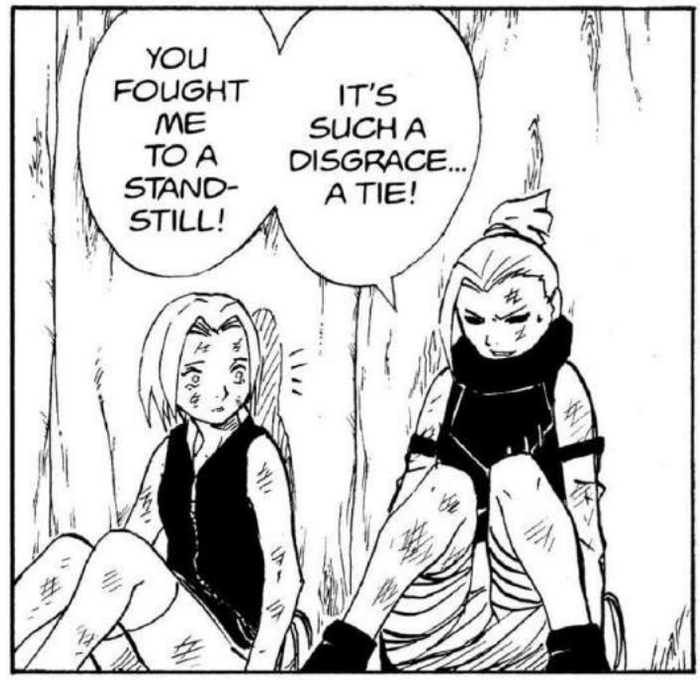

...
MMM... UNH...

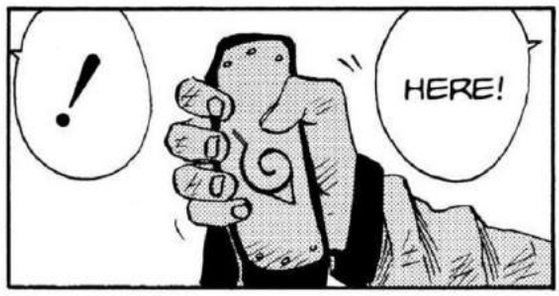

OUR MATCH IS OVER AND DONE...
THAT'S THE SPIRIT! KEEP CHEERING HER ON!!
TENTEN, USE THE POWER OF YOUR YOUTH!
FLINCH

I'M THE ONE WHO SHOULD CRY!
HMPH...

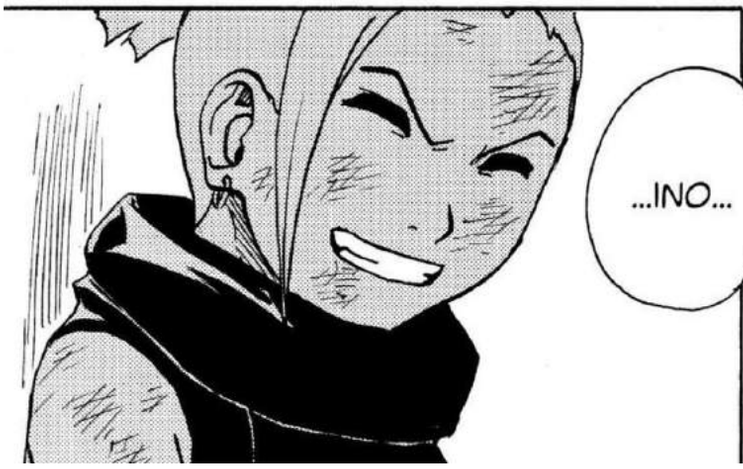
I...
... LOST ...?

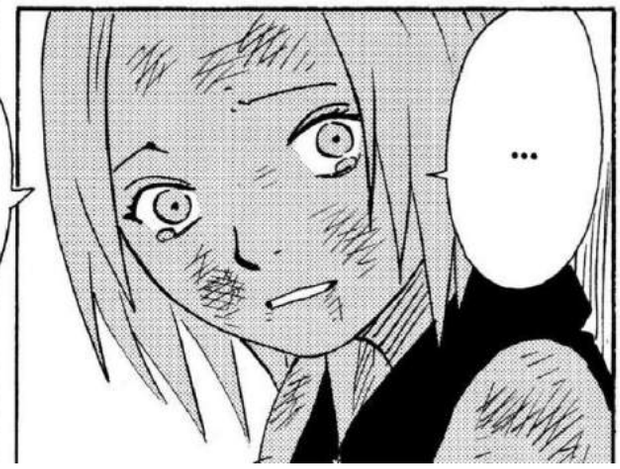
HUNH?


YOU FOUGHT ME TO A STAND-STILL!
IT'S SUCH A DISGRACE... A TIE!


!
HERE!

...!
...INTO A LOVELY FLOWER.
BY THE WAY, YOU'VE BLOSSOMED...


...INO...


...

BUT, JUST SO YOU KNOW... THE NEXT TIME WE FACE EACH OTHER, YOU DON'T GET TO TAKE THE EASY WAY OUT BY FAINTING!!
...!!

YANK

HMPH!
FLIP
FLIP

FLINCH
TWITCH
AND BY THE WAY... NO MATTER WHAT YOU SAY, I'M NOT GOING TO JUST HAND OVER SASUKE TO YOU!

...SAME HERE, INO! RIGHT BACK AT YOU!!
OH REALLY? WELL...

IMPOSSIBLE !!
SHE SHUT DOWN TENTEN'S WEAPONS ATTACK LIKE IT WAS NOTHING!

MURMUR

HOW DULL... IT'S A SHAME, REALLY...

THE WORLD OF KISHIMOTO MASASHI
MY PERSONAL HISTORY, PART 8

I PLAYED SOFTBALL FOR A WHILE IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, AND WHEN I ENTERED MIDDLE SCHOOL, I DECIDED TO JOIN THE BASEBALL CLUB. MY YOUNGER TWIN WAS INTO BASEBALL AS WELL, SO WE JOINED THE CLUB TOGETHER.THIS WAS WHEN THE BASEBALL ANIME *TOUCH* WAS A MONSTER SUCCESS ALL OVER JAPAN. IT WAS CREATED BY MITSURU ADACHI, AND WAS A STORY ABOUT TWIN BROTHERS WHO JOIN A BASEBALL CLUB. IN THE END, THE YOUNGER BROTHER DIES, AND THE OLDER ONE IS INSPIRED TO REALLY STEP UP AND DO A GREAT JOB FOR HIS BROTHER'S SAKE. THE IDEALISM OF THAT THEME APPEALED TO ME TREMENDOUSLY AT THE TIME.

AS AN ADOLESCENT, I GOT A LITTLE CONFUSED AND DECIDED THAT THE STORYLINE IN *TOUCH* TRULY REFLECTED MY OWN LIFE, SO I BOUGHT AND VORACIOUSLY CONSUMED THE MANGA SERIES AS WELL AS THE ANIMATION. BUT MY PASSION FOR IT COMPLETELY COOLED DOWN WHEN MY LITTLE BROTHER RUDELY TOLD ME, "OUR BASEBALL CLUB REQUIRES YOU SHAVE YOUR HEAD TO *GORINGARI* STANDARDS -- NO HAIR LONGER THAN A MILLIMETER... AND BY THE WAY, FOOL, WE BOTH SUCK AT BASEBALL." I HAD TO ADMIT HE WAS RIGHT, SO I SWITCHED MY ALLEGIANCE TO ANOTHER MANGA CALLED *MEIMON DAISAN YAKYUUBU* -- "THE GLORIOUS #3 BASEBALL CLUB" AND CONVERTED TO THE ASUNARO CAMP -- THE ADMIRERS OF THAT SERIES' MAIN CHARACTER, ASUNARO.

Number 74:
一般
普通
気楽
鹿
The Sixth Round Match and Then...!!

...IS TEMARI!
THE WINNER OF THE FIFTH ROUND MATCH...

...
BLINK

TAK
WHOA!
TAK

HEH

!

SNATCH
SKESKESKE

FWUP

GET YOURSELF AND THAT LOSER OUT OF MY WAY.
OH, SHUT UP!
WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?! THAT'S NOT HOW YOU TREAT A WORTHY OPPONENT... ESPECIALLY NOT ONE YOU'VE JUST DEFEATED!!
TAP

...

NICE CATCH!

GRRR
CLENCH

!!

!
KONOHA HURRICANE!!

!!
NO, LEE--!

JUST AS I THOUGHT...

HAH!

WHAT...?!

...YOU'RE NOT SO FAST, AFTER ALL!

HOP

THAT'S ENOUGH, LEE!

MASTER GUY...!

-HMF-

!

WHAT THE--?!

WHAT...?!

!

YOU'VE ALREADY BEEN DECLARED THE WINNER...

HOW LONG DO YOU INTEND TO TRIFLE WITH THAT HOMELY LITTLE PRINCE CHARMING?

!

TEMARI... GET BACK UP HERE!

愛

!
...MY DEAR FRIENDS FROM SAND... IF YOU DON'T MIND, I'D LIKE TO OFFER A WORD OF ADVICE...
PAT

...
SIGH

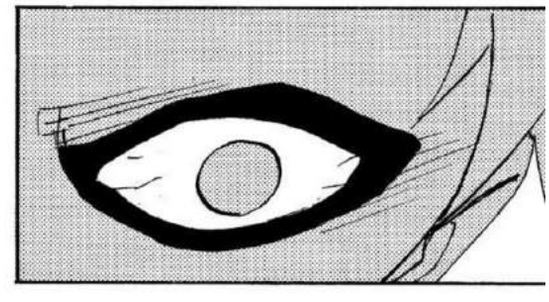
HAD ENOUGH NOW, LEE...?

QUIVER
QUIVER

!
愛
!

BE PREPARED. YOU HAVE NO IDEA...
...HOW STRONG THIS BOY REALLY IS.

HE ACTUALLY PICKED A FIGHT WITH THOSE FREAKS FROM THE SAND...
IN HIS PLACE, I'D HAVE RUN FOR COVER!
TH-THEY REALLY CREEP ME OUT!



...!

S-SAKURA!!

!
ONNNG
DON'T YOU LOSE TO THEM, NARUTO!
!!

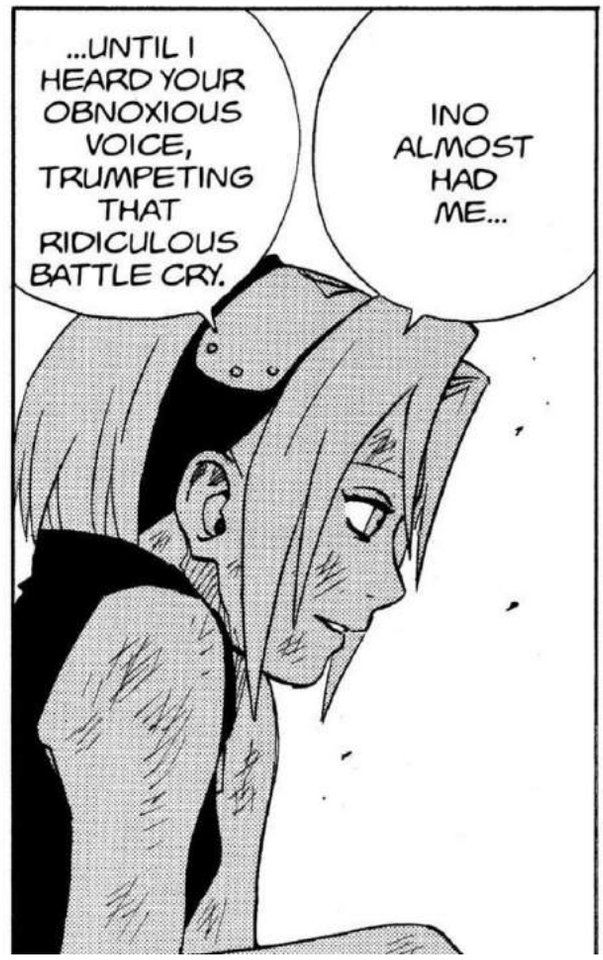
SAKURA... ARE YOU ALREADY FEELING BETTER?!
DON'T MIND ME... YOU JUST WORRY ABOUT YOURSELF!
IF YOU LET YOURSELF LOSE NOW, YOU'LL BE A DISGRACE TO ALL MEN!
AND SASUKE WILL NEVER LET YOU LIVE IT DOWN!!

...THANKS, NARUTO... FOR HELPING ME OUT BEFORE!
!

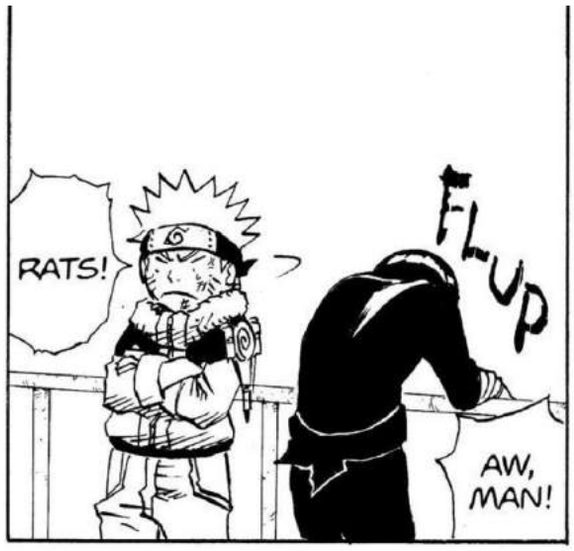
H&H

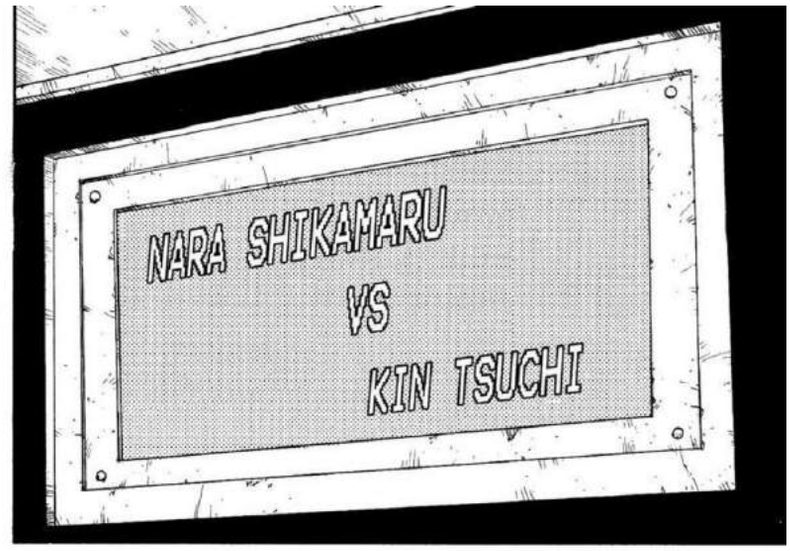
R-RIGHT!!

Y-YOU...!
YEAH! I SURE SAVED YOUR BUTT!


...UNTIL I HEARD YOUR OBNOXIOUS VOICE, TRUMPETING THAT RIDICULOUS BATTLE CRY.
INO ALMOST HAD ME...

WHO'S NEXT? I HAVE A FEELING IT'S ME!!
HOP
OKAY! MY TURN! I'M GOOD TO GO. WHO THINKS HE CAN TAKE ME?!


RATS!
FLUP
AW, MAN!


NARA SHIKAMARU
VS
KIN TSUCHI

HEH... IT'LL TAKE A LOT MORE THAN A STUPID TECHNIQUE LIKE THAT TO BEAT ME!
SKF
...BE WARY OF THEM.
HE MANIPU-LATES SHADOWS...

ME, EH?

IF THAT'S THE WAY YOU FEEL, I'LL PUT YOU OUT OF YOUR MISERY QUICKLY!
AND HOW EMBAR-RASSING... BEING EXPECTED TO FIGHT A GIRL...
-> SIGH <-
THIS IS SUCH A NUISANCE.
SHIKAMARU, DON'T YOU DARE LOSE!!
WELL... INO'S SUDDENLY FULL OF ENERGY!

HOW LAME!
SKFF
JUST A ONE-TRICK PONY...
SSSS

CHINNG
CHINNG
KLAT
KLAT

HOP
!

CHINNG
CHINNNG

...BELLS...
!
CHINNG

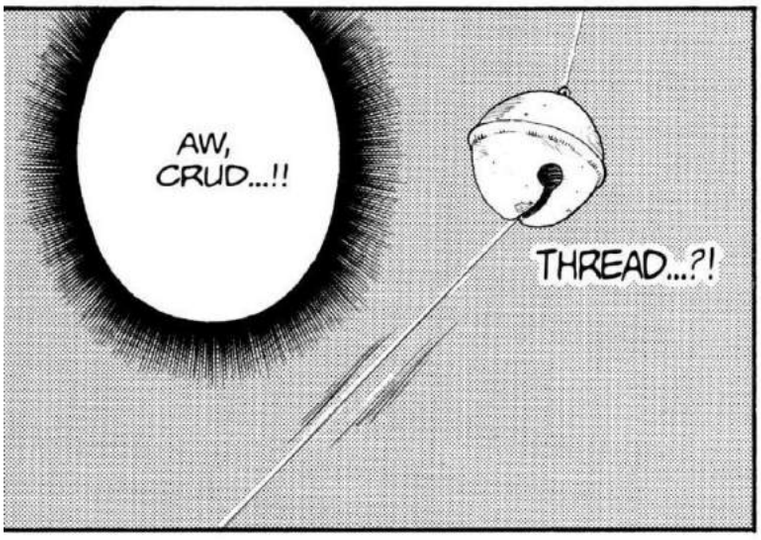
FW
CHATTY, AREN'T YOU?!
UP

...TO MISLEAD ME INTO THINKING I'M SAFE ONCE I'VE DODGED THE ONES I CAN HEAR...
I SUPPOSE NEXT YOU'LL BE FLINGING YOUR NEEDLES IN TWO GROUPINGS, WITH AND WITHOUT BELLS...
WHAT A TIRED OLD TRICK!
...UNTIL THE SILENT ONES PERFORATE ME... RIGHT?!

!!
CHINNG
CHING

ONCE I'VE MASTERED THE PATTERN, IF I'M CAREFUL, I CAN DO IT!
ALL I HAVE TO DO IS EVADE THE SILENT, PHANTOM NEEDLES.

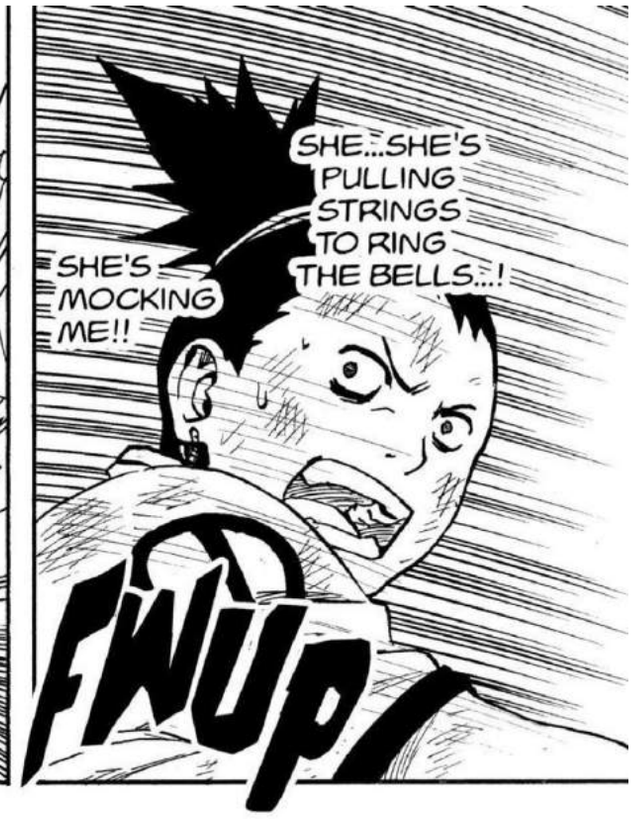
FFFM
WHAT? BEHIND ME?!


AW, CRUD...!!
THREAD...?!

YANK

CHING
CHING
CHING

FWUNG
TOO LATE!!
!!

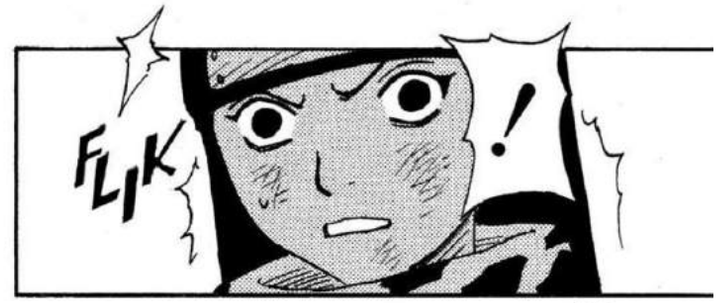

SHE...SHE'S PULLING STRINGS TO RING THE BELLS...!
SHE'S MOCKING ME!!
FWUP

SHIKAMARU!!

STAB
STAB

!!
I...CAN'T MOVE--!!
TCHGK

NOW FOR THE COUP DE GRACE!
ONCE I MASTERED HOW TO AVOID YOUR SHADOW, YOU NEVER STOOD A CHANCE!


FLIK
!

...?!

!!
TIME TO DEPLOY MY SHADOW POSSESSION TECHNIQUE...
SHF
OKAY...
FLIK

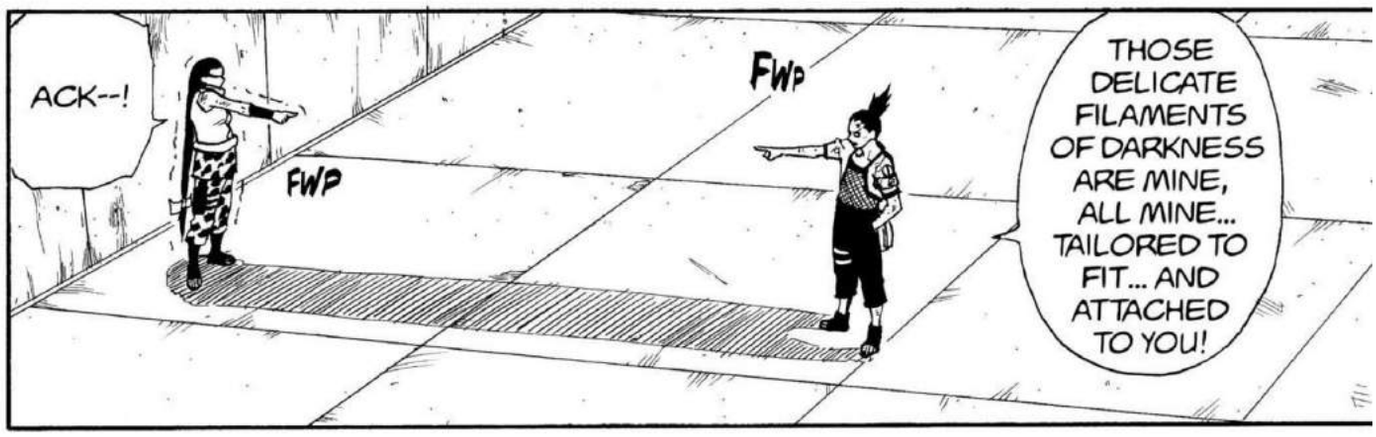
YOU STILL DON'T GET IT, DO YOU?

NO WAY--!
!!

YOUR SHADOW IS NOWHERE IN SIGHT!
HOW?!

THERE'S NO WAY THEY COULD CAST SHADOWS!
SUCH DELICATE LITTLE THREADS, SO HIGH UP...
YES, YOU IDIOT!
GNNG

THE THREADS DIDN'T CAST THOSE SHADOWS AT ALL!
THE SHADOW IS GROWING AND SPREADING... AW, MAN!
VNNNNG
...WITHIN LIMITS.
GUUUNG
!
WHEREAS I CAN MAKE MY OWN SHADOW AS BIG AS I WISH... OR AS SMALL...


ACK--!
FWP
FWP
THOSE DELICATE FILAMENTS OF DARKNESS ARE MINE, ALL MINE... TAILORED TO FIT... AND ATTACHED TO YOU!

TELL ME SOMETHING I DON'T KNOW!
...WILL HURT YOU, TOO!
DON'T BE AN IDIOT. WHILE WE'RE LOCKED INTO THIS MIMICRY, ANY INJURY DONE TO ME...
AW... YOU WOULDN'T--!!
SHF

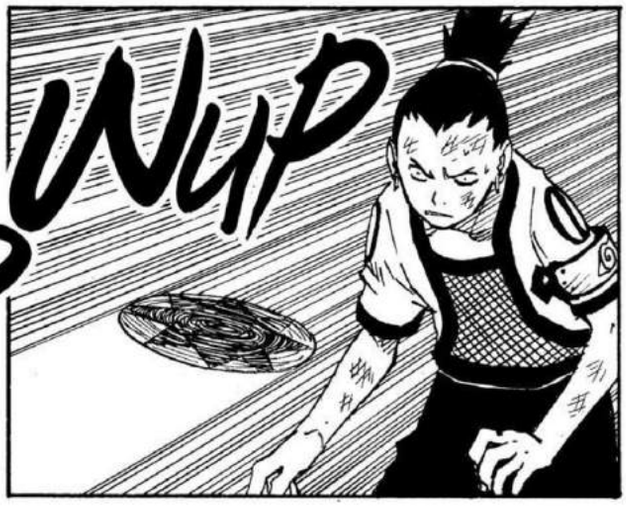
POK

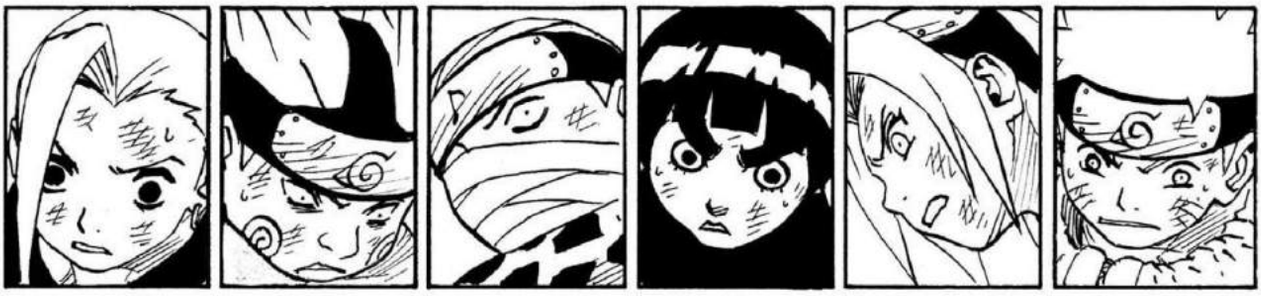
POK
!!
FLIK

FWUNNG
NO...! YOU FOOL!!

IT'S A HEAD-TO-HEAD SHURIKEN ATTACK. I DOUBT YOU'LL HOLD UP FOR LONG.
FWUNG

OW...
FWUP

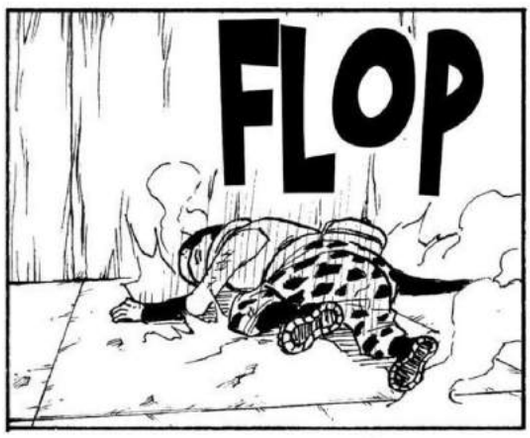

WUP

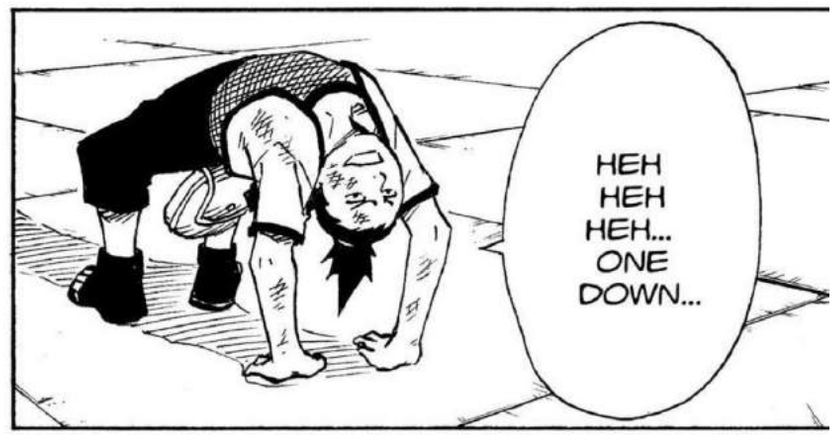


WAS HE BLUFFING ALL ALONG?!
SHIF

WHOA...
TAK

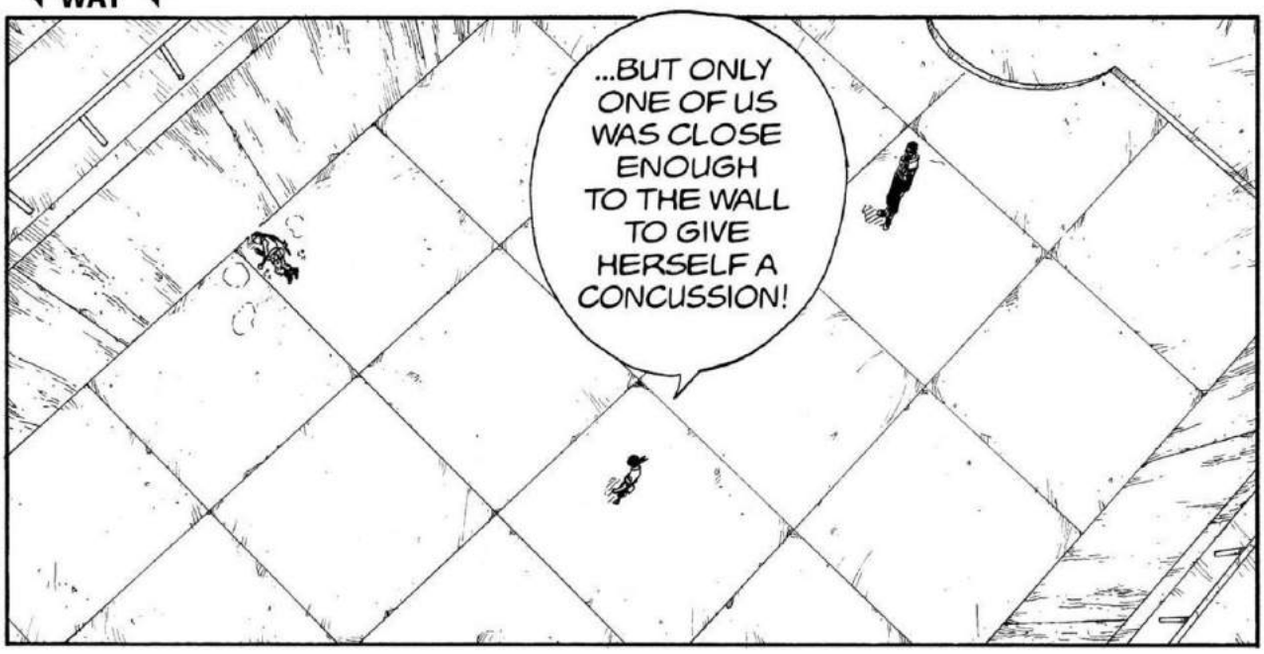
ON!!G
THOK

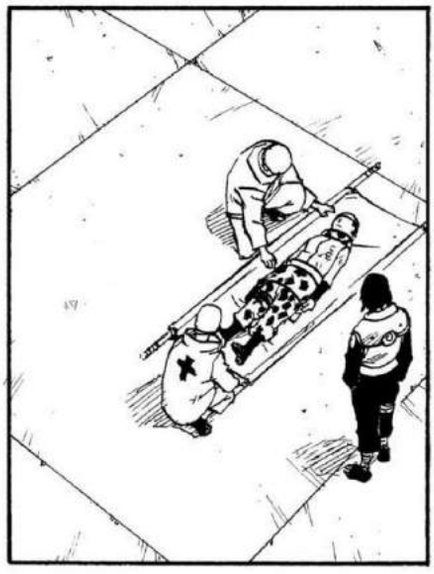

FLOP


HEH HEH HEH... ONE DOWN...

YOU WERE LOCKED INTO THE SAME MOVEMENTS AS I...
SKF
A SHINOBI USES EVERYTHING TO HIS ADVANTAGE... INCLUDING THE TERRAIN... AND THE ARCHITECTURE, AS WELL.

FLIP
THERE!


...BUT ONLY ONE OF US WAS CLOSE ENOUGH TO THE WALL TO GIVE HERSELF A CONCUSSION!



THE WINNER IS NARA SHIKAMARU!
...SO YOU WOULDN'T NOTICE WHERE YOU WERE STANDING.
THE SHURIKEN WERE JUST A DISTRAC-TION...

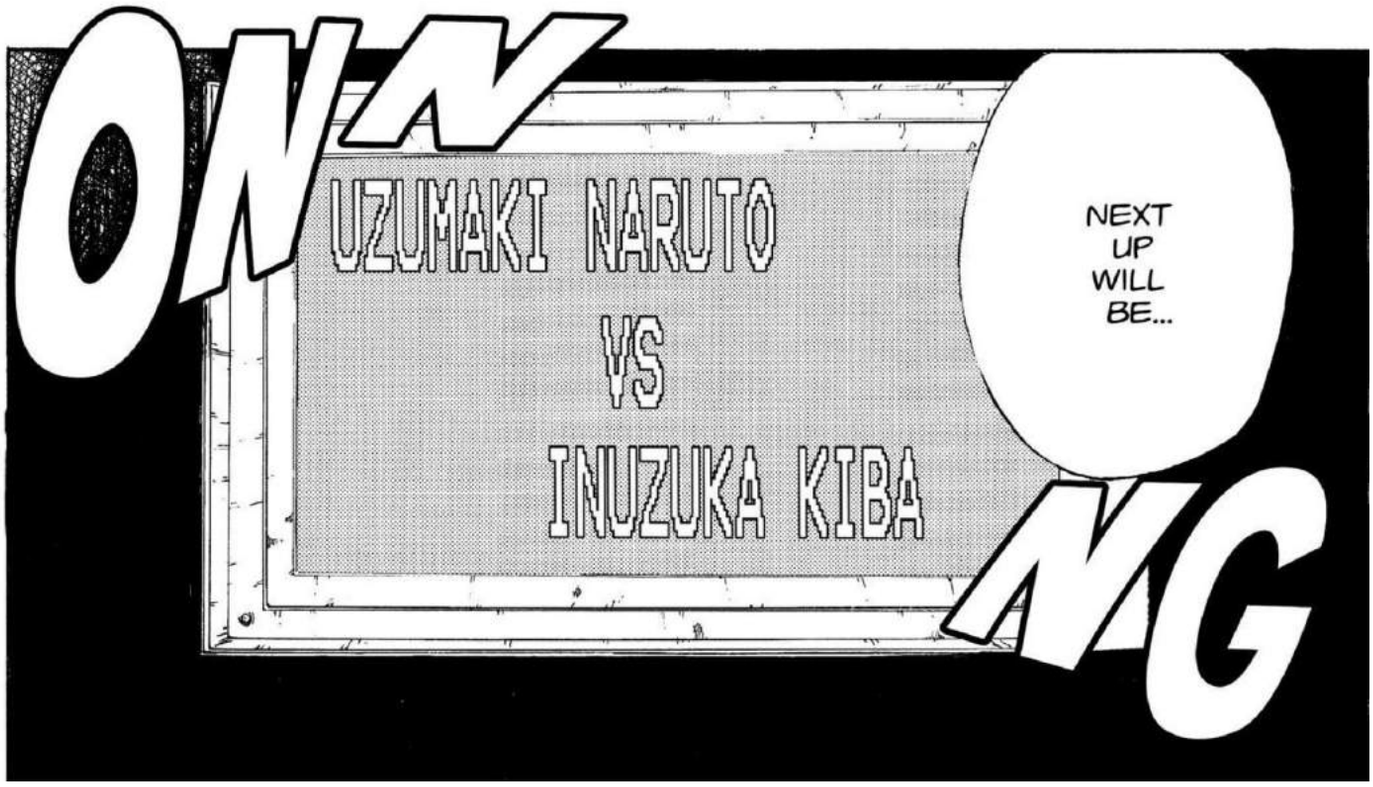
HMPH... AND NOW IT'S JUST DOWN TO ME.

AND THE GUY ACTS TOTALLY HUMBLE... MAN, THAT WAS COOL!

AWESOME!!
NICE ONE, SHIKAMARU!!

THIS YEAR'S ROOKIES SEEM TO BE SHOWING SOME PROMISE, BUT...

...PLEASE, JUST DON'T LET IT BE THE SAND GUY...!
THE ONLY ONES WHO HAVEN'T COMPETED YET ARE ME, HINATA, NARUTO, ONE OF THE SOUND NINJA... CHOJI, NEJI AND LEE...AND THAT GUY FROM SAND...


ON
UZUMAKI NARUTO
VS
INUZUKA KIBA
NEXT UP WILL BE...
NG

READ THIS WAY
!
!

THANKS FOR BEING PATIENT, EVERYONE! I'M GONNA MAKE THIS WORTH YOUR WAIT!
WELL, IT'S ABOUT TIME!!

OH, YEAH!!
MUTTER
IF I'M NOT NEXT... THEN IT SIGNIFIES THAT SAKURA WILL HATE ME FOR HAVING MASSIVE EYEBROWS. BUT IF I AM NEXT...
FRET

WE CAN TAKE THIS GUY, AKAMARU!!!
OH, YESSS! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!!
WOOF!

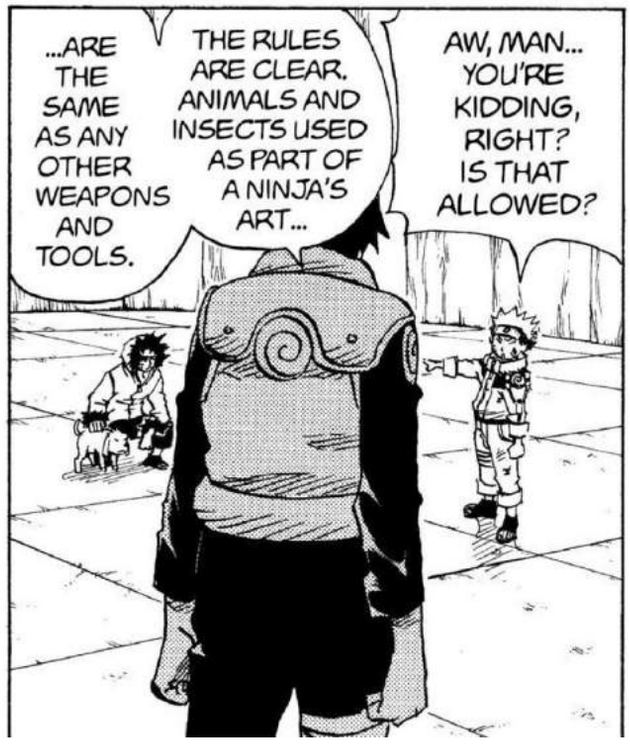
Number 75:
Naruto's Coming-of-Age...!!
暫あいや

UZUMAKI NARUTO VERSUS INUZUKA KIBA!
THE SEVENTH ROUND BATTLE!!

C'MON... HE'LL GET IN OUR WAY!
HEY, KIBA!! SEND YOUR LITTLE PUPPY DOG HOME!!
!

DON'T BE SO COCKY, YOU JERK!

WE LUCKED OUT, AKAMARU! THIS FIGHT IS AS GOOD AS WON!!!
WOO-HOO!!
WOOF!


...ARE THE SAME AS ANY OTHER WEAPONS AND TOOLS.
THE RULES ARE CLEAR. ANIMALS AND INSECTS USED AS PART OF A NINJA'S ART...
AW, MAN... YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT? IS THAT ALLOWED?

WOOF WOOF!
SKF
WHATEVER! AKAMARU FIGHTS WITH ME, LIKE ALWAYS.

...

!!
HMPH! FINE. I DO MY BEST WORK WITH A LITTLE HANDICAP, ANYWAY!

...

SIT THIS ONE OUT, AKAMARU. I'LL HANDLE HIM ALONE.
SKF
WHINE
TWO CAN PLAY THAT GAME!!
WHO DOES HE THINK HE IS?

I-I WISH I COULD CHEER FOR NARUTO... BUT KIBA IS MY TEAMMATE, AND I DON'T WANT TO UPSET HIM! BUT...
FUSS
FUSS

TOUGH BREAK, KAKASHI. THERE'S NO WAY YOUR BOY CAN BEAT KIBA!
NARUTO, HUNH?

NARUTO! DON'T YOU DARE LET THAT LOSER BEAT YOU!!!
...AT LAST. HERE GOES...

...CONSIDERING WHAT HE WAS LIKE BACK IN SCHOOL?!
ONG
TODAY WE'LL BE REVIEWING HENGE NO JUTSU -- THE ART OF TRANSFORMATION. PLEASE TAKE THE FORM OF LORD HOKAGE.
HEH... HOW MUCH SKILL AND STRENGTH COULD HE POSSIBLY HAVE GAINED SINCE HE REACHED THE RANK OF GENIN...

PACKLE
SNAP

BWA HA HA
HMM?

HA HA HA HA HA
...
...

BWA HA HA HA HA HA!
OHHH...

READ THIS WAY
LOUD-MOUTH...
I'D JUST GOTTEN TO SLEEP!
WHO IS THIS LOSER?
POP
PRETTY FUNNY, EH? I MEANT TO DO THAT! NO, REALLY...
HEH HEH HEH!!
NOW TRY AGAIN, YOU FOOL!
NARUTO... YOU'VE BEEN A STUDENT HERE FOR THREE YEARS.
ENOUGH!!
YIPE!
GRUMBLE
GRUMBLE
AWW...
ONNG
TRANS-FORM!!
HMPH...
YOU KNOW... HE HAS A GOOD GRASP OF THE BASICS. THAT WAS A DECENT IMITATION OF THE HOKAGE...
HA HA... I JUST TRANSFERRED INTO THIS CLASS. I'VE BEEN MISSING OUT!
SWF

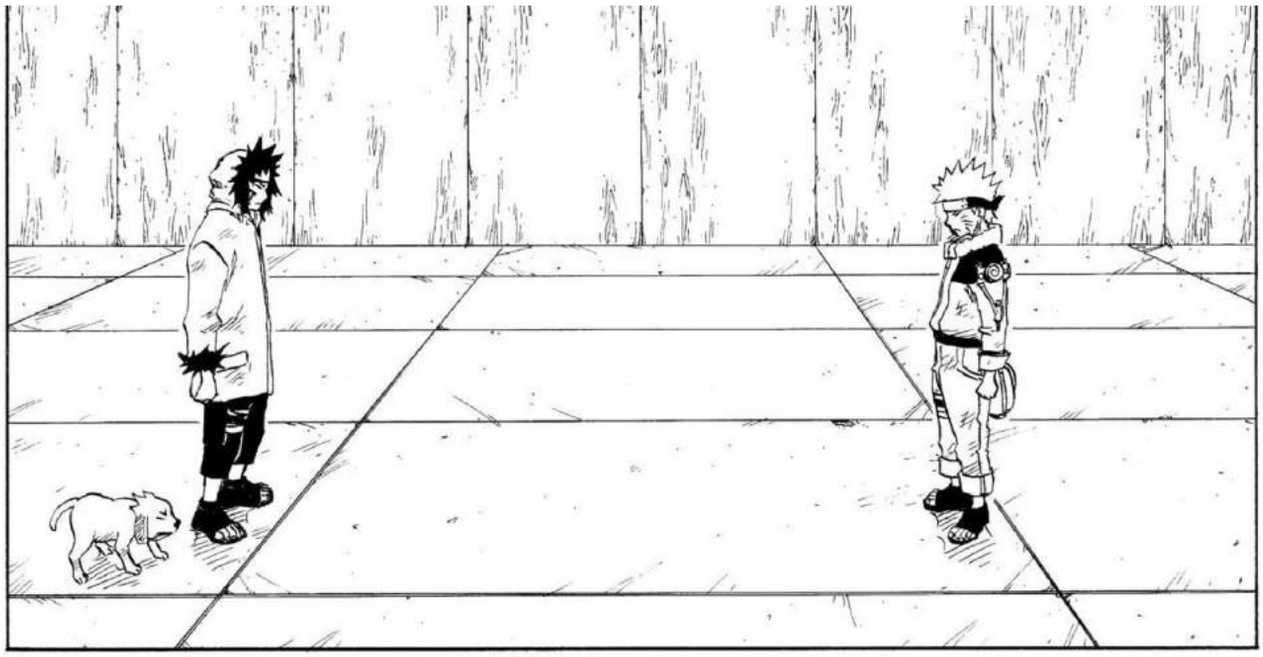
FZZZ
ZT

NARUTO...
I DON'T WANT TO HEAR...

PO
OF
...

GLARE
...
...

THAT'S JUST SAD!
HE'S BEEN HERE THREE YEARS WITHOUT MASTERING THE ART OF TRANS-FORMATION!
HA HA... IS THIS GUY FOR REAL?!



WELL... RIGHT BACK ATCHA!
OH, YEAH...?!
KRAK

I'LL FINISH YOU OFF FAST INSTEAD OF DRAGGING IT OUT.
DON'T WORRY. I'LL BE KIND...
CRUNCH

YOU'RE NOT FOOLING ANYONE WITH THAT COOL ACT.
WOOF!

BEGIN!!
K.O.FF
WELL THEN...

SHIKYAKU NO JUTSU!! DOWN ON ALL FOURS TECHNIQUE!
SH HF
NINJA ART OF BEAST MIMICRY!

CLENCH

HOP

!

SH F
HERE I COME...

POW
HE'S FAST...!

SKF
HE'S DOWN FOR THE COUNT ALREADY, SIR!

BA
M
SKRLL

COME ON, NARUTO. YOU'RE NOT THAT LAME--!
...

THERE'S NO WAY A LOSER LIKE NARUTO COULD EVER STAND UP TO KIBA!
LIKE I FIGURED...

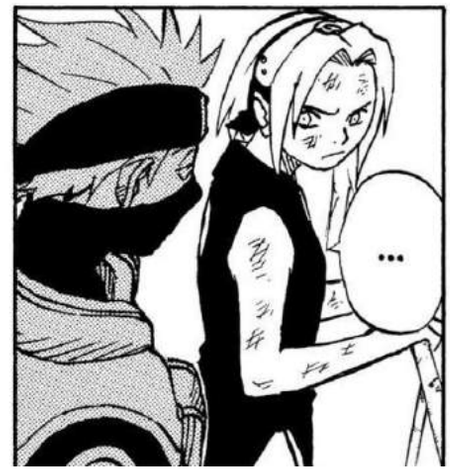
POOR NARUTO!

HE'S SUCH A WIMP!

SEE...

...
WINK

WINK


...

...ALL THE VILLAGERS WILL HAVE TO ACKNOWLEDGE MY EXISTENCE AT LAST!!
...I'LL OUTSHINE EVEN THE HOKAGE! AND THEN...
...THAT'S RIGHT...

SHOOOOM
!!!
...THINKING THAT NARUTO WAS JUST A SWAGGERING FOOL, FULL OF HOT AIR...

I REMEMBER... I USED TO MOCK THOSE WORDS, TOO...
SNF.

!!

...GET BETTER THAN ME?
WHY DON'T YOU...

...YOU BIG CHICKEN...

SHUT UP!
TAK TAK

GRUNT
...BUT...

DOOM
CHAAARGE!!

LUB DUB

...YOU BIG CHICKEN?!
HUFF
PUFF

YOU'RE ONE OF THE ONES I WANT TO FIGHT...
...!!
LUB DUB

I NEVER GO BACK ON MY WORD.
THAT'S... MY SHINOBI WAY!

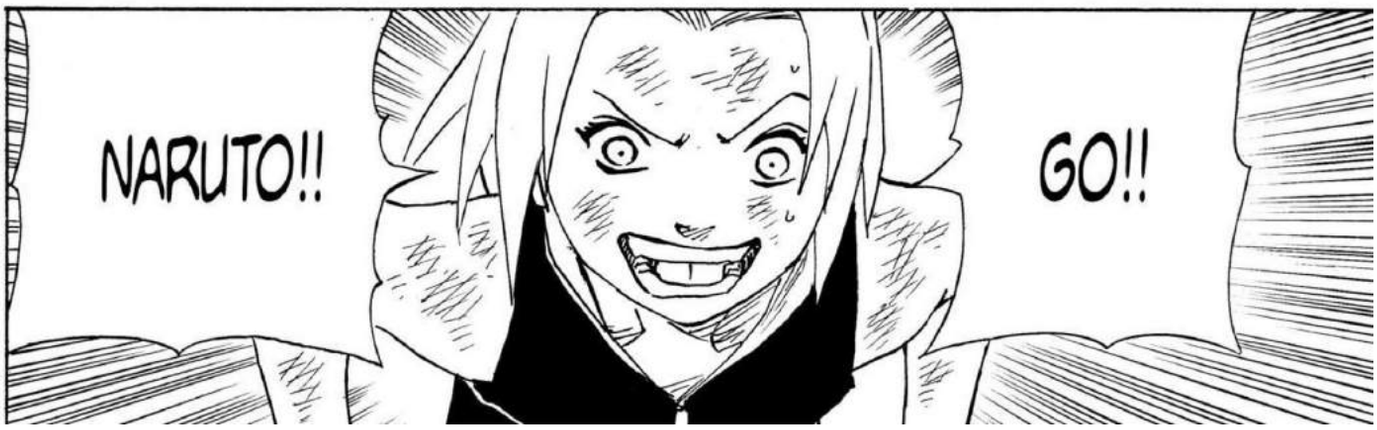
!
WHAT ...?!

...I WAS WRONG!

...NARUTO!
...

YOU SHOW 'EM...

DON'T...



...UNDERESTIMATE ME!!!

YOU TALK PRETTY TOUGH FOR SOMEONE WHO'S BLEEDING ALL OVER THE PLACE.

WOULD YOU JUST SUR-RENDER ALREADY?!

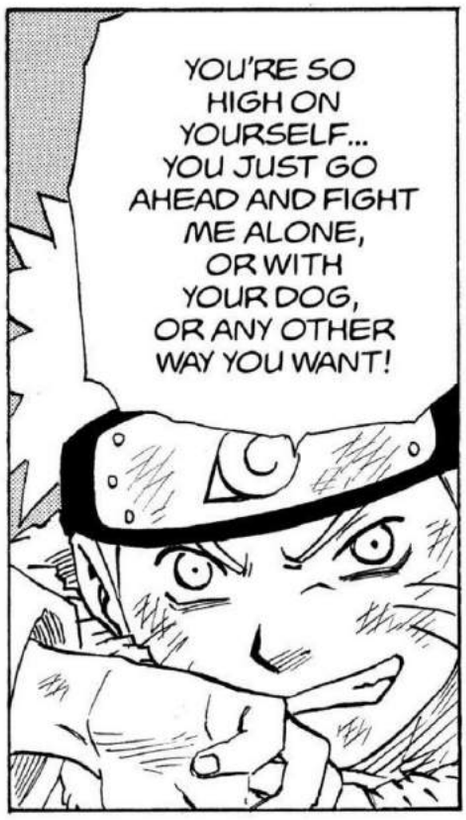
WOOF!

WOOF!

SO... HE'S LIVING UP TO HIS BOASTS NOW...!

YEAH!!

OH, NARUTO!!


YOU'RE SO HIGH ON YOURSELF... YOU JUST GO AHEAD AND FIGHT ME ALONE, OR WITH YOUR DOG, OR ANY OTHER WAY YOU WANT!

!
FLINCH

...SO I COULD FIND OUT WHAT YOU'RE MADE OF!!
DON'T YOU GET IT? I LET YOU POUND ME...

YOU'LL BE SORRY!
...

SHF

A SMOKE BOMB!!
!

WOOF!
HOP
GET HIM, AKAMARU!!
DIG DIG

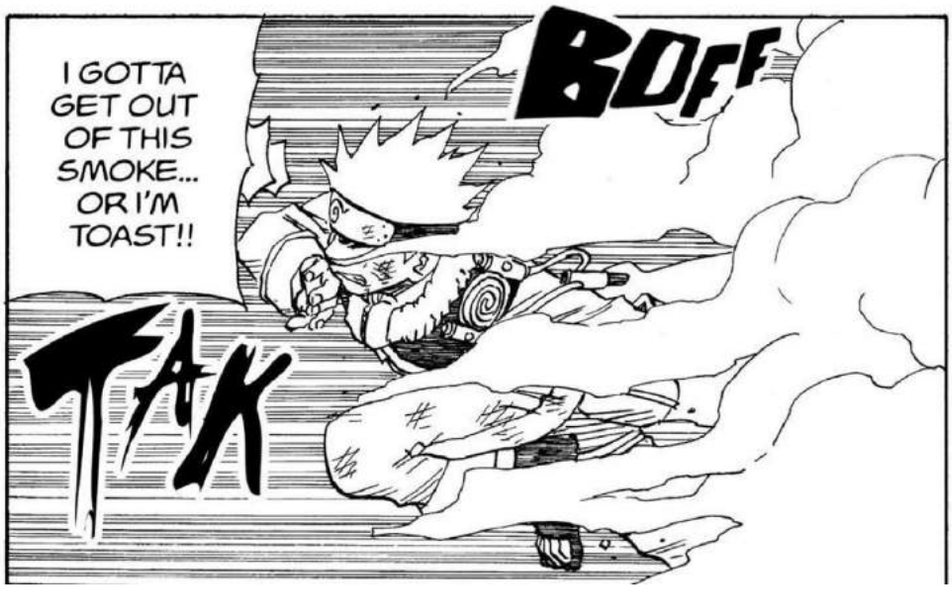
BOOOOF
AUGH--!

WOO HOO!
TROMP
TROMP
YESSS!
ARGH!!
TROMP

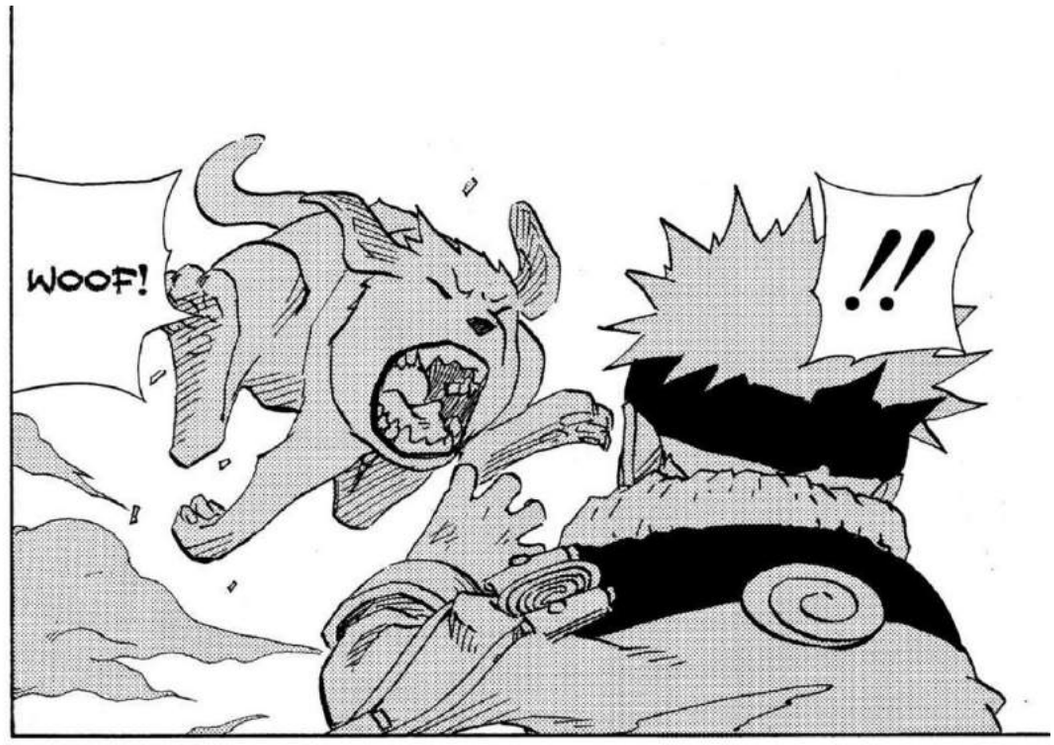
I CAN'T SEE!!

?!

!


I GOTTA GET OUT OF THIS SMOKE... OR I'M TOAST!!
BOFF
TAK

GOTCHA!


WOOF!
!!

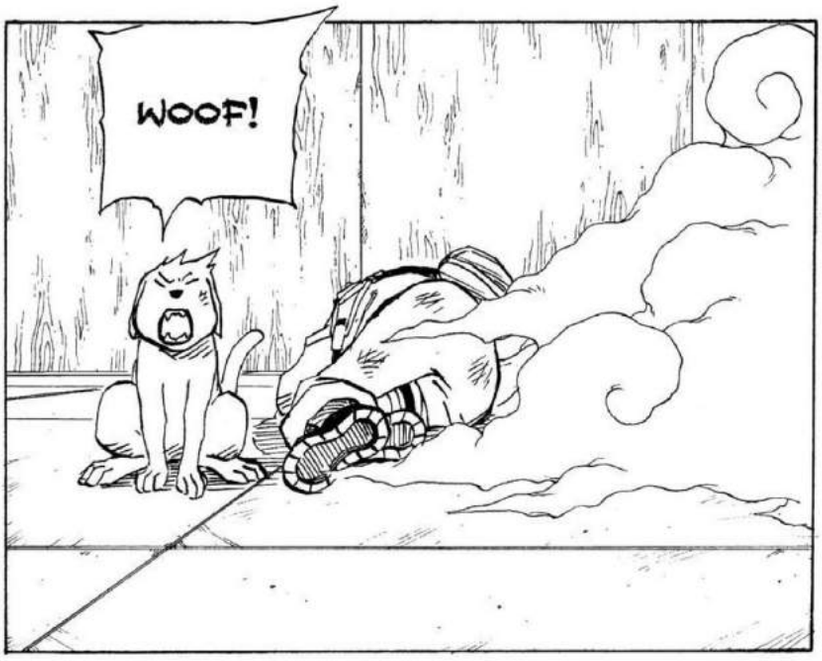
!!

CHOMP
OWW!!

TAK
HOP

...

AUGH!
POOM


WOOF!

WAFT

GOOD ONE, AKA--

NICE!!
ALL RIGHT! I DID IT!!
WOOF!
TAK

!!

CHOMP
?!

YOU--! THE ART OF TRANS-FORMATION?!
PO
GOTCHA! ARF!!
F

ARGH--!
!
WHERE'S AKAMARU?!
DARN IT! I LET MY GUARD DOWN!!

AKAMARU!!
WHINE
OVER HERE!
YOU... YOU TASTE LIKE DOG! YUCK!

I HAD NO IDEA HE WAS SO GOOD...
HE TIMED HIS TRICKS FLAWLESSLY.

THAT CAN'T BE NARUTO. NO WAY COULD HE STAND UP TO KIBA... OR MAYBE EVEN BEAT HIM! I CAN'T BELIEVE...
AMAZING! NARUTO WAS ABLE TO USE THE ART OF TRANSFORMATION RIGHT ON THE HEELS OF CREATING HIS SHADOW DOPPELGANGERS! THERE'S NO WAY...!

HO HO... WHAT AN INTERESTING DEVELOPMENT.

SHIVER
EVER SINCE THIS EXAM BEGAN, HE'S REALLY SEEMED TO BE COMING INTO HIS OWN...

BUT WHAT A FREAK... ACTUALLY BITING KIBA... AND THEN HAVING IT BACKFIRE ON HIM. HE'S HILARIOUS...

HUF
OH YEAH?
THEN... RIGHT BACK ATCHA!
HUF

SO THIS TIME, I'M NOT HOLDING BACK!!
I GUESS YOU'VE GOTTEN STRONGER, EH...?

THE WORLD OF KISHIMOTO MASASHI
MY PERSONAL HISTORY, PART 9

FOR ME, JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL WAS ALL ABOUT BASEBALL, AND DURING EVERY SUMMER VACATION WE HAD TRAINING CAMP. AT OUR SCHOOL, THE ENTIRE BASEBALL CLUB WENT TO SHODO ISLAND, FAMOUS FOR ITS OLIVES AND ITS MONKEYS. EVEN WHILE ON THE TRIP, EVERYONE WAS REQUIRED TO WEAR OUR BLACK SCHOOL UNIFORM PANTS WITH WHITE SHIRTS. THE NUMBER OF MEMBERS IN THE BASEBALL CLUB USUALLY TOTALED ABOUT 45, AND WE WOULD RENT A BUS AND SET OUT FOR CAMP WITH GREAT POMP AND SPLENDOR. WE HAD GOOD TIMES -- AND MORE THAN A LITTLE PAIN -- DURING OUR STAYS ON SHODO ISLAND, AND IT WAS OUR TRADITION TO END THE EXPERIENCE EACH SUMMER BY CLIMBING THE LOCAL TOURIST RESORT'S "MONKEY MOUNTAIN" RIGHT BEFORE WE LEFT.

...IF I REMEMBER CORRECTLY, IT WAS WHEN I WAS IN THE EIGHTH GRADE THAT I WAS INVOLVED IN AN INCIDENT SO TERRIBLE THAT ITS INFAMY IS UNPARALLELED IN THE ANNALS OF THE TRAINING CAMP HISTORY -- A DISASTROUS EVENT THAT COULD HAVE GOTTEN A LOT OF PEOPLE KILLED. WHENEVER I RECALL WHAT I DID AND WHAT HAPPENED I WISH I COULD FORGET... BUT I'M RUNNING OUT OF IDEAS FOR THIS FEATURE NOW, SO I'M GOING TO FINALLY TELL THE TALE...

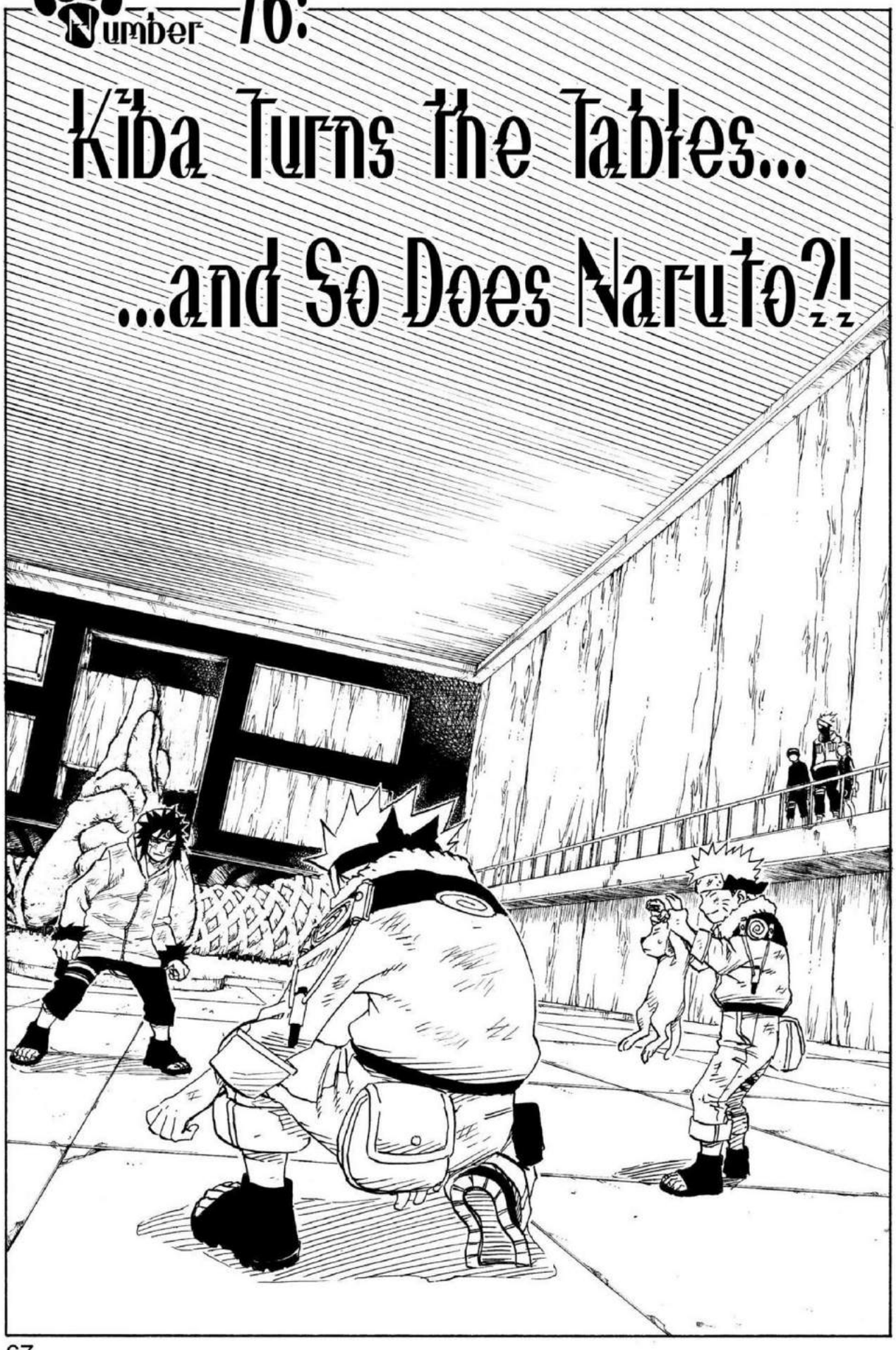
...NEXT TIME.

TO BE CONTINUED...

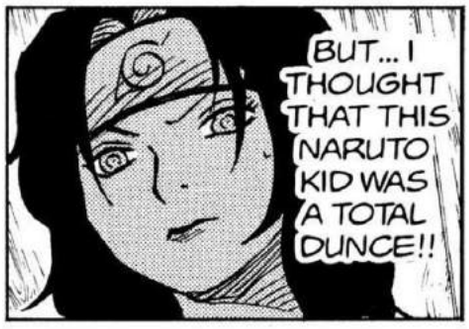
Number 76:

Kiba Turns the Tables...

...and So Does Naruto?!

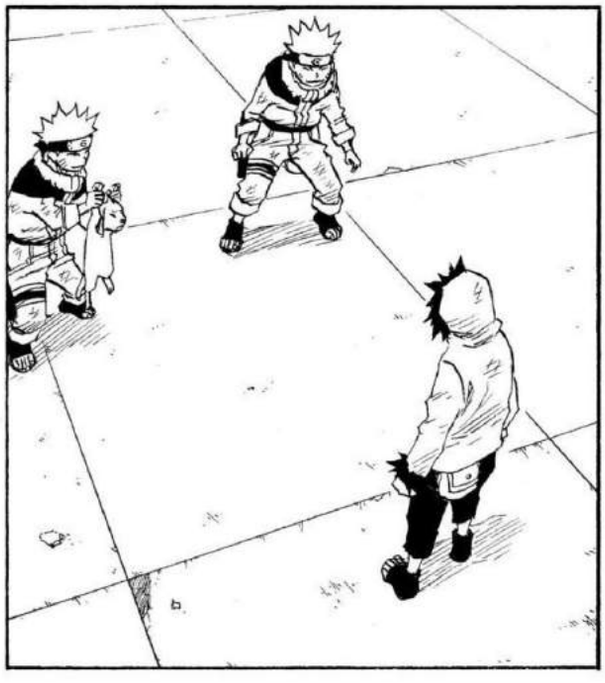


OH, N-NARUTO...
TH--!


BUT... I THOUGHT THAT THIS NARUTO KID WAS A TOTAL DUNCE!!

...WHAT KIND OF METHOD DID KAKASHI USE TO TEACH HIM...?

THAT WAS AWESOME, NARUTO!!

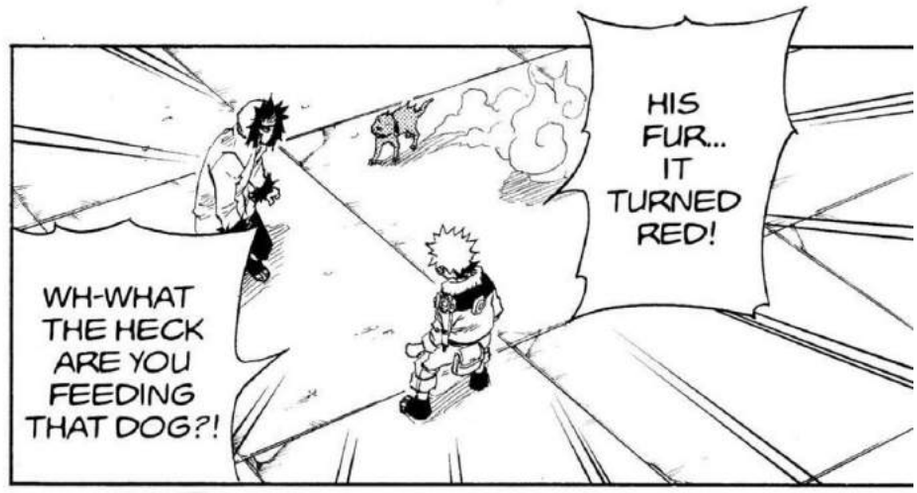


YEAH!
I THINK WE'RE LOOKING AT A WHOLE NEW NARUTO!

READ THIS WAY
YA WWWW
...I THINK MY BOY KIBA AND AKAMARU MAY HAVE MATURED EVEN MORE THAN NARUTO HAS!
HOWEVER...
I MEAN IT, NARUTO. NO HOLDS BARRED... NO MERCY!
FLIK
GULP
?!
SNARL!
CHUMP
OWW!
BRISTLE
GRRR...
GRRR!
BRISTLE
!

SKRRT
ON
G

A MILITARY RATIONS PELLET?!


WH-WHAT THE HECK ARE YOU FEEDING THAT DOG?!
HIS FUR... IT TURNED RED!

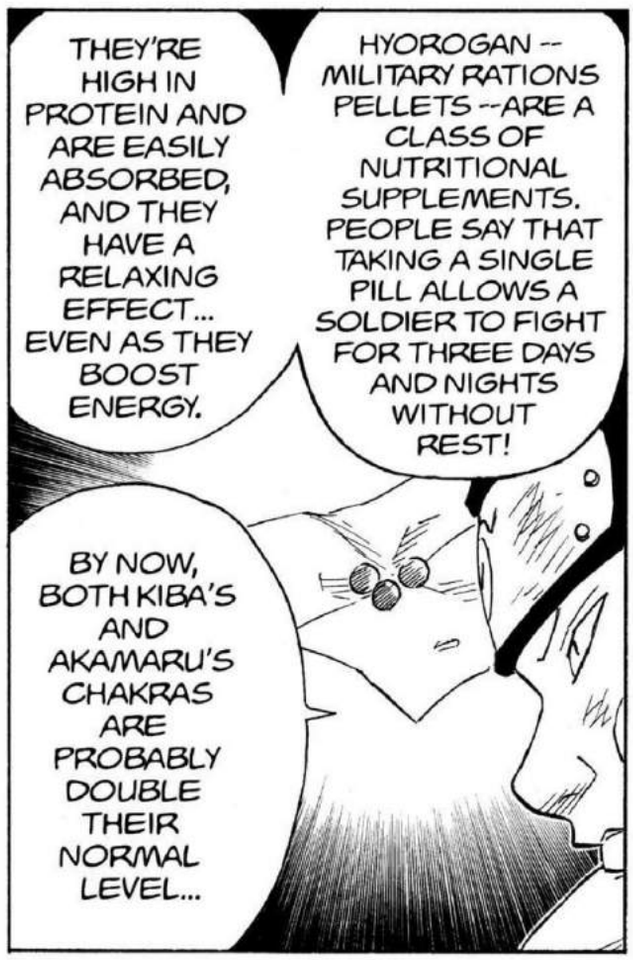
SK
TAK
LET'S DO IT, AKAMARU!!

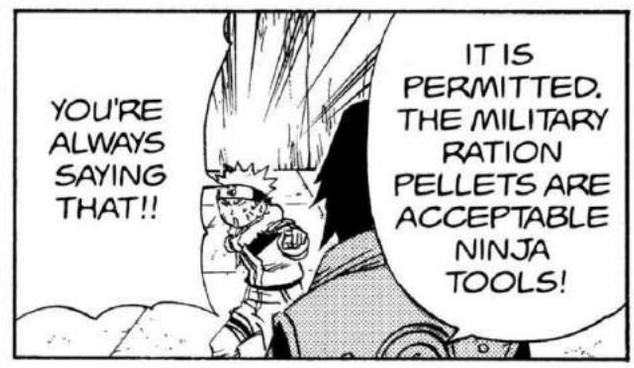
GULP
HIS NAME IS AKAMARU. IT MEANS "RED," YOU DOPE!!

...IS PLANNING TO END THIS, HERE AND NOW.
KIBA...

READ THIS WAY
!!
NINJA ART OF BEAST MIMICRY!
WOOF WOOF!!
(NINJA ART OF HUMAN MIMICRY!)
SHHHMM
JUJIN BUNSHIN! MAN-BEAST DOPPEL-GANGERS!

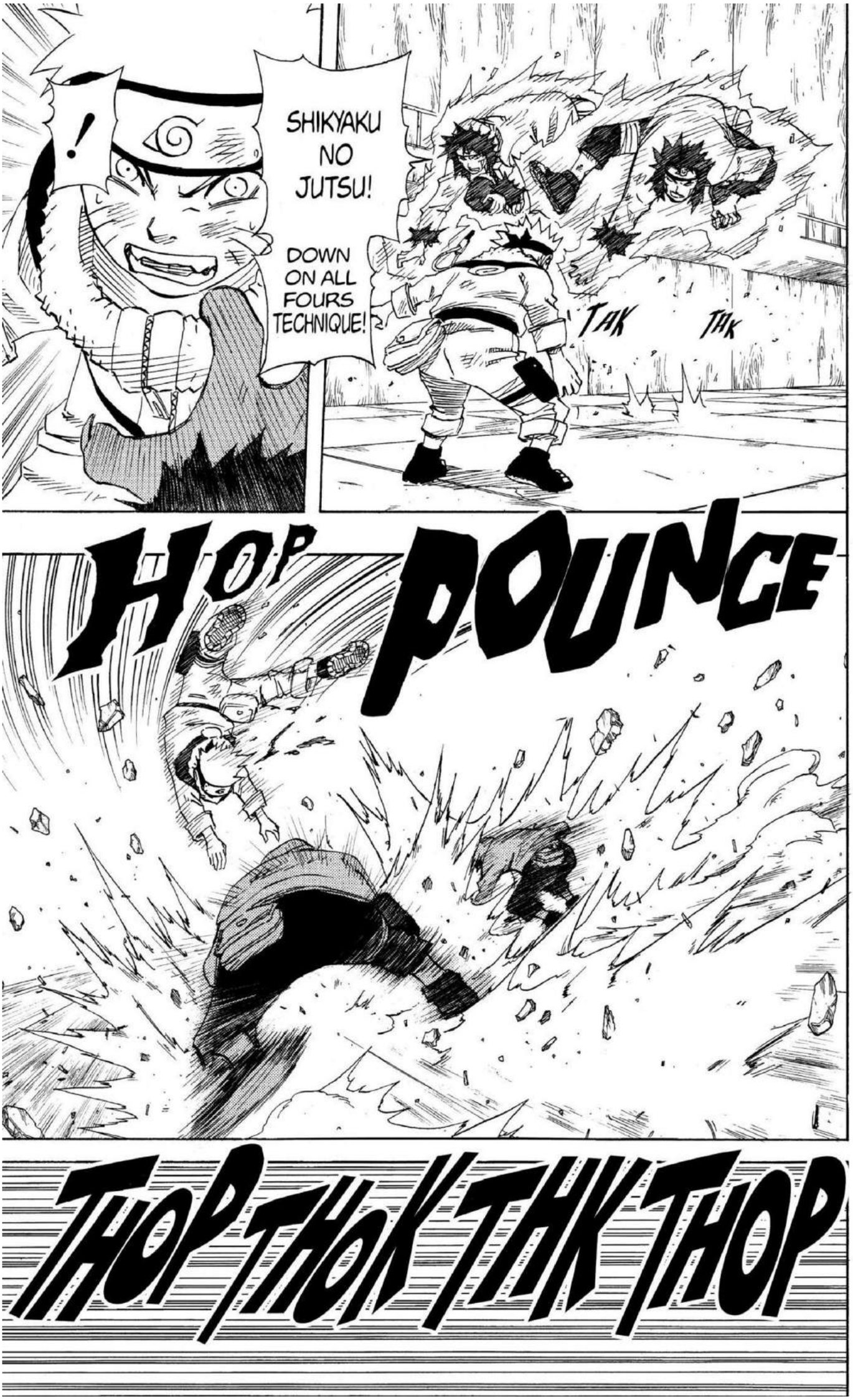
HEY! ISN'T THIS CONSIDERED "DOPING"? IS THIS ALLOWED?!
THE LOOK IN HIS EYES IS FREAKING ME OUT! HE MUST BE HOPPED UP ON SOMETHING!
GRRR!


THEY'RE HIGH IN PROTEIN AND ARE EASILY ABSORBED, AND THEY HAVE A RELAXING EFFECT... EVEN AS THEY BOOST ENERGY.
HYOROGAN -- MILITARY RATIONS PELLETS --ARE A CLASS OF NUTRITIONAL SUPPLEMENTS. PEOPLE SAY THAT TAKING A SINGLE PILL ALLOWS A SOLDIER TO FIGHT FOR THREE DAYS AND NIGHTS WITHOUT REST!
BY NOW, BOTH KIBA'S AND AKAMARU'S CHAKRAS ARE PROBABLY DOUBLE THEIR NORMAL LEVEL...


YOU'RE ALWAYS SAYING THAT!!
IT IS PERMITTED. THE MILITARY RATION PELLETS ARE ACCEPTABLE NINJA TOOLS!

THEY'RE CALLED HYOROGAN.
WHICH MEANS...?
WHAT? WHAT DID THEY JUST EAT?!

FOR KIBA, IT'S IDEAL.
IN BATTLE SITUATIONS, THE PELLETS ACT AS A MEDICINE THAT DISTRIBUTES THE USER'S CHAKRA UNIFORMLY TO EVERY PART OF HIS BODY, MAKING IT FUNCTION AS AN ANIMAL'S DOES...
THIS IS BAD NEWS FOR NARUTO...


!
SHIKYAKU NO JUTSU!
DOWN ON ALL FOURS TECHNIQUE!
TAK
TAK
HOP
POUNCE
THOP THOK THK THOP

HEYYY--!
HOP
SWIPE
SWIPE

AW, MAN--!
EVEN IF I DRIVE ALL OF MY CHAKRA DOWN INTO MY LEGS, IT STILL TAKES EVERYTHING I'VE GOT JUST TO EVADE HIM...! AT THIS RATE...

SKIDD
UGH!

!!

THERE'S MY CHANCE--!!
!

LUNGE
TAKE THIS! MAN-BEAST ULTIMATE TAIJUTSU!

TWIRRRL

TAK

TAK

POW

GATSUUGA! FANG OVER FANG!!

AAGH--!!!

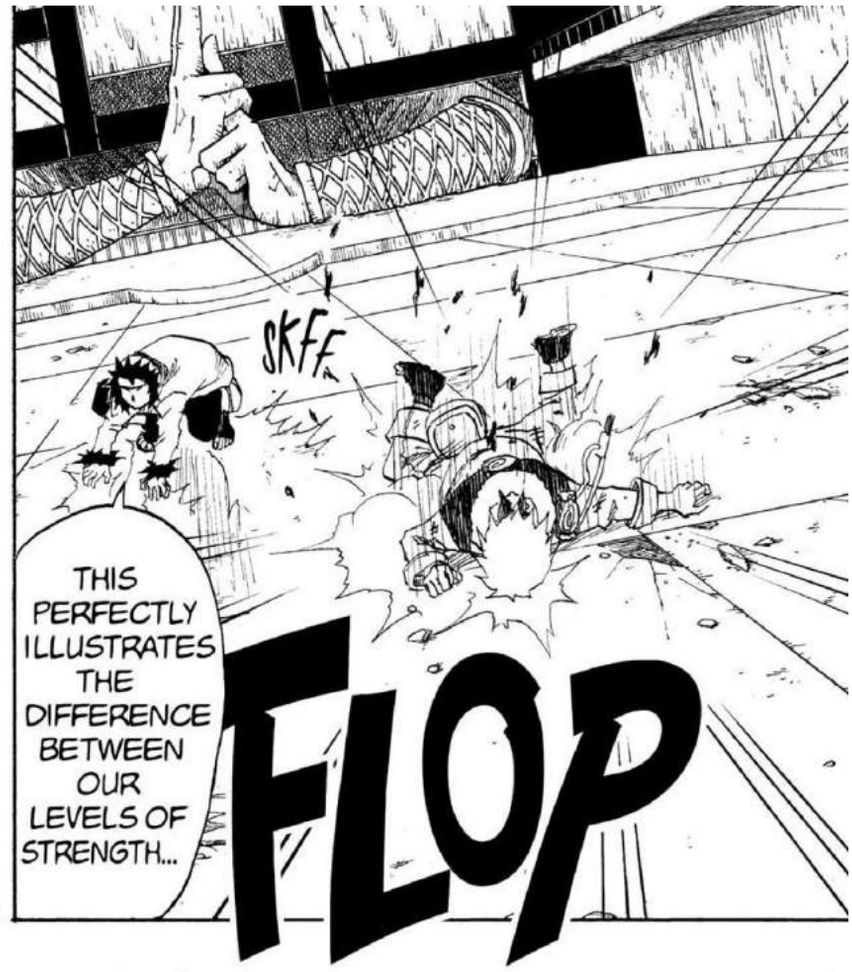
POW

POW

POW

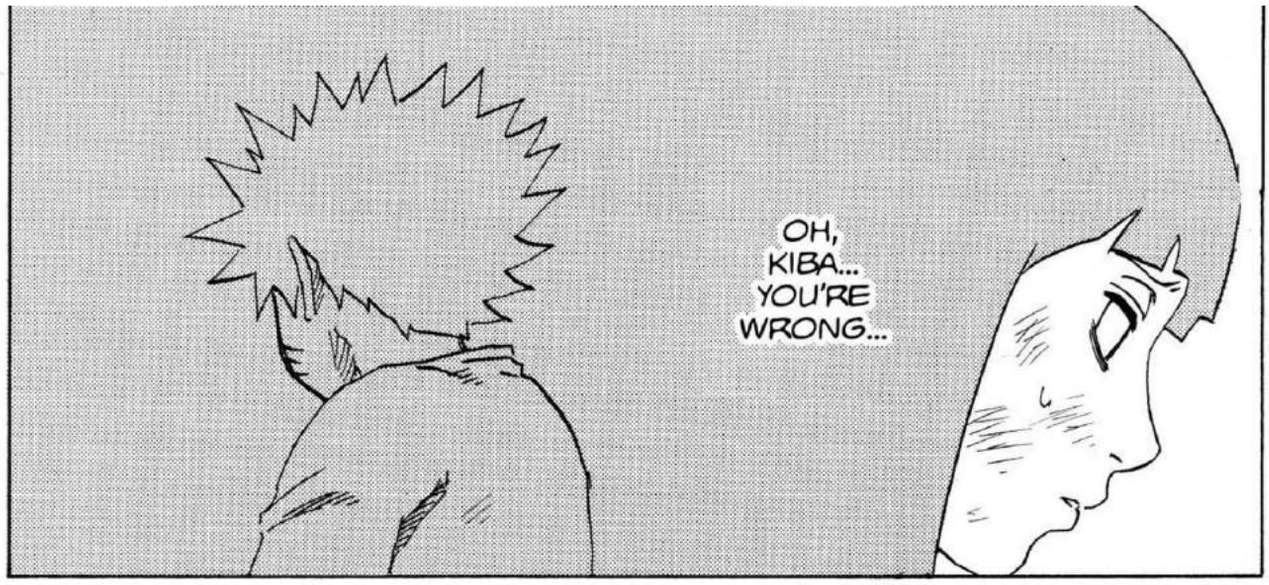
SHIVER
GAGK

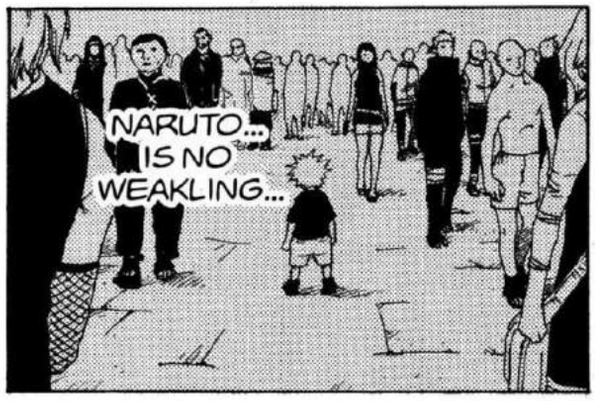
...


SKFF
THIS PERFECTLY ILLUSTRATES THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN OUR LEVELS OF STRENGTH...
FLOP

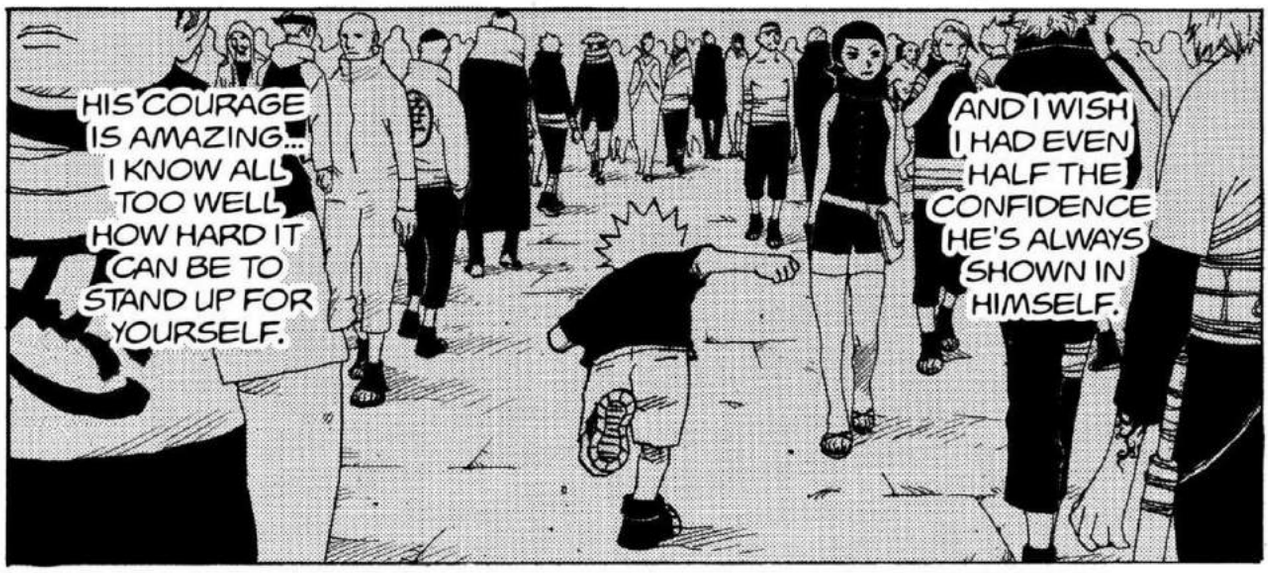
NO ONE'S DELUDED ENOUGH TO THINK YOU REALLY HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO BECOME THE NEXT HOKAGE... NOT EVEN YOU!
YOU CAN'T EVEN BEAT ME!
YOU, HOKAGE?
TELL YOU WHAT, THOUGH... I'LL BECOME HOKAGE IN YOUR PLACE!

...I WON'T... LOSE... NOW...
...BE THE HOKAGE.
I-I'M GONNA...
SCRAPE


OH, KIBA... YOU'RE WRONG...


NARUTO... IS NO WEAKLING...

JUST YOU WAIT!
I'LL BECOME THE HOKAGE SOMEDAY. I WILL! IT'S TRUE!!


HIS COURAGE IS AMAZING... I KNOW ALL TOO WELL HOW HARD IT CAN BE TO STAND UP FOR YOURSELF.
AND I WISH I HAD EVEN HALF THE CONFIDENCE HE'S ALWAYS SHOWN IN HIMSELF.

THEY REFUSED TO SEE HIM AS HE REALLY WAS... BUT...
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
...AND YET, FOR THE LONGEST TIME, NO ONE WOULD EVEN ADMIT HE HAD ANY GOOD POINTS AT ALL.

EVERYONE IS ACKNOWLEDGING HIM... | HIS DETERMINATION...

NOW, EVERYONE IS WATCHING...

!

...YOU'LL WHIMPER...
...LIKE A WHIPPED DOG!!!
IF YOU TRY TO COME BETWEEN ME... AND THE TITLE OF HOKAGE...

LET'S GO, AKAMARU!!
TAK
TAK

...YOU'RE A STUBBORN ONE, AREN'T YOU?
GEEZ...

SHF

HEY! YOU CAN'T FOOL ME AGAIN WITH THE SAME OLD TRICK!

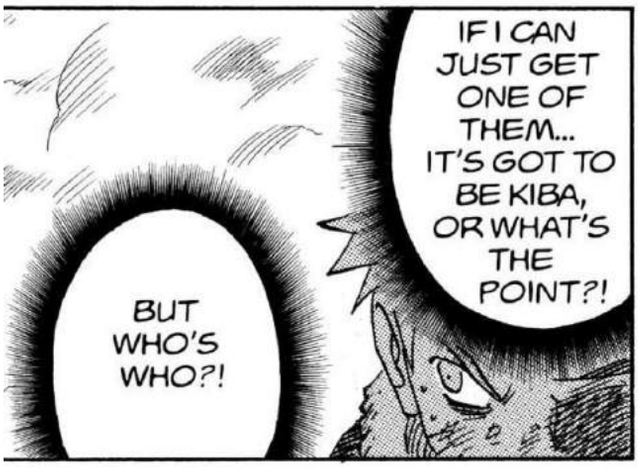
TAKE THAT!!

TAK
TAK
!!

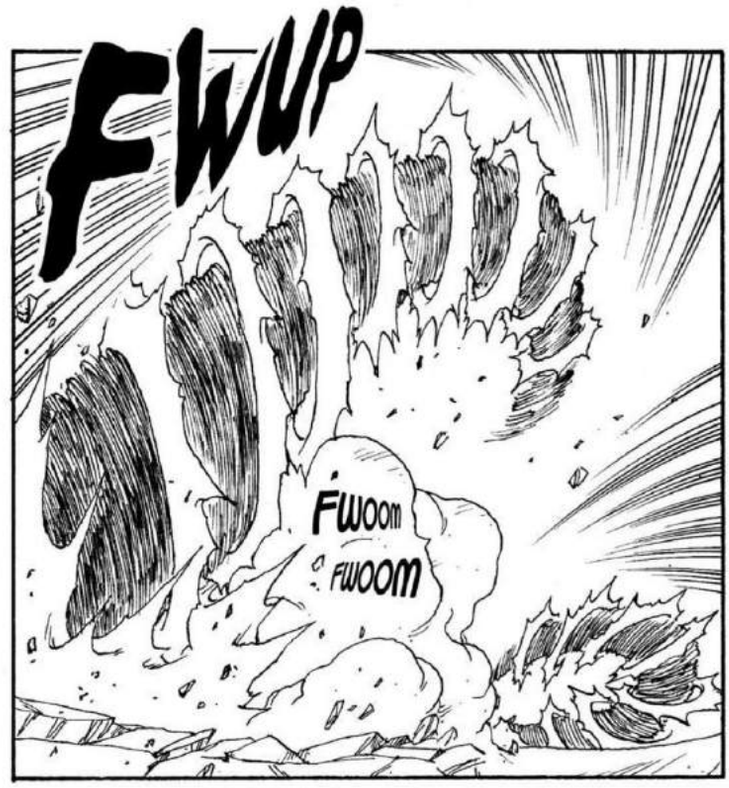
UNGH...
TAK
POW

WE'RE NOT DONE YET!!
SKIDD

SO, NOW WHAT?!
...IT'S STILL A TOUGH ONE TO HAVE TO KEEP DODGING!
EVEN THOUGH I'VE SEEN THIS TECHNIQUE BEFORE...


IF I CAN JUST GET ONE OF THEM... IT'S GOT TO BE KIBA, OR WHAT'S THE POINT?!
BUT WHO'S WHO?!

!!
I'VE GOT IT!


FWUP
FWOOM
FWOOM

SMAT

WHAT'S NARUTO UP TO?!

I'VE GOT YOU NOW...!!

!!

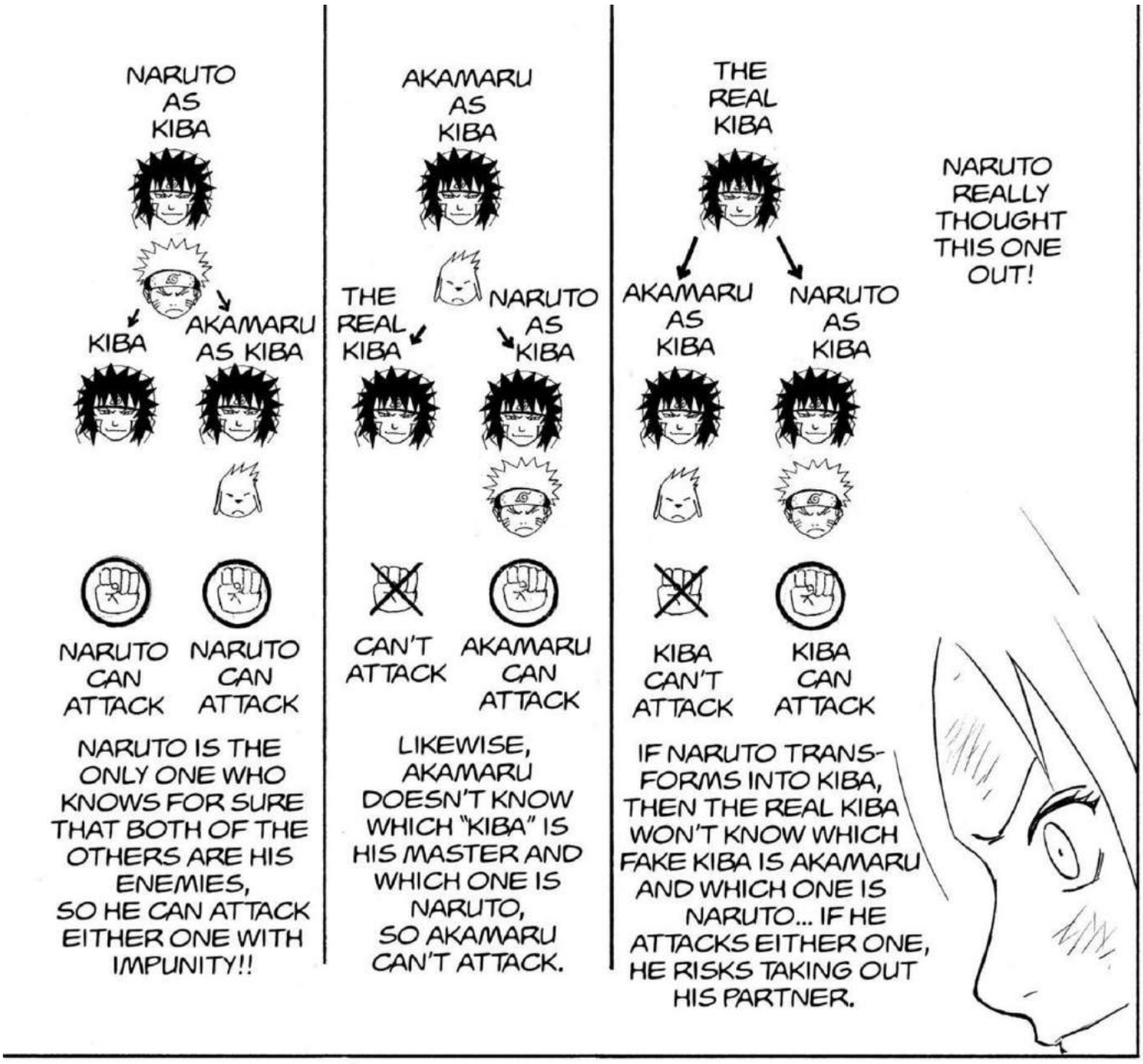
!!

ONN
TRANSFORM!!
G

OH!
...

AHA... VERY GOOD!

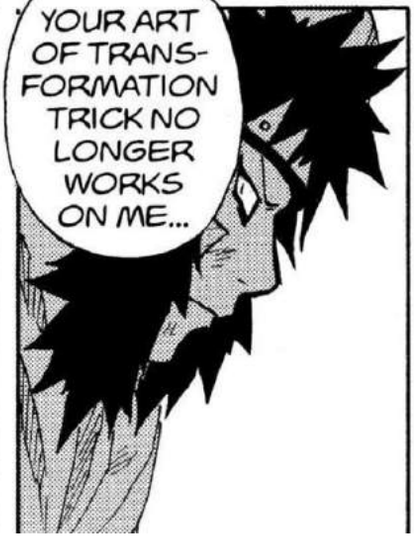
WATCH CLOSELY ...
HUNH?!


NARUTO AS KIBA
KIBA
AKAMARU AS KIBA
NARUTO CAN ATTACK
NARUTO CAN ATTACK
NARUTO IS THE ONLY ONE WHO KNOWS FOR SURE THAT BOTH OF THE OTHERS ARE HIS ENEMIES, SO HE CAN ATTACK EITHER ONE WITH IMPUNITY!!
AKAMARU AS KIBA
THE REAL KIBA
NARUTO AS KIBA
CAN'T ATTACK
AKAMARU CAN ATTACK
LIKEWISE, AKAMARU DOESN'T KNOW WHICH "KIBA" IS HIS MASTER AND WHICH ONE IS NARUTO, SO AKAMARU CAN'T ATTACK.
THE REAL KIBA
AKAMARU AS KIBA
NARUTO AS KIBA
KIBA CAN'T ATTACK
KIBA CAN ATTACK
IF NARUTO TRANSFORMS INTO KIBA, THEN THE REAL KIBA WON'T KNOW WHICH FAKE KIBA IS AKAMARU AND WHICH ONE IS NARUTO... IF HE ATTACKS EITHER ONE, HE RISKS TAKING OUT HIS PARTNER.
NARUTO REALLY THOUGHT THIS ONE OUT!

A WORD OF WARNING...
I SEE WHAT HE'S UP TO, BUT...

NICE!
HE'S GIVEN HIMSELF AN OPENING...

!
AND HERE'S THE REASON WHY...


YOUR ART OF TRANSFORMATION TRICK NO LONGER WORKS ON ME...

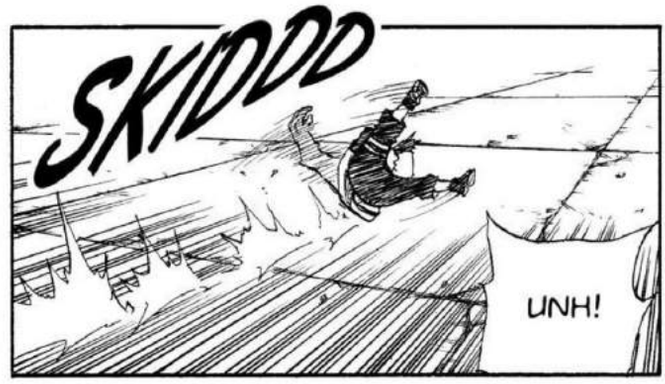
I WAS CARELESS BEFORE, BUT NOW I'M ON TO YOU.

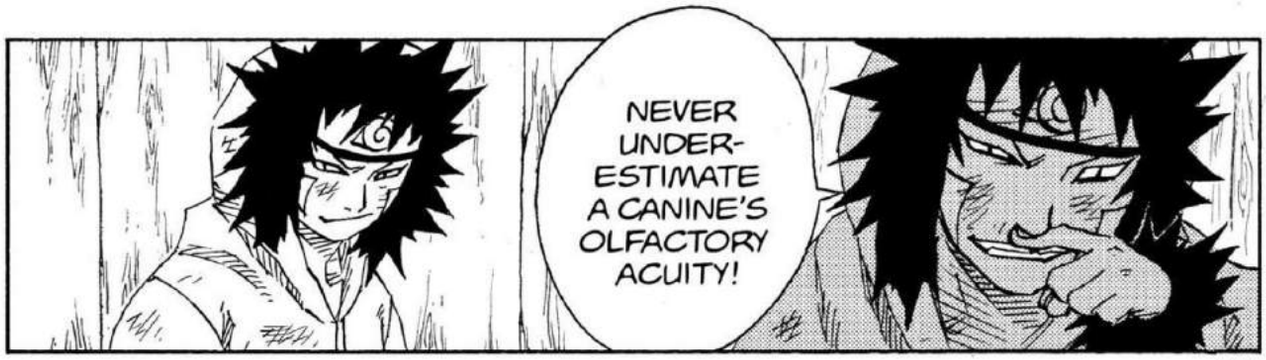
POW

AGH--!!

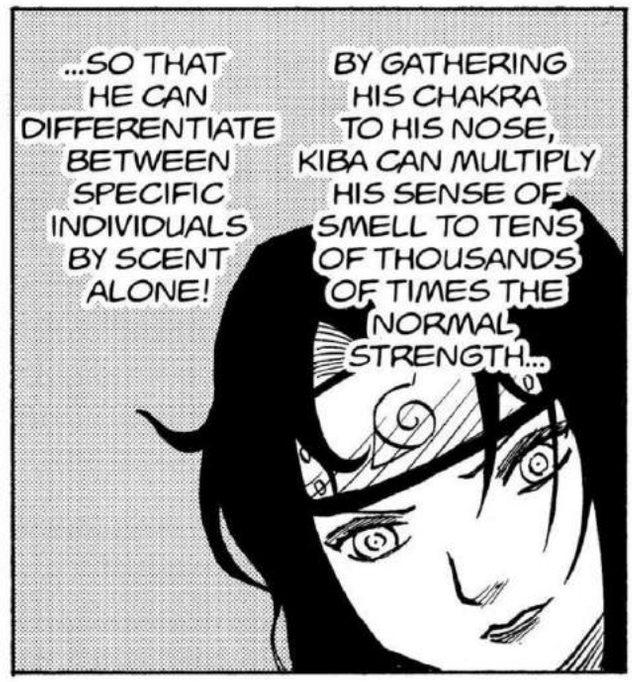
HYAH!!

I CAN SMELL YOU!


SKIDDD
UNH!


NEVER UNDER-ESTIMATE A CANINE'S OLFACTORY ACUITY!

I WIN.
->MOAN<-

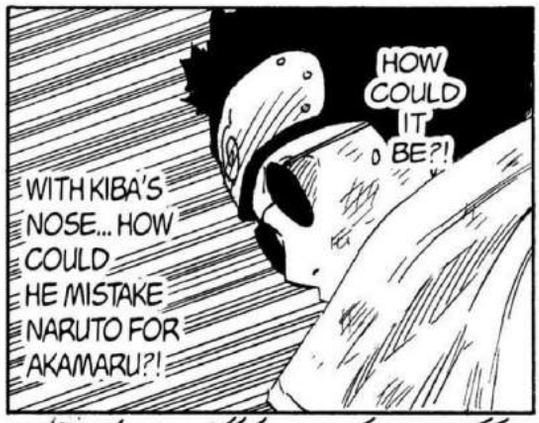

...SO THAT HE CAN DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN SPECIFIC INDIVIDUALS BY SCENT ALONE!
BY GATHERING HIS CHAKRA TO HIS NOSE, KIBA CAN MULTIPLY HIS SENSE OF SMELL TO TENS OF THOUSANDS OF TIMES THE NORMAL STRENGTH...

!!
!
WH-WHAT THE--?!

POO
F

AKAMARU!!

Number 77: Naruto's Clever Scheme!!



THEN YOU MUST BE NARUTO... MOCKING ME!!!

UNH!

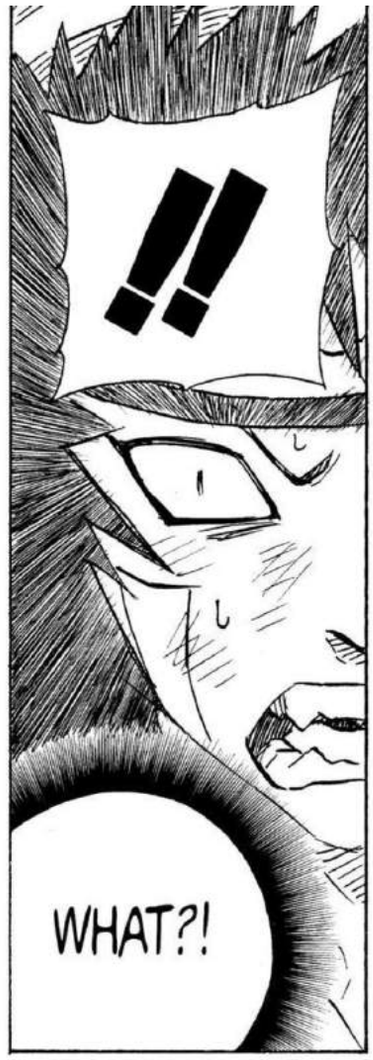
SKF
SKF
SKF

Number 77: Naruto's Clever Scheme!!

A PRANK WORTHY OF MY LITTLE PRACTICAL JOKER!

HE WAS TOTALLY TRICKED!!

?!?


!!
WHAT?!

POW
!!

SHAKE

WHAT--?!?
TAKE THIS!!
TH
AM

NOW'S MY CHANCE! TRANS-FORM!!

HE HIT ME-!

POW

NARUTO AS KIBA

KIBA

AKAMARU AS KIBA

I GET IT! AFTER KIBA'S NOSE EXPOSED NARUTO'S DECEIT, NARUTO WAITED UNTIL KIBA PUNCHED HIM... AND THEN TRANSFORMED HIMSELF INTO AKAMARU!!

!!

IMMEDIATELY TRANSFORMED INTO AKAMARU

BAM

NARUTO AS AKAMARU

HUNH? I HIT AKAMARU?!

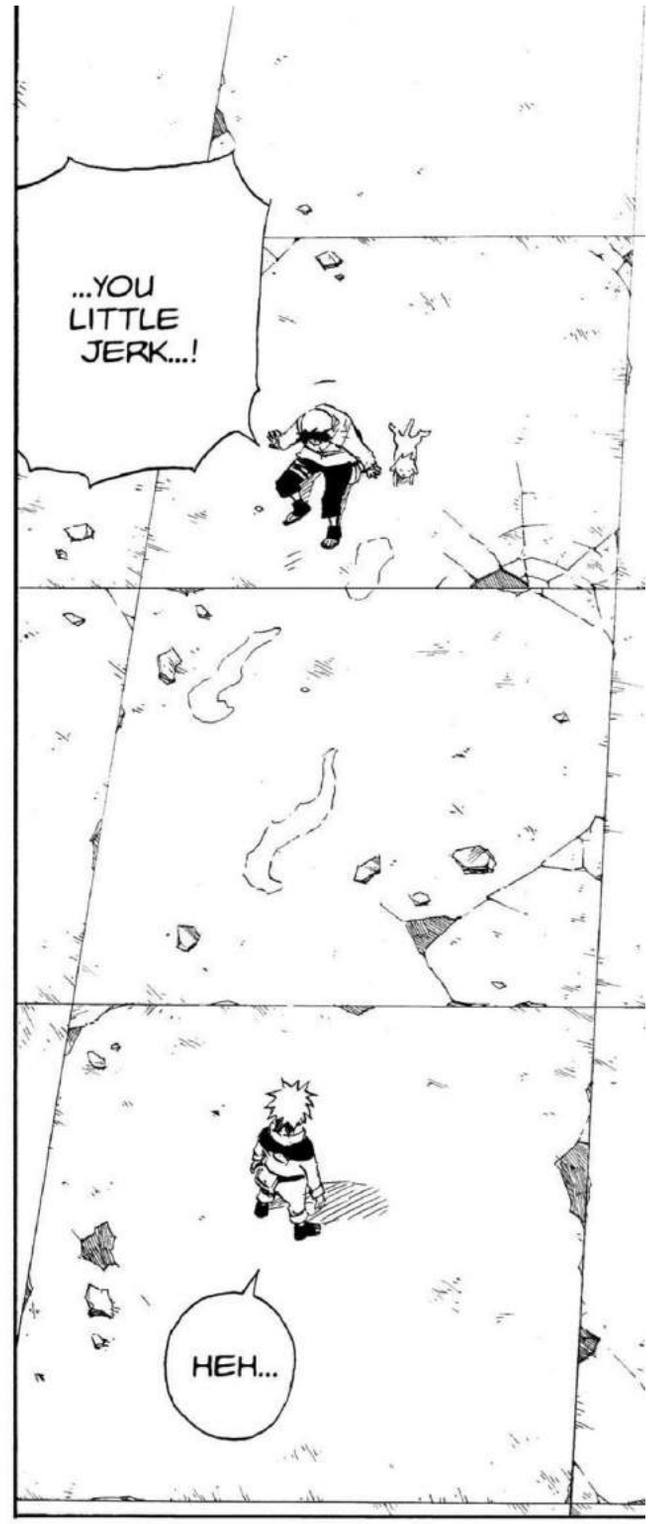
KIBA

!?!

AKAMARU AS KIBA

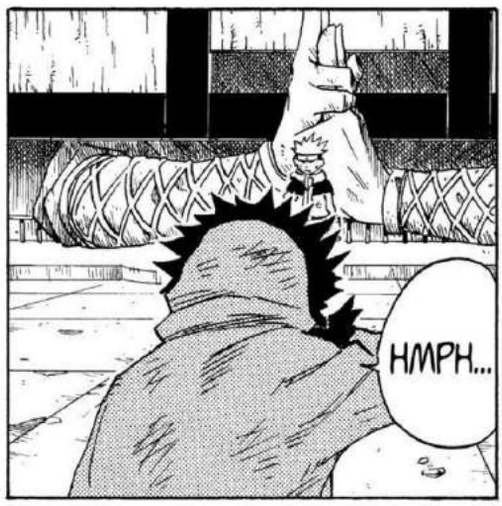
BY TIMING IT PRECISELY, NARUTO TRICKED KIBA INTO THINKING THAT THE MAN-BEAST TRANSFORMATION HAD COME UNDONE, AND THAT HE'D TAKEN OUT AKAMARU INSTEAD!

...YOU SHOULD REALLY THINK ABOUT THEIR CONSEQUENCES... OTHERWISE THEY'LL JUST BE USED AGAINST YOU, FOOL!
BEFORE YOU START THROWING THOSE TECHNIQUES AROUND...


...YOU LITTLE JERK...!
HEH...

GRRR
...!

...VERY FUNNY...

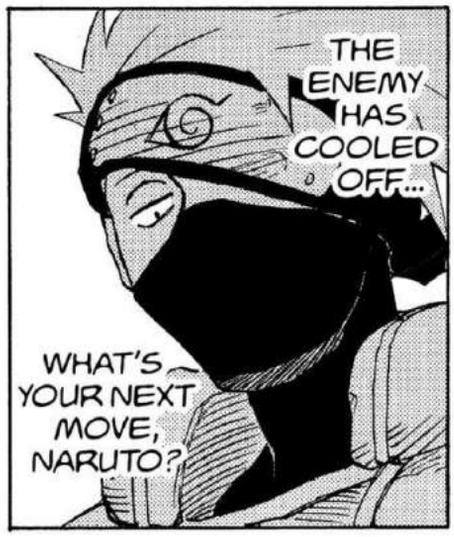

HMPH...

...I CAN'T LET HIM SET THE PACE. GOT TO CENTER MYSELF... REMAIN CALM.
THIS VERBAL WRANGLING IS TOTALLY POINTLESS!!
CHOMP
DRIP

POP
I'LL WATCH HIS MOVEMENTS AND STRIKE WHEN THERE'S AN OPENING...
I CAN GET HIM WITH THE DOWN ON ALL FOURS TECHNIQUE!
POP

SO I STILL HAVE THE ADVANTAGE!
THERE'S NO WAY HE CAN KEEP UP WITH MY MOVES.
RUSTLE
KLAT
TAK

FINALLY TAKING ME SERIOUSLY, EH, KIBA?


THE ENEMY HAS COOLED OFF...
WHAT'S YOUR NEXT MOVE, NARUTO?

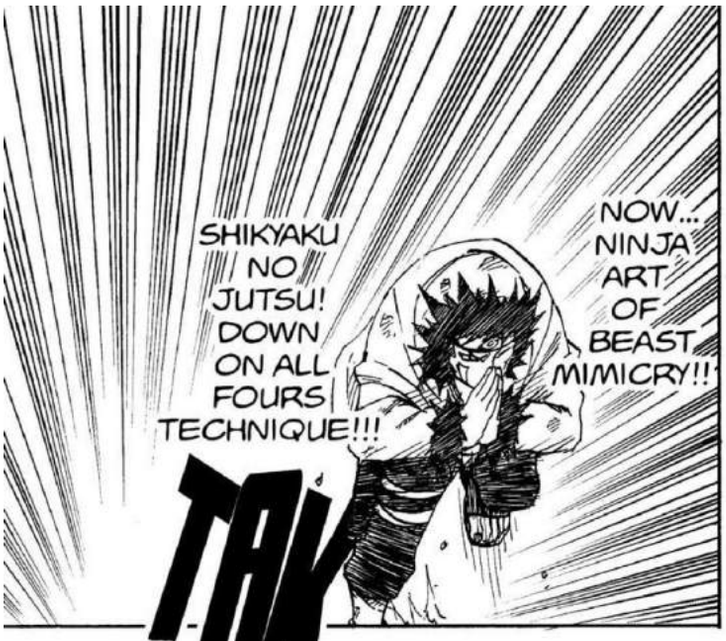
IF I STAY RELAXED, THIS IS DEFINITELY A MATCH I CAN WIN!!
NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT!

...THAT SHOULD END THIS FAST!!
SKF
WELL, THERE'S A NEW KILLER MOVE I'VE BEEN PRACTICING...

EVEN NOW, HE STILL HAS A NEW TRICK UP HIS SLEEVE? WHOA... HE'S AMAZING!
?
WHEN COULD HE HAVE MASTERED THAT?!?
...HUNH?

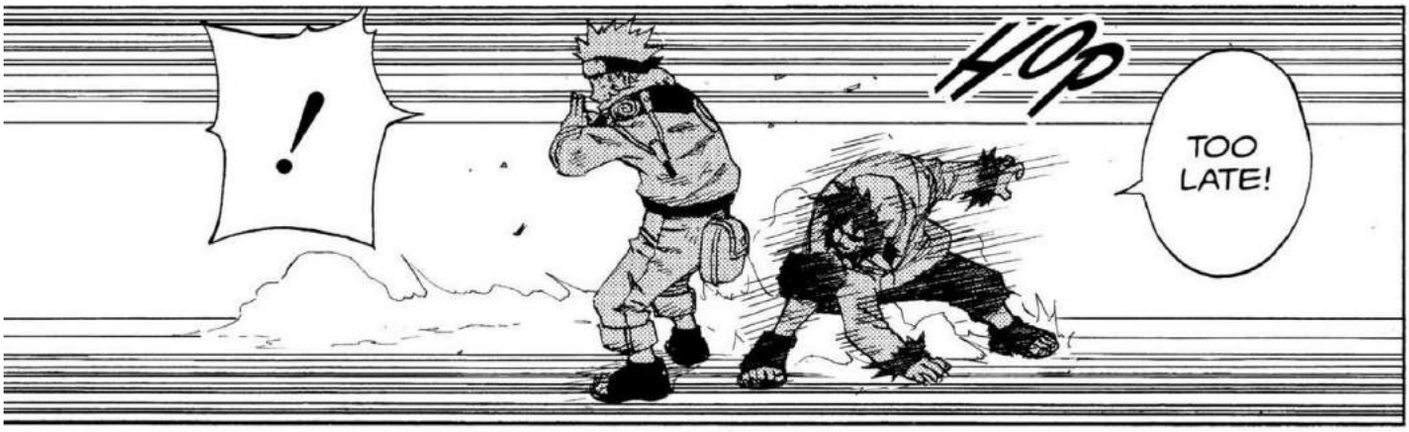
A NEW KILLER MOVE?!
WHAT?!

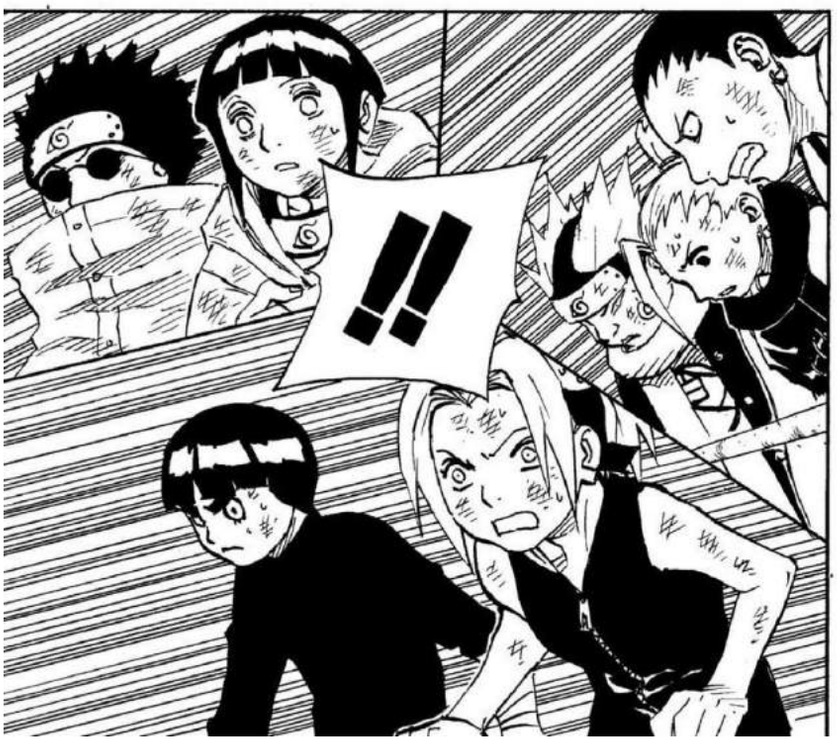
F**K UP
!
--ALL I HAVE TO DO IS KEEP YOU FROM RELEASING IT!!!
I DON'T RECOGNIZE THE TECHNIQUE, BUT--!!
SNAP
SNAP
SNAP
SNAP
SNAP
SNAP


SHIKYAKU NO JUTSU! DOWN ON ALL FOURS TECHNIQUE!!!
NOW... NINJA ART OF BEAST MIMICRY!!

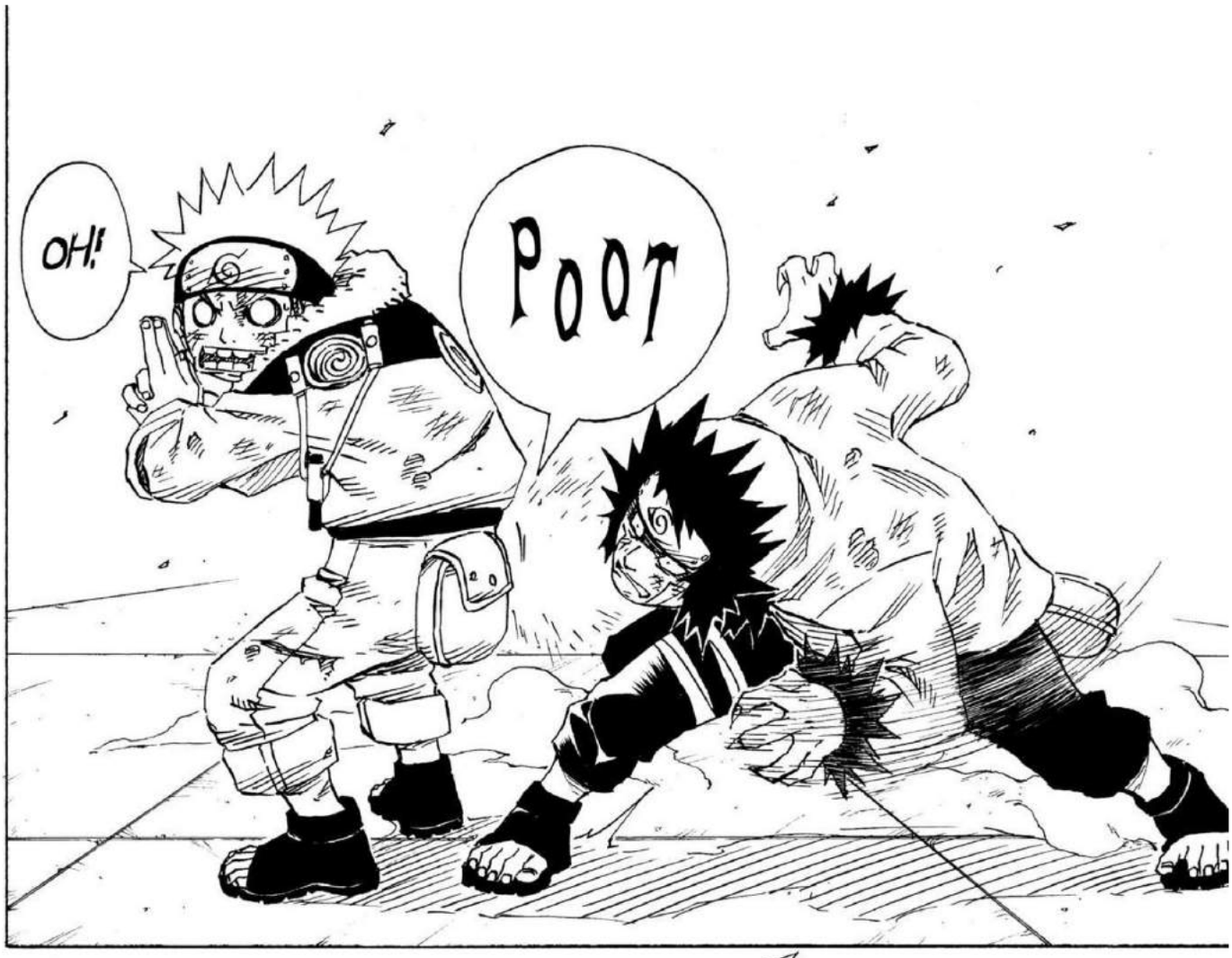
TAK
ZZHNG
AAAKRH!!

FWUP
HEY--!
FWUP
FWUP


!
HOP
TOO LATE!


!!

TAKE THIS--!!


OH!
POOT

AARGH!!
!!

IN HIS PRESENT STATE, KIBA'S SENSE OF SMELL IS TENS OF THOUSANDS OF TIMES SHARPER THAN USUAL...!

FAST MOVEMENTS AND A SHARP NOSE... KIBA'S BEAST MIMICRY SKILL HAS BECOME HIS UNDOING!

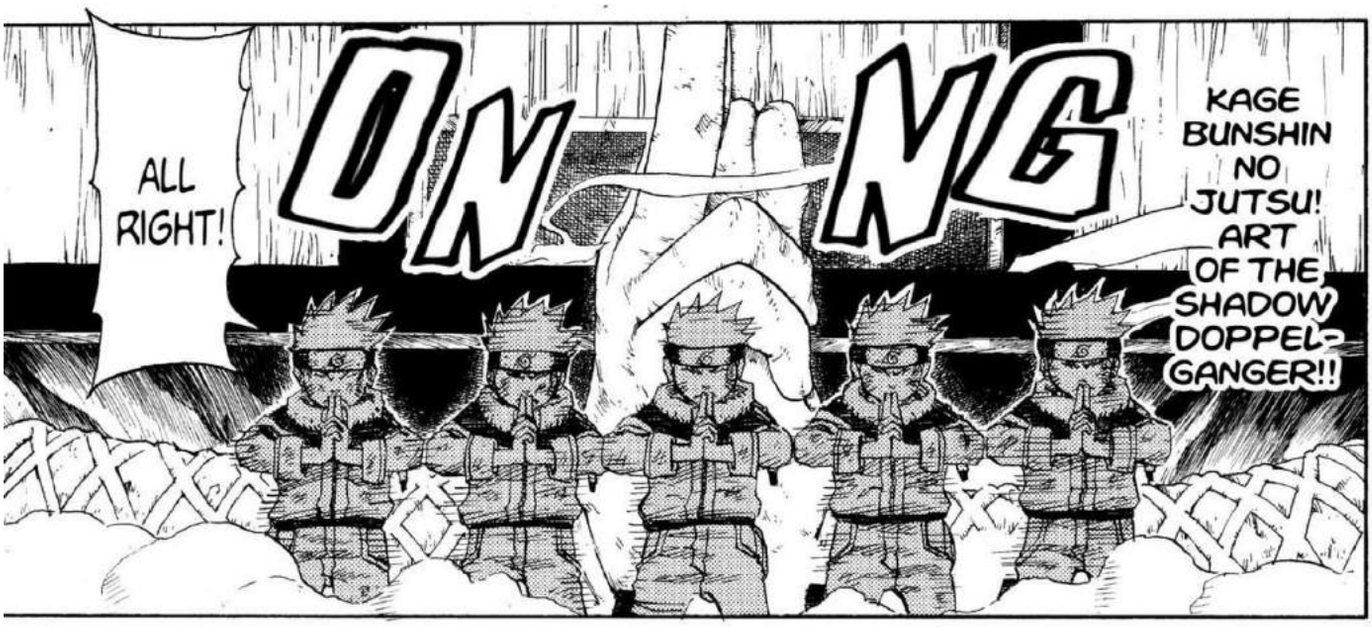
!!
!!
!!

GAAAH...
SHUDDER
SHUDDER

...TRUST THE ULTIMATE MAVERICK NINJA TO TURN BREAKING WIND INTO AN ATTACK MOVE!
OKAY... THAT FART WAS PROBABLY UNINTENTIONAL, BUT...

BUT NOW... IT'S TIME FOR ME TO START SHOWING YOU MY NEW MOVE!!!
RATS! I WAS OVER-DOING IT A LITTLE...

!
SHUDDER
NARUTO! NOW'S YOUR CHANCE!

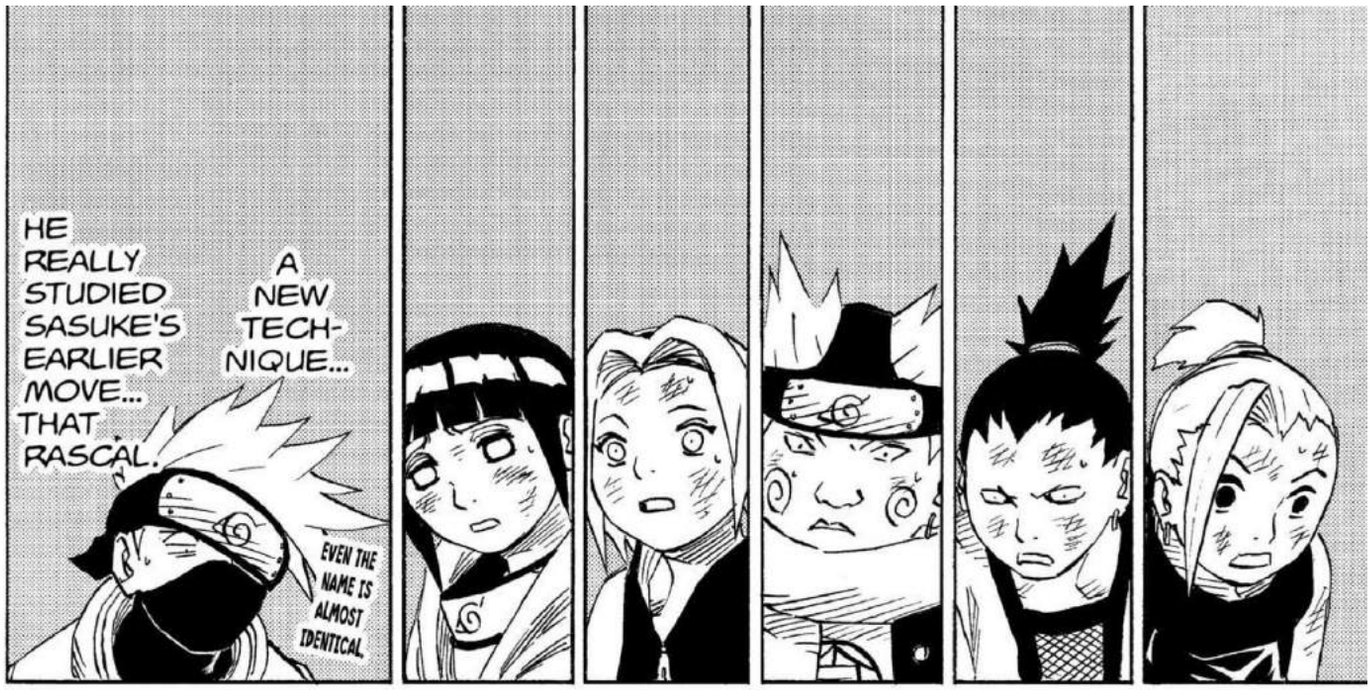

ALL RIGHT!
ON-NG
KAGE BUNSHIN NO JUTSU! ART OF THE SHADOW DOPPEL-GANGER!!

!
IT'S TIME TO REPAY ALL THE ABUSE I'VE TAKEN UP 'TIL NOW!!!

!!!
WHOP
HOP
U!!

BAM
MA!
KI!
ZU!

NARUTO BARRAGE!!


HE REALLY STUDIED SASUKE'S EARLIER MOVE... THAT RASCAL.
A NEW TECH-NIQUE...
EVEN THE NAME IS ALMOST IDENTICAL.

SKF

HUF
HUF
HUF
KOFF

ONNG
HUF
HUF
ONG
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF

YEAH!!

AND THE WINNER IS UZUMAKI NARUTO!

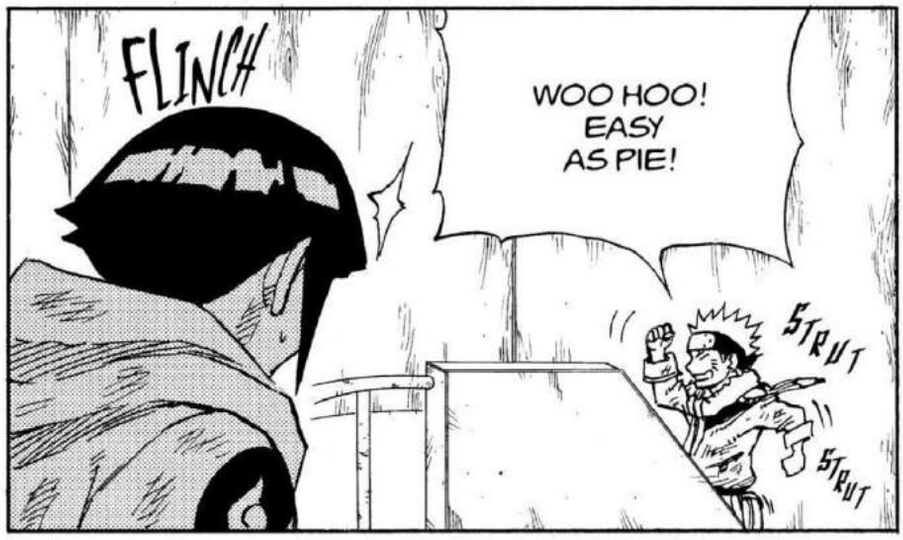
...YES!

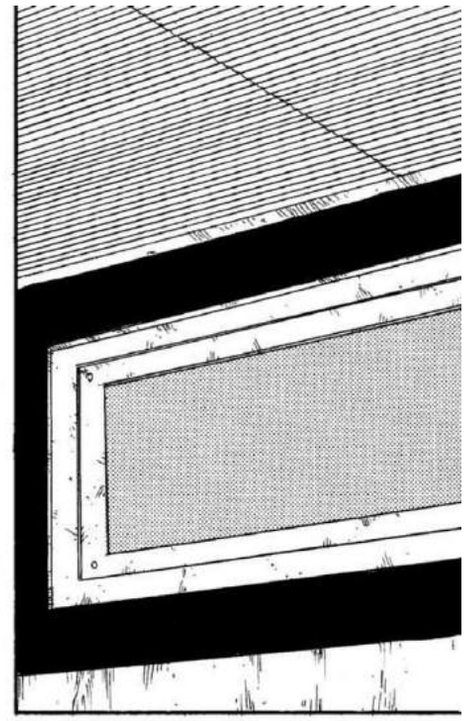
INCREDIBLE! NARUTO BEAT KIBA!

OH, YEAH! THAT FEELS GOOD!!

HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF

I'VE GOTTEN STRONGER ...!
...I... I HAVE!
CLENCH


FLINCH
WOO HOO! EASY AS PIE!
STRUT
STRUT



FLUTTER
FLUTTER

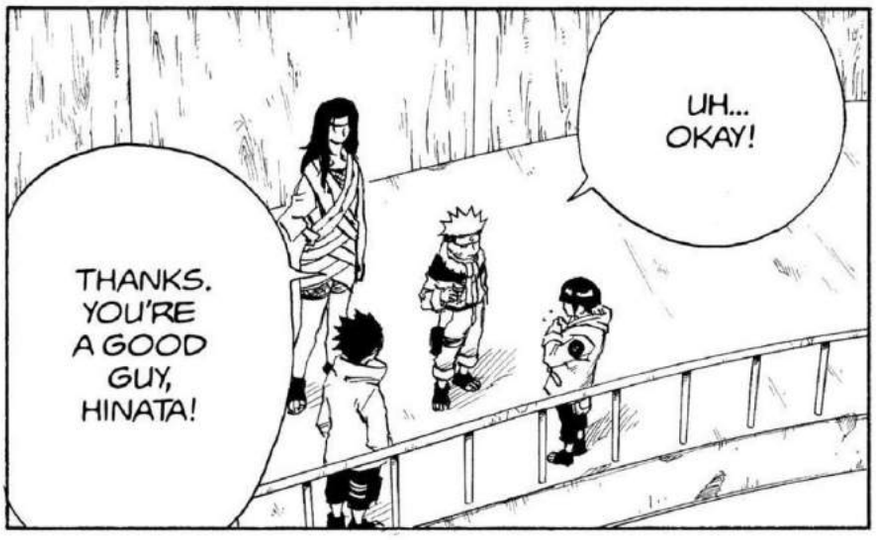
...SH... SHOULD I...? SHOULDN'T I...?
FLUTTER
FLUTTER

...HINATA...!

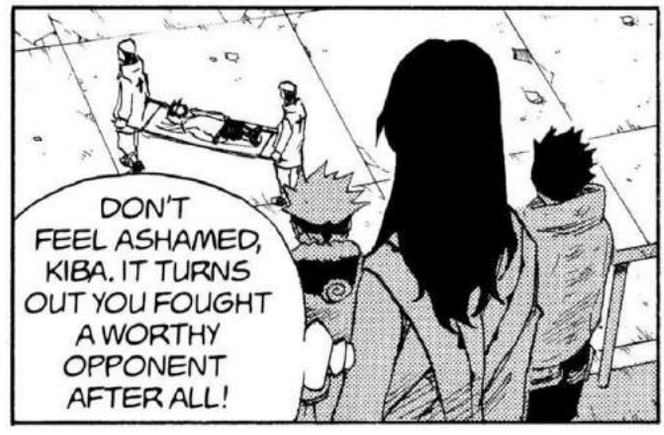
?
SHFF

...N...NARUTO...
!

...AN OINTMENT... FOR WOUNDS.
...WHAT'S THAT STUFF?
FOR ME...? WHY...?


UH... OKAY!
THANKS. YOU'RE A GOOD GUY, HINATA!

...
JUST TAKE IT FROM HER, NARUTO!


DON'T FEEL ASHAMED, KIBA. IT TURNS OUT YOU FOUGHT A WORTHY OPPONENT AFTER ALL!

...LADY HINATA?
WELL, AREN'T YOU LOOKING CARE-FREE...

THE WORLD OF KISHIMOTO MASASHI
MY PERSONAL HISTORY, PART 10

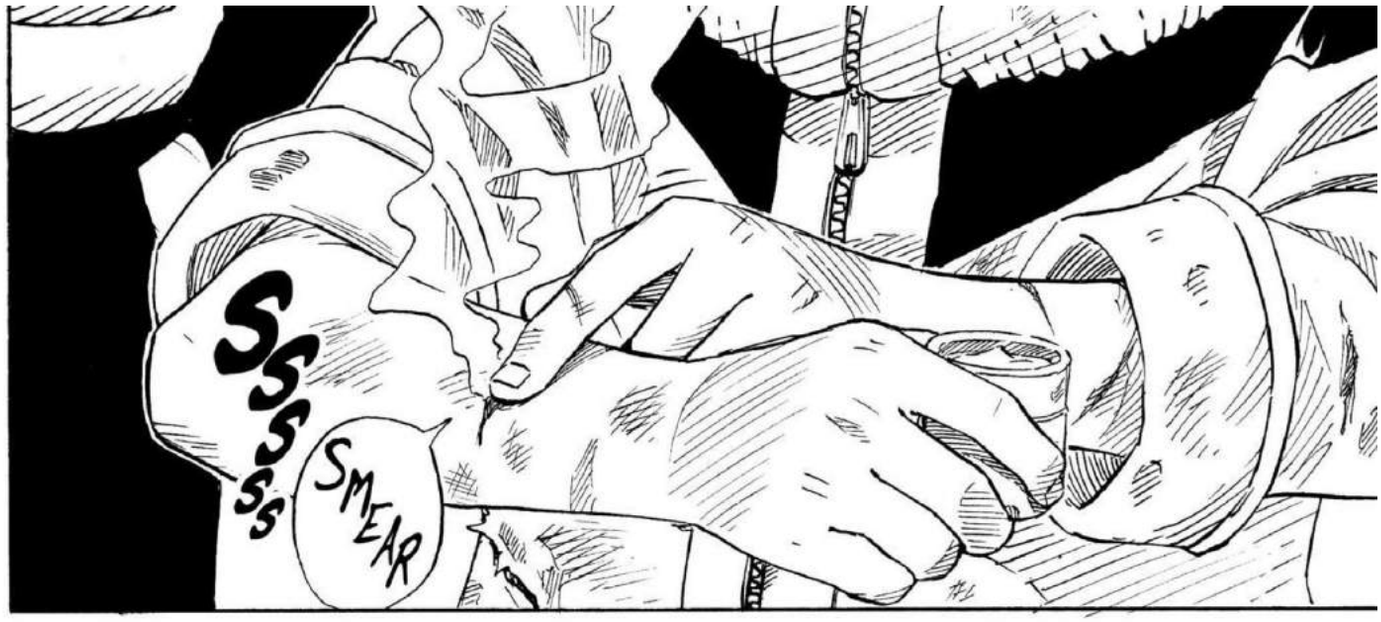
...THE INFAMOUS INCIDENT... IT HAPPENED RIGHT AFTER THE END OF TRAINING CAMP, THE DAY THAT ALL 45 OF US IN THE BASEBALL CLUB CLIMBED THE RESORT'S MONKEY MOUNTAIN TOGETHER.

TO BEGIN AT THE BEGINNING, AS WE STARTED TO CLIMB THE MOUNTAIN, WE SAW A PLACARD THAT SAID, "DO NOT LOOK THE WILD MONKEYS IN THE EYE. IT IS EXTREMELY DANGEROUS." THE SIGN ALONE WAS ENOUGH TO GIVE US THE JITTERS, BUT AS WE CONTINUED UP THE 200-METER MOUNTAIN PATH WITH THE GLARING EYES OF VAST NUMBERS OF WILD MONKEYS UPON US, WE GOADED EACH OTHER FURTHER, SAYING STUFF LIKE, "WHOA! GETTING CLOSE TO MONKEYS IS SCARY! THEY'LL GET MAD IF YOU SO MUCH AS SPIT OUT YOUR GUM! AND THEY'VE GOT THESE HUGE FANGS, MAN. THEY ARE BAD NEWS!" AND SO ON AND SO FORTH... WE WERE GETTING THOROUGHLY FREAKED OUT. WHEN WE REACHED THE SUMMIT, THERE WERE ABOUT 100 TAME MONKEYS BEING MANAGED BY AN ANIMAL TRAINER, AND THEY CAME OVER TO GREET US. UNLIKE THEIR WILD COUNTERPARTS THAT WE'D BEEN WARNED AGAINST, THESE TAME ONES WERE GENTLE, PEOPLE-FRIENDLY, SWEET MONKEYS, ACCORDING TO THEIR HANDLER. HE TOLD US THAT THERE WAS ONE ALPHA MALE AMONG THE SUMMIT MONKEYS, AND THEY SEEMED TO BE CREATING AN INDEPENDENT COLONY. AND THEN HE POINTED THE BOSS MONKEY OUT TO US. NOT SURPRISINGLY, IT WAS HUGE... WE COULDN'T HELP NOTICING THE MANY SCARS THAT CRISS-CROSSED ITS BODY, EACH UNDOUBTEDLY REPRESENTING A VICTORY IN ONE OF THE HUNDREDS OF DIFFERENT BATTLES IT HAD ENDURED ON ITS ROAD TO BECOME THE HEAD OF THE COLONY. WHILE I LOOKED UP AT THE ALPHA MONKEY, WHICH WAS SITTING FIRMLY ATOP A PROMINENT BOULDER, I NERVOUSLY EDGED TOWARD IT, WANTING TO GET A CLOSER LOOK.

AND THAT WAS IT!
THE MOMENT WHEN IT HAPPENED!!

(TO BE CONTINUED...)

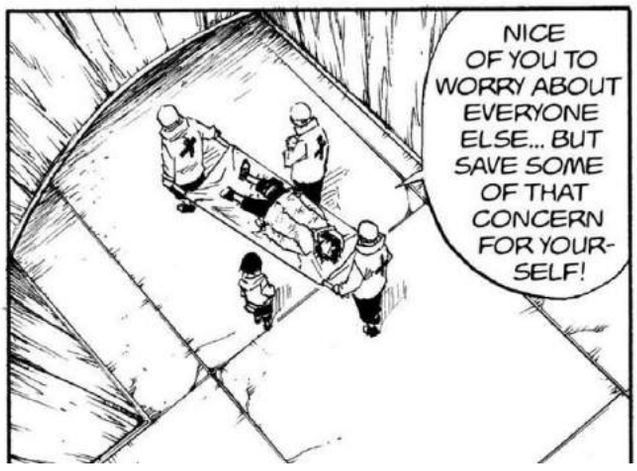
Number 78: Neji vs. Hinata


SSSSS
SMEAR

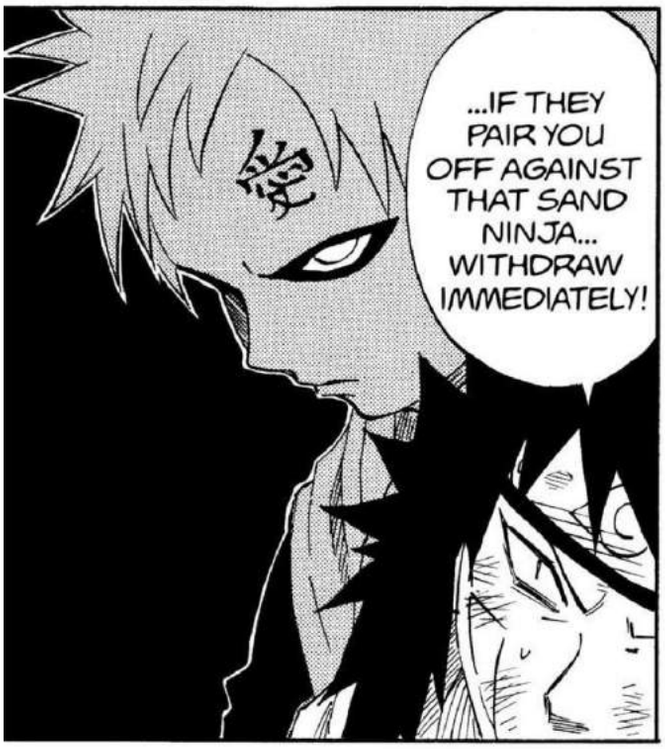
WANNA TRY SOME, SAKURA?!
?
HERE!
THE NINE-TAILED FOX WITHIN GIVES YOU AMAZING RECUPERATIVE POWER!
...NO ONE ELSE'S WOUNDS WILL HEAL AS QUICKLY AS YOURS, NARUTO.

THIS STUFF REALLY WORKS!
GREAT MEDICINE!

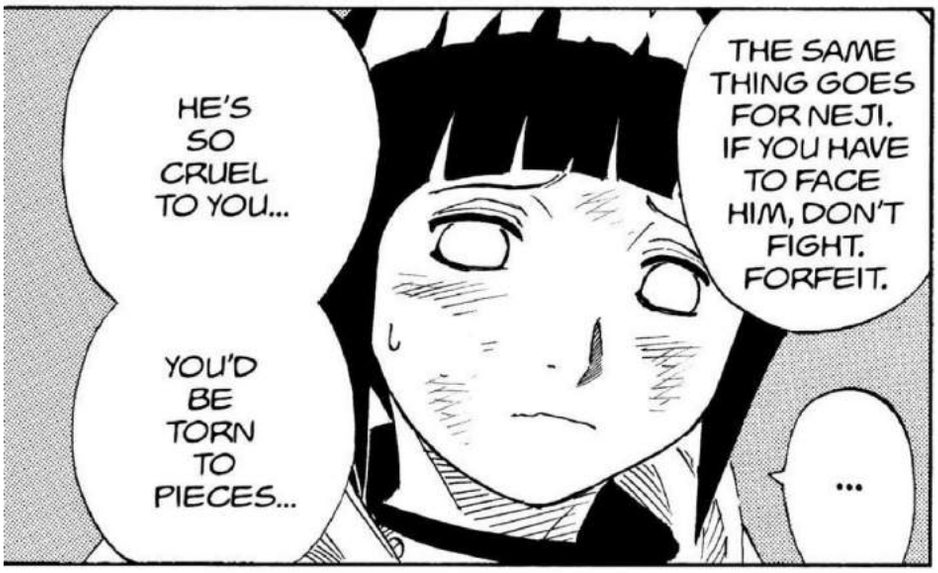
TH-THIS IS A HEALING SALVE...
...FOR KIBA... AND AKAMARU...


NICE OF YOU TO WORRY ABOUT EVERYONE ELSE... BUT SAVE SOME OF THAT CONCERN FOR YOUR-SELF!

UH... UM...

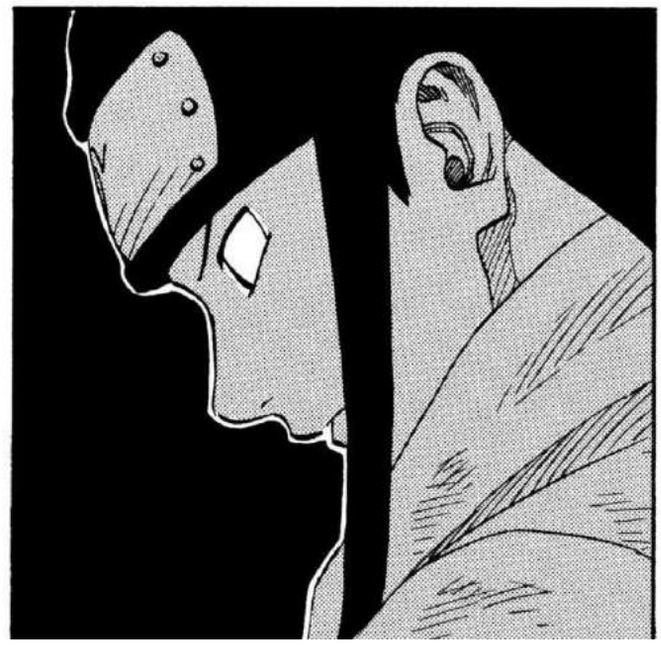

...IF THEY PAIR YOU OFF AGAINST THAT SAND NINJA... WITHDRAW IMMEDIATELY!

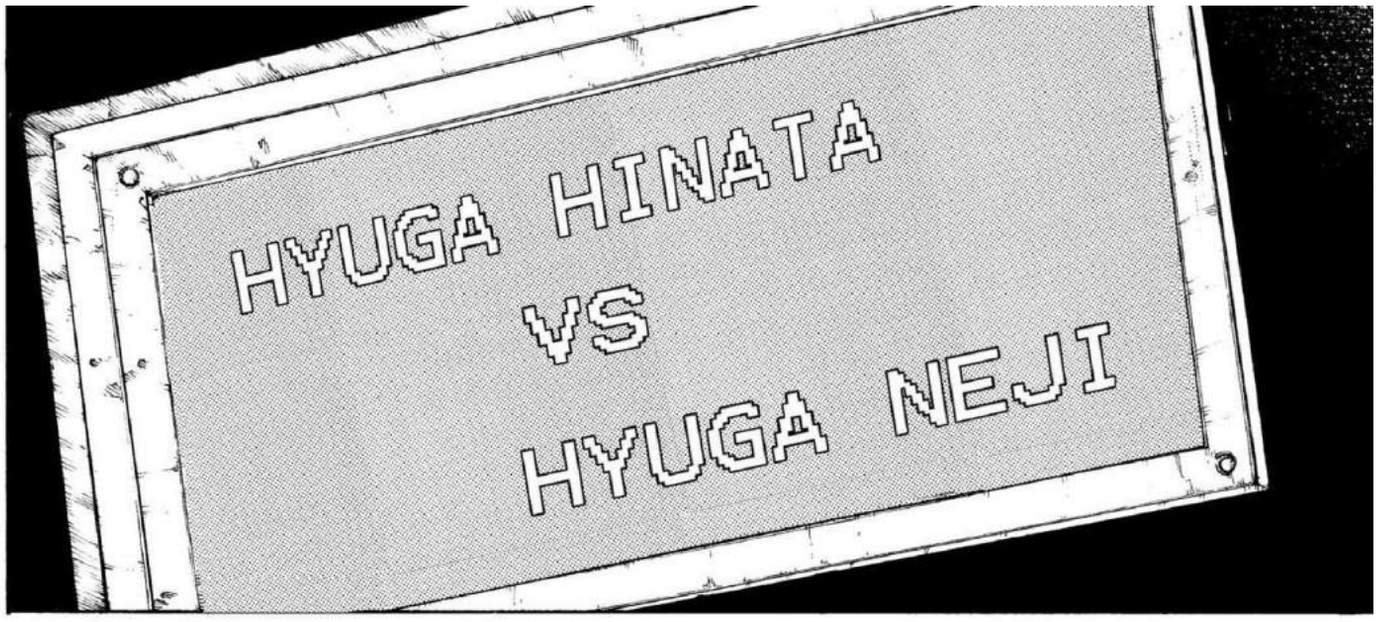
THERE ARE ONLY SIX OF YOU LEFT... YOU, CHOJI, NEJI, LEE, ONE OF THE SOUND NINJA... AND THAT GUY FROM SAND.
...?
LISTEN, HINATA...

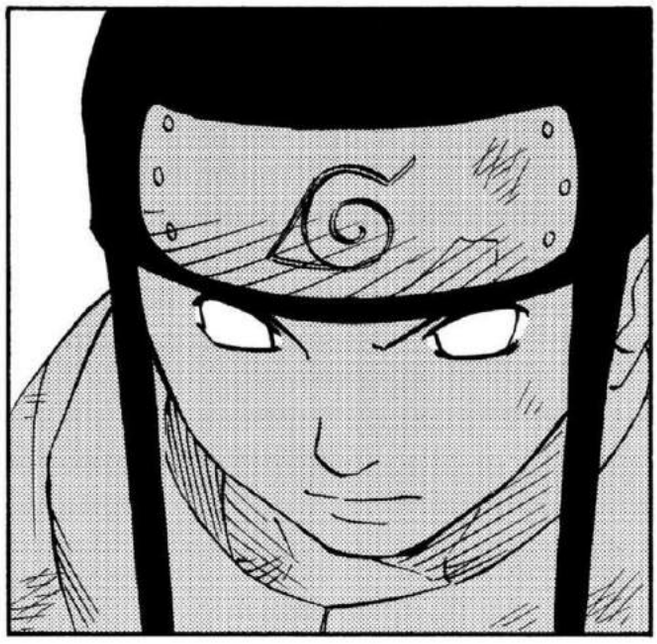

HE'S SO CRUEL TO YOU...
YOU'D BE TORN TO PIECES...
THE SAME THING GOES FOR NEJI. IF YOU HAVE TO FACE HIM, DON'T FIGHT. FORFEIT.
...

AND NOT JUST HIM!

WELL THEN... THE NEXT MATCH WILL BE...
KOFF




HYUGA HINATA
VS
HYUGA NEJI

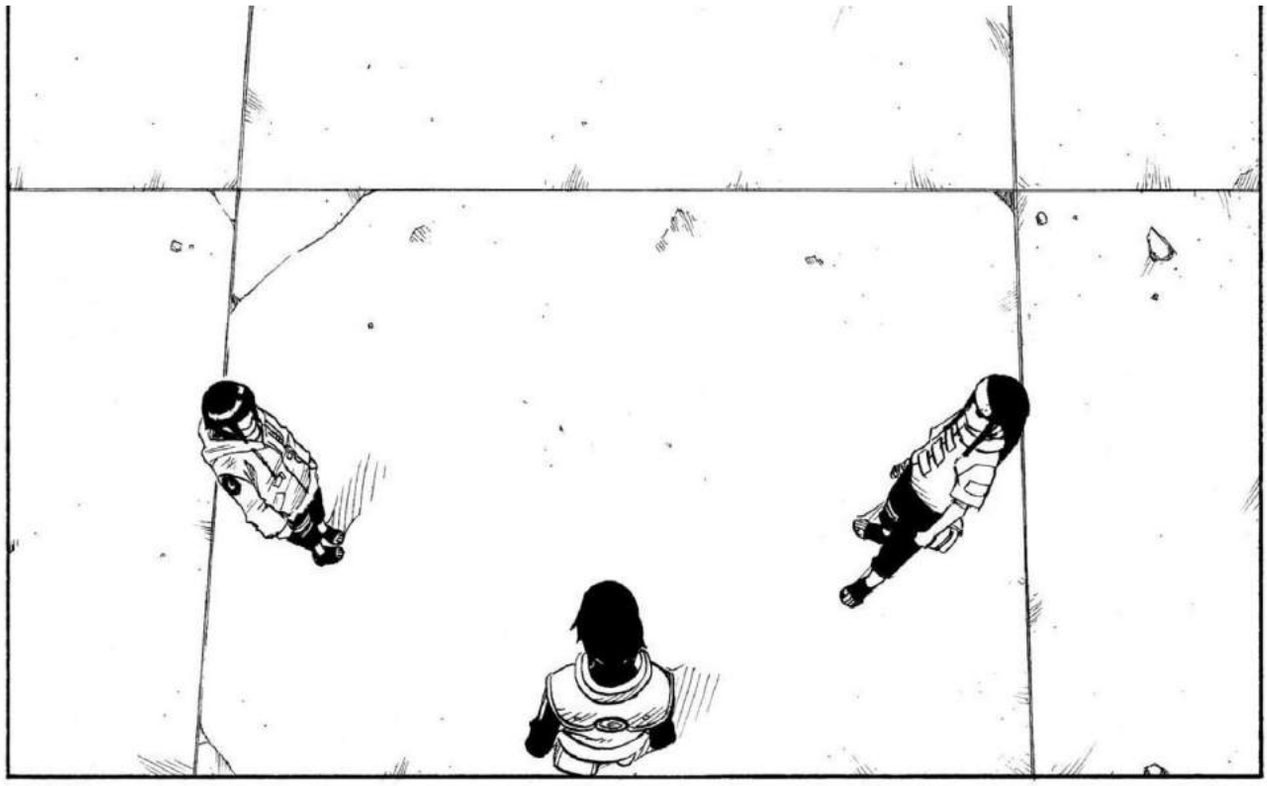


...

THESE CONTESTS GET MORE AND MORE INTRIGUING...

HINATA...

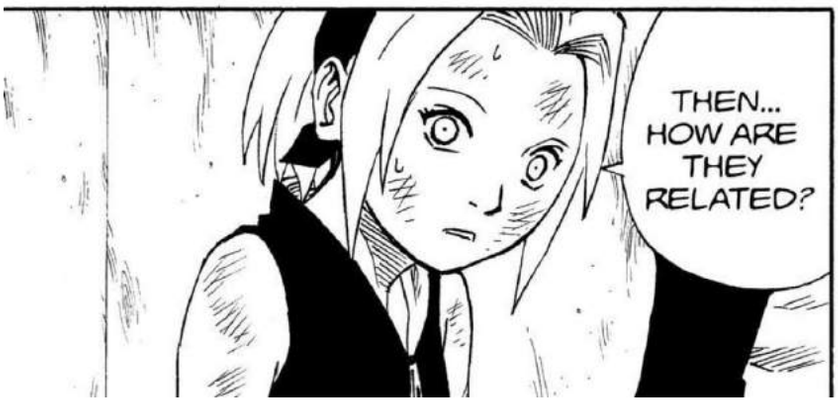
UGH...



...NEJI... BIG BROTHER...
...

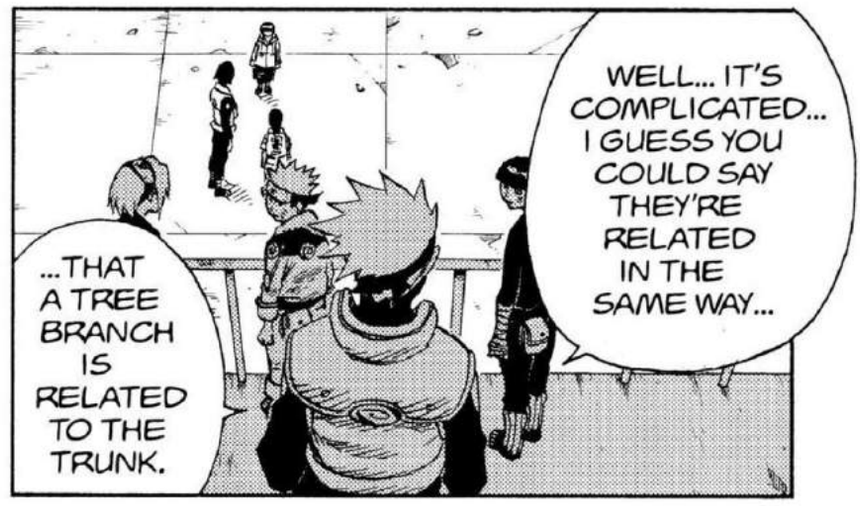
I NEVER DREAMED WE'D FIND OURSELVES FIGHTING EACH OTHER...
...LADY HINATA.

BUT THEY'RE NOT BROTHER AND SISTER...
...BOTH ARE MEMBERS OF KONOHA'S OLDEST AND MOST ILLUSTRIOUS FAMILY, THROUGH WHOSE VEINS FLOWS THE MOST ELITE AND ACCOMPLISHED BLOOD... THE HYUGA CLAN.


THEN... HOW ARE THEY RELATED?

SHE'S HIS SISTER?!
HUNH?!

BRANCH AND TRUNK...?

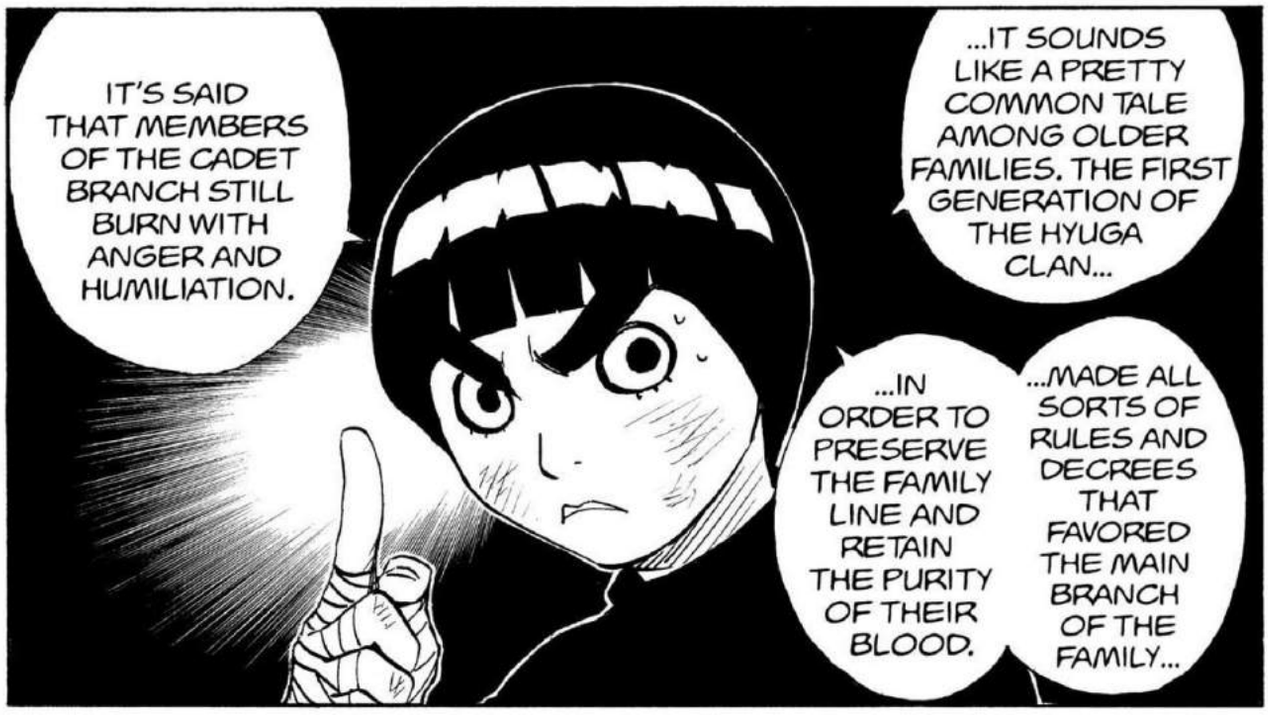

...THAT A TREE BRANCH IS RELATED TO THE TRUNK.
WELL... IT'S COMPLICATED... I GUESS YOU COULD SAY THEY'RE RELATED IN THE SAME WAY...

MAIN BRANCH
CADET BRANCH
YES! HINATA IS A MEMBER OF THE MAIN BRANCH OF THE HYUGA CLAN...
AND NEJI IS A MEMBER OF THE CADET BRANCH THAT SUPPORTS IT.

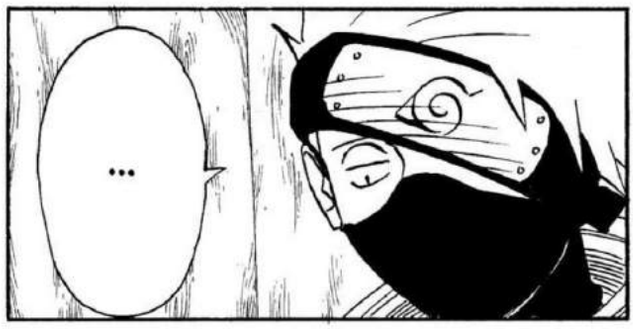
THERE'S BEEN STRAIN BETWEEN THE CENTRAL AND CADET BRANCHES OF CLAN HYUGA FOR SOME TIME...
RELATIONS AREN'T EXACTLY FRIENDLY.

YES... EXCEPT...
THAT'LL BE HARD ON BOTH OF THEM.
...SO IT'S FAMILY FIGHT-ING FAMILY?
WHAT...?

HMM...
WHY'S THAT?
...I DON'T KNOW ALL THE DETAILS, BUT...


...IT SOUNDS LIKE A PRETTY COMMON TALE AMONG OLDER FAMILIES. THE FIRST GENERATION OF THE HYUGA CLAN...
IT'S SAID THAT MEMBERS OF THE CADET BRANCH STILL BURN WITH ANGER AND HUMILIATION.
...MADE ALL SORTS OF RULES AND DECREES THAT FAVORED THE MAIN BRANCH OF THE FAMILY...
...IN ORDER TO PRESERVE THE FAMILY LINE AND RETAIN THE PURITY OF THEIR BLOOD.

WELL... PLEASE BEGIN THE MATCH!
KOFF


...

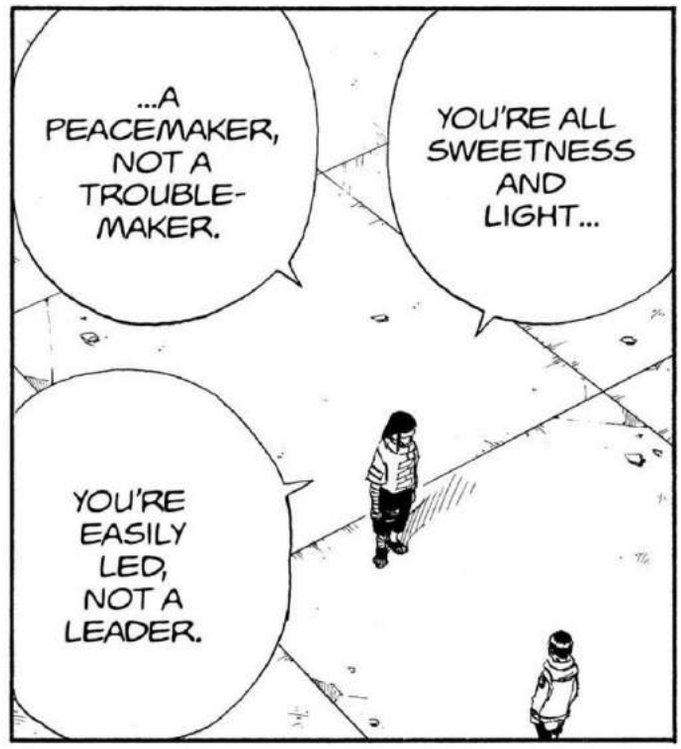
SO IT'S ONE OF THOSE FATEFUL SHOWDOWN THINGS, THEN...

...?
THERE'S SOMETHING I HAVE TO POINT OUT TO LADY HINATA.
BEFORE WE BEGIN...

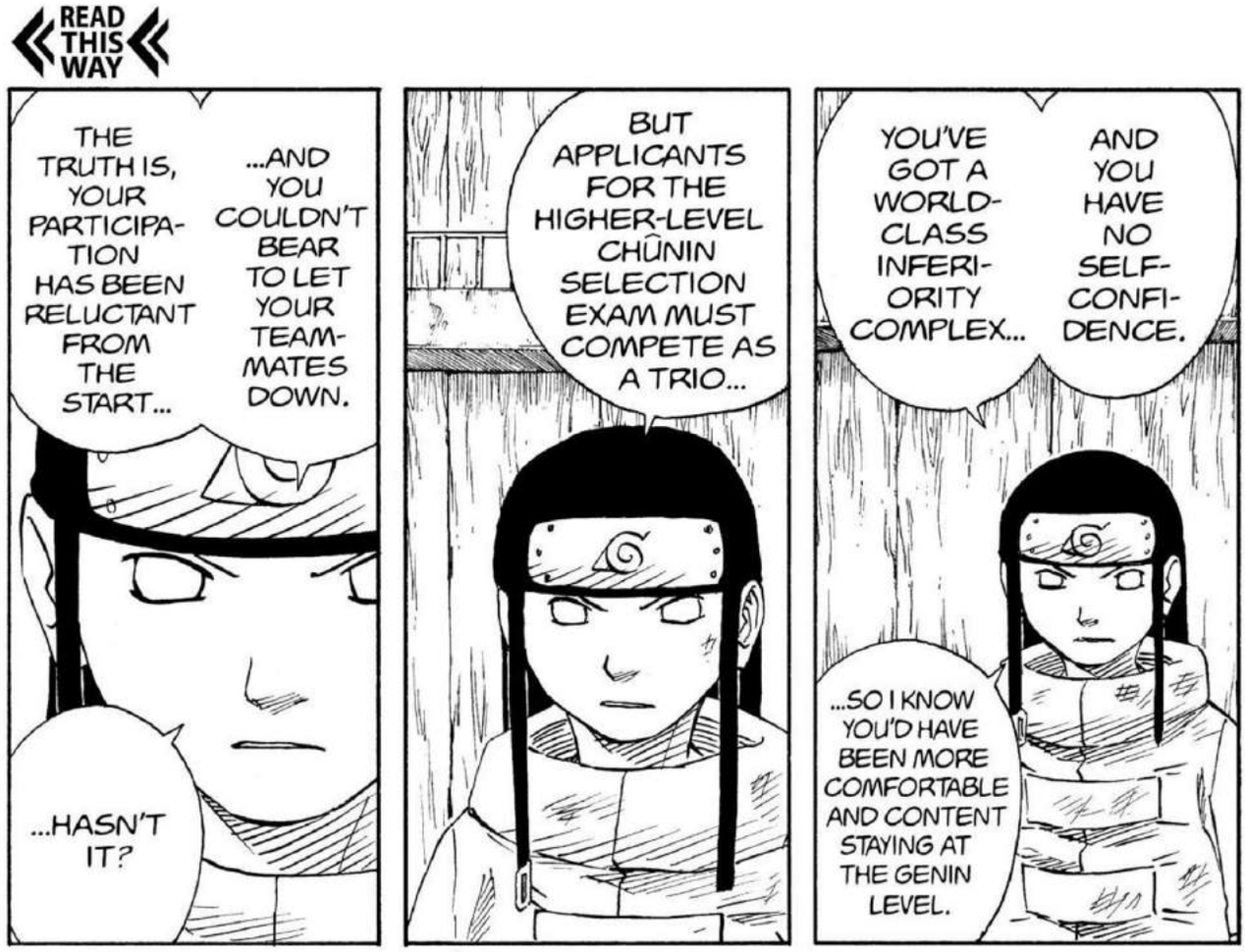
CLENCH

WITHDRAW FROM THE MATCH!
YOU'RE NOT CUT OUT TO BE A SHINOBI.

...


...A PEACEMAKER, NOT A TROUBLE-MAKER.
YOU'RE ALL SWEETNESS AND LIGHT...
YOU'RE EASILY LED, NOT A LEADER.

...!


READ THIS WAY
THE TRUTH IS, YOUR PARTICIPATION HAS BEEN RELUCTANT FROM THE START...
...AND YOU COULDN'T BEAR TO LET YOUR TEAMMATES DOWN.
...HASN'T IT?
BUT APPLICANTS FOR THE HIGHER-LEVEL CHÛNIN SELECTION EXAM MUST COMPETE AS A TRIO...
YOU'VE GOT A WORLD-CLASS INFERIORITY COMPLEX...
AND YOU HAVE NO SELF-CONFIDENCE.
...SO I KNOW YOU'D HAVE BEEN MORE COMFORTABLE AND CONTENT STAYING AT THE GENIN LEVEL.

SO, OF MY OWN VOLITION, I...
...WANTED TO CHANGE THAT ABOUT MYSELF.

I...
...N... NO...
YOU'RE WRONG.
...I REALLY ...

HINATA IS SUPPOSED TO BE THE HEIR APPARENT OF THE HYUGA MAIN BRANCH...
FROM THIS DAY FORWARD, HINATA WILL BE UNDER MY COMMAND...
...IF THAT TRULY MEETS WITH YOUR APPROVAL.

...HINATA...
STAND UP, HANABI!
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF

SKF
HUF
HUF
HUF
...SHE'S A FAILURE WHO CANNOT EVEN MEASURE UP TO HANABI, FIVE YEARS HER JUNIOR.

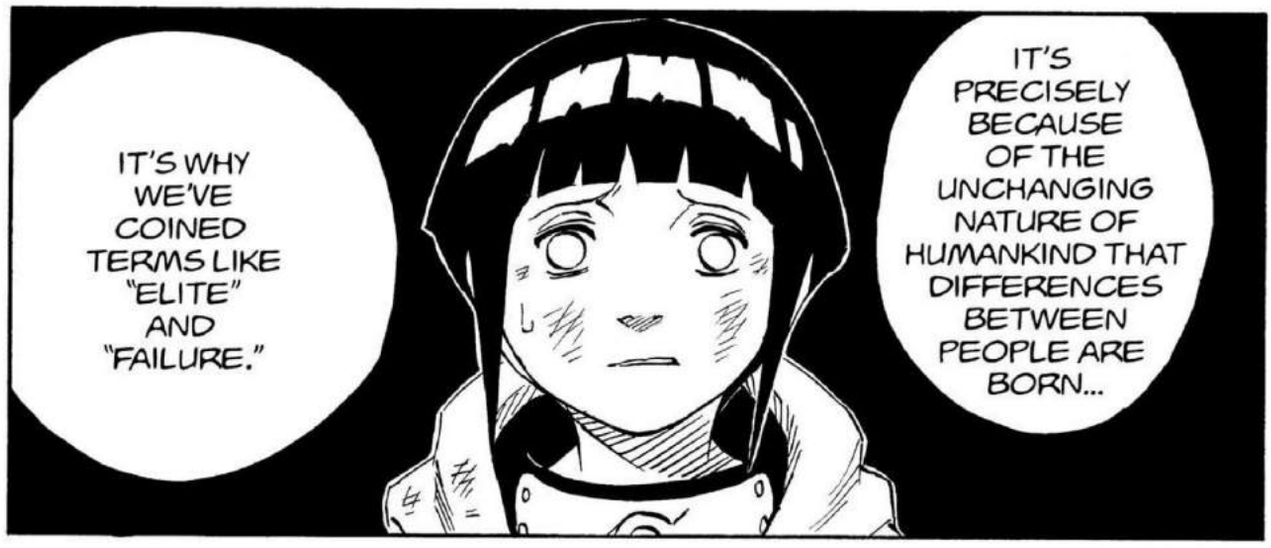
WE REGARD HER AS SUPERFLUOUS TO THE CLAN...

DO AS YOU PLEASE...
IN HER WORK AS A GENIN, SHE WILL BE CONSTANTLY SURROUNDED BY AND IN DANGER OF DEATH.

...AS YOU WISH.
IF YOU HAVE NOTHING MORE TO DISCUSS, PLEASE GO. YOU'RE IN THE WAY!

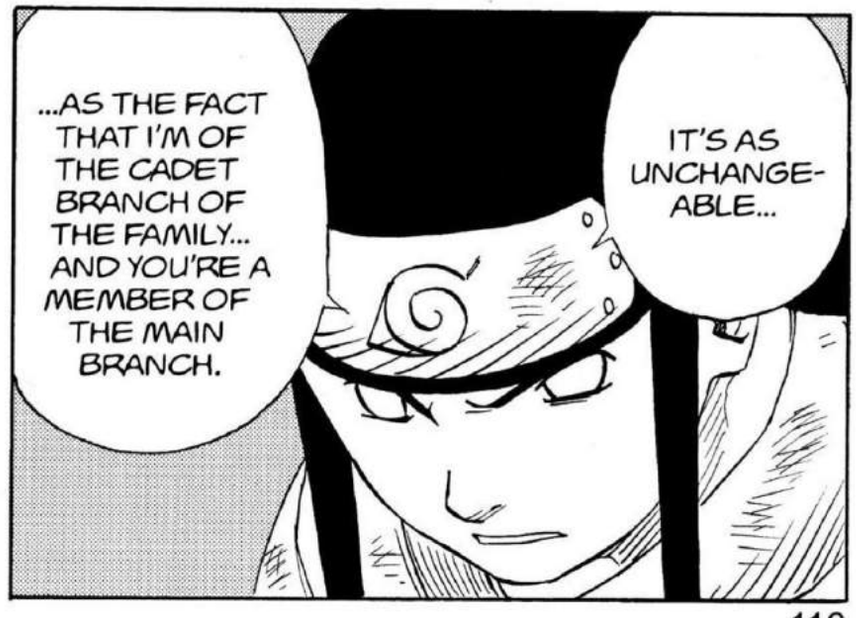
SKF

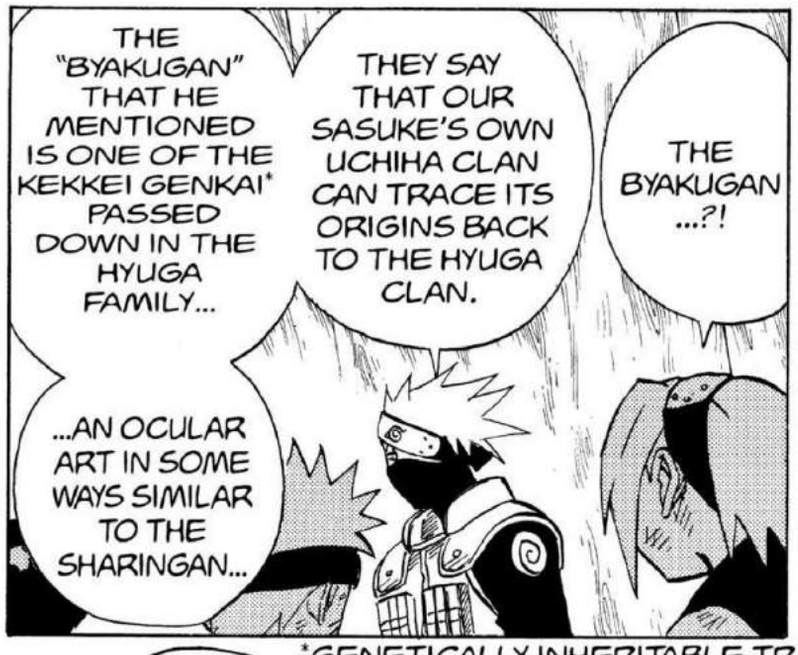
READ THIS WAY
A LEOPARD DOESN'T CHANGE ITS SPOTS.
...IN HER OWN WAY, HINATA IS TRYING TO IMPROVE HERSELF...
WHAT?
LADY HINATA... YOU'RE THE SHELTERED LITTLE BABY OF THE MAIN BRANCH, AREN'T YOU?
THAT JERK...!
AND A WEAK PERSONALITY WON'T BECOME STRONG.
A FAILURE ALWAYS FAILS.


IT'S WHY WE'VE COINED TERMS LIKE "ELITE" AND "FAILURE."
IT'S PRECISELY BECAUSE OF THE UNCHANGING NATURE OF HUMANKIND THAT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PEOPLE ARE BORN...

YES, IT'S A FORM OF DISCRIMINATION. AND THE FACTORS THAT IT'S BASED ON DON'T CHANGE. WE HAVE NO CHOICE...
...WE MUST LIVE WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES SET FOR US BY THE JUDGMENTS OF OTHERS.
IT DOESN'T MATTER WHO YOU ARE. WE'RE ALL JUDGED ON THE BASIS OF OUR LOOKS, OUR INTELLIGENCE, OUR TALENT, OR OUR PERSONALITIES...
...JUST AS WE JUDGE OTHERS IN THEIR TURN.

GRR
GRR
TREMBLE


...AS THE FACT THAT I'M OF THE CADET BRANCH OF THE FAMILY... AND YOU'RE A MEMBER OF THE MAIN BRANCH.
IT'S AS UNCHANGE-ABLE...



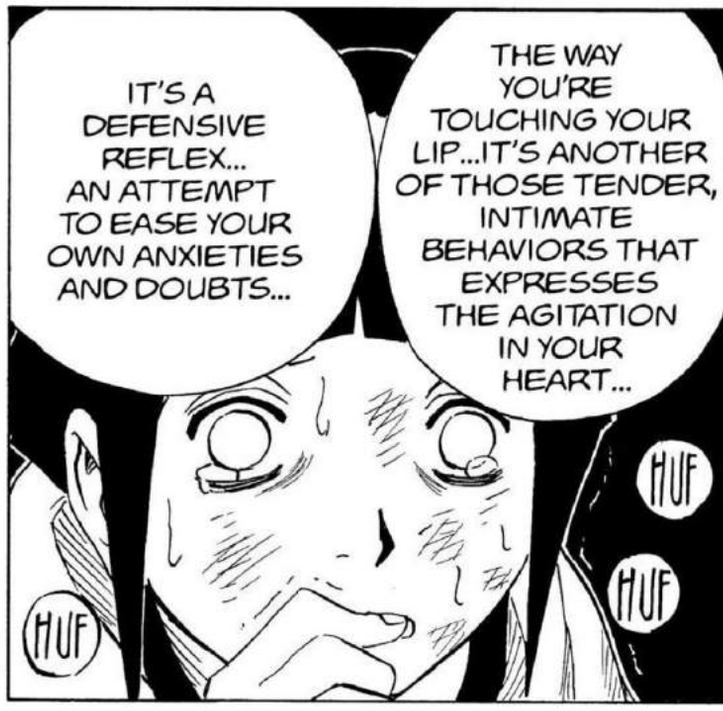
*GENETICALLY INHERITABLE TRAITS

GRR RR

READ THIS WAY
JUST NOW, TO ESCAPE MY STARE...
...YOU AVERTED YOUR OWN EYES...
...!
FLINCH
MY EYES CAN'T BE DECEIVED.
...GLANCING TOWARDS THE UPPER LEFT. IT SIGNALED YOUR RECALL OF A PAST EXPERIENCE...
...ONE THAT BROUGHT YOU PAIN.
IN OTHER WORDS... YOU RECALLED YOUR OWN PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES, AND BASED UPON THOSE MEMORIES...
...YOU IMAGINED THE OUTCOME OF THIS MATCH.
WHEN YOU SUBSEQUENTLY GLANCED TO THE LOWER RIGHT...
...IT INDICATED THAT YOU WERE ENVISIONING PHYSICAL AND MENTAL AGONY.
YOU FORESAW...
...YOUR OWN DEFEAT!!

HUF
...BECAUSE EVERYTHING I HAVE SAID SO FAR HAS BEEN RIGHT ON TARGET!
HUF

YOU IMPLORE ME TO COME NO FURTHER, TO PEER NO MORE DEEPLY INTO THE INNERMOST SECRETS OF YOUR HEART...
FLINCH
EVEN NOW, AS YOU BRING YOUR ARMS UP IN FRONT OF YOUR BODY AS IF TO SHIELD YOURSELF...
...YOUR BODY IS SIGNALING YOUR DESIRE TO RAISE A WALL BETWEEN US... TO CREATE SOME DISTANCE FROM ME.


IT'S A DEFENSIVE REFLEX... AN ATTEMPT TO EASE YOUR OWN ANXIETIES AND DOUBTS...
THE WAY YOU'RE TOUCHING YOUR LIP...IT'S ANOTHER OF THOSE TENDER, INTIMATE BEHAVIORS THAT EXPRESSES THE AGITATION IN YOUR HEART...
HUF
HUF
HUF

IN ADDITION ...

GRRR
GRRR

HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
IT'S COMPLETELY CLEAR... WHETHER YOU ADMIT IT OR NOT, THAT YOU ARE AWARE...

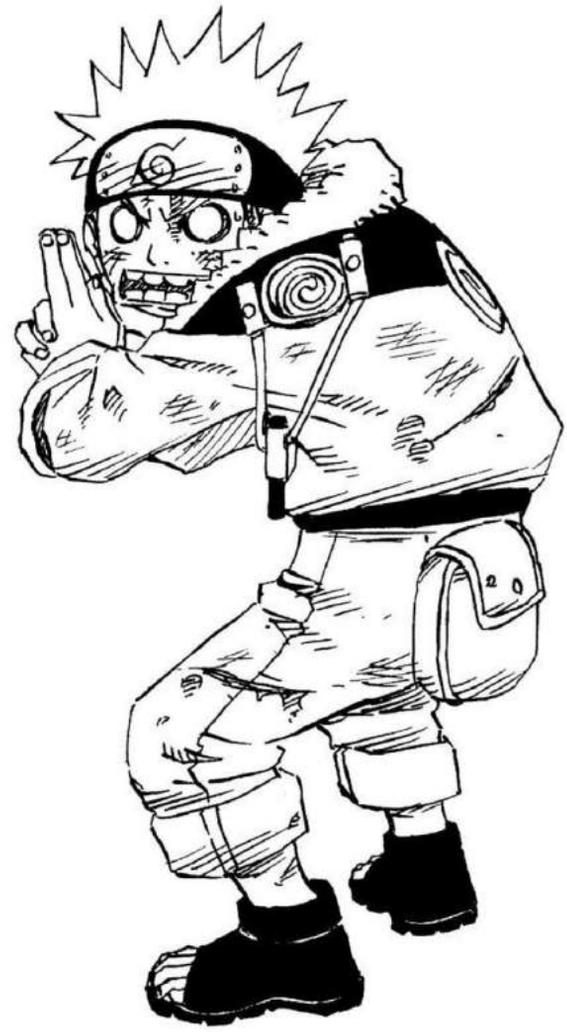
...THAT YOU CAN NEVER CHANGE YOUR-SELF!
YES, SHE CAN !!!!
!

YOU CAN'T JUST ARBITRARILY DECIDE THESE THINGS ABOUT OTHER PEOPLE, YOU FOOL!
SHOW HIM, HINATA! BEAT UP THIS IDIOT!

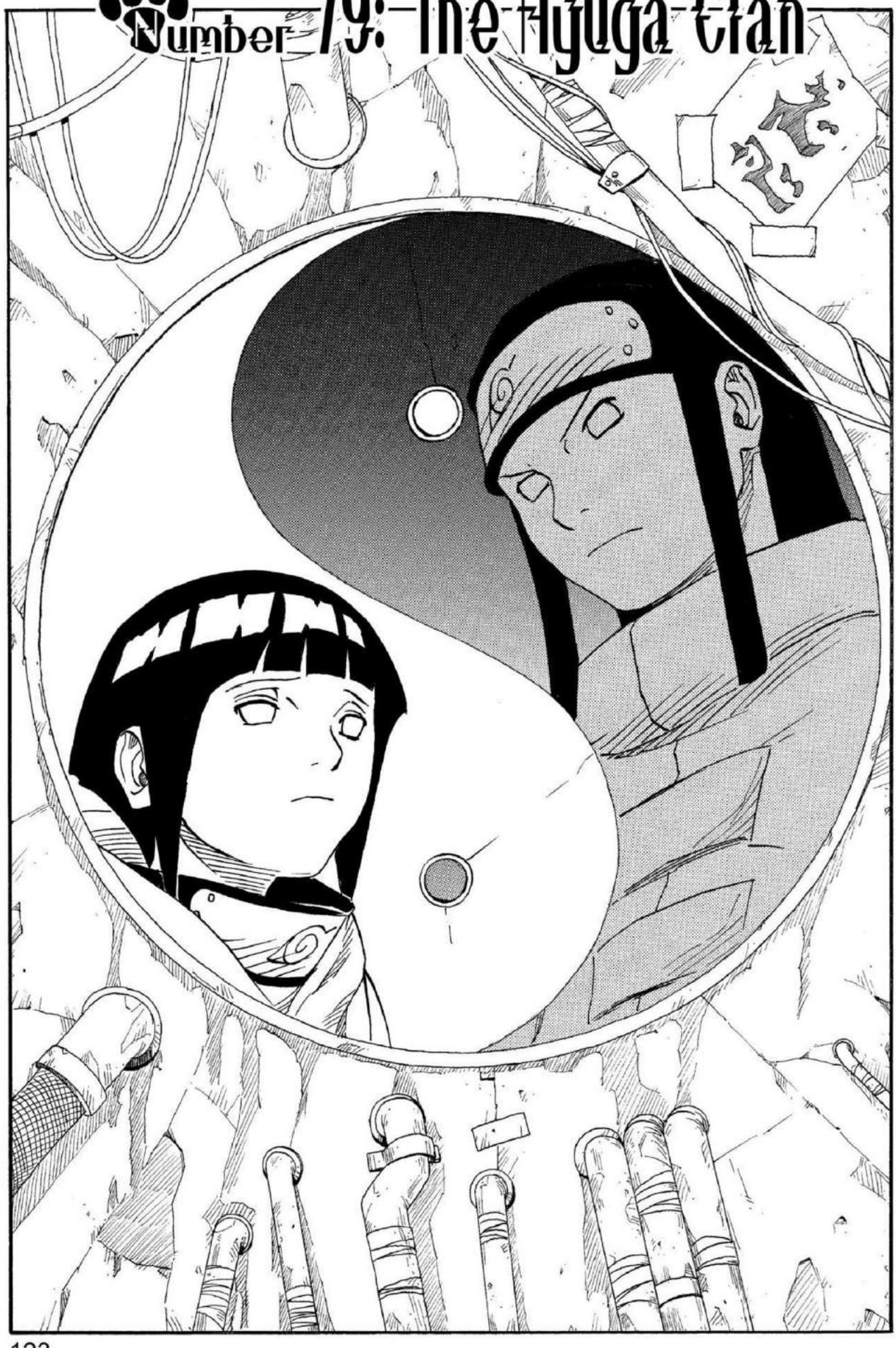
...

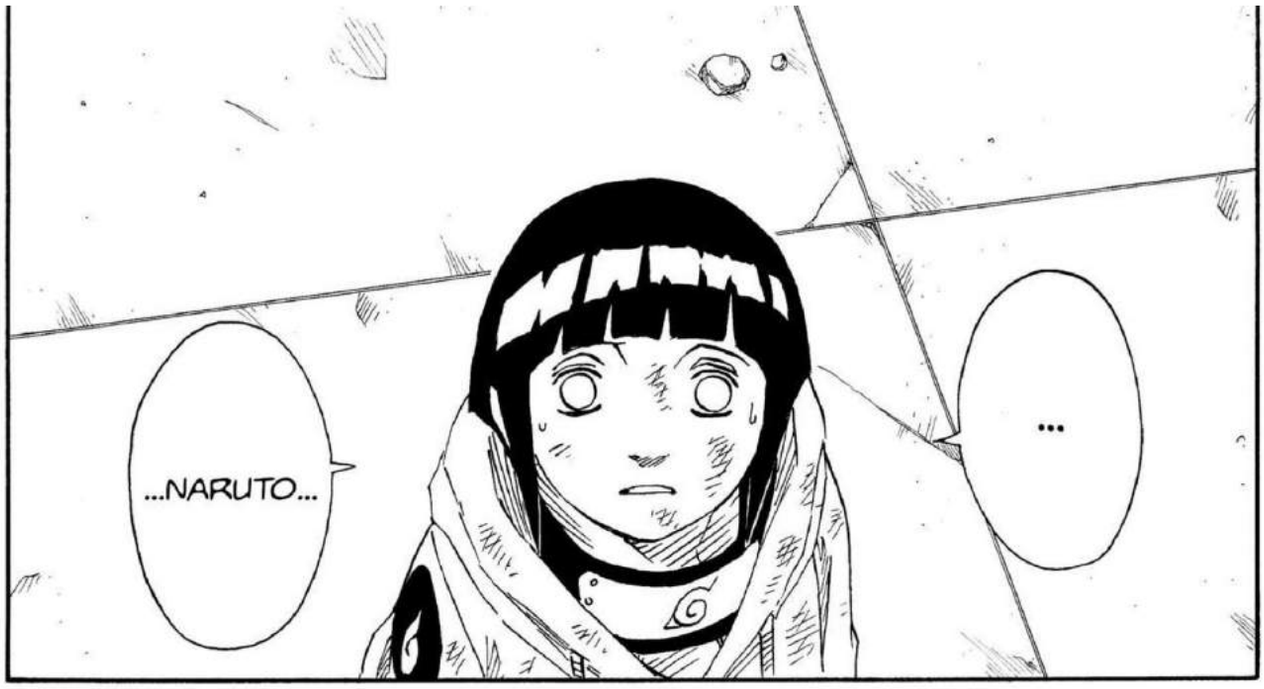
!!

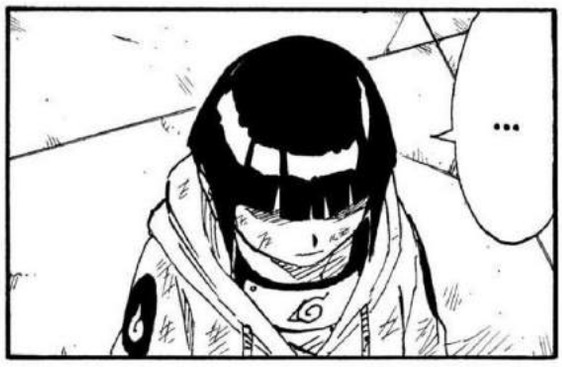
...NARUTO...
...



Number 79: The Hyuga Clan



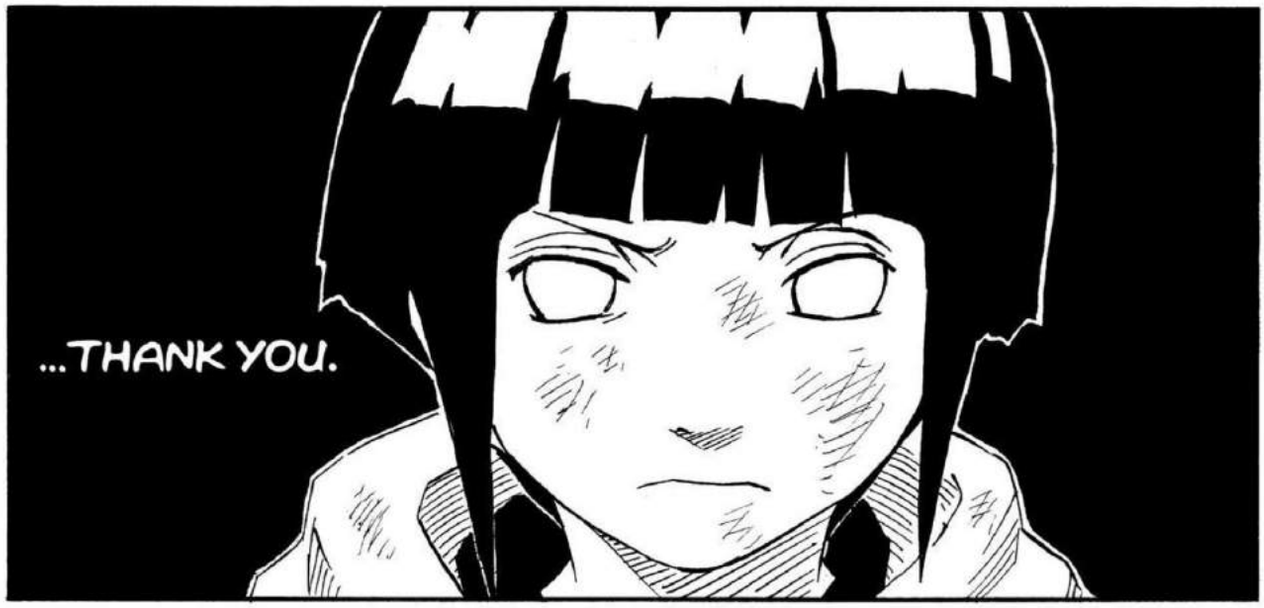

...NARUTO...
...


...

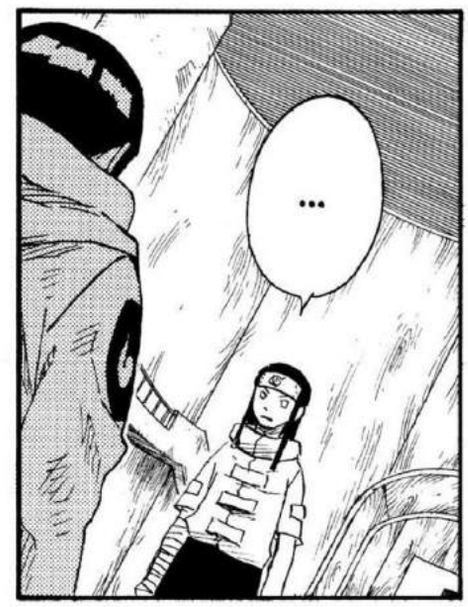
JUST HEARING HIM HAS MADE ME MAD, AND IT'S YOU WHO HAS TO FIGHT HIM!
COME ON, HINATA. AT LEAST TALK BACK TO HIM!!

HE IS SO ANNOYING ...!

NARUTO...
...


...THANK YOU.

SO YOU'RE NOT GOING TO WITHDRAW...?
THEN I WON'T BE RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT HAPPENS HERE.
THE LOOK IN HER EYES IS DIFFERENT NOW...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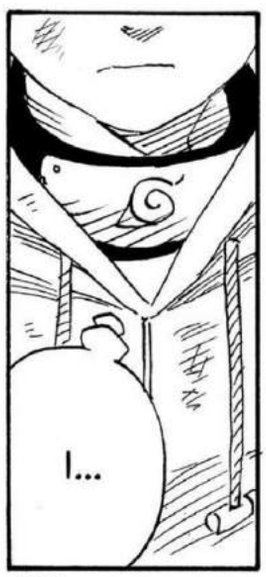

I...

I NEVER GO BACK ON MY WORD.
THAT'S... MY SHINOBI WAY!

I DON'T QUIT, AND I WON'T RUN!!

POP POP
POP POP

GRRR
BYA-KUGAN!!
...I DON'T WANT TO RUN ANYMORE!

!

...

!
THAT'S ...!

...

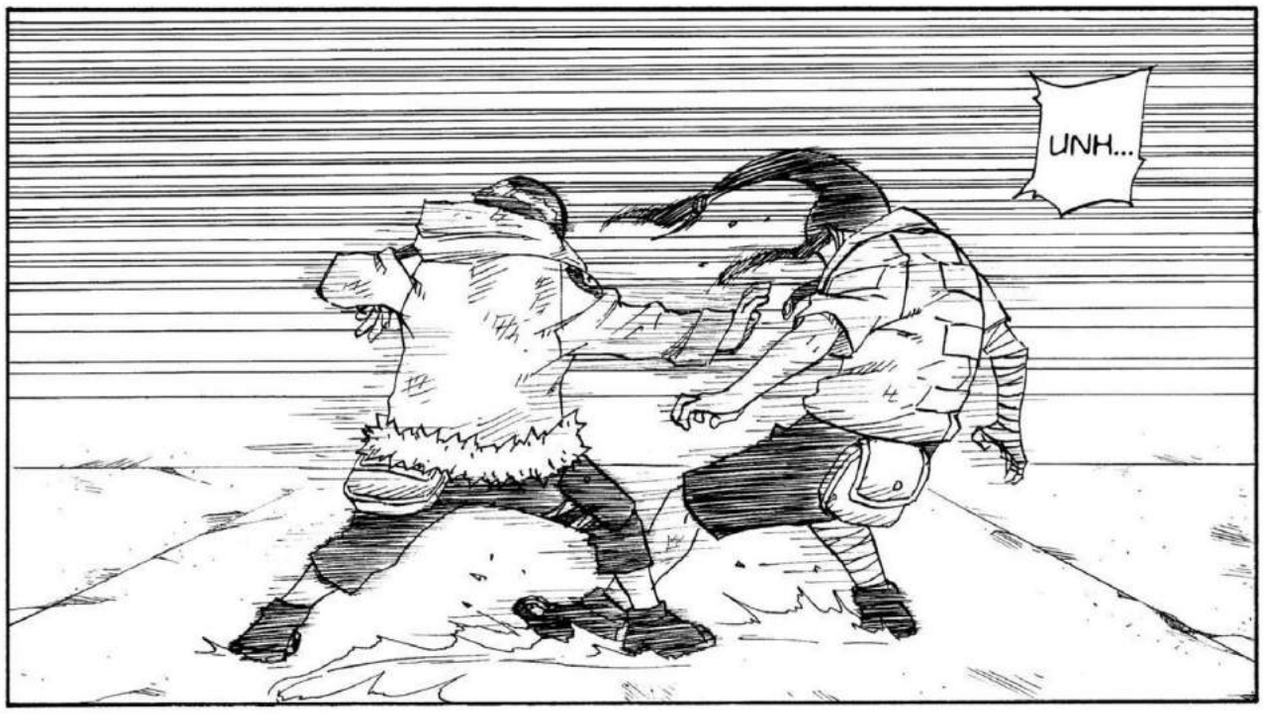
BIG BROTHER NEJI...
SHFFF
... LET'S FIGHT.

READ THIS WAY
...
POP POP
SKF
OKAY THEN...
THEY HAVE THE SAME HYUGA STYLE, AFTER ALL... EVEN HER STANCE IS IDENTICAL TO NEJI'S.
...HYUGA STYLE?
...THAT "THE STRONGEST JUNIOR NINJA IS A MEMBER OF MY OWN TEAM"!
...I'VE MENTIONED IT BEFORE, I'M SURE...
HUH?!
KRAK
...THE STRONGEST SCHOOL OF TAIJUTSU IN KONOHA!
...TO HYUGA NEJI!
...
PULSE
I WAS REFER-RING...

TAK
THOP
THOP
THOP
FWUP FWUP FWUP FWUP

ZING

HERE IT IS...!


UNH...

NO... IT'S JUST A SCRATCH!
DID SHE GET HIM?!

!

...AMONG THE HYUGA, THERE ARE UNIQUE TAIJUTSU PASSED DOWN FROM ONE GENERATION TO THE NEXT!

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
HUH ?!
THAT'S WHY THE HYUGA CLAN IS OFTEN REGARDED AS KONOHA'S MOST ILLUSTRIOUS FAMILY.

...A SCRATCH IS ALL IT WOULD TAKE.
BUT...

THAT LEADS TO THE BREAKDOWN OF THE INTERNAL ORGANS, DESTROYING THE FOE FROM WITHIN.
...THE HYUGA CLAN EMPLOYS JUKEN, OR "GENTLE FIST," TO INFLICT DAMAGE TO THE ENEMY'S KEIRAKUKEI, THROUGH WHICH THE CHAKRA FLOWS.
UNLIKE THE TAIJUTSU THAT LEE AND I SPECIALIZE IN, WHICH IS ALL ABOUT BEATINGS, BRUISES AND BROKEN BONES -- A STYLE ITS PROPONENTS CALL GOKEN, OR "FEROCIOUS FIST"...

...ANY ENEMY STRUCK WITH THAT BLOW IS GOING TO SUCCUMB!
THERE'S NO WAY OF STRENGTHENING THE INTERNAL ORGANS, SO...

...THE EFFECT GROWS GRADUALLY AFTER THE INITIAL ATTACK.
IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE MUCH, BUT...
SKFF SKFF
SKFF

TAK!
FWOP

FFFOP
FFFAP

YES, EVEN I CAN...

SMAT
FWUP
FWIP

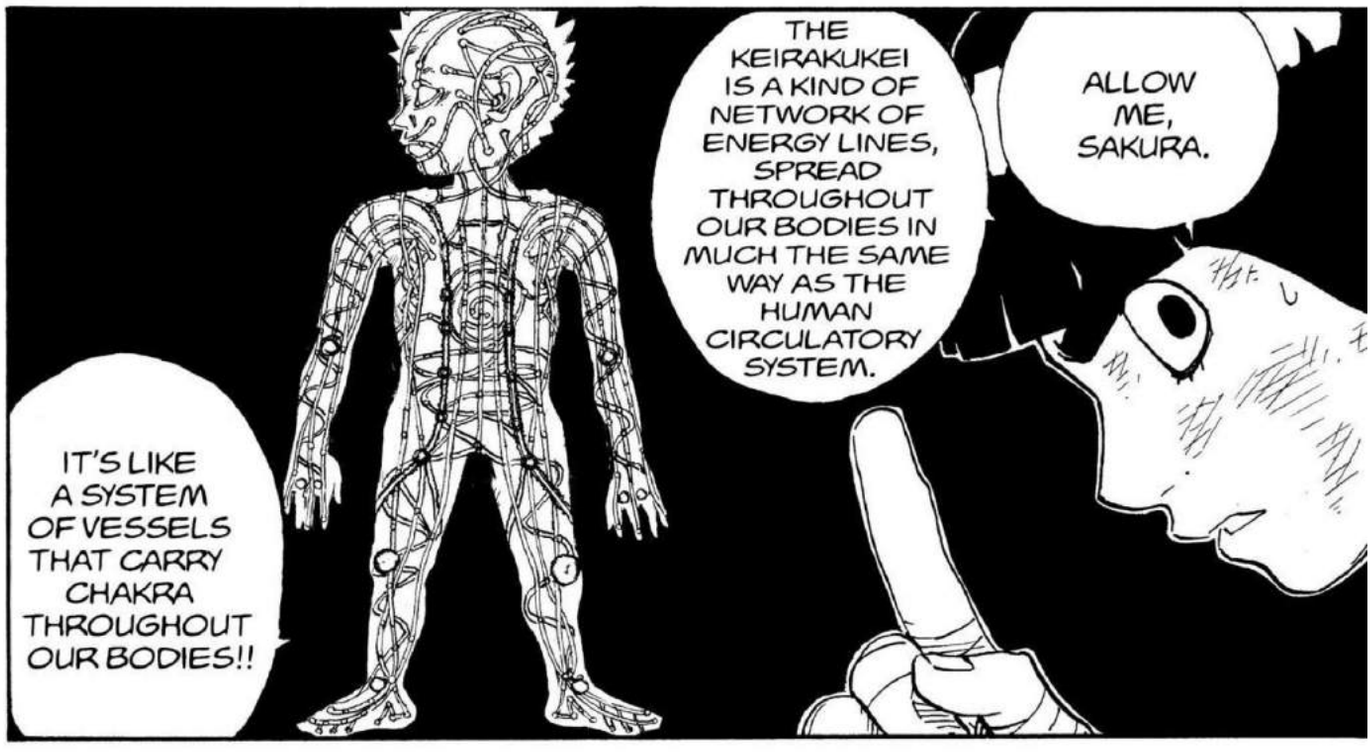
...HINATA...

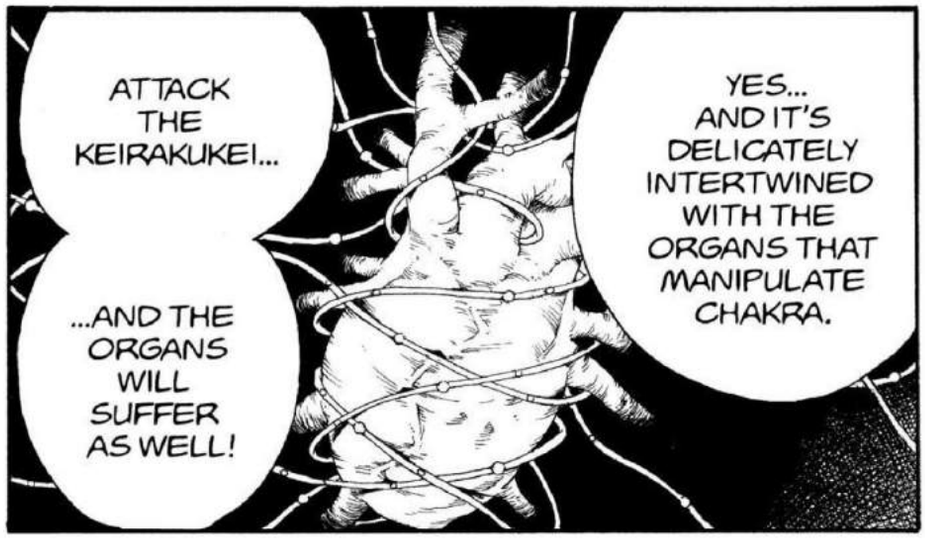
HINATA'S PUSHING HIM...!
...

YEAH, HINATA!!

...HERE WE GO AGAIN... THE INSIGHTFUL QUESTIONS OF AN IDIOT!
WHAT'S A KEIRAKUKEI?!
HEY! HEY!
!

...TO ATTACK THE KEIRAKUKEI?!
WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE ARE THEY...


THE KEIRAKUKEI IS A KIND OF NETWORK OF ENERGY LINES, SPREAD THROUGHOUT OUR BODIES IN MUCH THE SAME WAY AS THE HUMAN CIRCULATORY SYSTEM.
ALLOW ME, SAKURA.
IT'S LIKE A SYSTEM OF VESSELS THAT CARRY CHAKRA THROUGHOUT OUR BODIES!!

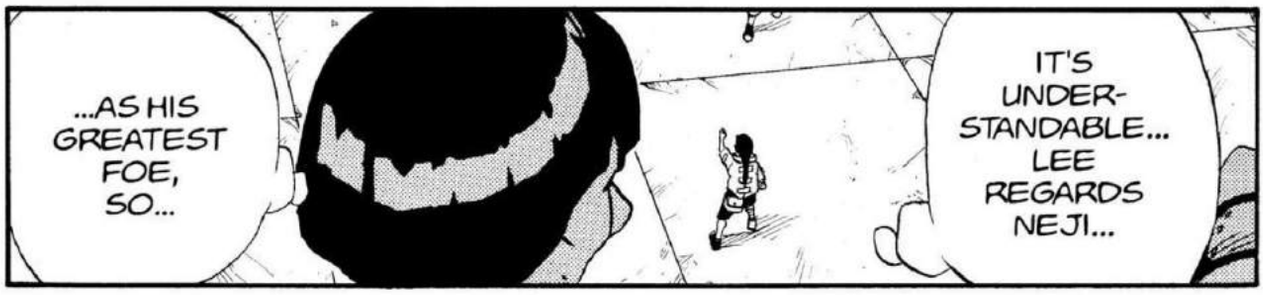

ATTACK THE KEIRAKUKEI...
...AND THE ORGANS WILL SUFFER AS WELL!
YES... AND IT'S DELICATELY INTERTWINED WITH THE ORGANS THAT MANIPULATE CHAKRA.

OH... LIKE PASSAGEWAYS FOR CHAKRA, EH?

HM?!

WHOA... I'M BOWLED OVER BY YOUR INTELLECT...

OW!
THOK
BE RESPECTFUL! HE OUTRANKS US!

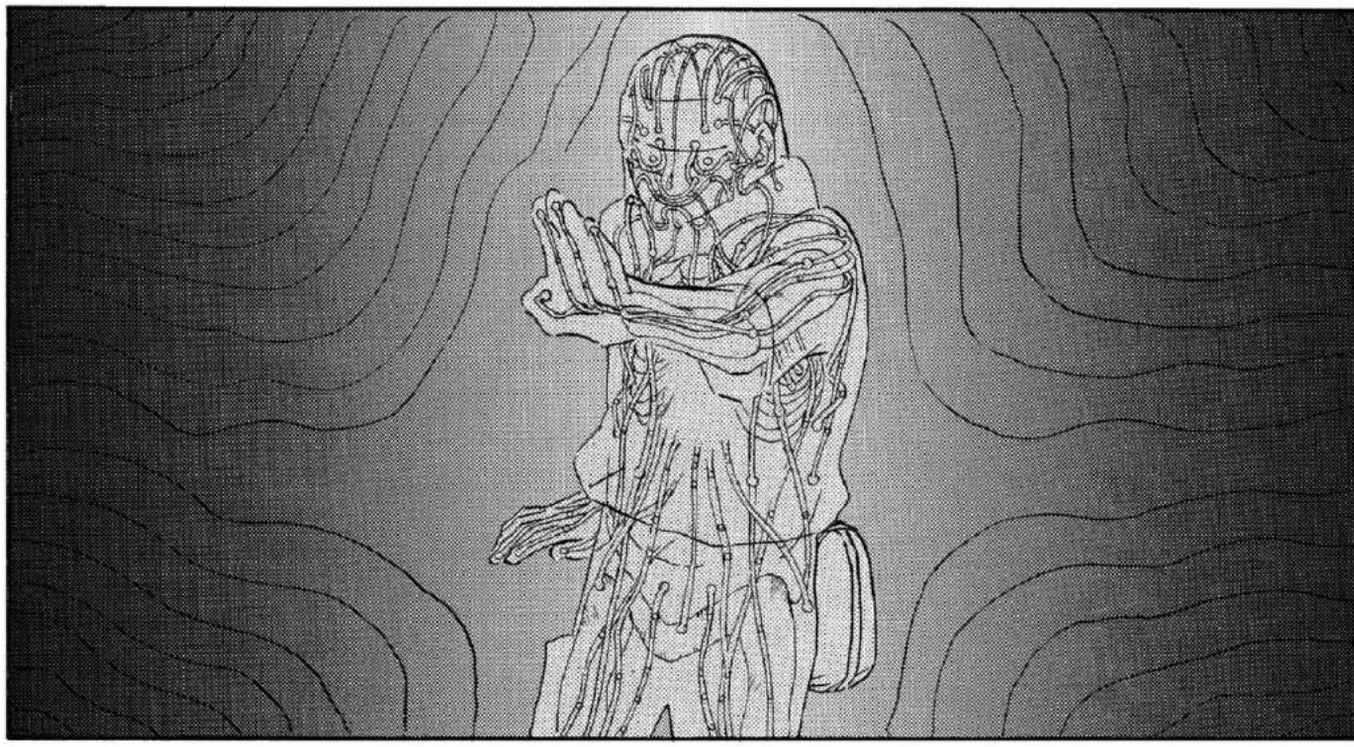

...AS HIS GREATEST FOE, SO...
IT'S UNDER-STANDABLE... LEE REGARDS NEJI...

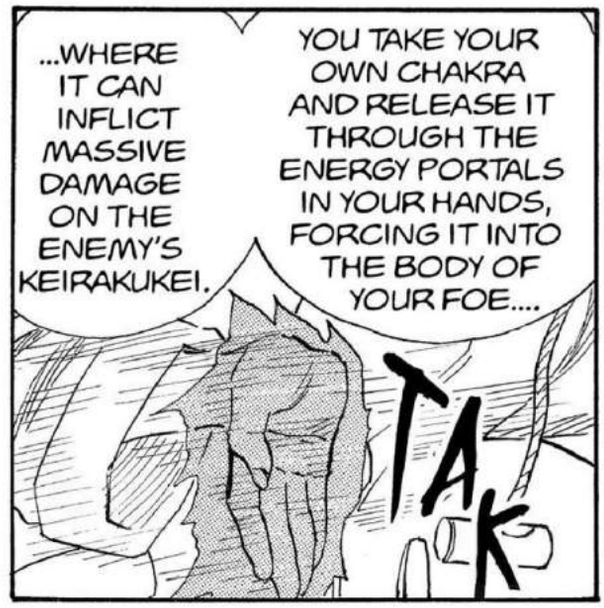
...SO HOW DO YOU ATTACK SOMETHING YOU CAN'T EVEN SEE?!
I MEAN, THIS "KEIRAKUKEI" THING IS JUST ENERGY LINES INSIDE THE BODY...

IT DOESN'T SEEM POSSIBLE!

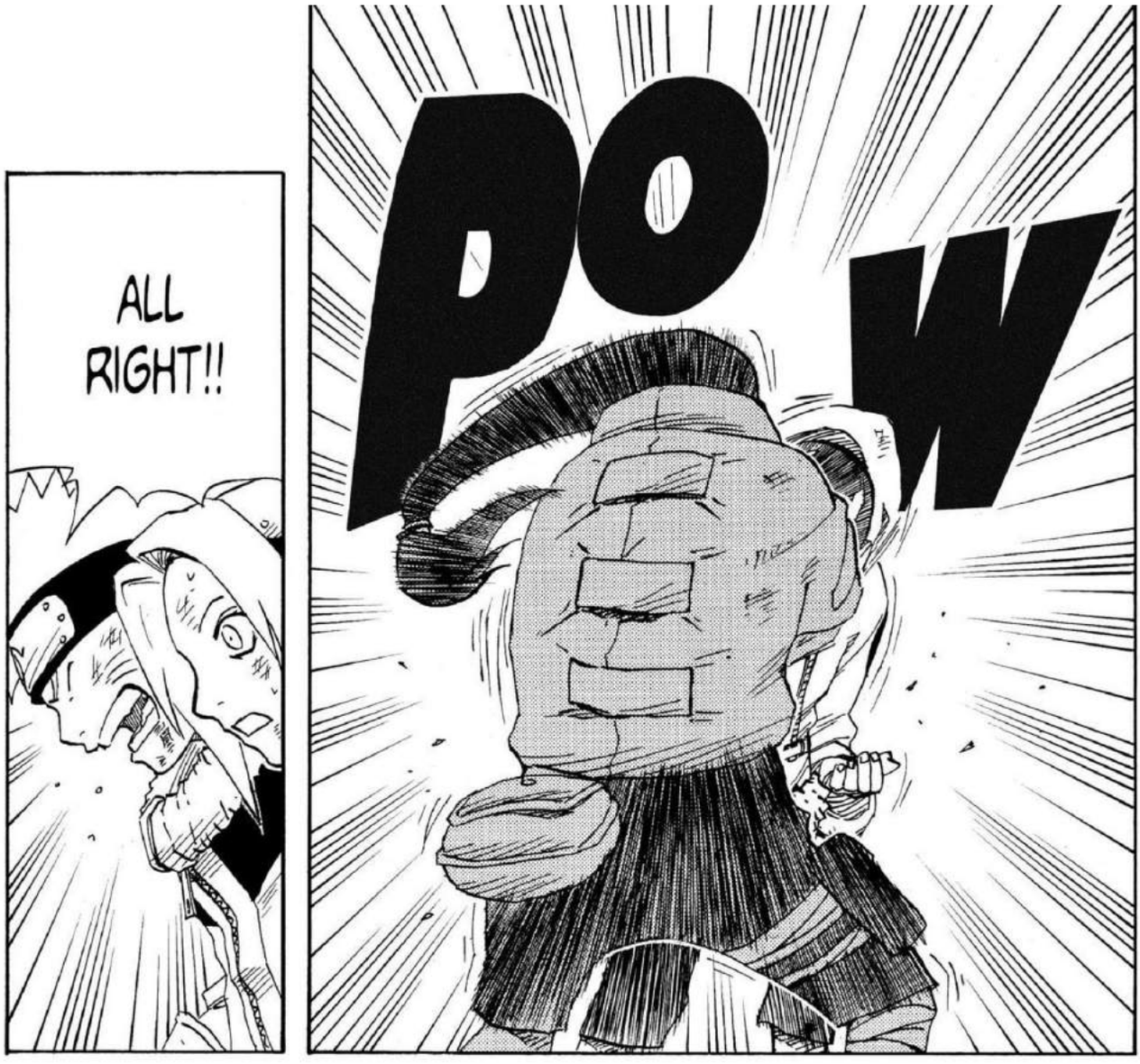
THEY CAN.

HUF
HUF
HUF
THOSE TWO... THEIR BYAKUGAN CAN SEE THEM.



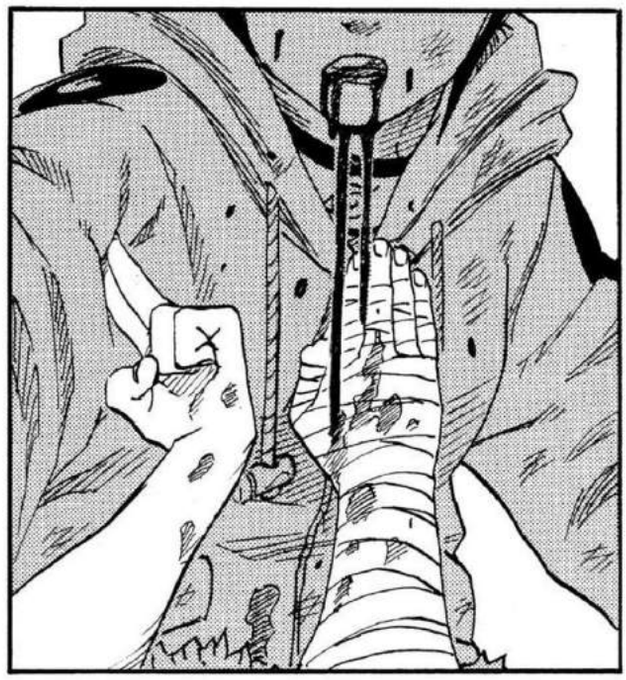

...WHERE IT CAN INFLICT MASSIVE DAMAGE ON THE ENEMY'S KEIRAKUKEI.
YOU TAKE YOUR OWN CHAKRA AND RELEASE IT THROUGH THE ENERGY PORTALS IN YOUR HANDS, FORCING IT INTO THE BODY OF YOUR FOE....
TAK

AND GENTLE FIST ATTACKS ARE DIFFERENT FROM THE PURELY BRUTE-FORCE, PHYSICAL KIND...


ALL RIGHT!!
POW

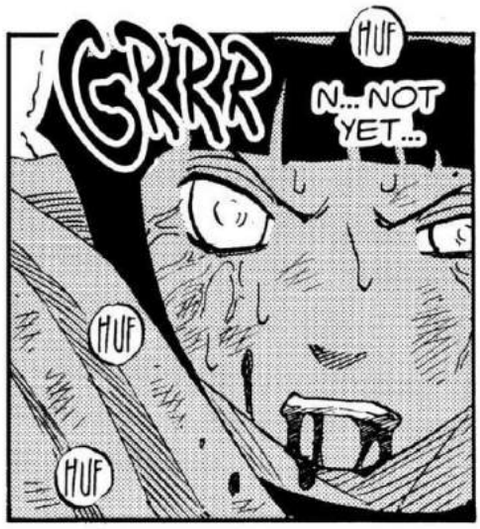
DID SHE GET HIM ...?!
...!!

THUD



...SO THIS IS THE FULL EXTENT...
...OF THE MAIN BRANCH'S STRENGTH?

!

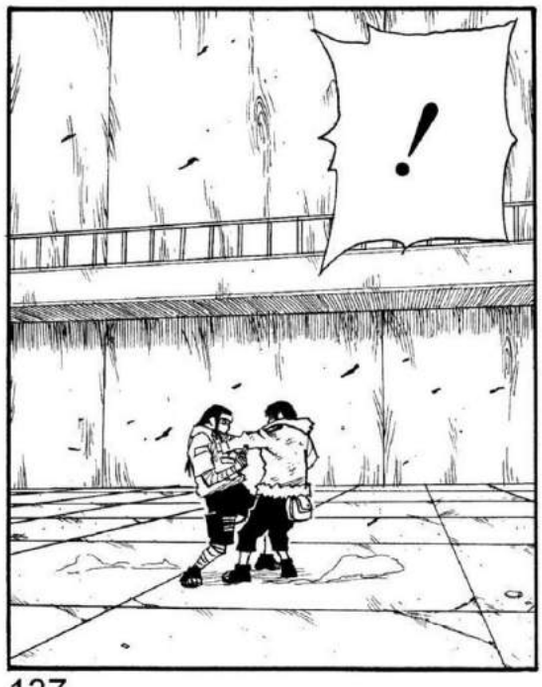

GRRR
HUF
N... NOT YET...
HUF
HUF

WHAT ABOUT HINATA'S ATTACK?!
HEY! WHAT THE HECK?!

GA!!
GGK

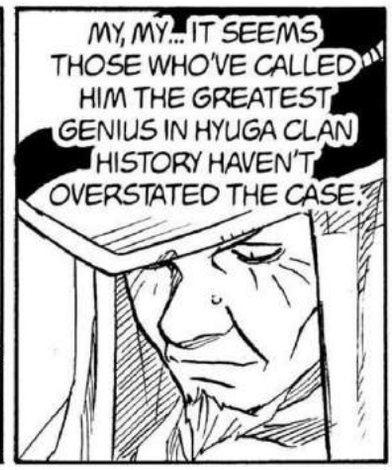
HYAH!
SWIPE

SMAT


!

POKE

愛

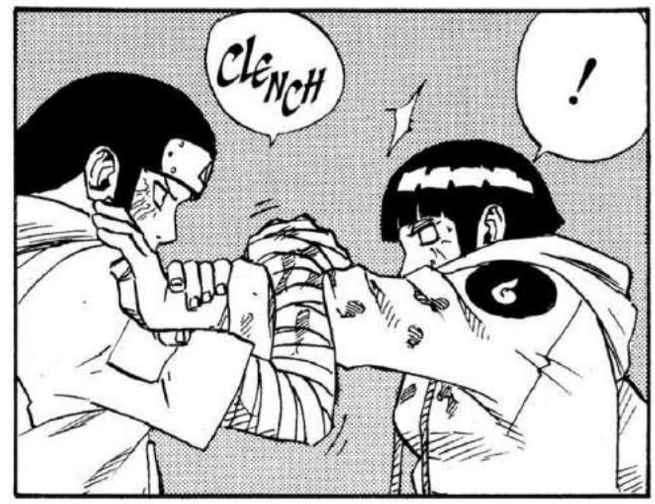

MY, MY... IT SEEMS THOSE WHO'VE CALLED HIM THE GREATEST GENIUS IN HYUGA CLAN HISTORY HAVEN'T OVERSTATED THE CASE.

D... DON'T TELL ME...

...WHAT A FIGHTER!

...

SSSLIP


CLENCH
!

SSSSSLIP

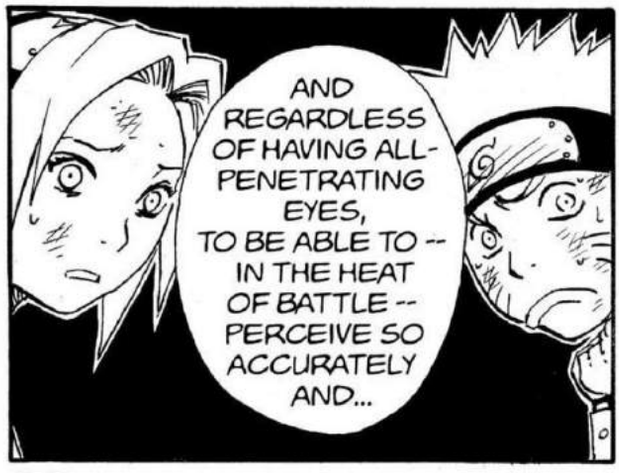
YOU MEAN... FROM THE VERY BEGINNING...?
...IT CAN'T BE!
!!

THESE NODES ARE CALLED TENKETSU... AND, IN THEORY, IF YOU CAN ACCURATELY HIT THEM...

...YOU CAN HALT THE FLOW OF AN ENEMY'S CHAKRA, OR ENHANCE IT, CONTROLLING IT IN ANY WAY YOU WISH.

...ALONG THE KEIRAKUKEI THAT WE SPOKE OF EARLIER, THERE ARE 361 CHAKRA POINTS...

...NO LARGER THAN THE PRICK OF A PIN.



AIEE!
WHAM

LADY HINATA... THIS IS THE UNALTERABLE DIFFERENCE IN STRENGTH...
...THE DISTINCTION THAT SEPARATES THE ELITE FROM THE FAILURE.

SKIDDD
!
!

...
HUF
HUF
HUF

THE ONLY POSSIBLE OUTCOME WAS YOUR PRESENT DESPAIR.
FROM THE MOMENT YOU SAID YOU WOULDN'T RUN, YOUR DEFEAT WAS INEVITABLE.
HUF
HUF

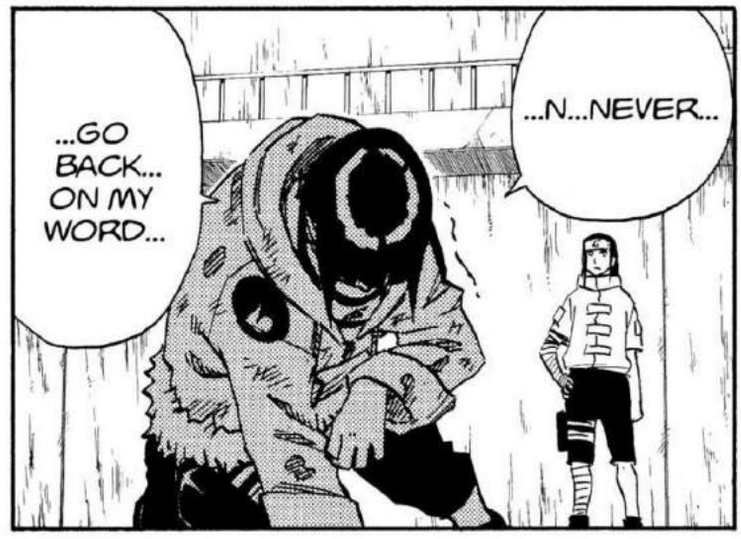
THIS IS THE UNCHANGE-ABLE REALITY.
HUF
HUF

...I...

...WITHDRAW!

HINATA...

...!


...GO BACK... ON MY WORD...
...N...NEVER...

HUF
HUF
BECAUSE... THAT'S... MY SHINOBI WAY, TOO...!

THE WORLD OF KISHIMOTO MASASHI
MY PERSONAL HISTORY, PART II

I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT. I WAS SO FIXATED ON THE ALPHA MALE, I HADN'T BEEN LOOKING WHERE I WAS GOING, AND I STEPPED RIGHT ON ONE OF THE YOUNG MONKEYS!

THE POOR LITTLE MONKEY RAN OFF SCREAMING...AND IN ALMOST THE SAME INSTANT, I FELT SOMETHING CLAMP ONTO MY BACK! I LOOKED OVER MY SHOULDER, AND TO MY HORROR, IT WAS THE LITTLE MONKEY'S MOTHER, BARING HER TEETH AND LOOKING DETERMINED TO TAKE A BITE OUT OF ME! ALL I COULD THINK WAS "I'M GOING TO BE EATEN!!" I DESPERATELY TRIED TO SHAKE OFF THAT MOTHER MONKEY AND RUN AWAY, BUT I LOST MY BALANCE AND FELL OVER. AS I SCRAMBLED TO GET BACK UP, I LOOKED UP AND SAW THAT THE ENORMOUS BOSS MONKEY HAD LEAPT FROM HIS BOULDER TO ATTACK ME! IT WAS LIKE HE HAD TRANSFORMED INTO A *DRAGONBALL*-STYLE SAIYAN MONSTER MONKEY, SO I TRULY THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO DIE. I TRIED AGAIN TO STAND AND RUN AWAY... BUT MY KNEES WERE LIKE RUBBER AND I COULD BARELY STAND! I THOUGHT THAT WOULD BE THE END FOR ME, BUT RIGHT THEN THE MONKEYS' HANDLER TACKLED THE ALPHA MONKEY AND TRAPPED HIM. BEFORE THE RELIEF COULD EVEN FULLY REGISTER IN MY BRAIN, THE HANDLER GLARED AT ME WITH AN EXPRESSION THAT SCARED ME ALMOST AS MUCH AS THE HEAD MONKEY'S HAD AND YELLED, "**RUN!!**"

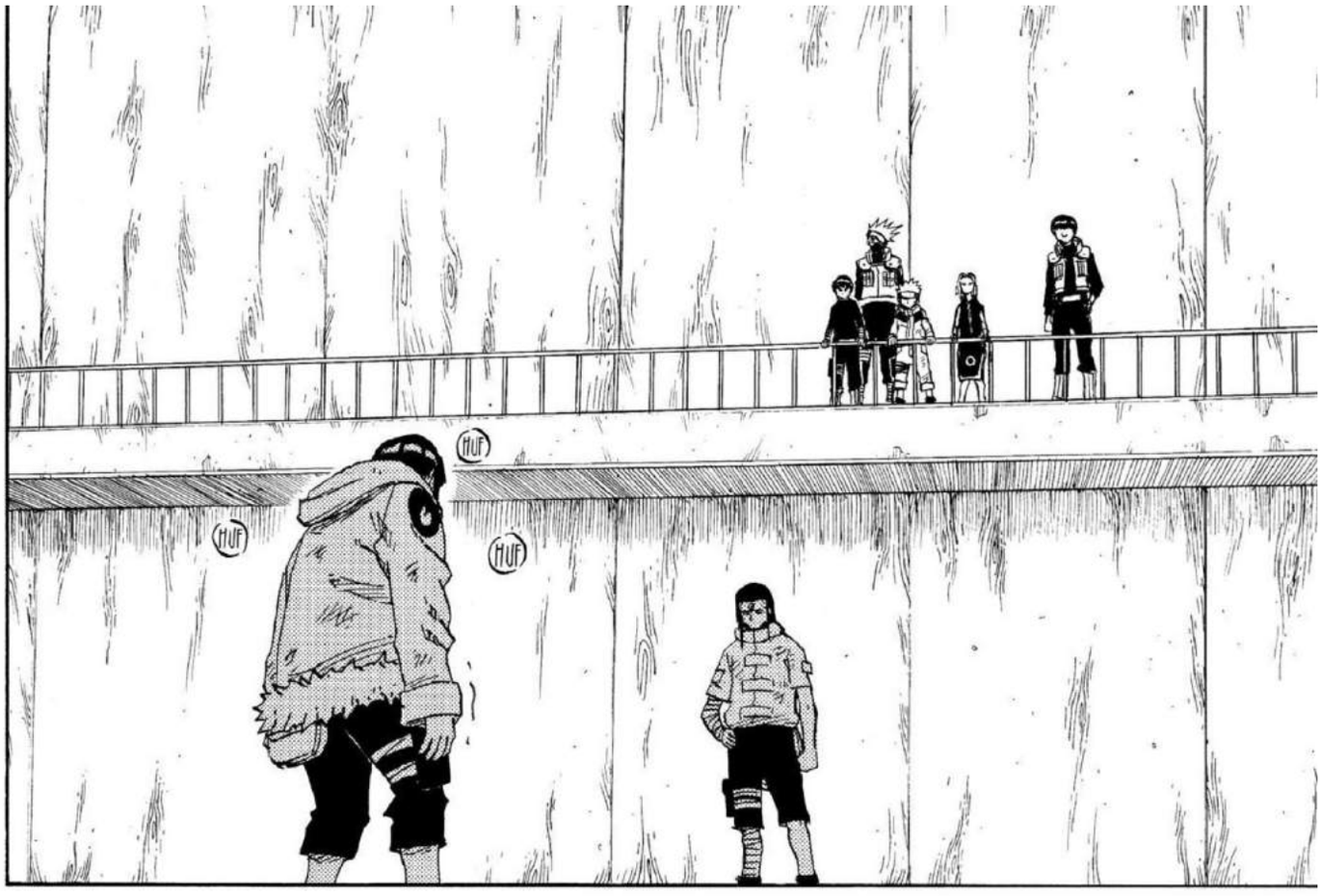
AS MY SENSES BEGAN TO RETURN TO ME, I LOOKED AROUND AND SAW A RIDICULOUS NUMBER OF MONKEYS CHARGING AT ME! "THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS TAME, FRIENDLY MONKEYS," I THOUGHT, CRYING MY EYES OUT AS I RAN!! AND ON TOP OF ALL THAT, I SAW THE MOST UNBELIEVABLE THING: THE ENTIRE BASEBALL CLUB WAS UNDER ASSAULT BY THE MONKEYS!!

AAAUGH !

IT WAS AN AMAZING SIGHT. THERE WERE PLENTY OF OTHER, ORDINARY TOURISTS AROUND, AND THEY WERE BEING LEFT ALONE. WHY WERE THE MONKEYS ATTACKING ONLY THE BASEBALL CLUB?! THEN, THE OBVIOUS ANSWER CAME TO ME! WE ALL HAD THE SAME *GORINGARI* BUZZ-CUT HAIR AND WERE WEARING WHITE SHIRTS AND OUR BLACK SCHOOL UNIFORM PANTS. TO THE MONKEYS, WE PROBABLY LOOKED LIKE SOME WEIRD, SHAVED-HEADED, WHITE-AND-BLACK GANG OF INVADERS. IN ANY CASE, WE LEFT THE MONKEY MOUNTAIN JUST AS FAST AS WE COULD. ONCE WE WERE ALL SAFELY INSIDE THE BUS, EVERYONE WAS TRYING TO CATCH THEIR BREATH AND EXCITEDLY DISCUSSING THE INCIDENT, WONDERING WHY IT HAPPENED. IT OCCURRED TO ME THAT MY HAVING ACCIDENTALLY STEPPED ON THE LITTLE MONKEY WAS A PRETTY JUICY TIDBIT... SO I CONFESSED, EXPECTING THE REST OF THE CLUB TO LAUGH. BUT NO ONE FOUND IT THE LEAST BIT FUNNY.

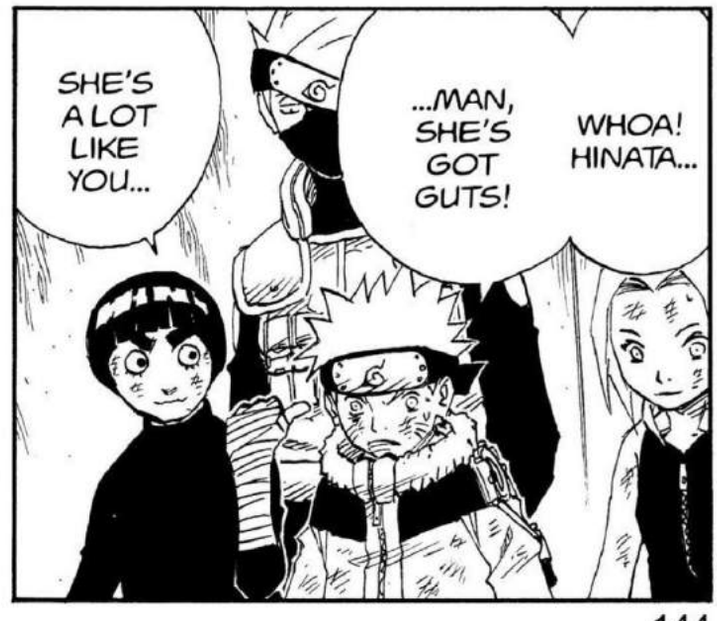
(THIS IS A TRUE STORY!)

Number 80: The Outer Limits


HUF
HUF
HUF

KOFF
HUF
HUF

YEAH... I'VE NOTICED THAT SHE'S ALWAYS WATCHING YOU, NARUTO...
HUNH?


SHE'S A LOT LIKE YOU...
...MAN, SHE'S GOT GUTS!
WHOA! HINATA...

READ THIS WAY
HUF
HUF
HUF
BLINK

...

COME HERE...

SPLATTER

THUD
!
-GACK-

THAT KID IS ALREADY AT HER LIMIT...
ONE MORE ATTACK AND SHE'LL ...!

!!

NEJI'S STRIKES ON HER TENKETSU NODE POINTS HAVE COMPLETELY ARRESTED THE FLOW OF HINATA'S CHAKRA.

BODY
NORMAL JUKEN
CHAKRA
BODY
WHEN THE TENKETSU HAVE BEEN PRESSED

SHE'S LOST THE CAPACITY TO PERFORM THE JUKEN (GENTLE FIST) ATTACKS THAT FLOOD HER CHAKRA INTO HER OPPONENT'S BODY.

THIS FIGHT IS AS GOOD AS DONE.

SKF

IT SEEMS INEVITABLE. NEJI WILL WIN.

BUT I DOUBT THAT, AGAINST A FIGHTER LIKE THIS NEJI, EVEN OUR OWN SASUKE WOULD PREVAIL.

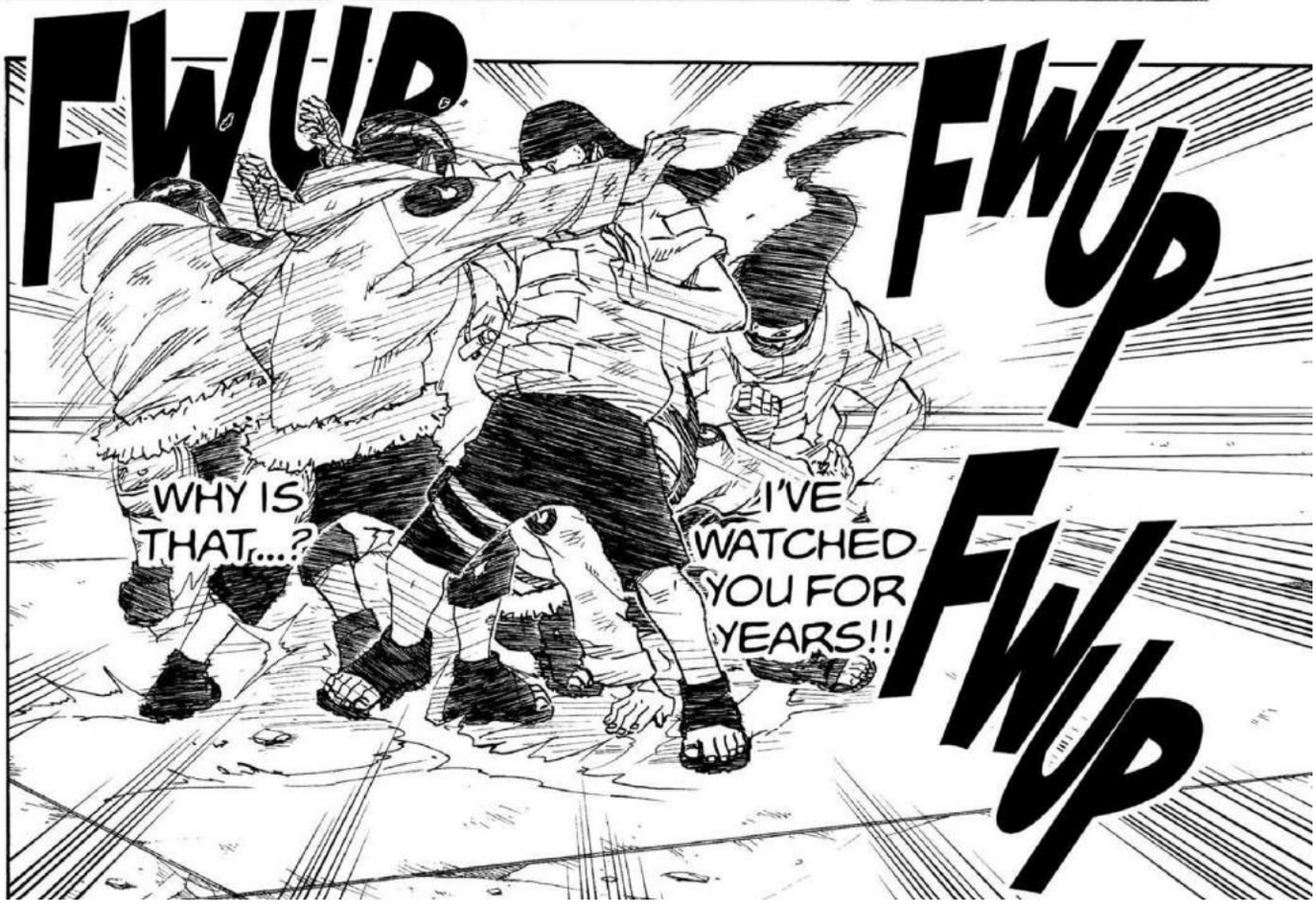
READ THIS WAY
SOURN
HE'S JUST TOO STRONG...
HIS LEVEL OF STRENGTH... IT... IT'S NOT A FAIR FIGHT!
HINATA... SHE WON'T GET KILLED, WILL SHE...?
THOSE EYES... SO CREEPY!
GRRR
HANG IN THERE, HINATA!!
UNH...!

KOFF
...NARUTO...!!
KOFF

I'VE BEEN WATCHING...

TAK
!

!
THE LOOK OF STRENGTH IS BACK IN HER EYES...


FWUP
FWUP
FWUP
WHY IS THAT...?
I'VE WATCHED YOU FOR YEARS!!

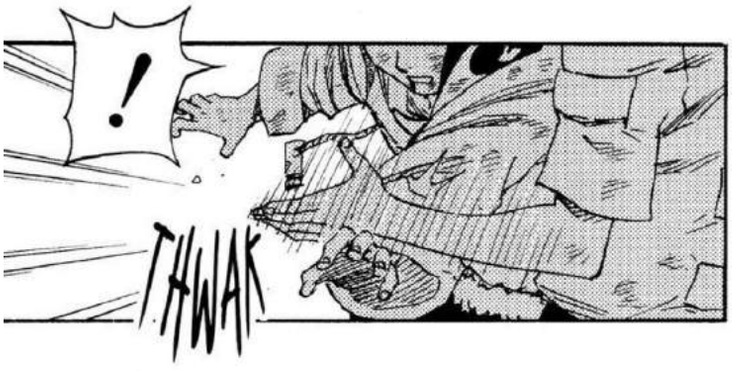
READ THIS WAY
AND NONE OF YOU ARE GONNA BEAT ME!!
...I FEEL A WELLSPRING OF COURAGE BUBBLING UP INSIDE ME.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS, BUT...
...WHEN I WATCH NARUTO...

BUT I CAN DO IT! I'M AWESOME!

THAT'S HOW I START TO FEEL!!
...AM WORTH SOMETHING!

I FEEL LIKE IF I JUST DO MY BEST...
...THEN EVEN I...


!
THWAK

!!
SWIPE
SHFF

!!
AH!

WH
AK
UGH!

HUF
GAK
KOFF
KOFF

!

STUMBLE
SHF

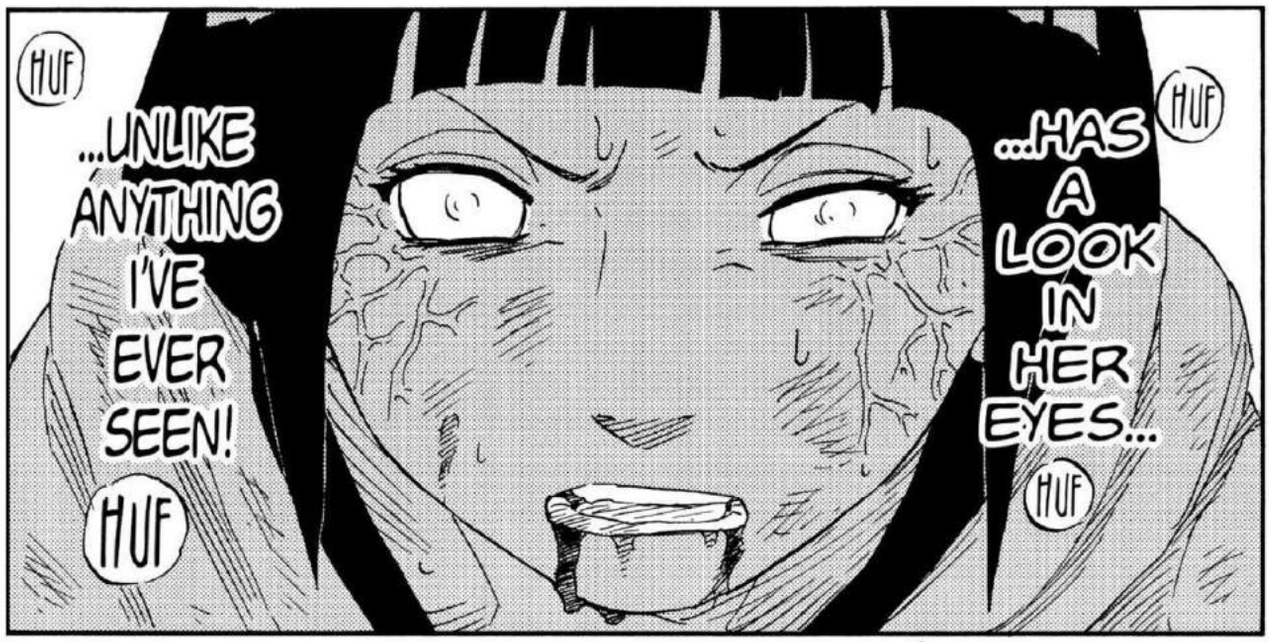
YOU TRAINED CONSTANTLY... DESPERATELY...
HEY, HINATA! LET'S HEAD HOME ALREADY!
HUF
HUF
HUF
WHAP

...
HINATA
...

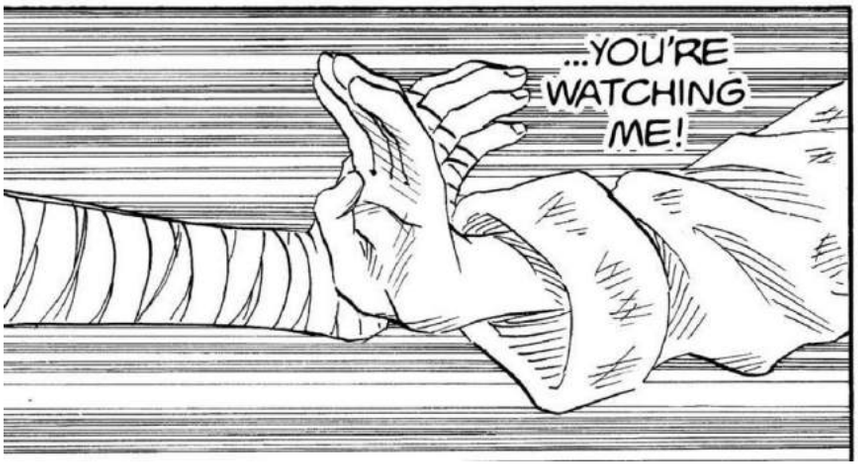
...BUT AT SOME POINT, YOU STARTED TRYING TO CHANGE.
...YOU ALWAYS HAD A HABIT OF QUITTING...
HUF
HUF
HUF

BUT THAT'S NO LONGER TRUE...
THE HINATA I SEE NOW...

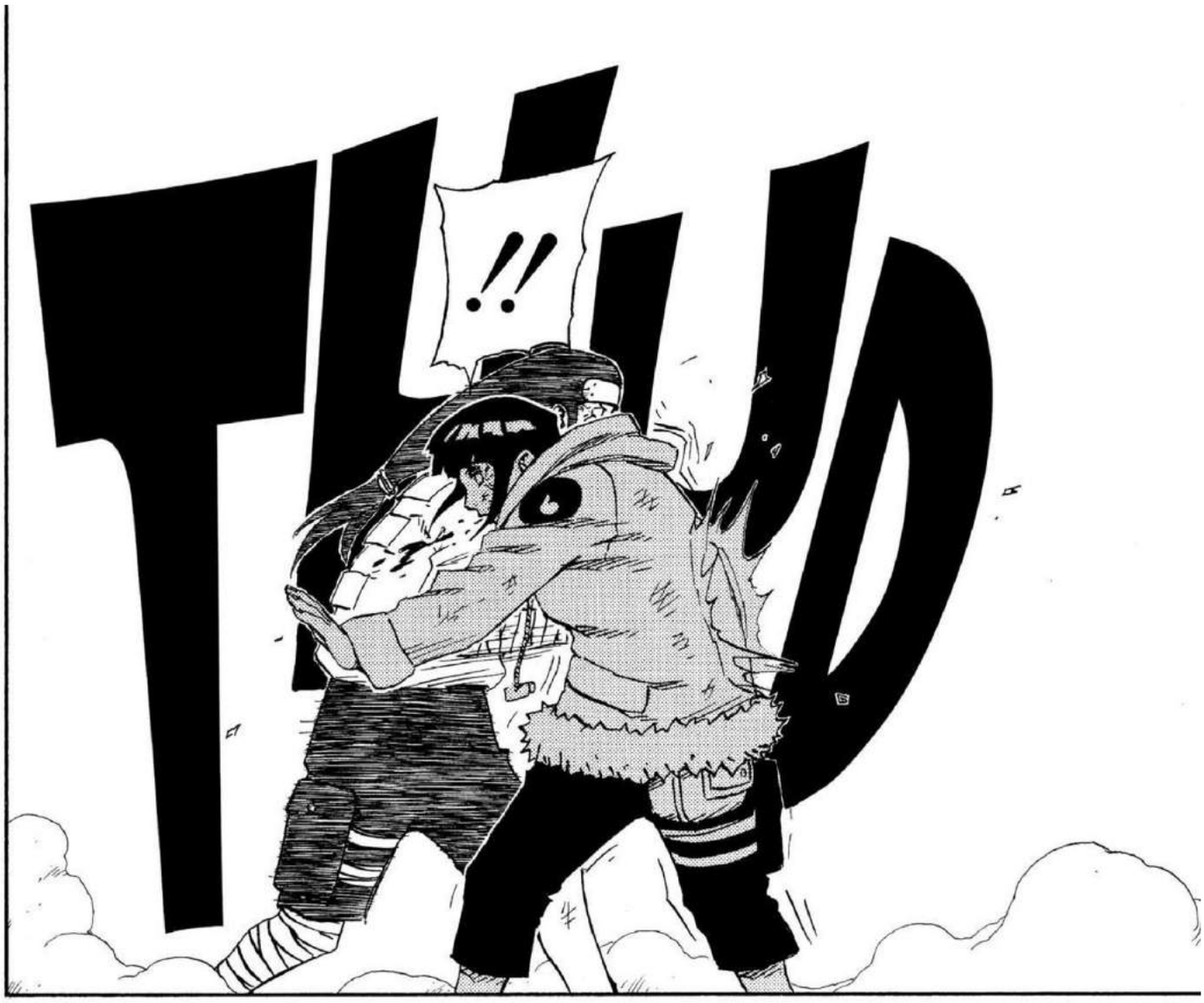
YOU FALTERED. YOU WERE WEAK. AND YOU NEVER HAD FAITH IN YOURSELF.
BUT ON MISSIONS, YOU WERE ALWAYS FULL OF MISTAKES.

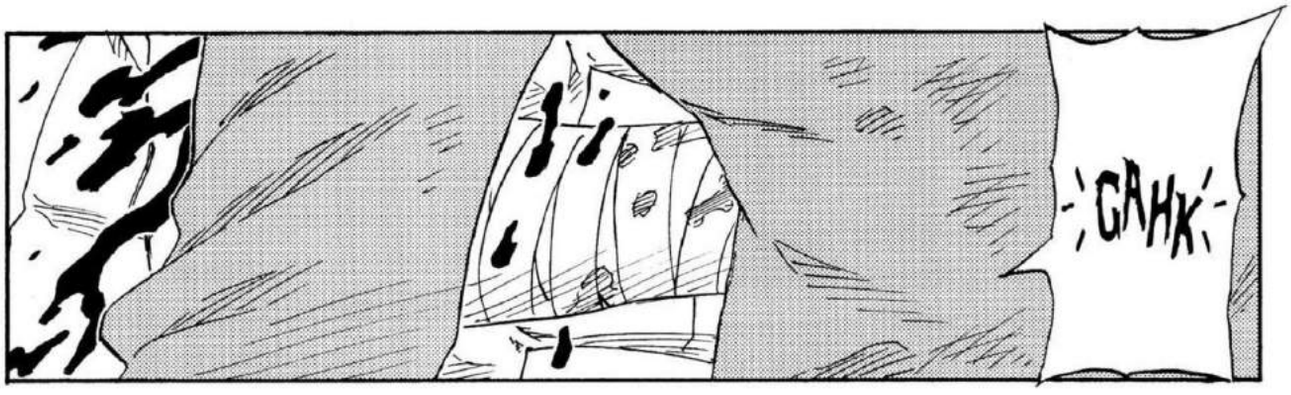

HUF
...UNLIKE ANYTHING I'VE EVER SEEN!
HUF
HUF
...HAS A LOOK IN HER EYES...
HUF

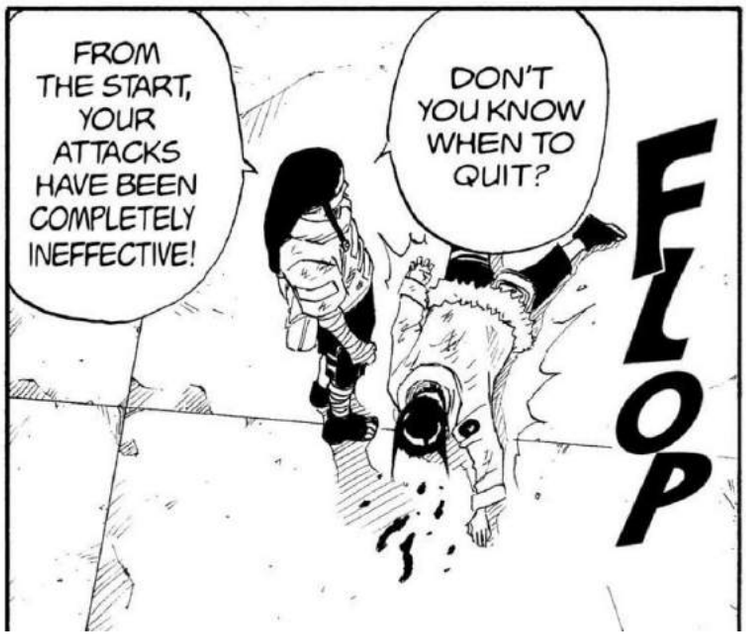
...I'VE BEEN WATCHING YOU FOR SUCH A LONG TIME... BUT NOW, AT LAST...


...YOU'RE WATCHING ME!

TAK
...NARUTO!


THUD
!!


GAHK


FROM THE START, YOUR ATTACKS HAVE BEEN COMPLETELY INEFFECTIVE!
DON'T YOU KNOW WHEN TO QUIT?
FLOP

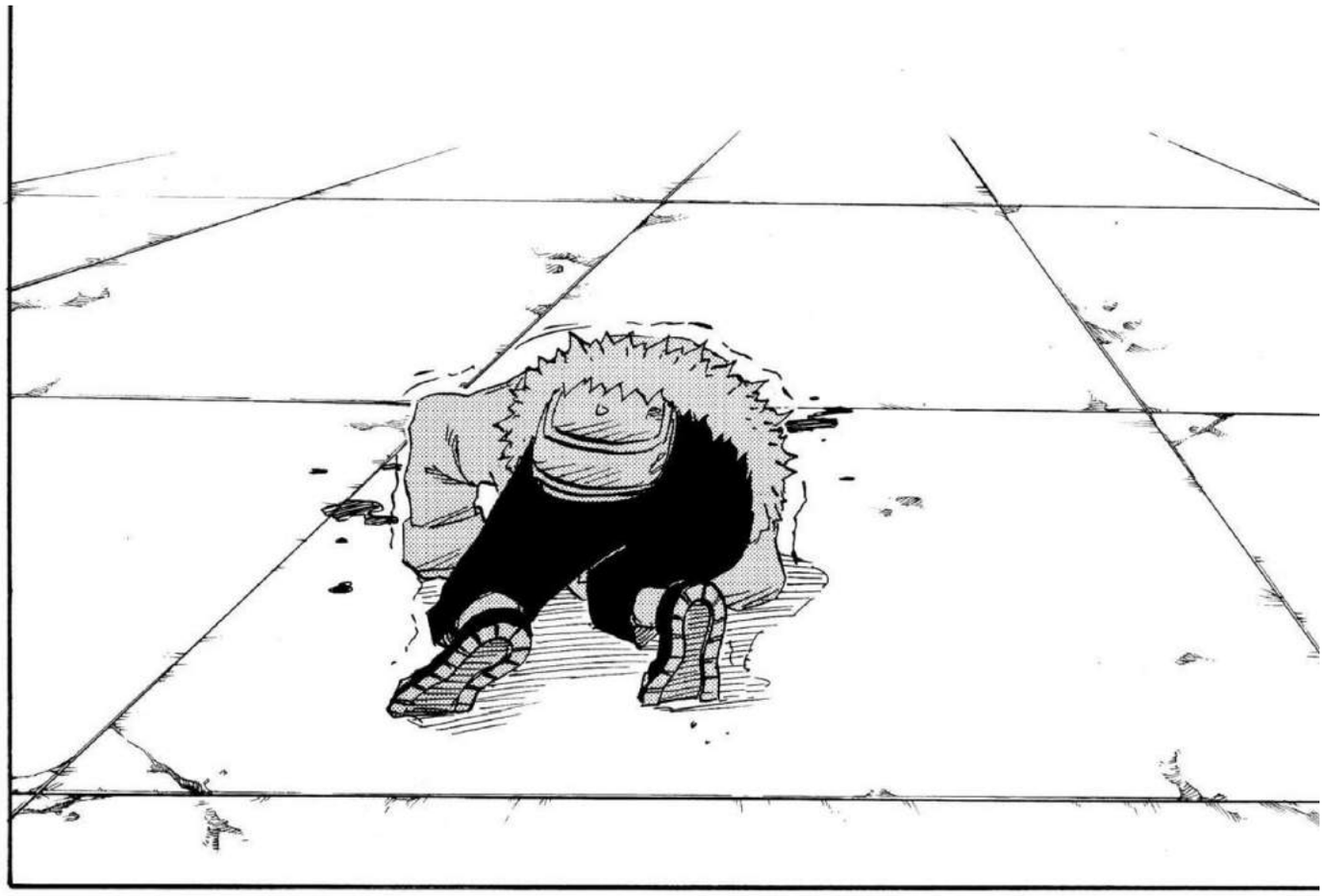
SKKF
SLLP

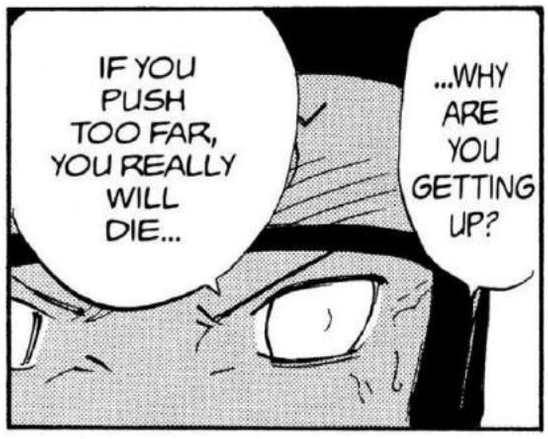
...

PLEASE, HINATA... CALL THIS OFF. YOU HAVE LOST THE MATCH, BUT YOU'VE SUCCEEDED IN CHANGING YOURSELF! YOU DID A GREAT JOB!

SO, OF MY OWN VOLITION, I...
I REALLY... WANTED TO CHANGE THAT ABOUT MYSELF.

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, YOU IDIOT?! SHE'S GOT NOTHING LEFT! SHE'S ALREADY COLLAPSED!!
DON'T STOP IT!!
SEEING AS THE MATCH CANNOT GO ON, I--
IT'S A PITY, BUT THE GIRL CAN NO LONGER EVEN STAND...
THAT WAS NEJI'S MASTER-STROKE. IT TARGETS THE HEART.




IF YOU PUSH TOO FAR, YOU REALLY WILL DIE...
...WHY ARE YOU GETTING UP?

...IS FINALLY WATCHING ME, AND...
HUF
...IT'S BECAUSE NOW THE PERSON I'VE ADMIRED FOR SO LONG...

WHY...?!
BLINK

HUF
HUF
UGK
HUF

...I CAN'T BEAR TO LOOK UNCOOL!!
...AND IN FRONT OF HIM...

GRR RR

...

YOU'VE HATED AND PUNISHED YOURSELF FOR YOUR OWN WEAKNESS AND FRAILTY...
BUT YOU CAN'T FIGHT YOUR NATURE... OR CHANGE YOUR FATE.
YOU WERE BURDENED FROM BIRTH WITH THE DESTINY OF THE HYUGA CLAN'S MAIN BRANCH...

TH-THIS ISN'T OVER YET!
I CAN SEE WITH THESE EYES... IT'S TAKING ALL YOUR STRENGTH JUST TO STAND!
YOU'RE NOT FOOLING ANYONE.

I CAN SEE IT NOW... THAT EVEN MORE THAN ME...
BUT... YOU'RE WRONG, COUSIN NEJI...

BE AT PEACE!
BUT YOU NEED NOT SUFFER ANY MORE.

GRRRR

FLINCH
...IT'S YOU WHO ARE TORN AND SUFFERING... CAUGHT BETWEEN THE DESTINIES OF THE MAIN BRANCH AND CADET BRANCH OF OUR CLAN!

TAK
!
!

SHIK

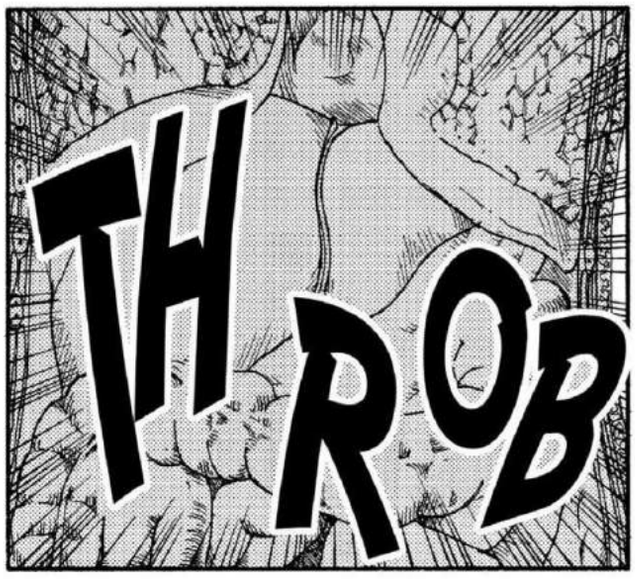
NEJI... THE MATCH IS ALREADY OVER!!

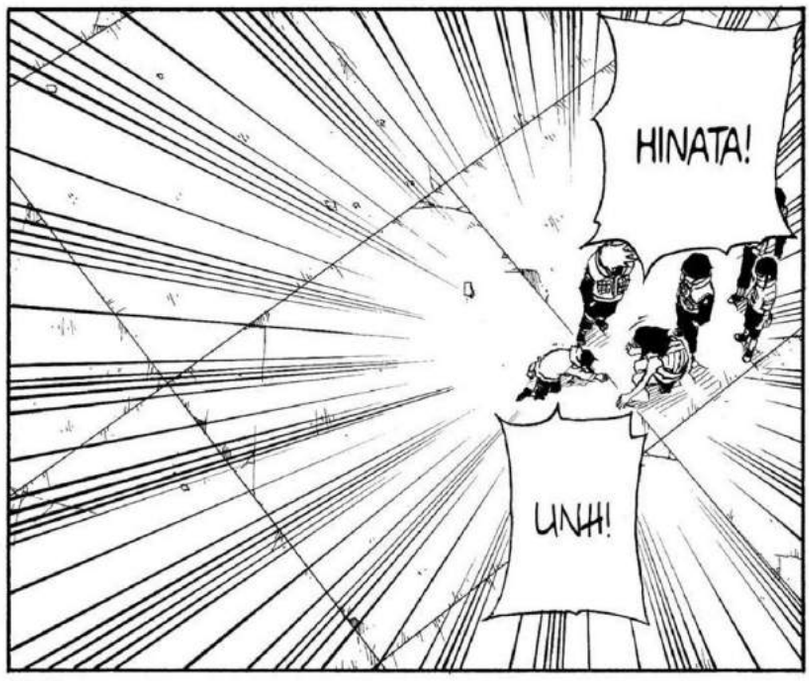
!!

TAP

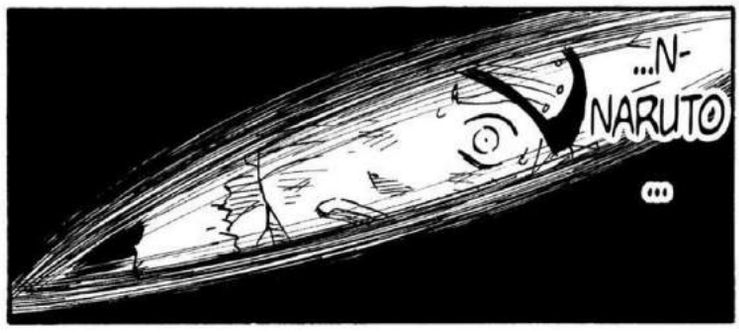
WELL... WHY IS IT THAT THE OTHER JÔNIN ARE GETTING INVOLVED? SPECIAL PROTECTION FOR THE MAIN BRANCH, EH...?
ENOUGH, NEJI!!
BEFORE THIS BEGAN, YOU SWORE YOU WOULDN'T DRAG THE ISSUES YOU HAVE WITH YOUR FAMILY'S MAIN BRANCH INTO THIS.

!!


THROB

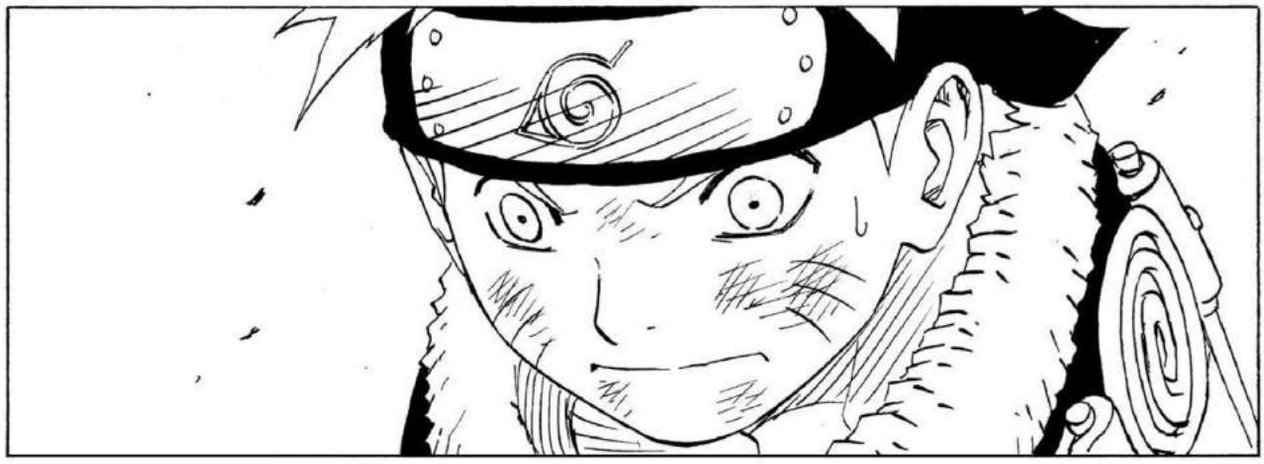

HINATA!
UNH!

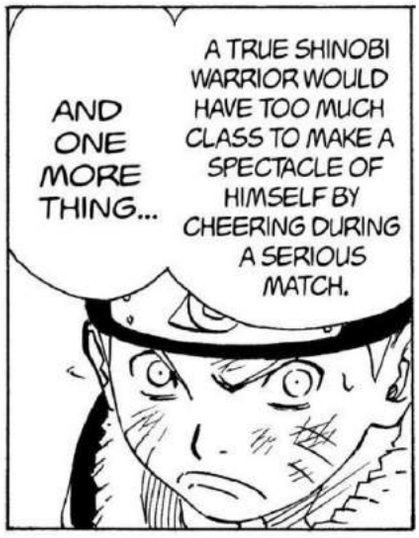
KOFF
GAGH
FLOP



...MANAGED TO CHANGE... JUST A LITTLE BIT...

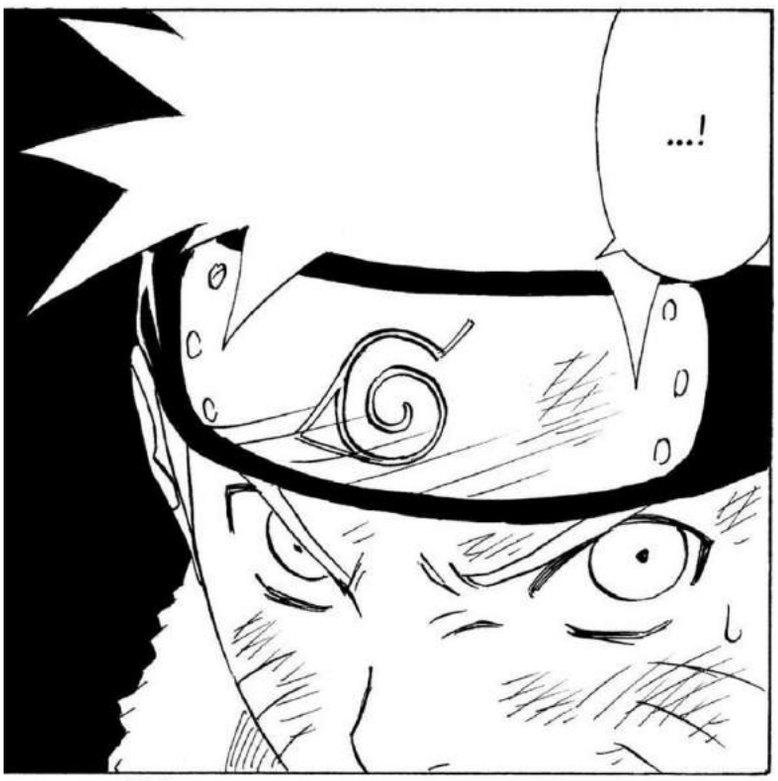
...I... WONDER IF MAYBE I...

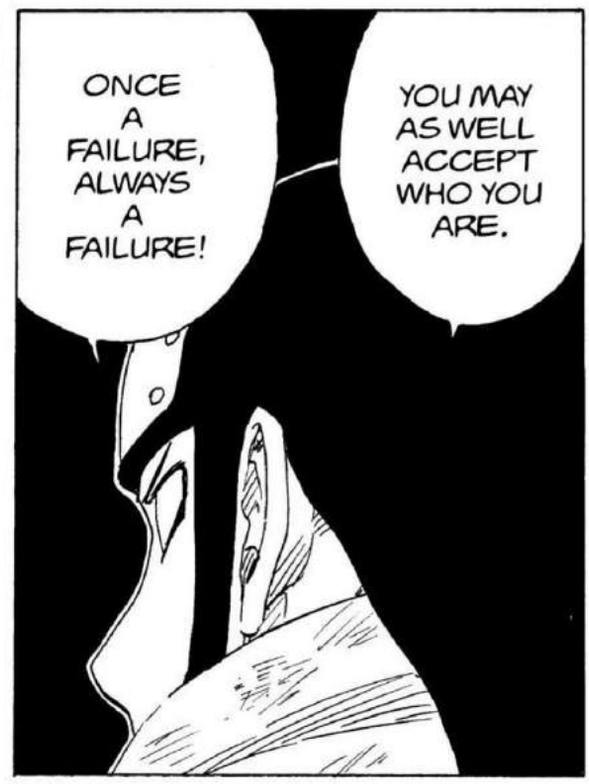


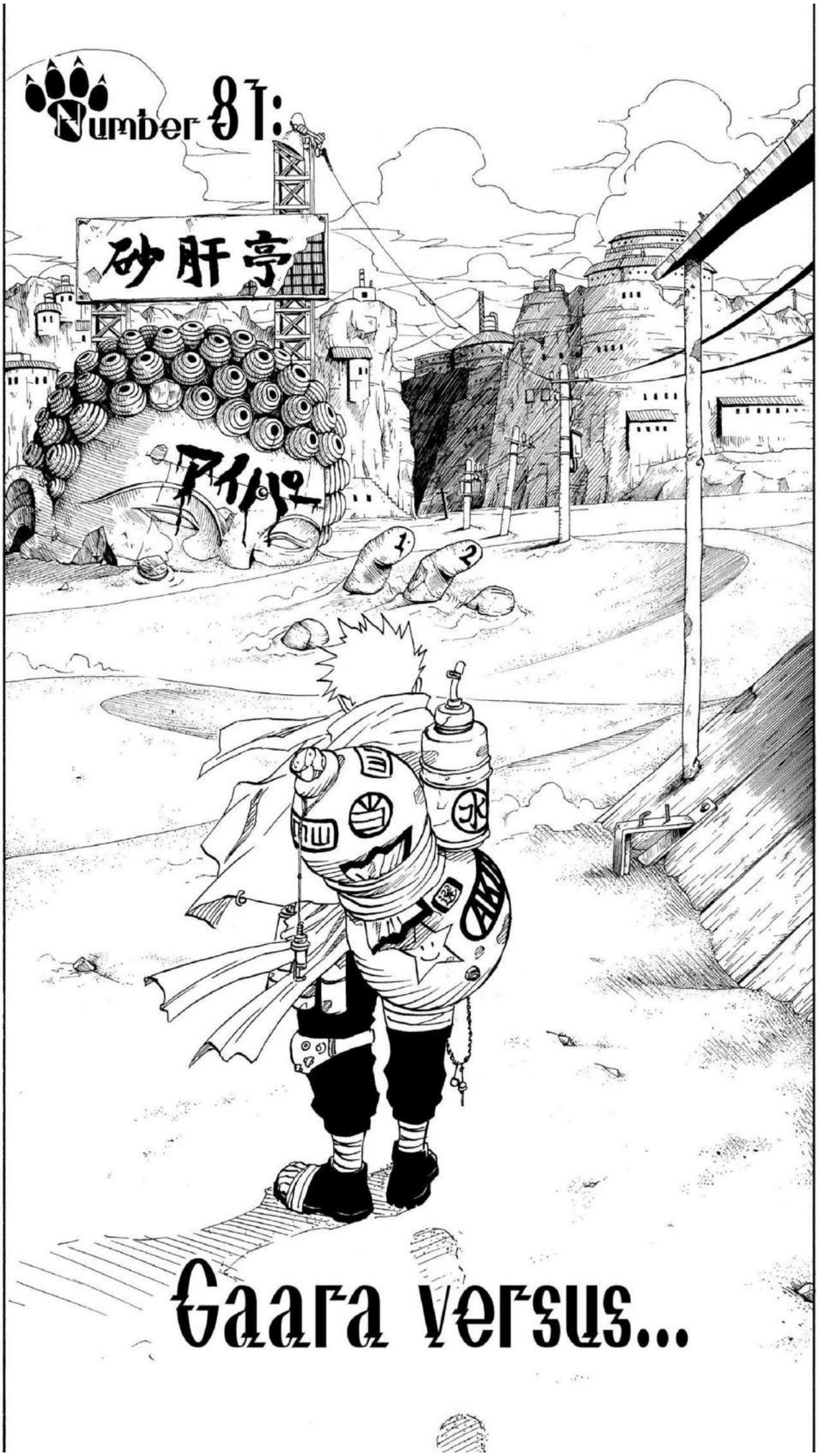

AND ONE MORE THING...
A TRUE SHINOBI WARRIOR WOULD HAVE TOO MUCH CLASS TO MAKE A SPECTACLE OF HIMSELF BY CHEERING DURING A SERIOUS MATCH.

A COUPLE OF WORDS OF ADVICE.
!

HEY... HEY, YOU! MR. FAILURE!


...!


ONCE A FAILURE, ALWAYS A FAILURE!
YOU MAY AS WELL ACCEPT WHO YOU ARE.


Number 81:
砂肝亭
アイパッ
Gaara versus...

YOU MAY AS WELL ACCEPT WHO YOU ARE.

ONCE A FAILURE, ALWAYS A FAILURE!

SHF

HEH...

YOU WANNA TRY ME?

TAK
...

OH!
!!

!!!
SKIDD
LLLYAP

...

...!

!

...

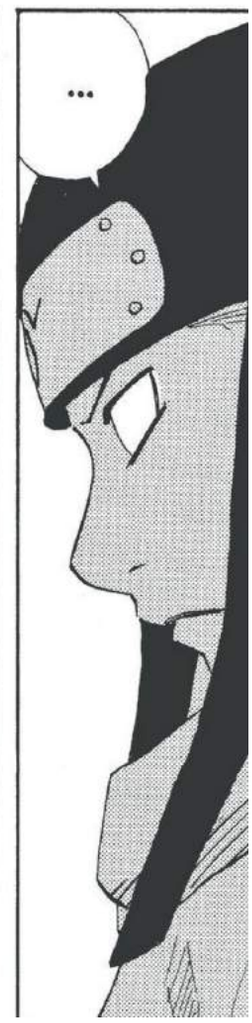
I UNDERSTAND ALMOST PAINFULLY WELL WHAT YOU'RE FEELING, NARUTO! BUT...
...WE HAVE TO LIMIT OUR BATTLES TO THE CONFINES OF THE SCHEDULED FIGHTS.
WHAT...?!

...IT REALLY MAKES YOU LOOK FORWARD TO THE FINAL ROUNDS, EH...?
...EVEN THOUGH HIS OPPONENT COULD VERY WELL BE ME!
THE PROSPECT OF SEEING A FAILURE DEFEAT A GENIUS THROUGH SHEER FORCE OF WILL...

YEAH.
...

I GET IT, OKAY?!

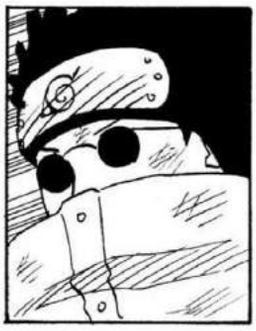
...I'LL HAVE NO REGRETS!
BUT EVEN IF IT'S YOU IN THE FINALS, NARUTO...


...

GAGK
SHIVER

FWIP

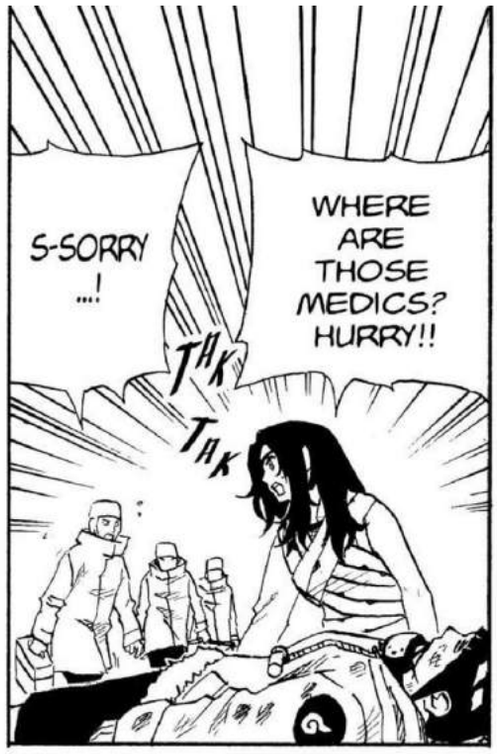
FWIP
LEE, YOU AMAZING KID! NICE!



!

OH NO... SHE'S GOING INTO VENTRICULAR FIBRILLATION...
!!

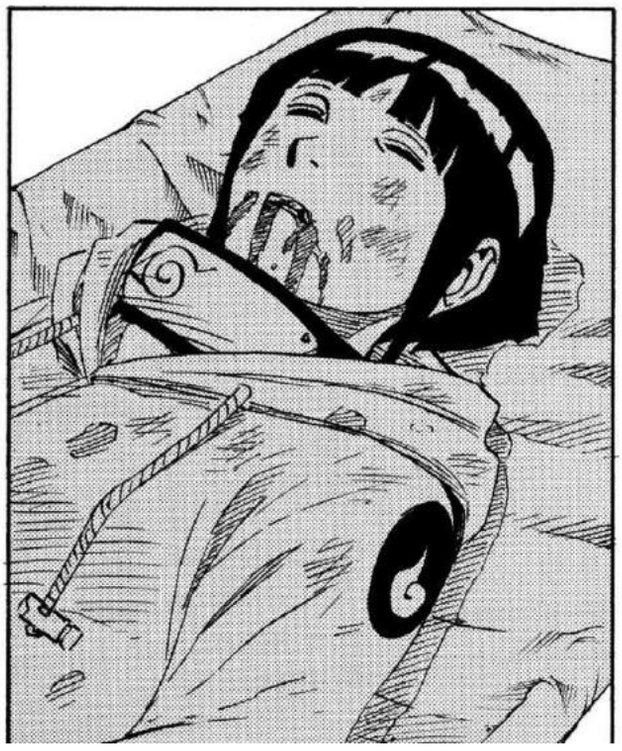
PAT


S-SORRY ...!
WHERE ARE THOSE MEDICS? HURRY!!
TAK
TAK

HE REALLY INTENDED TO KILL HER...

...YOU'D BETTER TAKE CARE OF HER.
INSTEAD OF WASTING TIME SCOWLING AT ME...

TAK
AT THIS RATE, SHE WON'T LAST 10 MINUTES!
WE'VE GOT TO GET HER TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM RIGHT NOW!



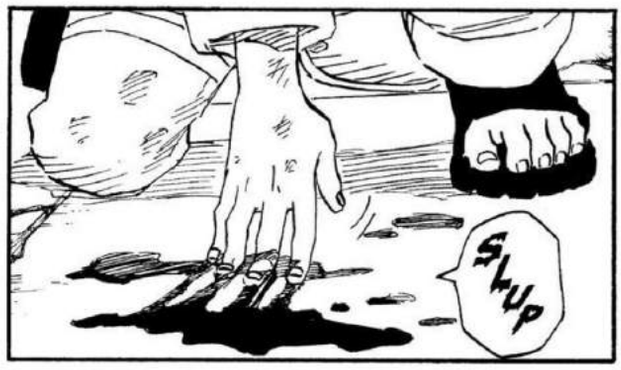
...!

SKF
MOVE IT!!

HYAH!
SWIPE
BECAUSE... THAT'S... MY SHINOBI WAY, TOO...!
HUF
HUF
HUF
...HINATA...

CLENCH
I GIVE YOU MY WORD...
PLIT

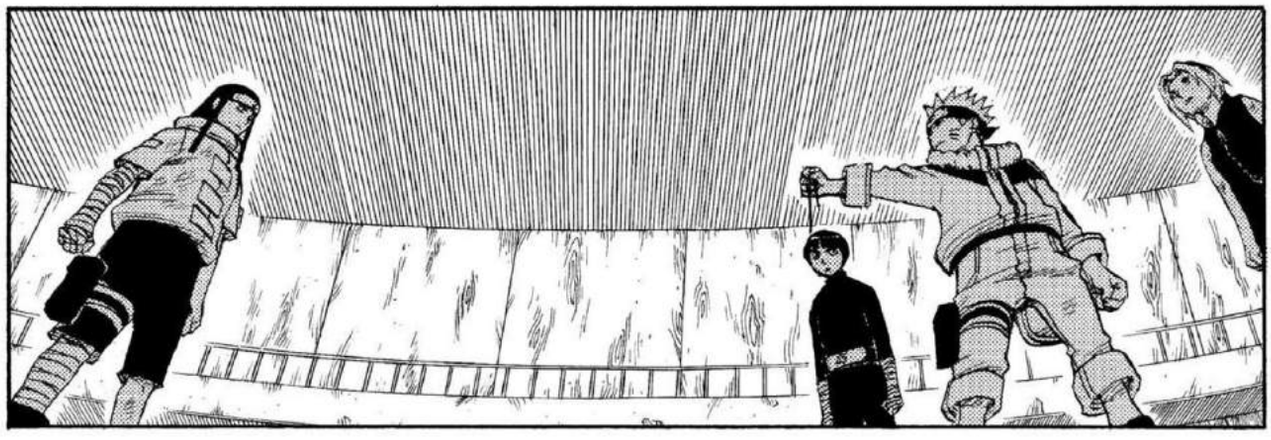
...!


SLUP

!

SHF
!

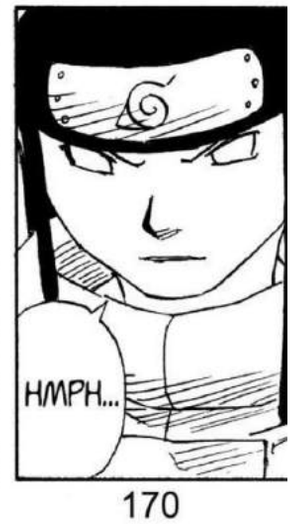
...TO WIN!!
I VOW...



HE HAS NO IDEA HOW OUTRANKED HE IS!
...THAT KID SO DOESN'T KNOW HIS PLACE, IT'S FUNNY...

...NARUTO!

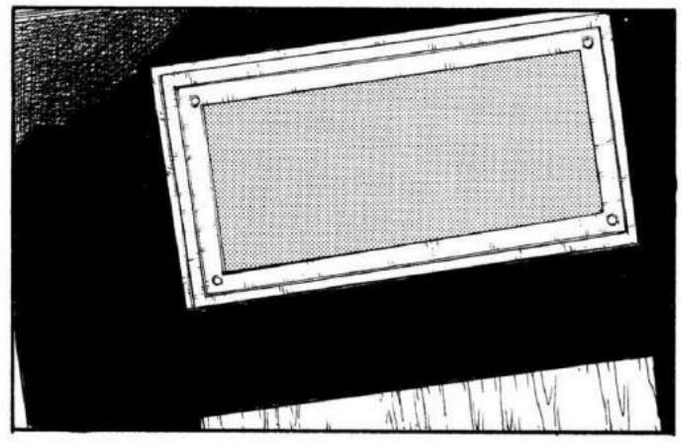
NARUTO...

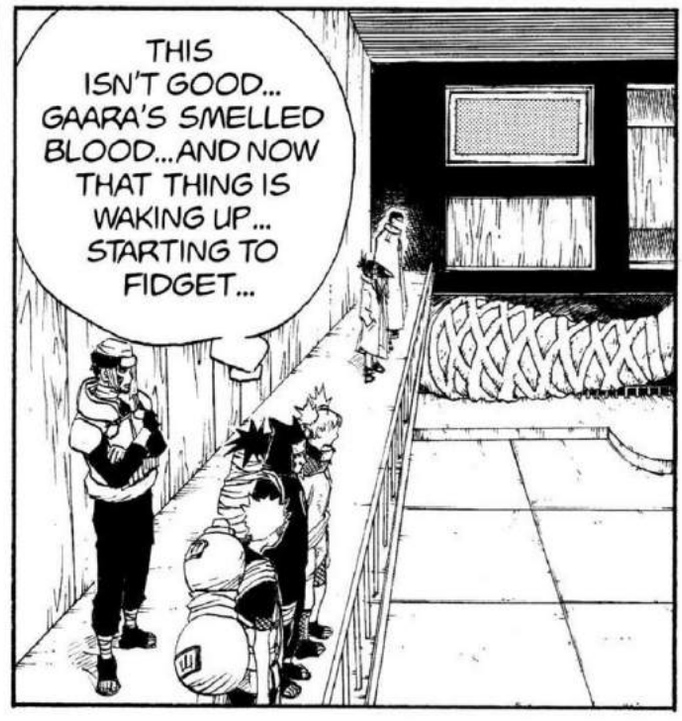

HMPH...

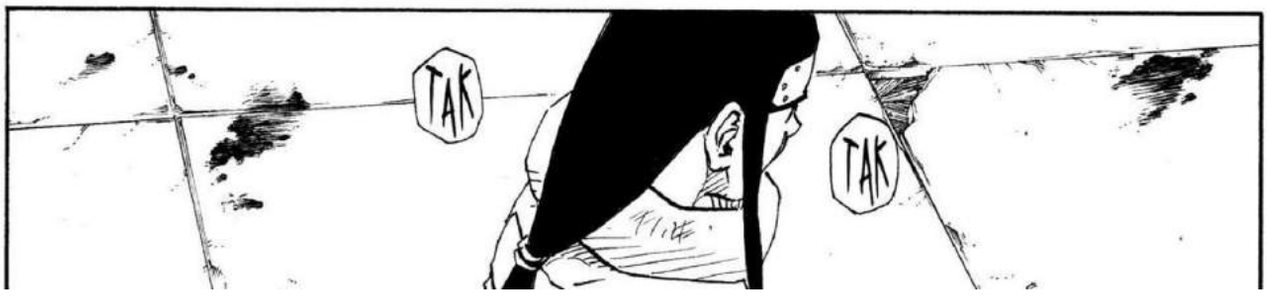
READ THIS WAY
愛
SQUIRM

...BUT OURS HAS AN... INNER NATURE THAT'S UNIQUELY BAD.
...NOW WE KNOW THERE ARE TWO MONSTERS HERE...

...THE DEMON THAT LIVES...
愛
...WITHIN HIM!!




THIS ISN'T GOOD... GAARA'S SMELLED BLOOD...AND NOW THAT THING IS WAKING UP... STARTING TO FIDGET...


TAK
TAK

WE'VE GOT TO START PLANNING AHEAD... TO PREPARE FOR THE FINAL ROUNDS...
YOU'D THINK HE HADN'T EVEN BEEN HARMED... THAT HE STILL HAS HIDDEN RESERVES OF STRENGTH...
BUT THAT NEJI GUY...

!
HEY...!

TAK
TAK
NARUTO'S AN IDIOT... BUT HE'D BE A GOOD PLACE TO START.
MAYBE I SHOULD GATHER SOME INTELLIGENCE...

GRR
GRR
YOU ARE SO DEAD THE FIRST TIME I GET AN EXCUSE!
WHAT THE HECK DO YOU WANT?!
THAT MISERABLE LITTLE...

TAK
I LIKE THAT.
YOU'RE A FUNNY GUY...

AND I DON'T LIKE THAT!
WELL YOU'RE NOT FUNNY AT ALL...

I'M GONNA GET THAT GUY!!
...FINE, FINE, BUT THAT'S NOT WHAT I ASKED.

...

WELL... YOU SEE...
IT'S ABOUT THAT HYUGA NEJI GUY... BUT...
!

NOW, THEN...
KOFF KOFF
IT'S TIME FOR THE NEXT BOUT!!

愛

NO WAY!
SHRUG

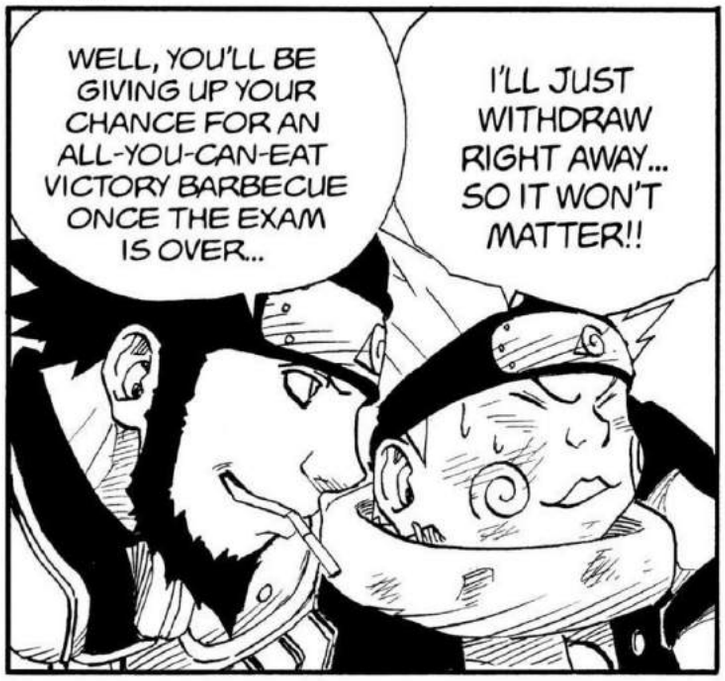
GO, LEE!
I GUESS IT'S FINALLY YOUR TURN!

...
I'VE WAITED THIS LONG... IF IT WERE UP TO ME...
SCOWL
...IT ALMOST LOOKS LIKE LEE IS... SULKING!
...I'D RATHER BE THE FINAL ACT!!

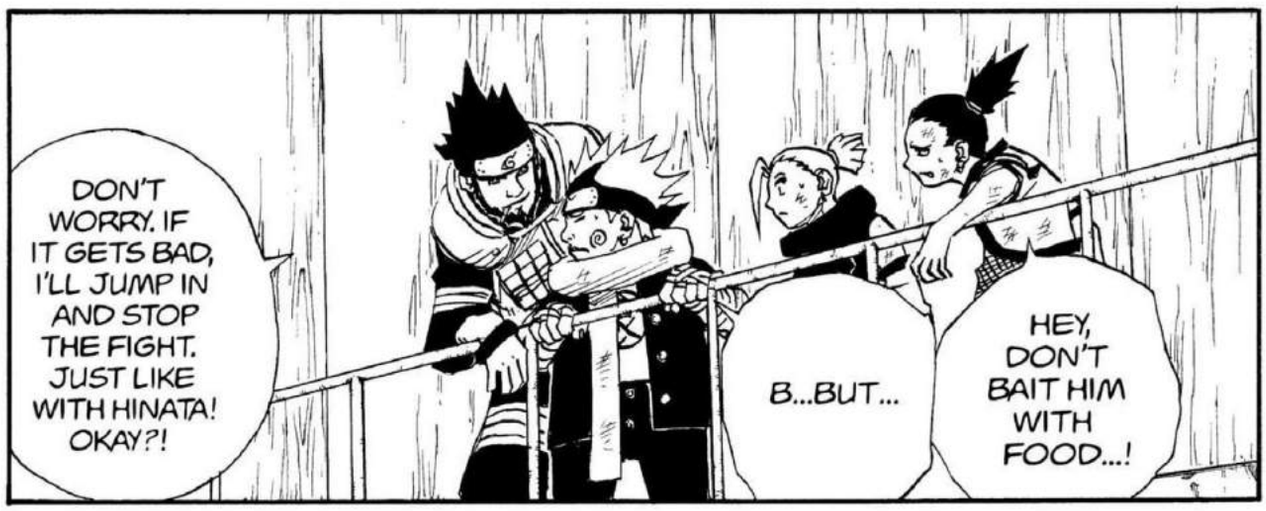
!

!

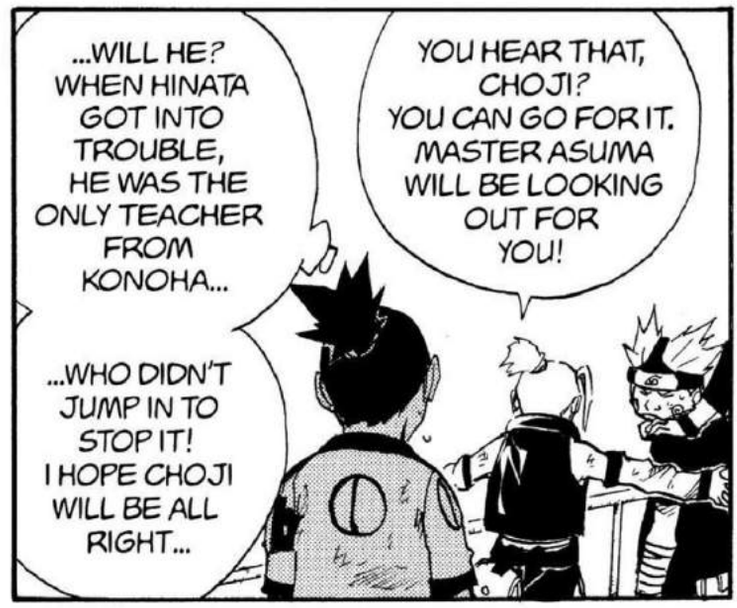
ONLY THE STRONGEST ARE LEFT... WHAT'LL YOU DO?
HEY, CHOJI, YOU'RE IN TROUBLE NOW...

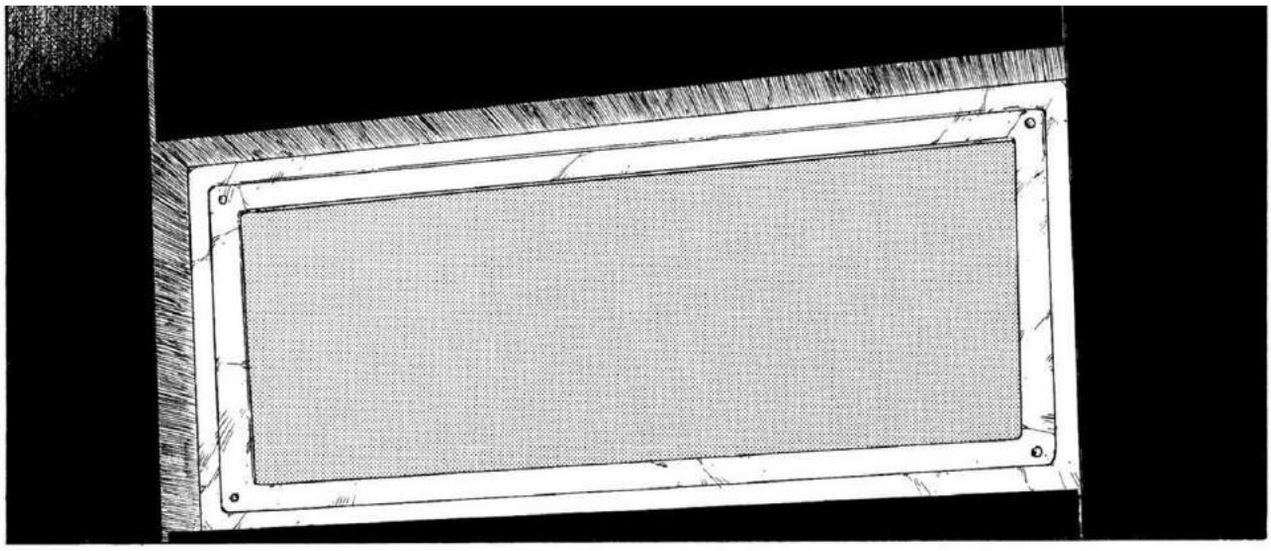

WELL, YOU'LL BE GIVING UP YOUR CHANCE FOR AN ALL-YOU-CAN-EAT VICTORY BARBECUE ONCE THE EXAM IS OVER...
I'LL JUST WITHDRAW RIGHT AWAY... SO IT WON'T MATTER!!

HE'S THE MOST DANGEROUS TYPE!
ESPECIALLY THAT KID FROM SAND... THE LOOK IN HIS EYES WORRIES ME.


DON'T WORRY. IF IT GETS BAD, I'LL JUMP IN AND STOP THE FIGHT. JUST LIKE WITH HINATA! OKAY?!
B...BUT...
HEY, DON'T BAIT HIM WITH FOOD...!

OH YEAH! ALL THE MEAT I CAN EAT!!
LET'S GO! THINK OF THE BARBECUE!!
...UNLESS YOU GET EATEN FIRST, YOU POOR SAP!!


...WILL HE? WHEN HINATA GOT INTO TROUBLE, HE WAS THE ONLY TEACHER FROM KONOHA...
YOU HEAR THAT, CHOJI? YOU CAN GO FOR IT. MASTER ASUMA WILL BE LOOKING OUT FOR YOU!
...WHO DIDN'T JUMP IN TO STOP IT! I HOPE CHOJI WILL BE ALL RIGHT...



愛

LUB
DUB

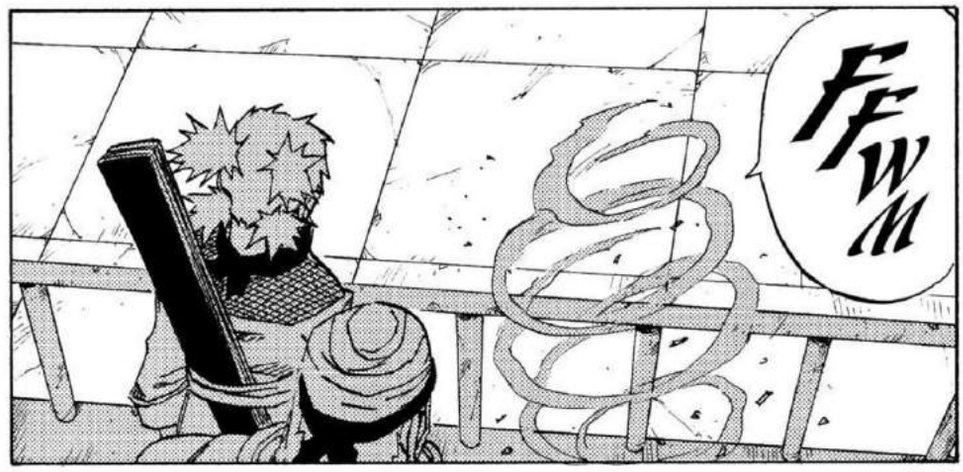
GULP

NOW...

愛
SHF

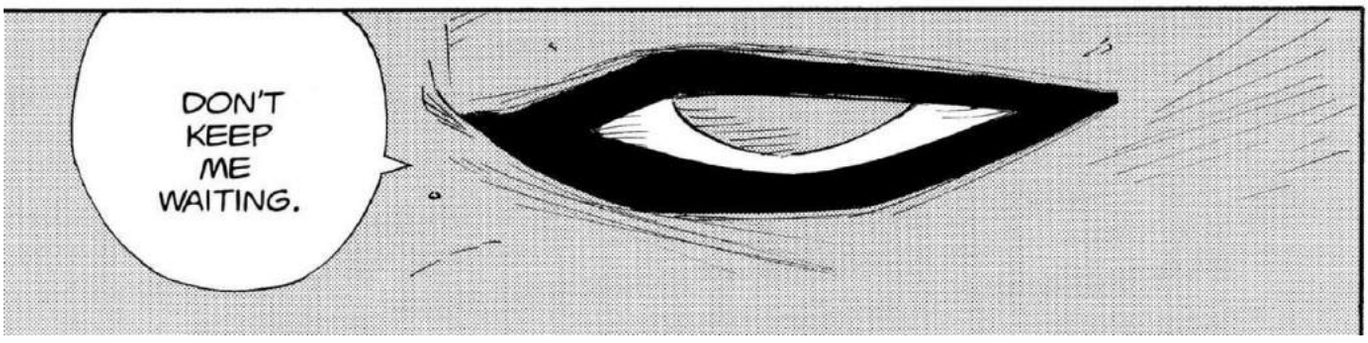
愛

...

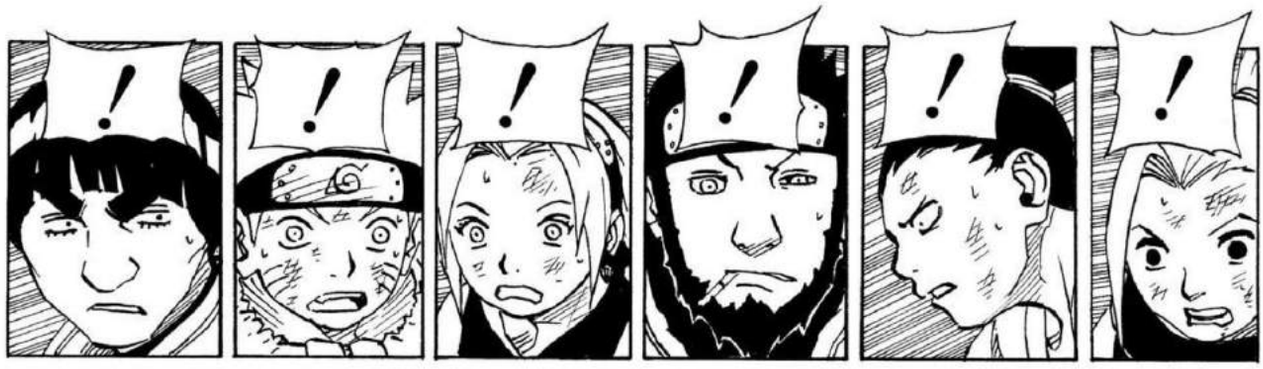

FFWM

WHOOO

SH



ROARR!
ROAARR!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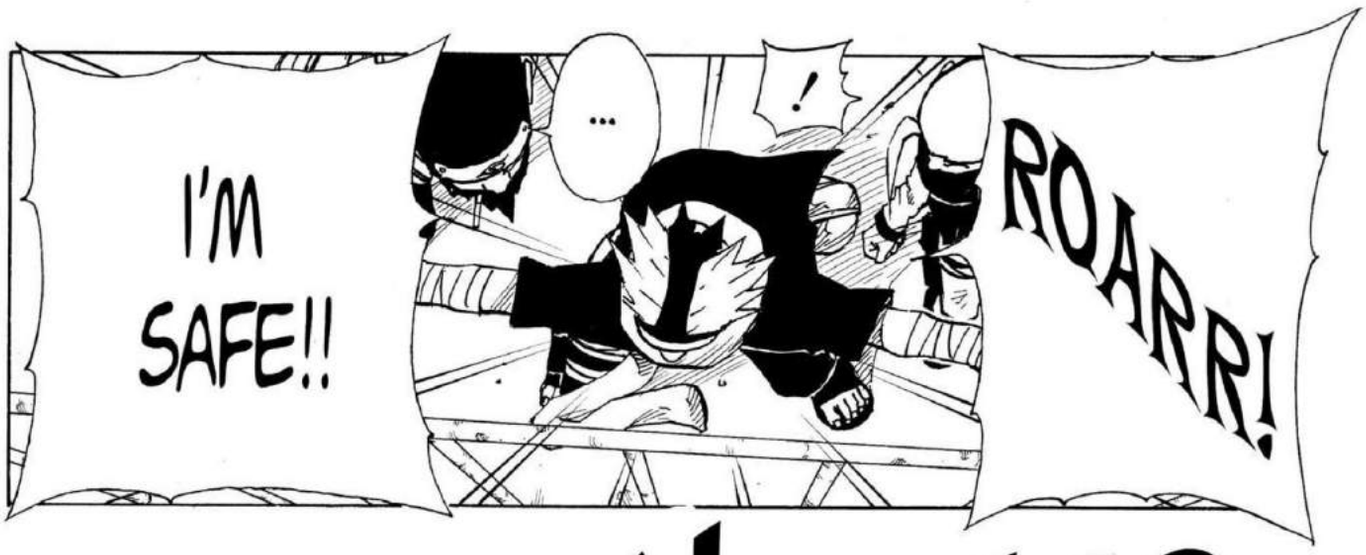
I'M SAFE!!
...
!
ROARR!

BUT... THAT HUGE GOURD OF GAARA'S... WHAT'S IT FOR?!
SO IT'S LEE ...
I HAVE A BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS...

ON GOING
GAARA VS ROCK LEE

READ THIS WAY
THEN... WHO'S THE ONE WHO GOT CAUGHT?!
I DIDN'T REALLY WANT TO BE THE FINAL ACT ANYWAY!

YES, SIR!
SNAP
LEE! I'VE NOTICED SOMETHING CRUCIAL THAT MOST PEOPLE MAY HAVE OVER LOOKED.

FWUP
OKAY! YOU CAUGHT ME!!
AS SOON AS I SAID I WANTED TO BE LAST... I WAS THWARTED!
IT'S A NATURAL LAW... YOU CAN THROW A STONE AT A TELEPHONE POLE TIME AND AGAIN AND NEVER HIT IT...
...BUT THE MINUTE YOU AIM TO MISS, YOU END UP HITTING THE THING DEAD CENTER.

I HOPE LEE WILL BE ALL RIGHT...
...I SEE...
STOP TAKING NOTES! YOU WON'T HAVE THE TIME TO CONSULT THEM IN THE HEAT OF BATTLE!
I SEE...
SCRITCH SCRITCH

THAT GOURD THING OF HIS IS QUITE SUSPICIOUS...

HOP
YES, SIR!
ALL RIGHT! GO GET HIM, LEE!!

FACING YOU SO SOON...

...MAKES ME VERY HAPPY!

KMPH!

TO BE CONTINUED IN NARUTO VOL. 10!

VIZMANGA

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