

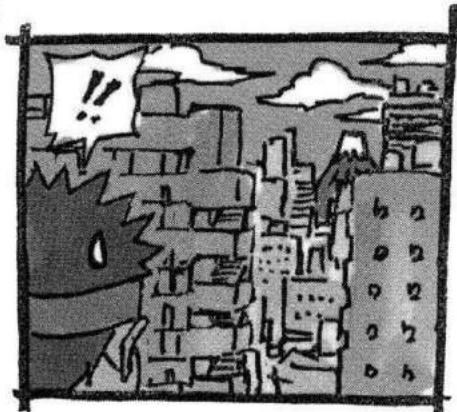
NARUTO

SHONEN JUMP MANGA

Story & Art by

Masashi Kishimoto *volume*

23



It's been a year since I moved into my current apartment and I just recently realized something... I can see Mt. Fuji from my porch. It took me this long to notice!

—Masashi Kishimoto, 2004

岸本斉史



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. 23
The SHONEN JUMP Manga Edition

STORY AND ART BY MASASHI KISHIMOTO

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SHONEN JUMP Manga Edition

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www.viz.com



PARENTAL ADVISORY

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

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THE WORLD'S
MOST POPULAR MANGA

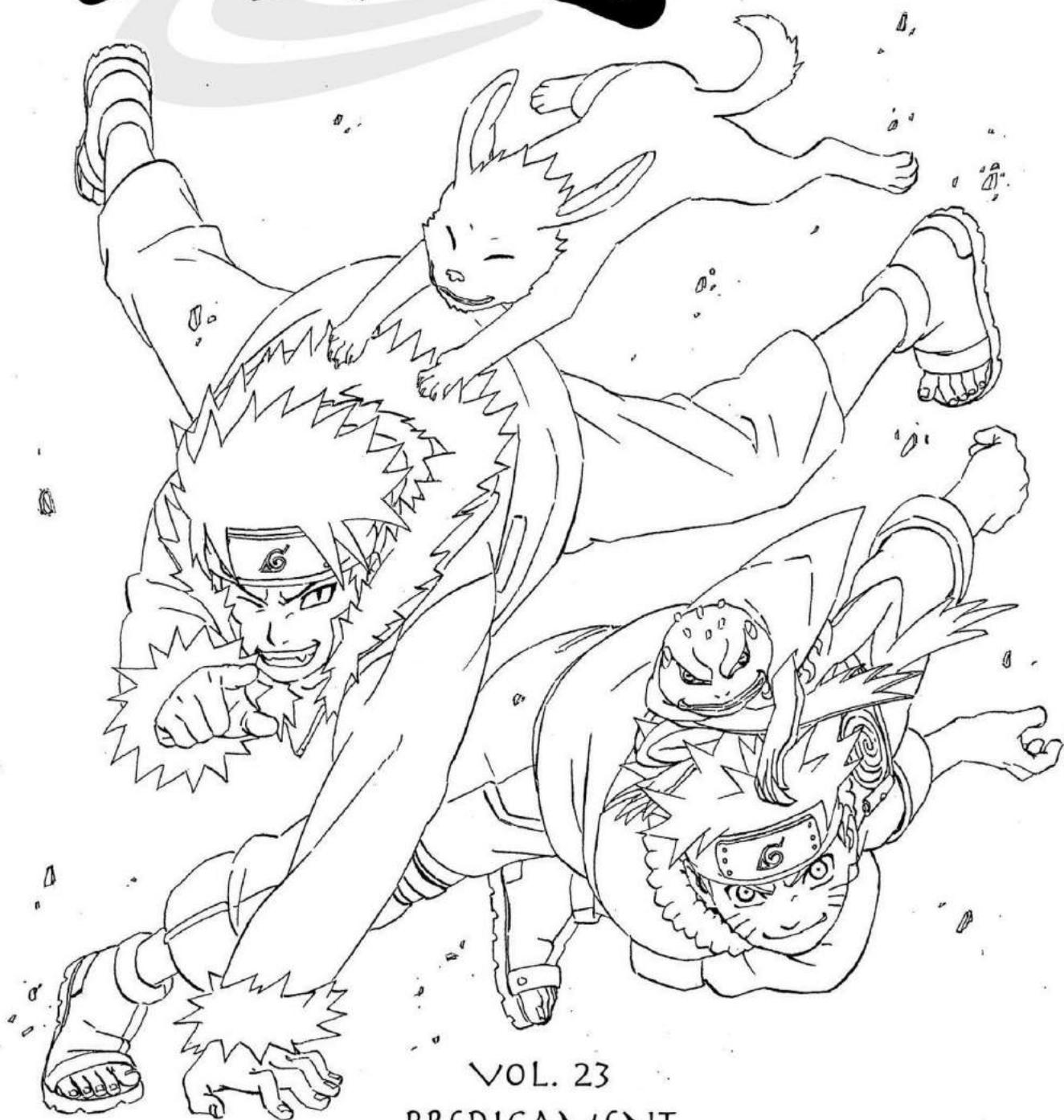


www.shonenjump.com



SHONEN JUMP MANGA EDITION

NARUTO



VOL. 23
PREDICAMENT

STORY AND ART BY
MASASHI KISHIMOTO

CHARACTERS

Sasuke
サスケ

Naruto
ナルト

Sakura
サクラ



The Sound Ninja Four

左近

Sakon

次郎坊

Jirobo

多由也

Tayuya

鬼童丸

Kidomaru



Orochimaru



Jiraiya



Kabuto



Kimimaro



Tsunade
綱手

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

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

After the funeral, the mysterious Tsunade becomes Fifth Hokage. Sasuke flees Konohagakure with the Sound Ninja Four. Shikamaru and a cell hurry to pursue Sasuke, but Choji and then Neji are struck down by the Sound Ninja. Can Sasuke be saved from himself?!

The Story So Far:



NARUTO

VOL. 23
PREDICAMENT

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Number 200: According to Plan...!!





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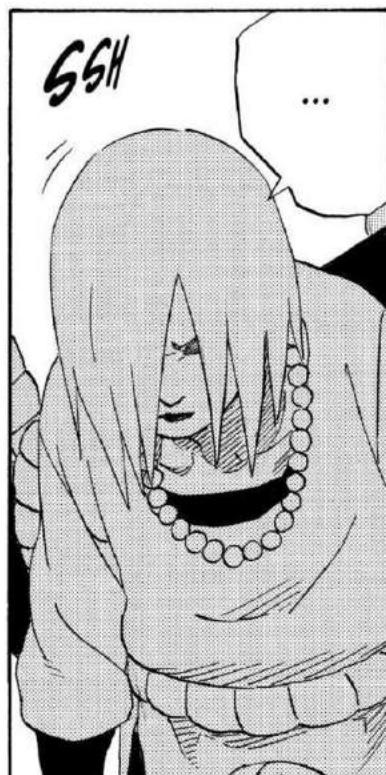






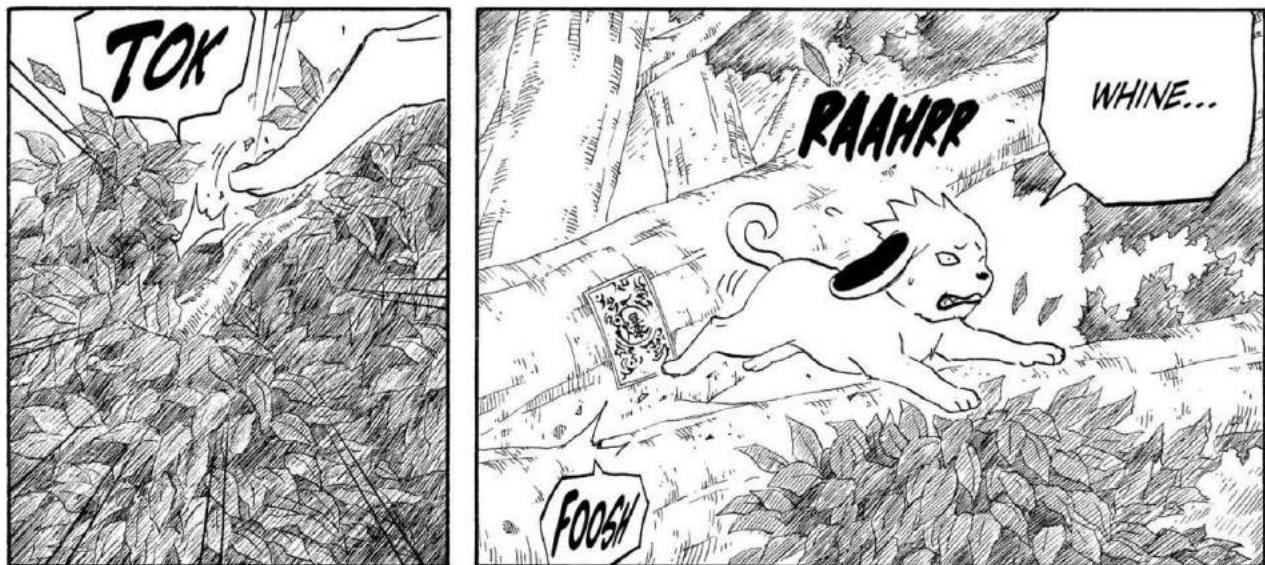


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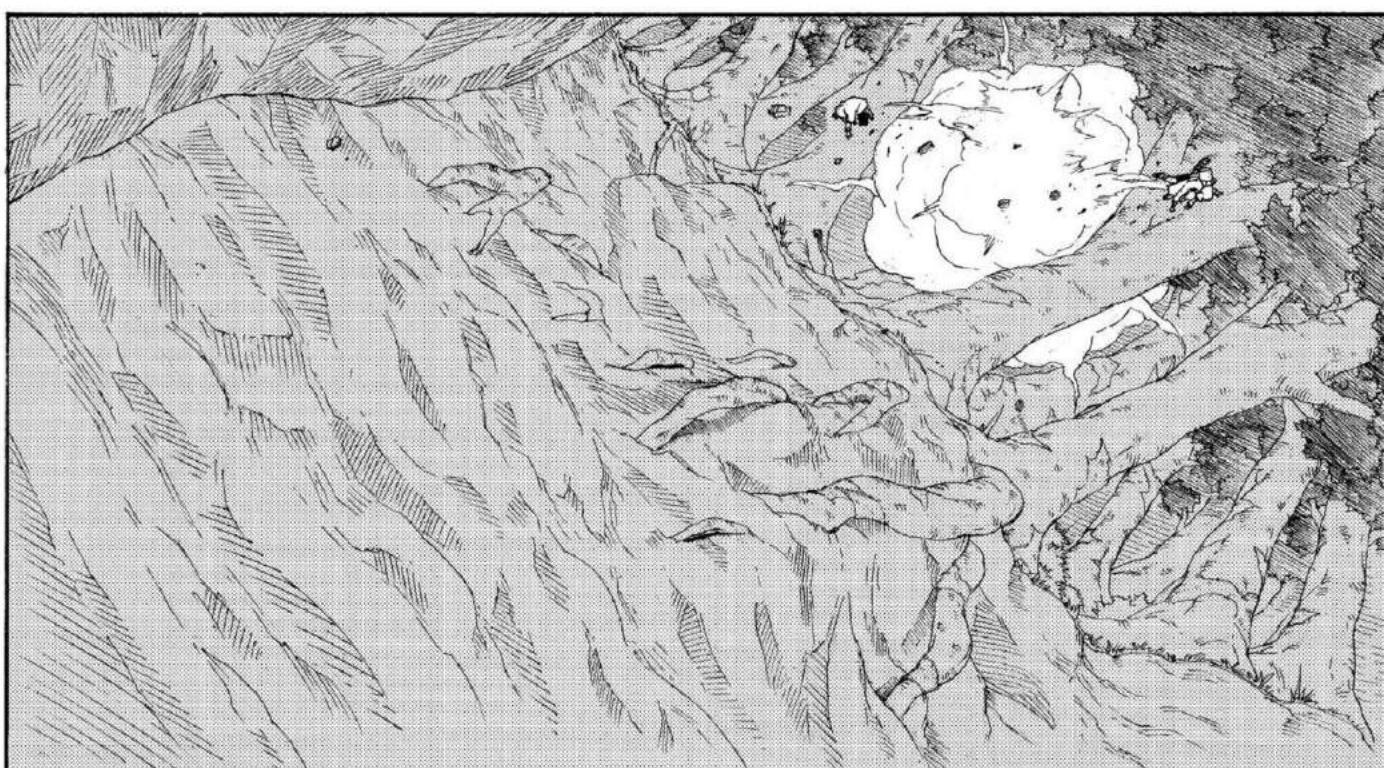






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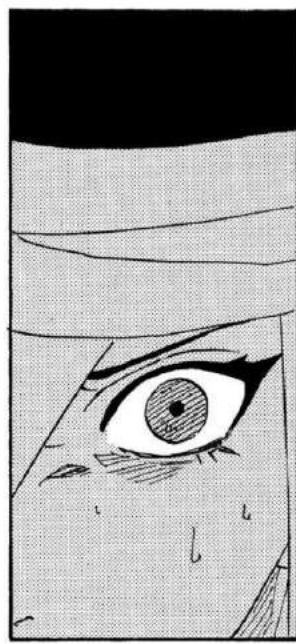


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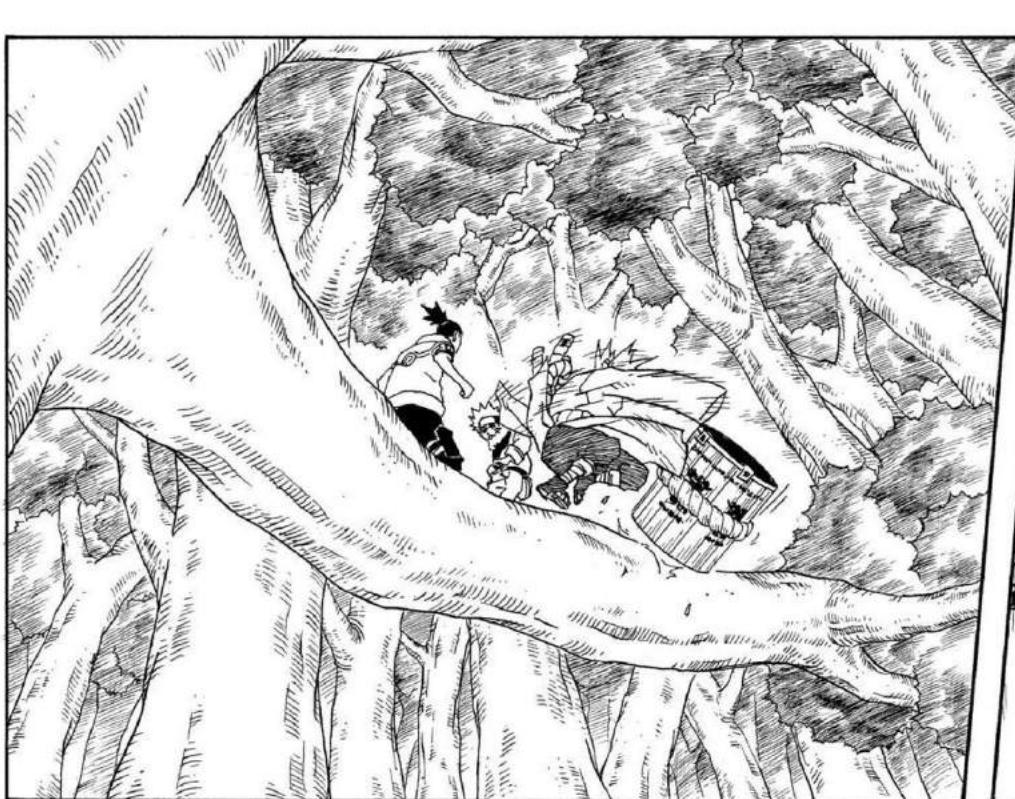


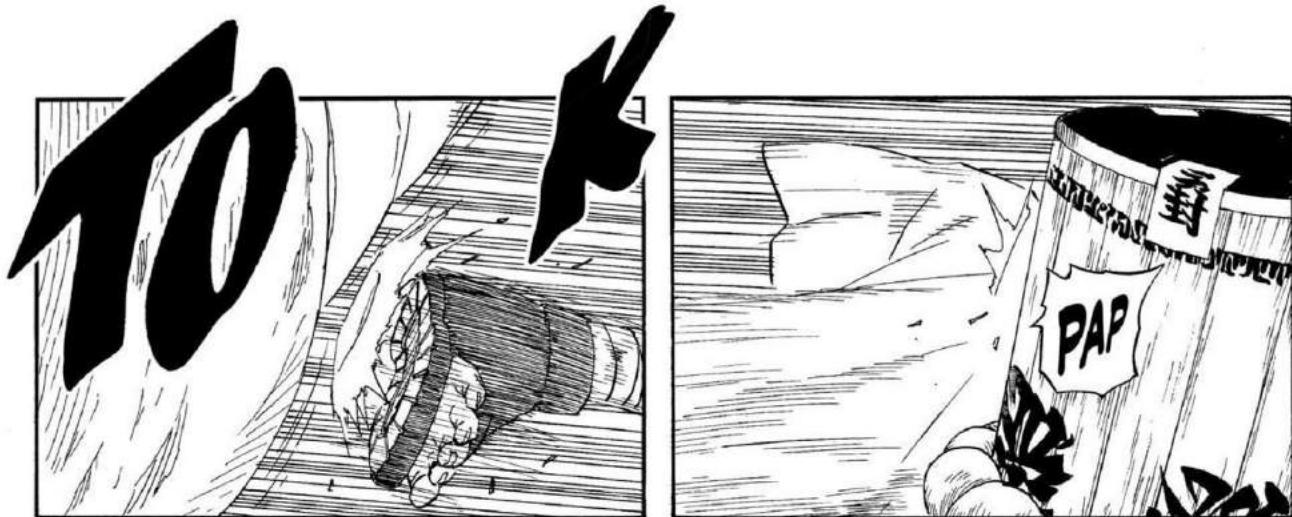
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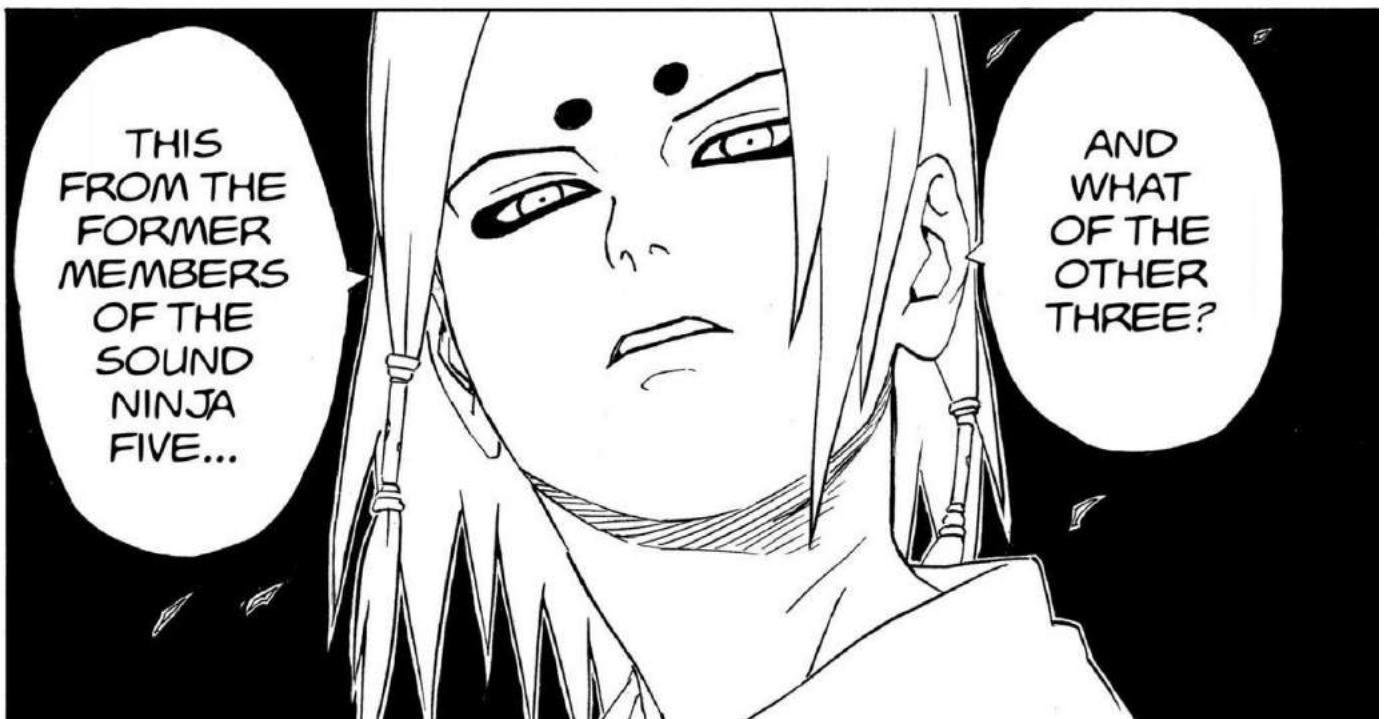
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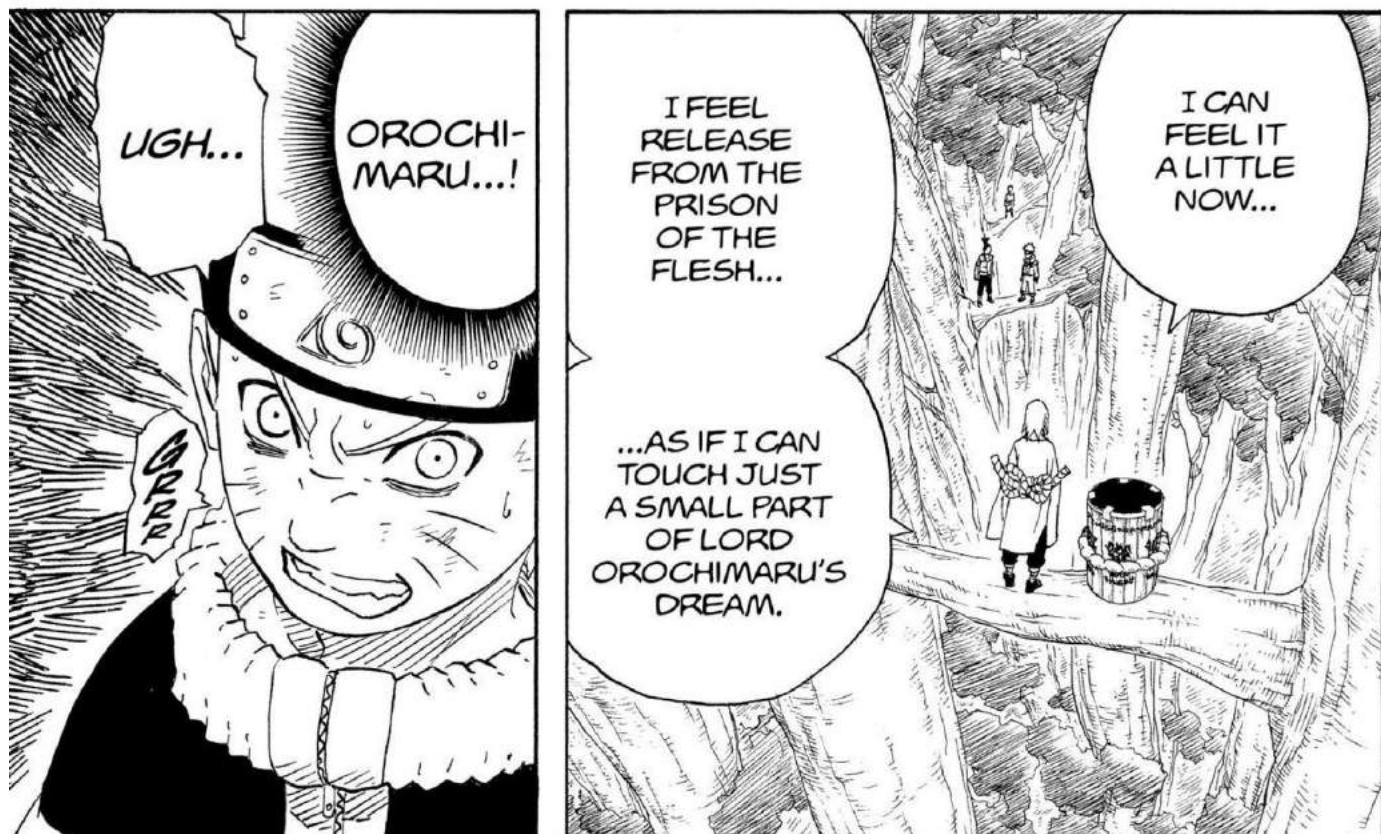
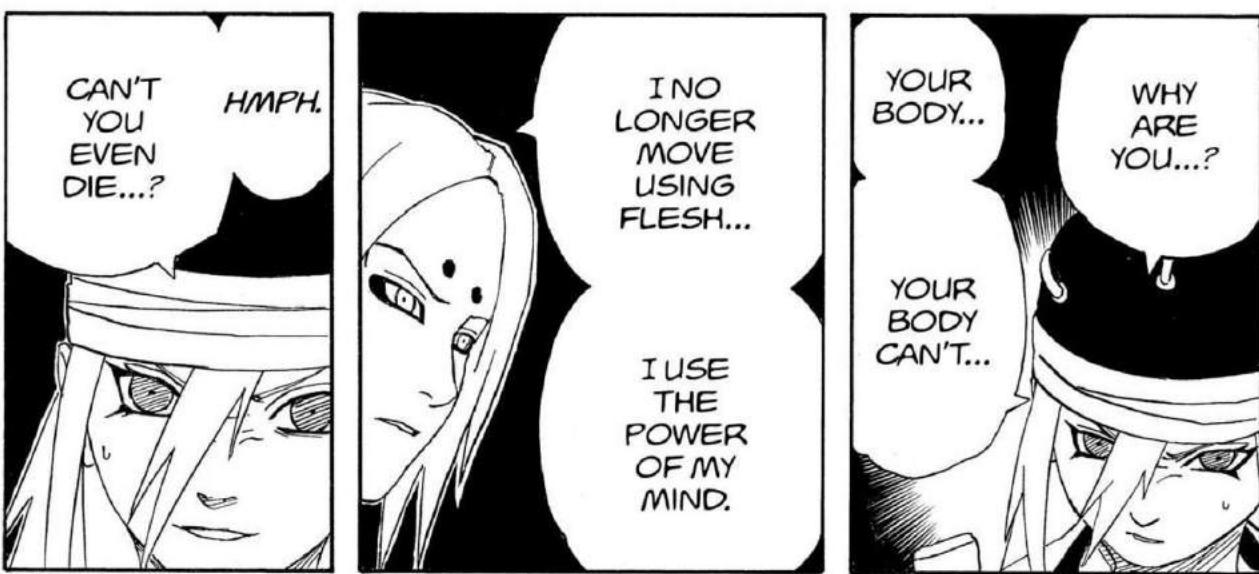
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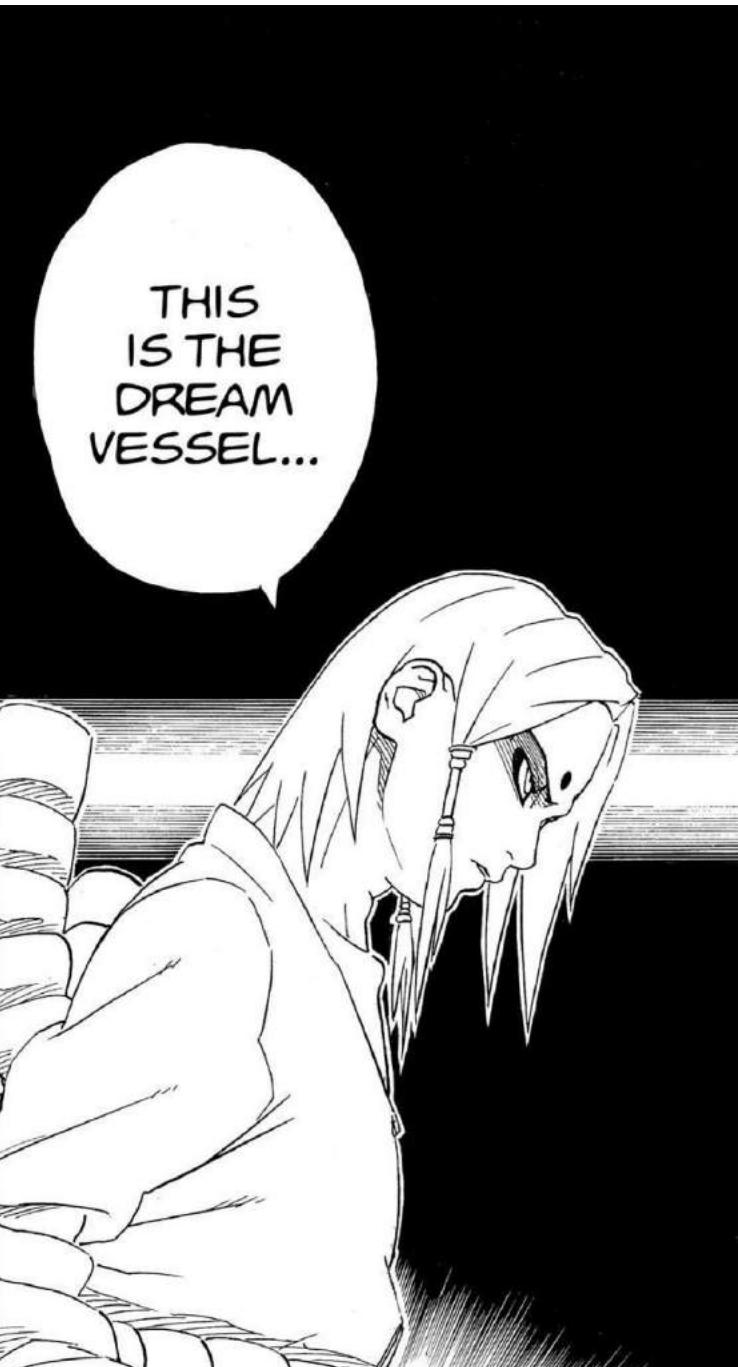




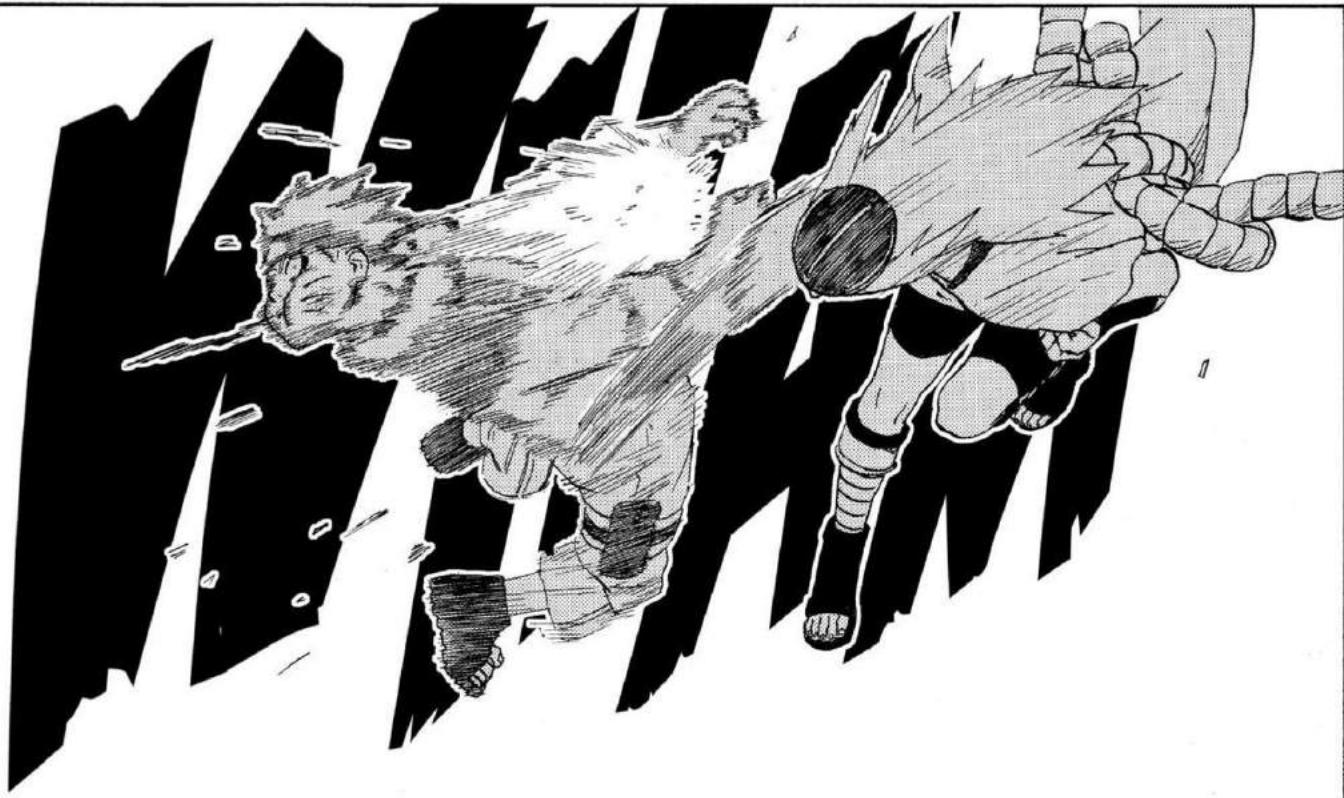








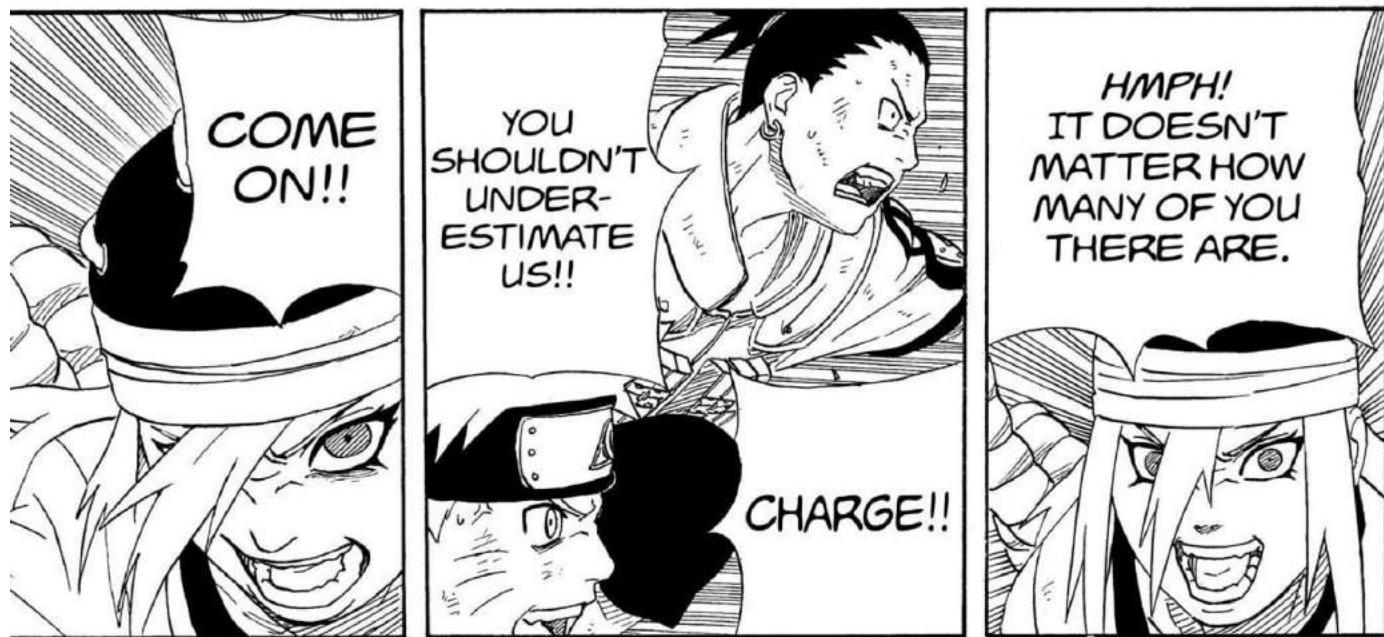
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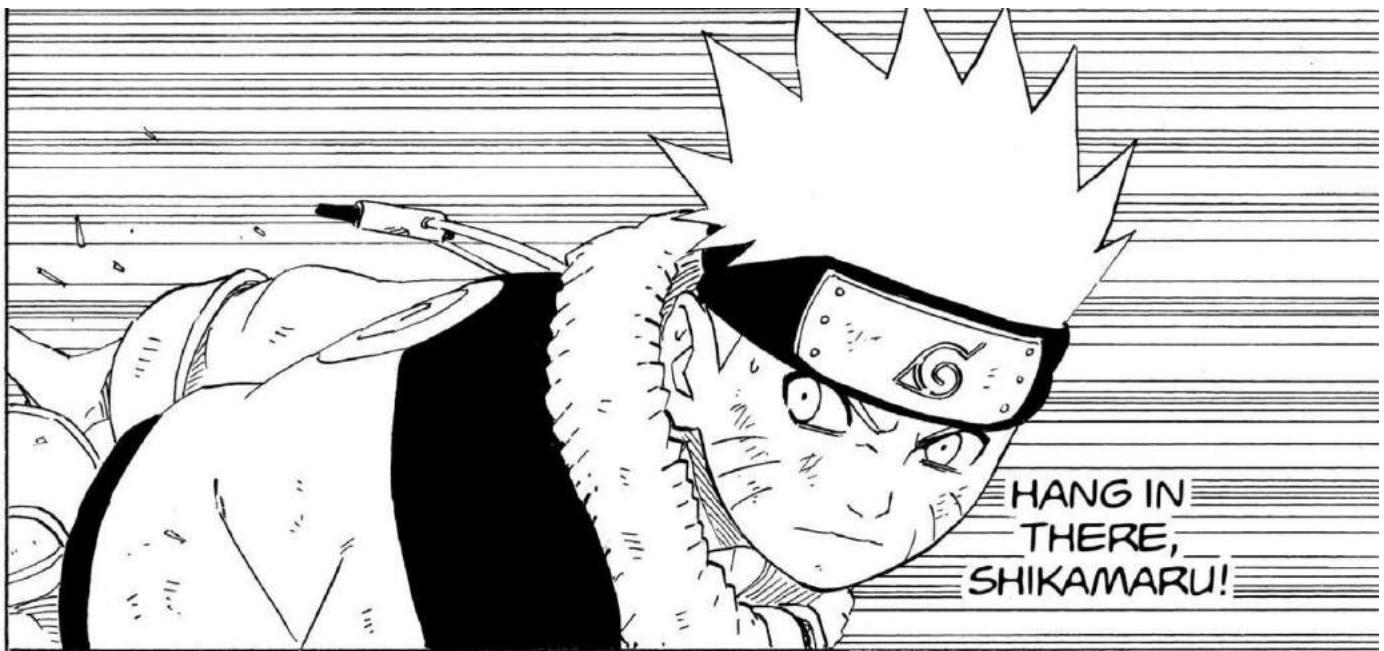


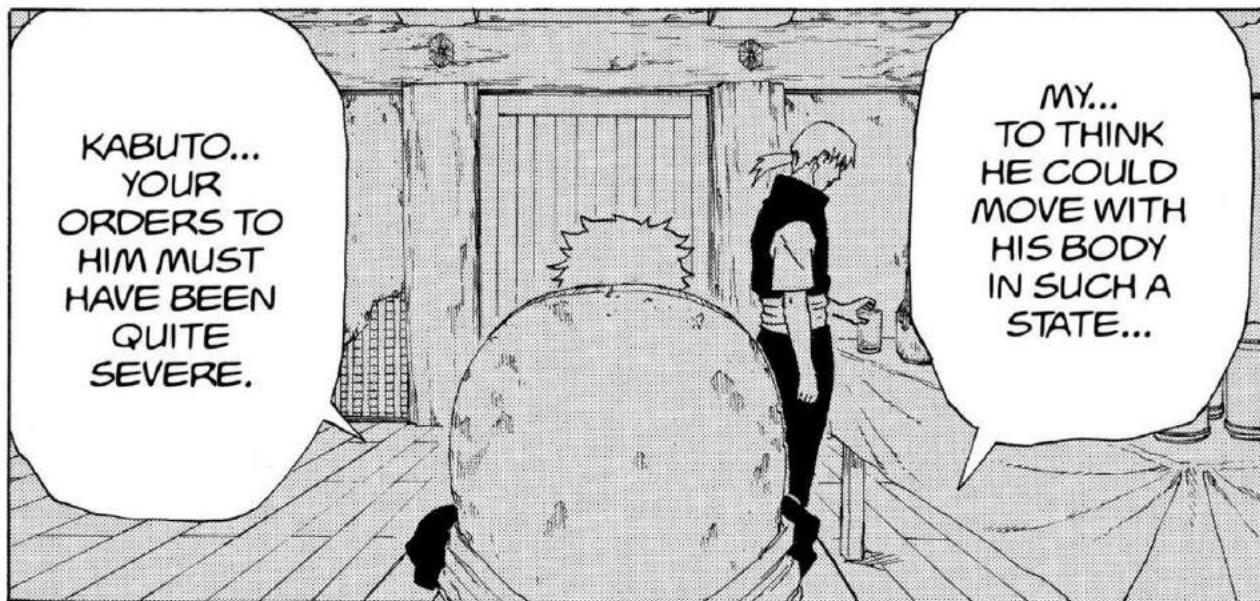




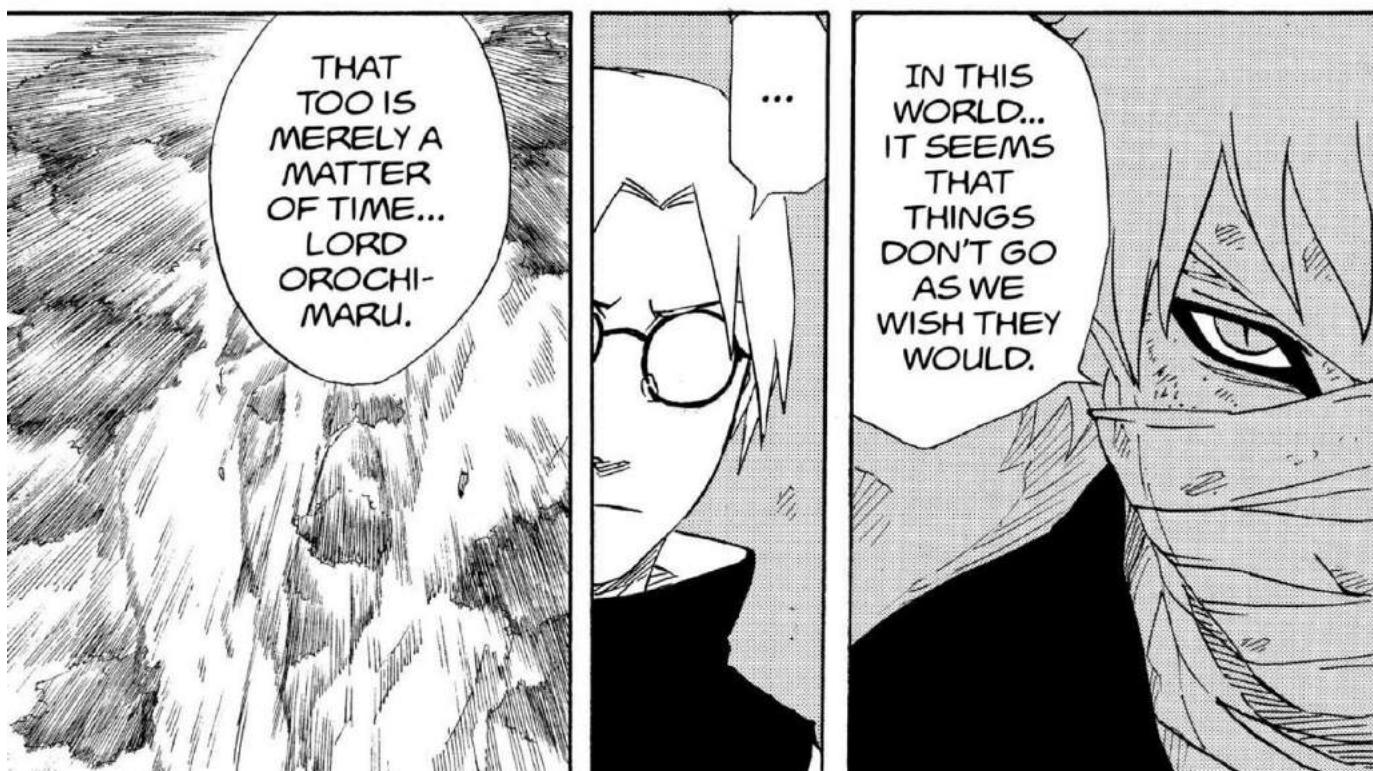


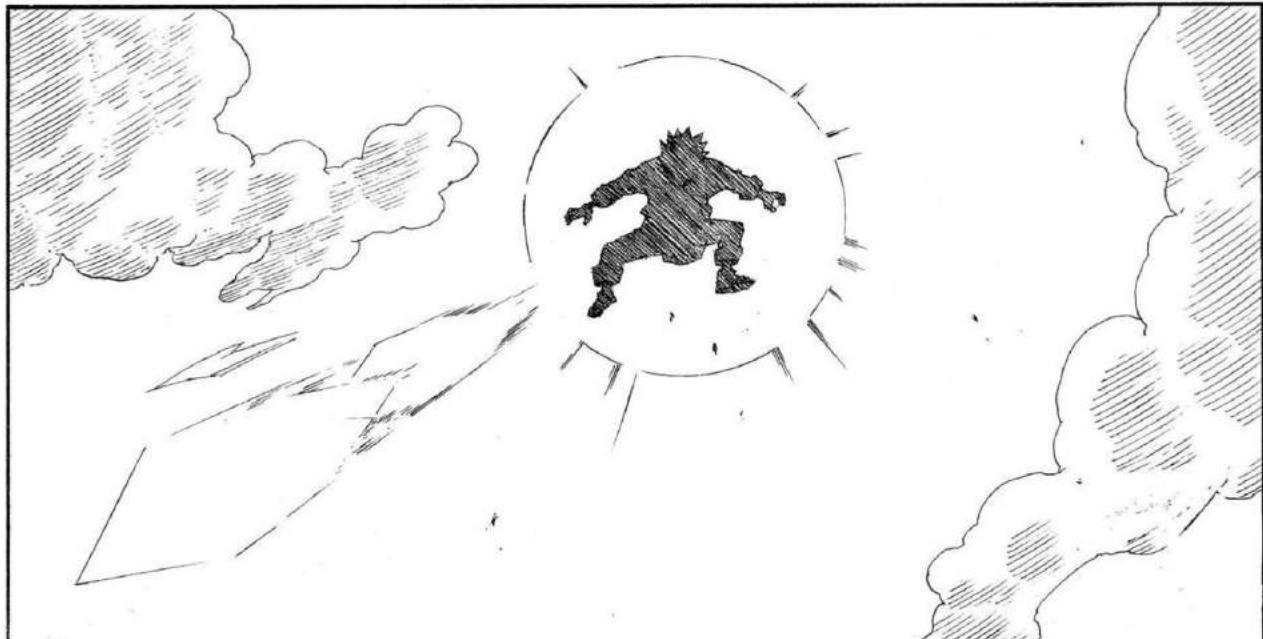
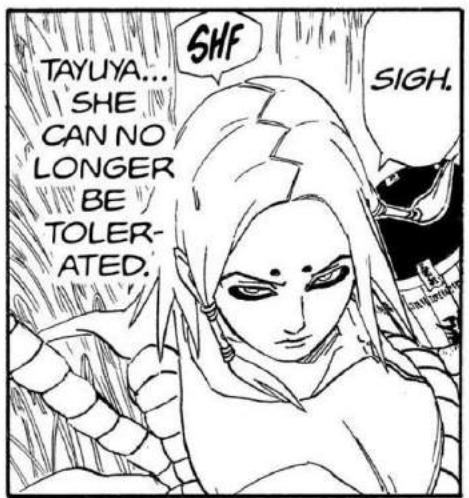
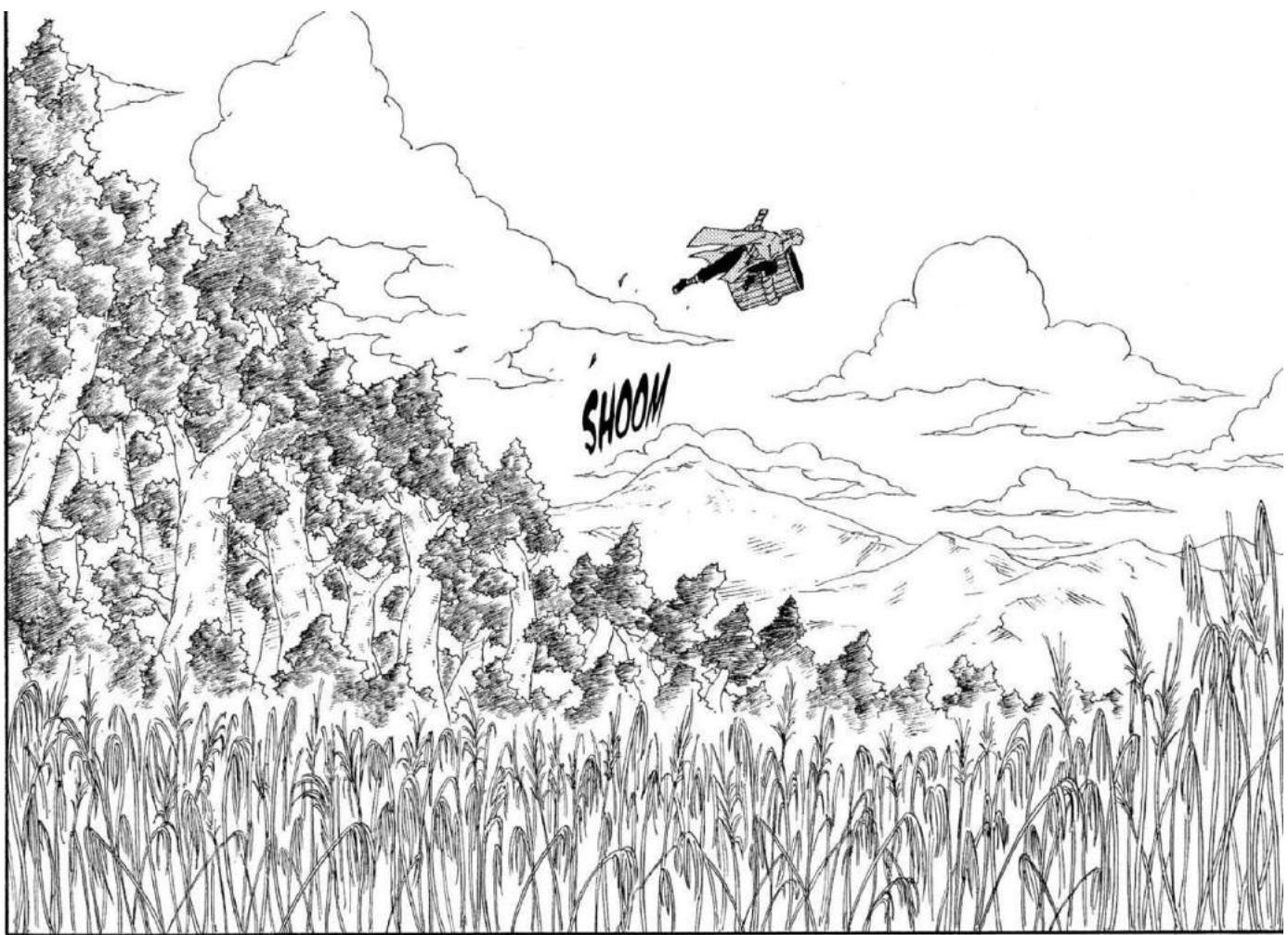


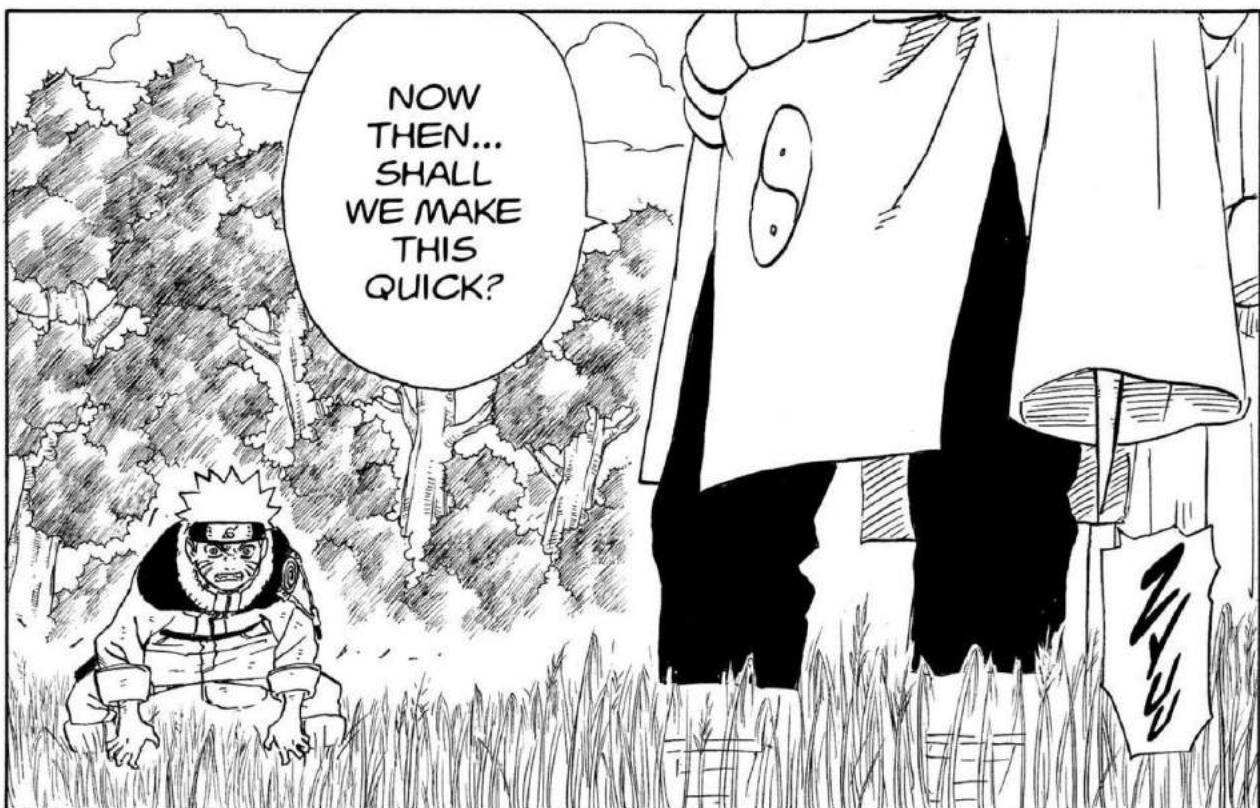
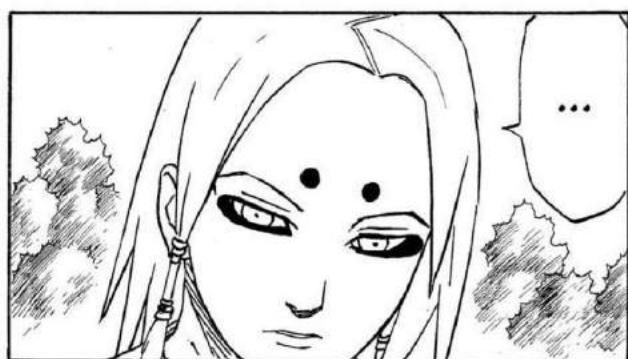
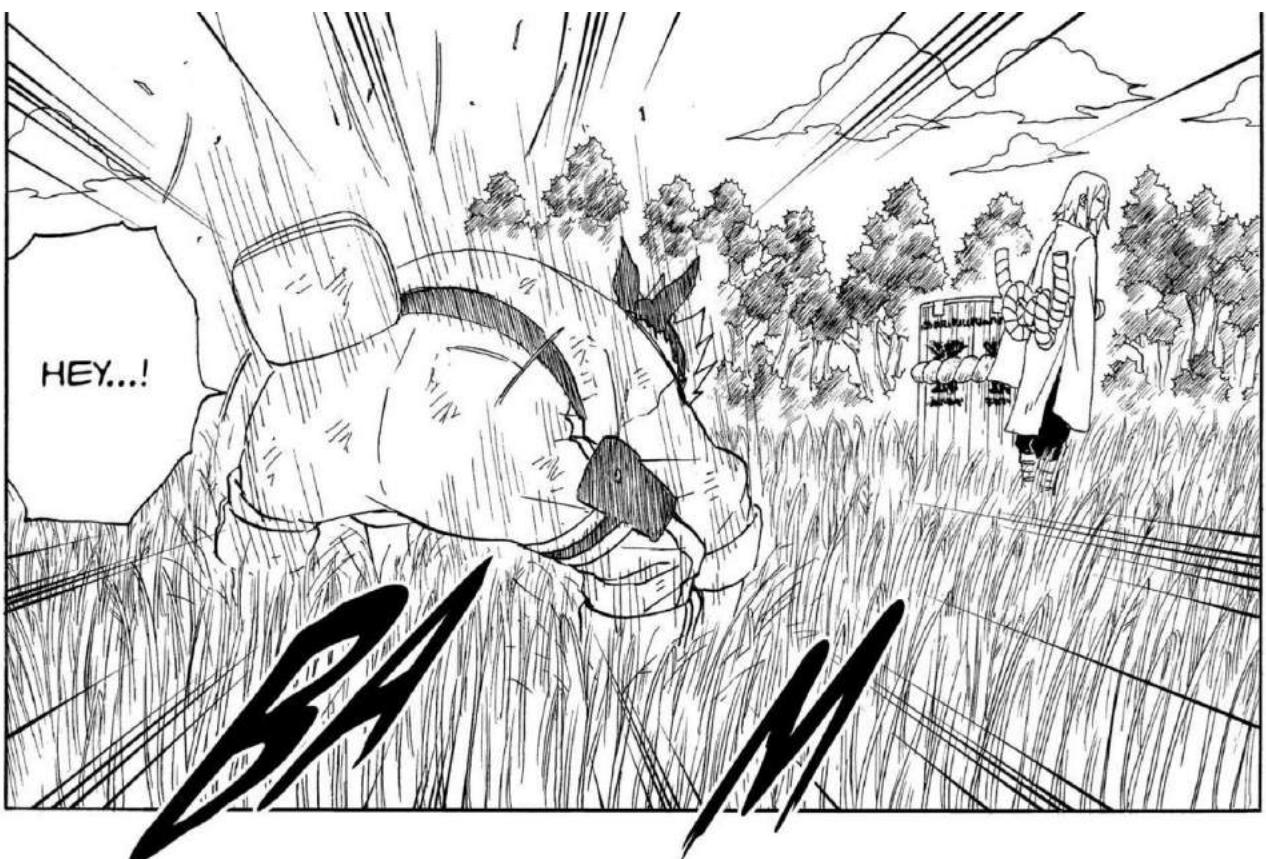










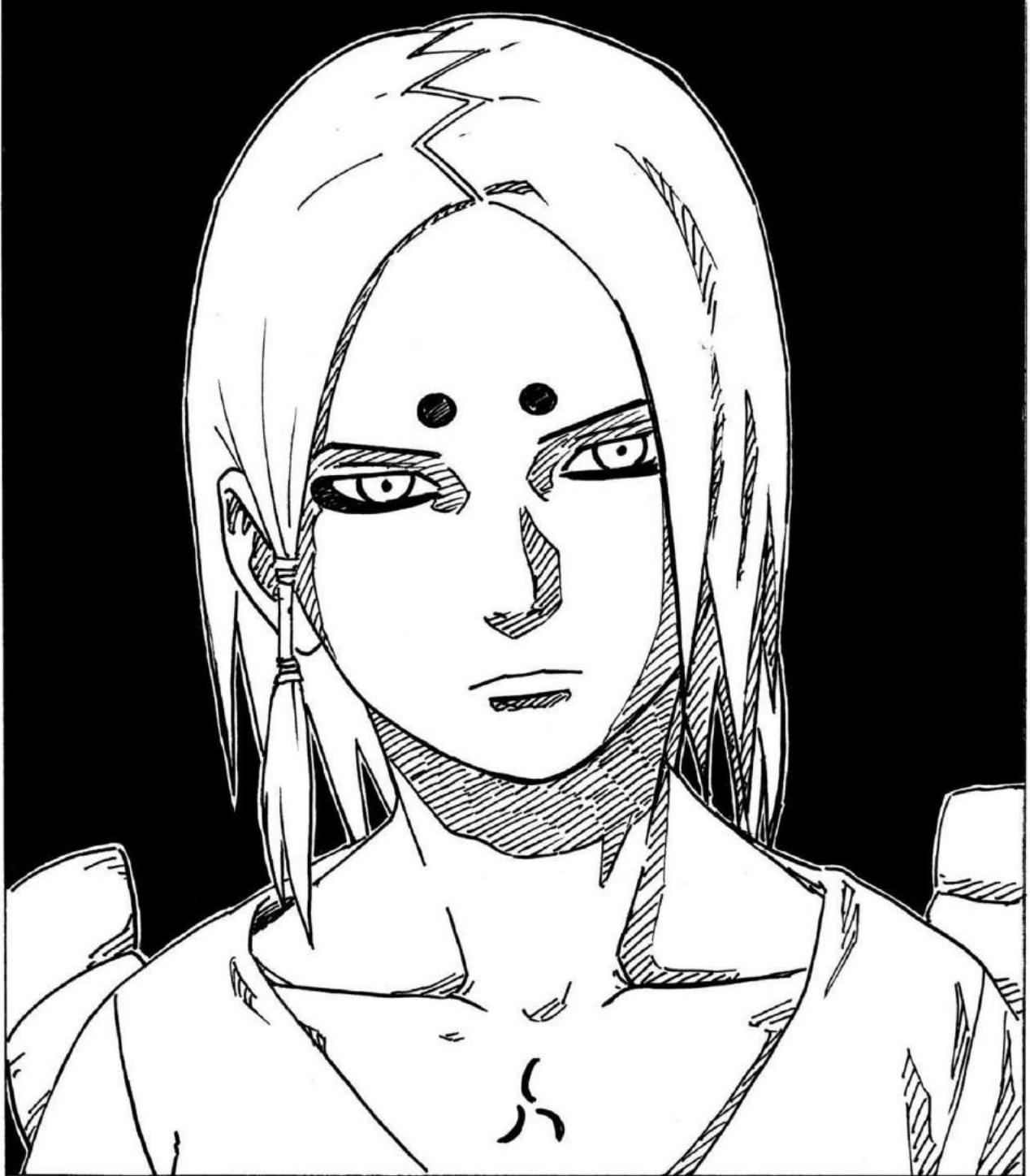


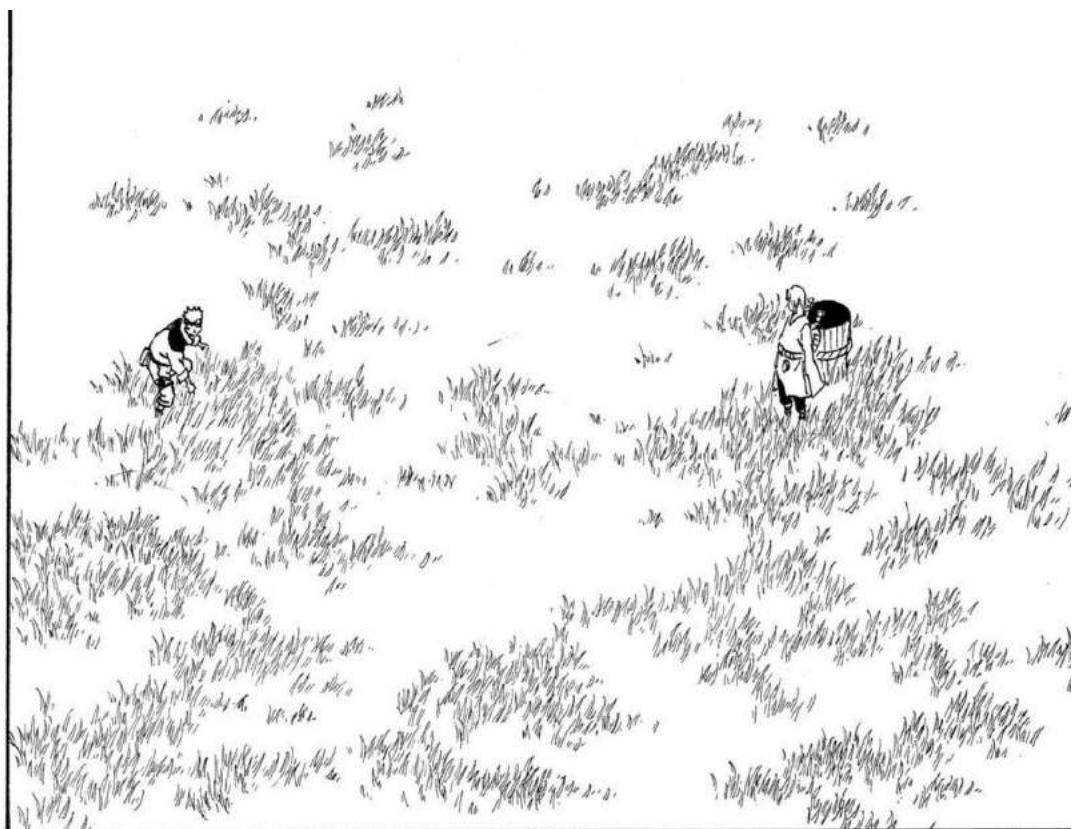
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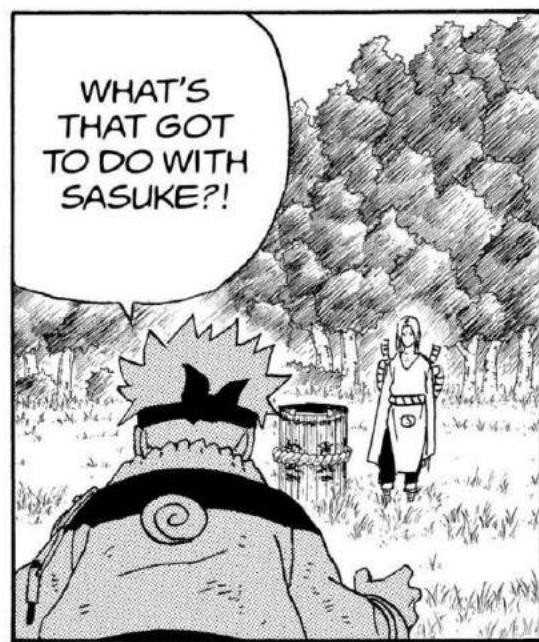
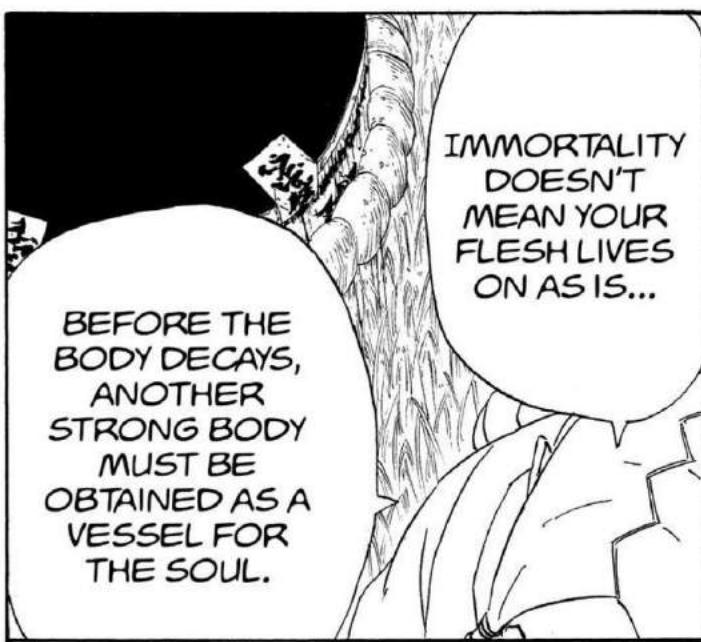
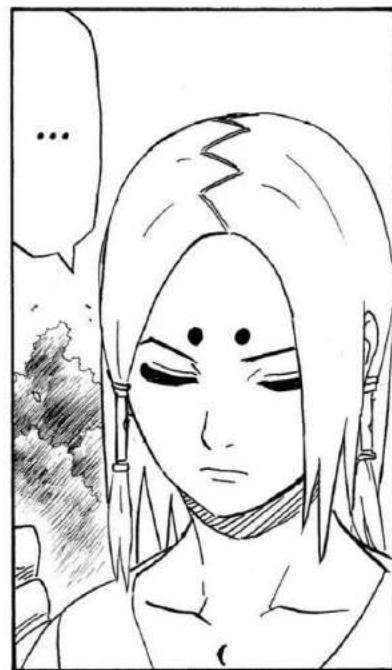
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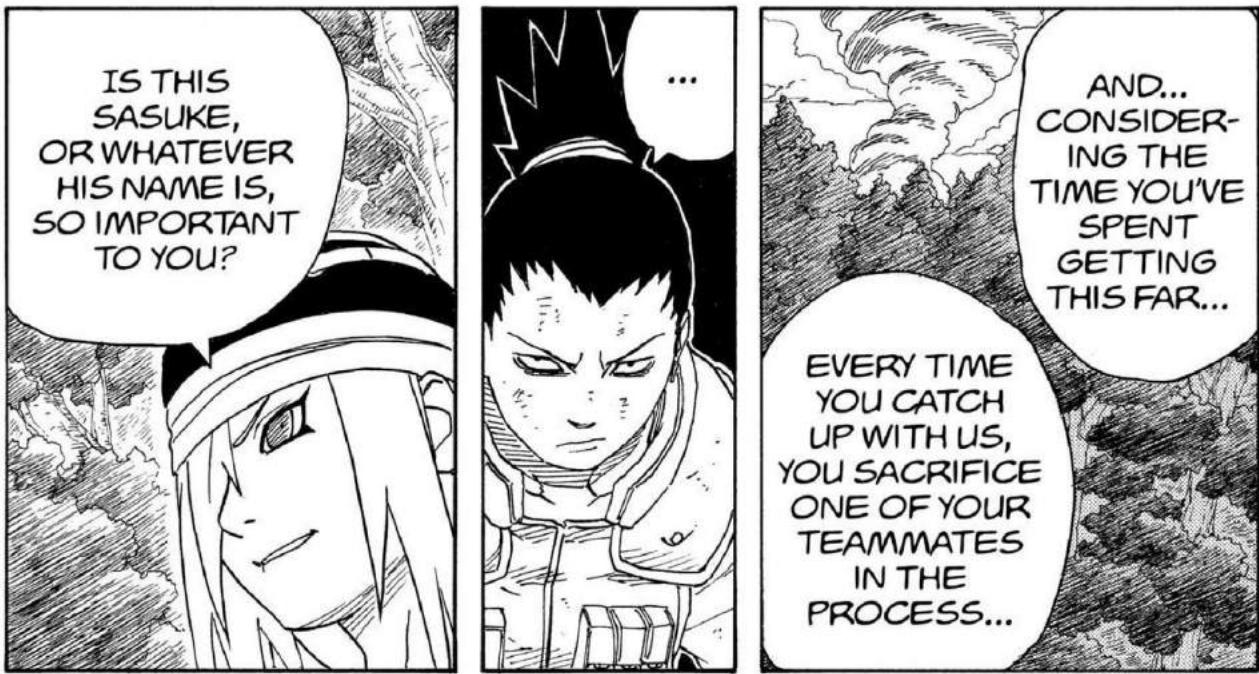
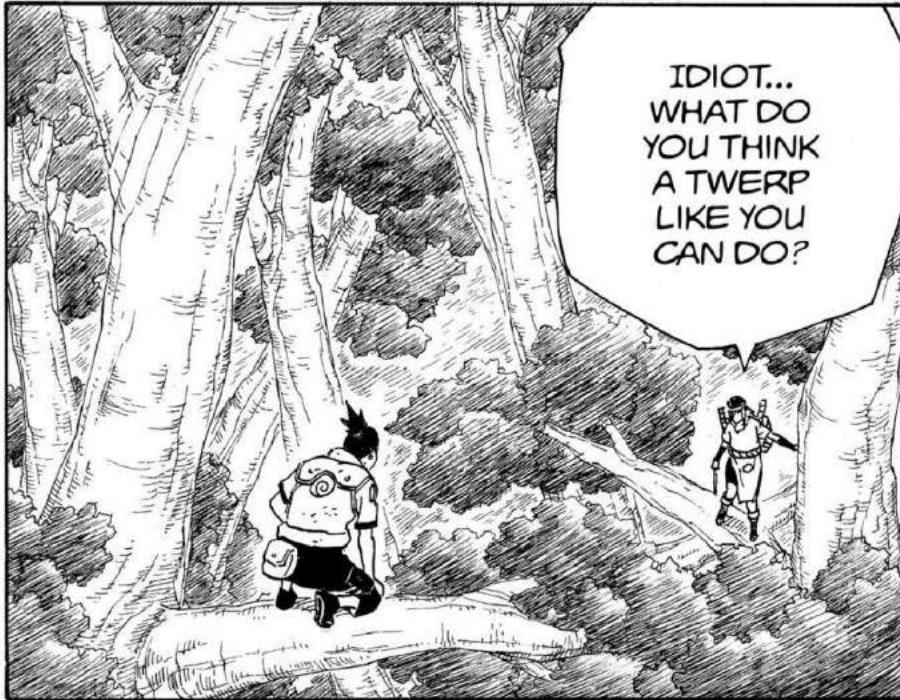
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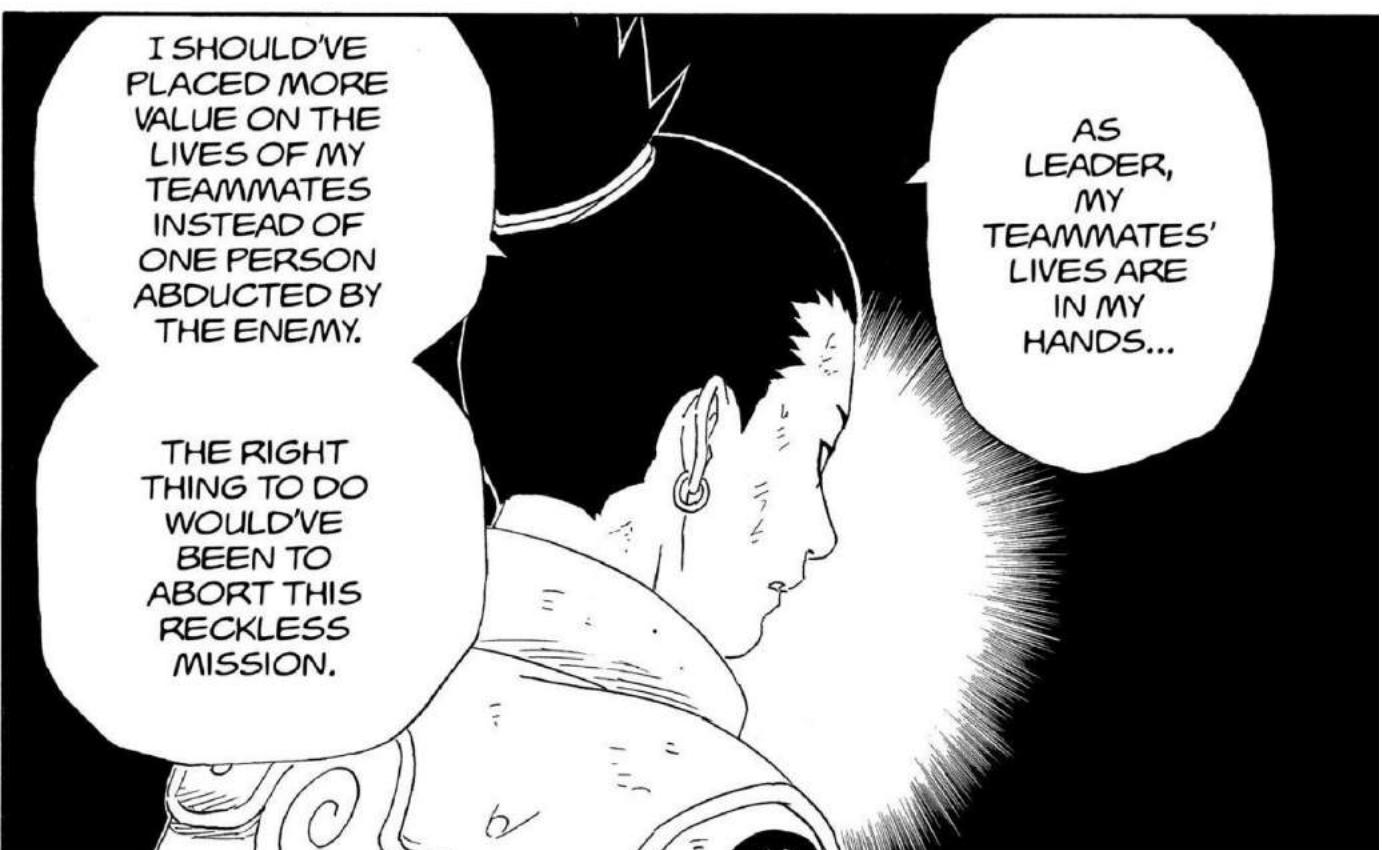




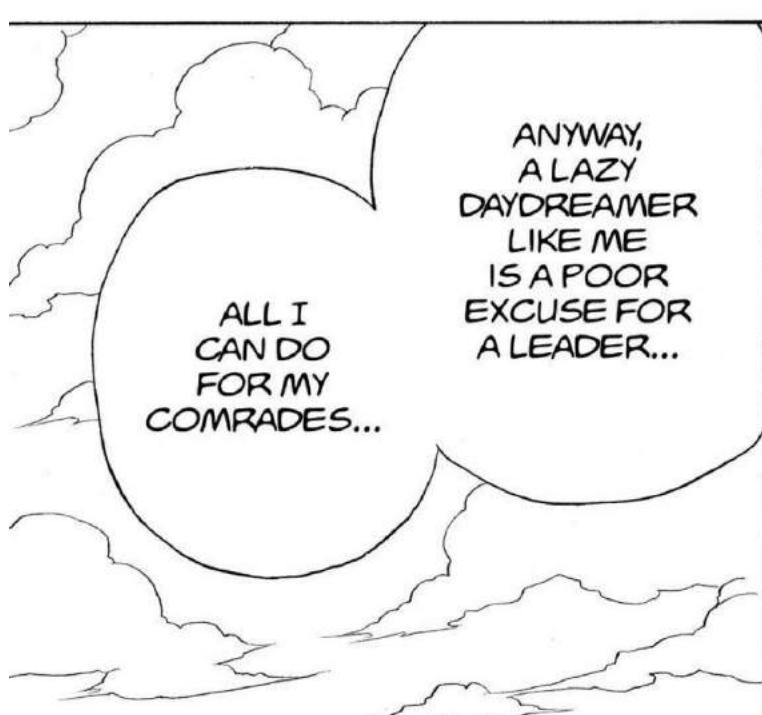
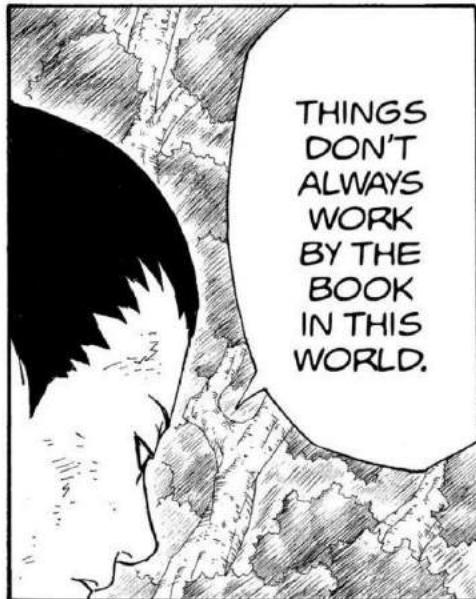






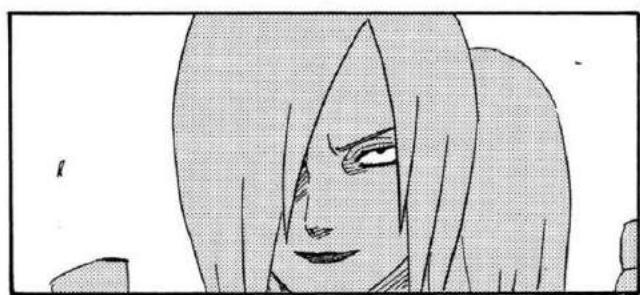
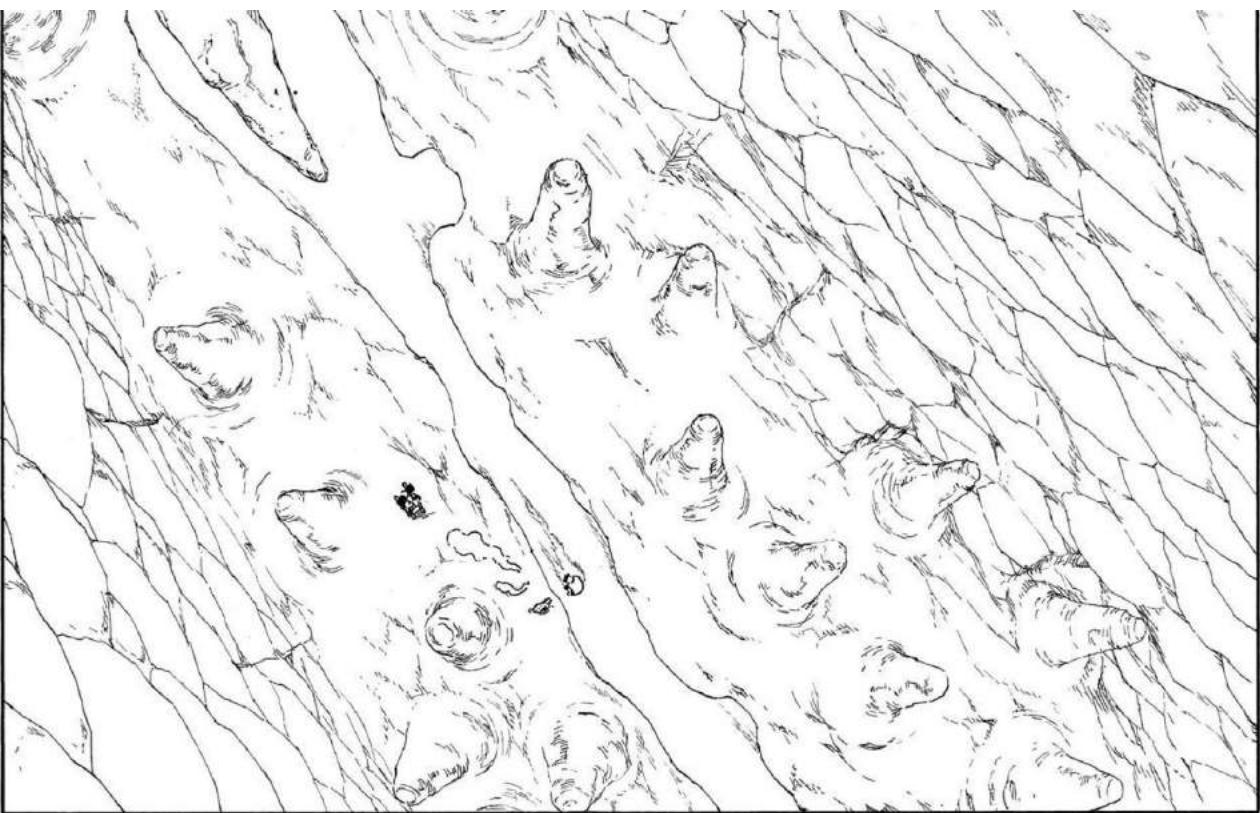


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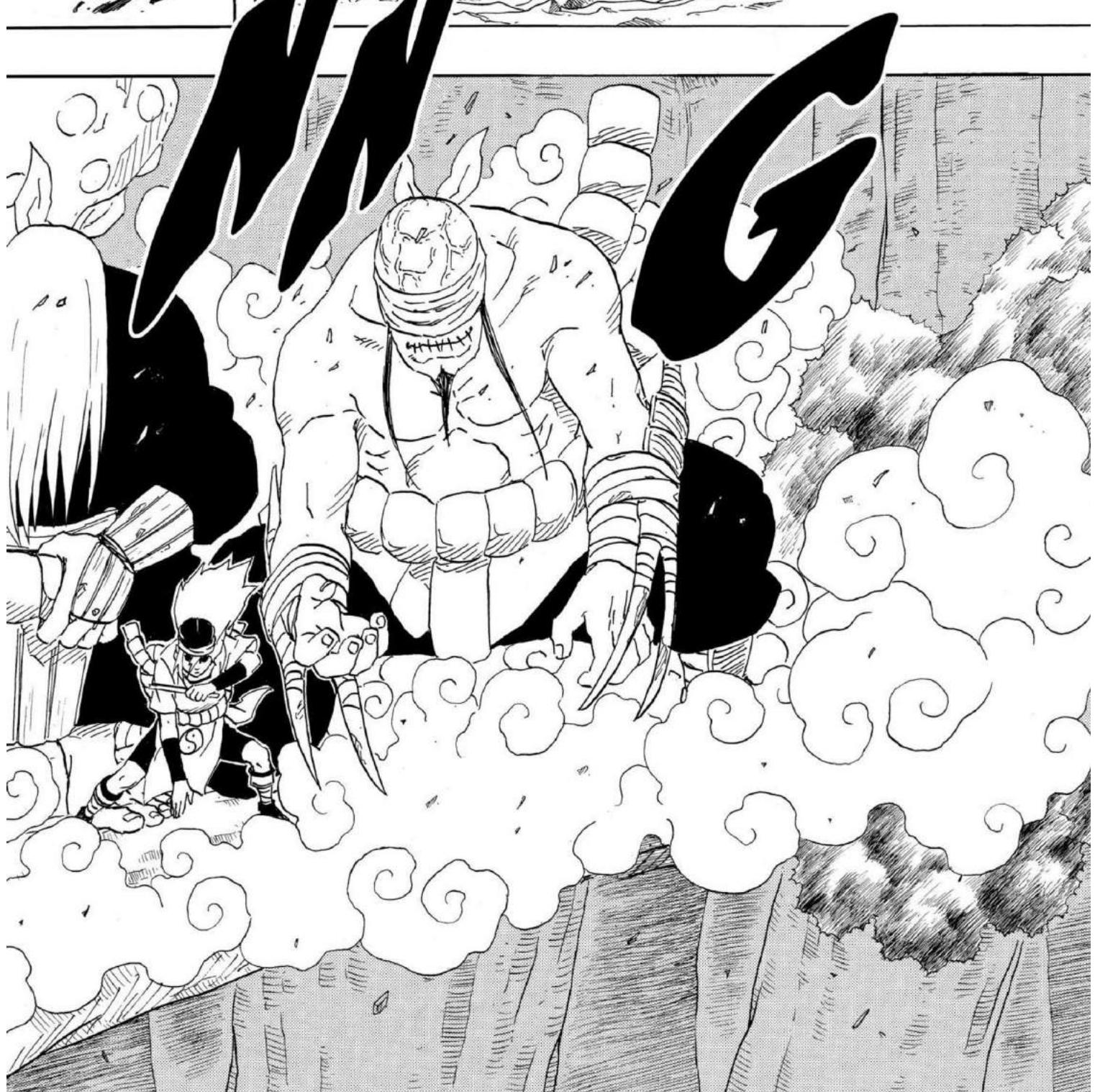


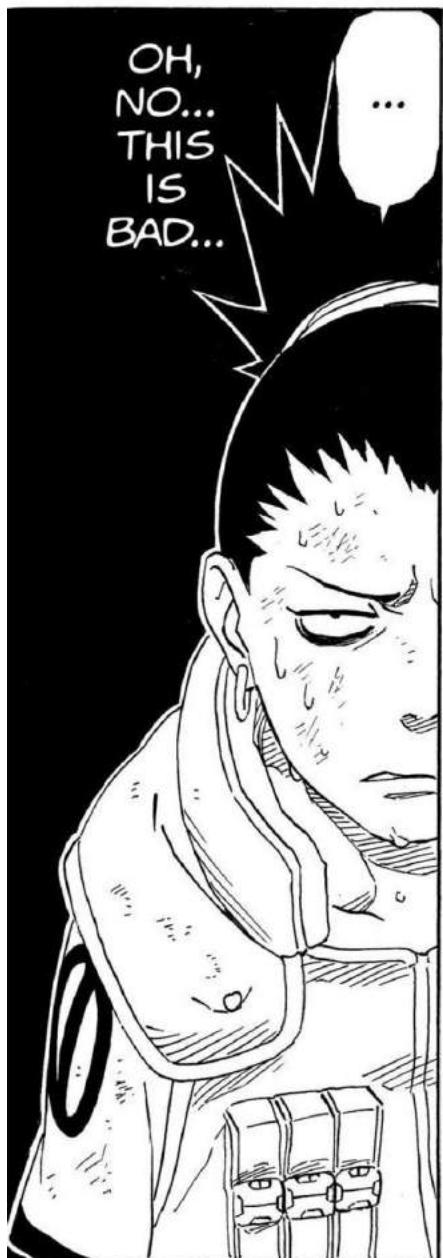
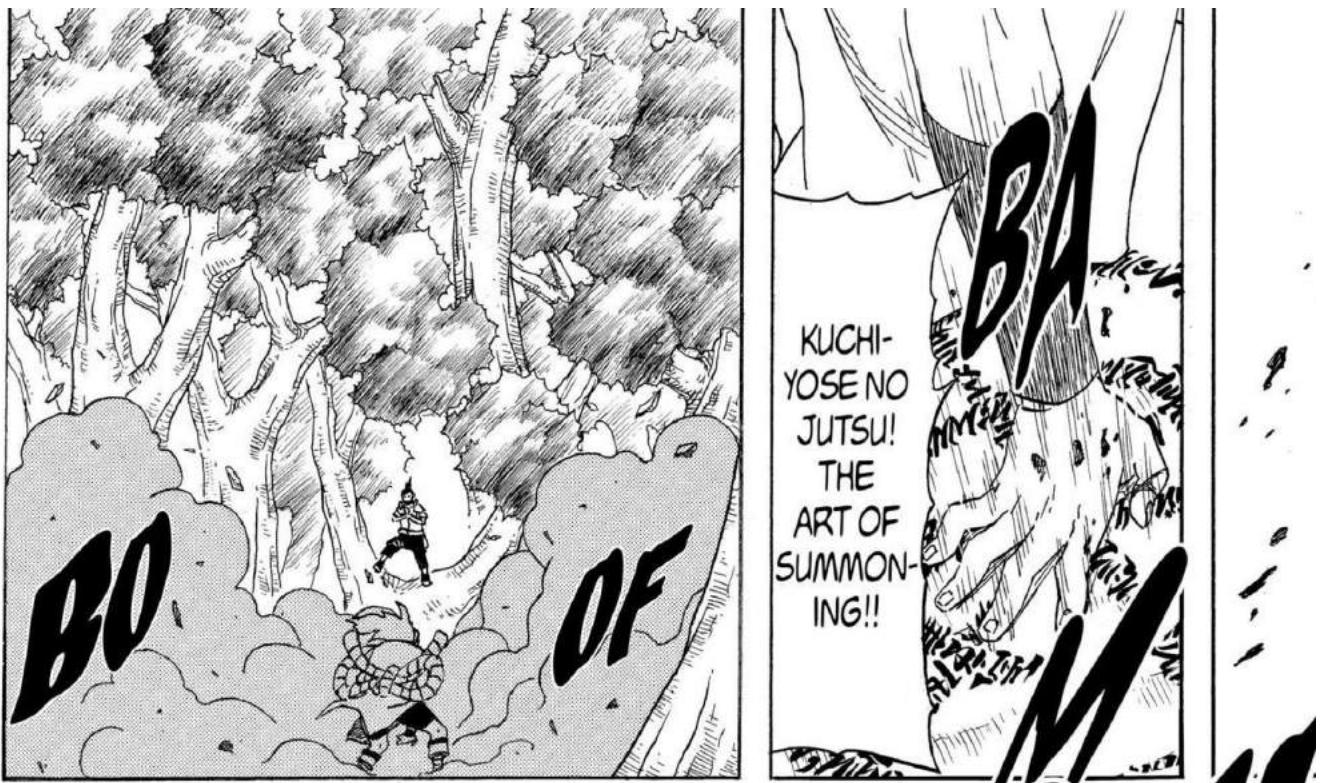


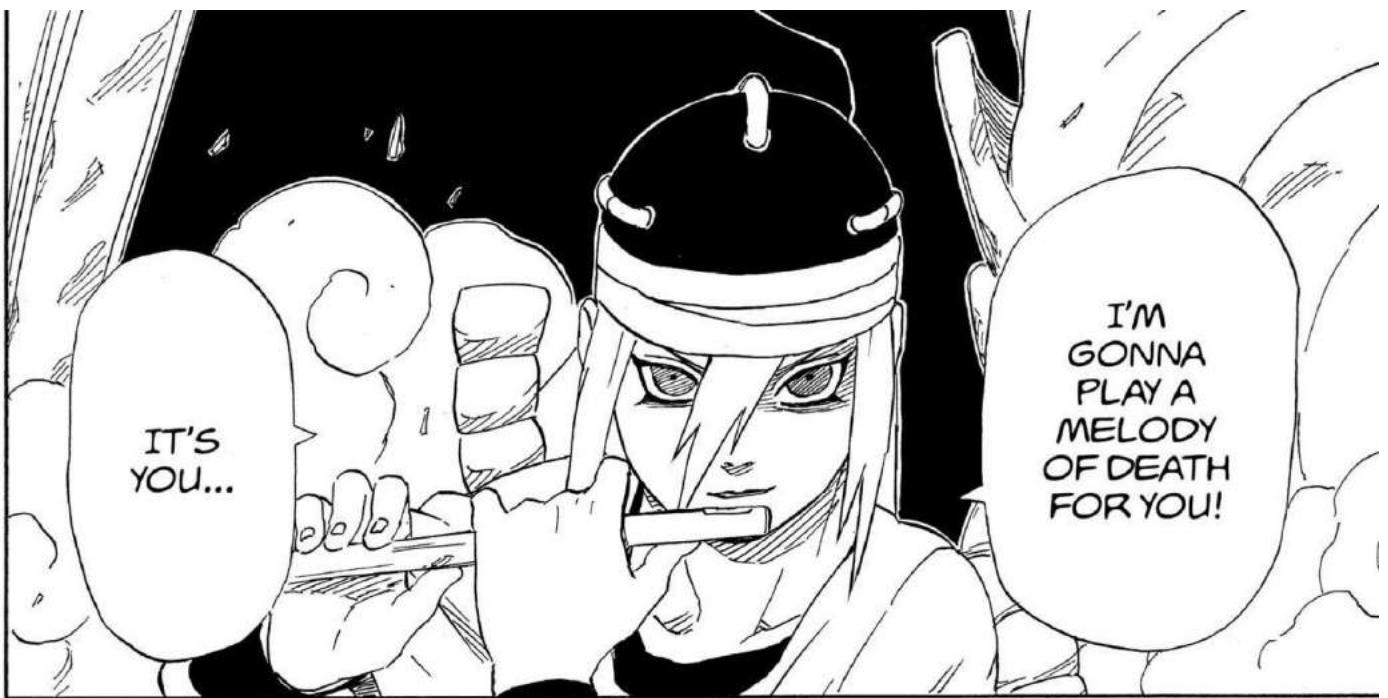
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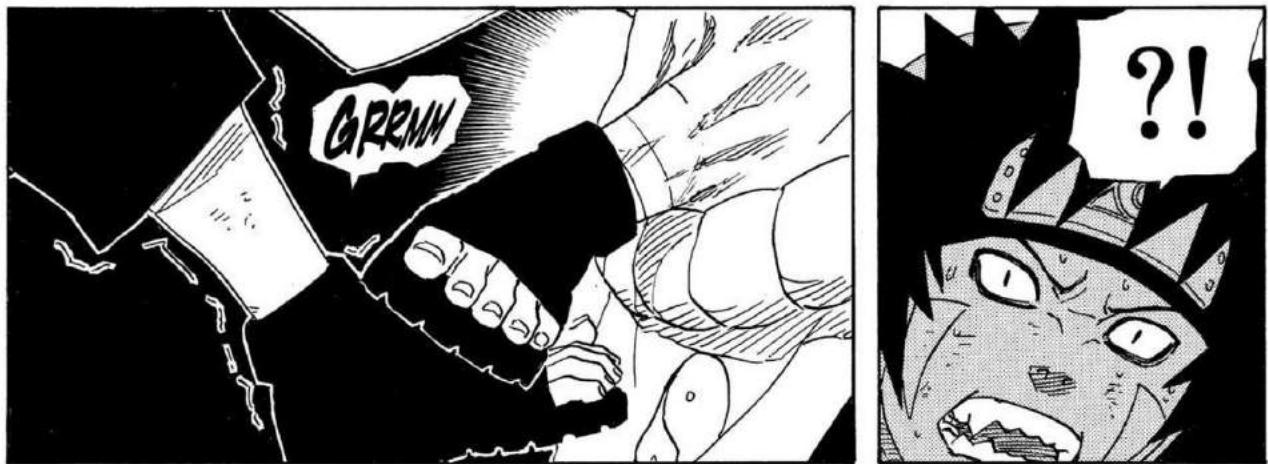


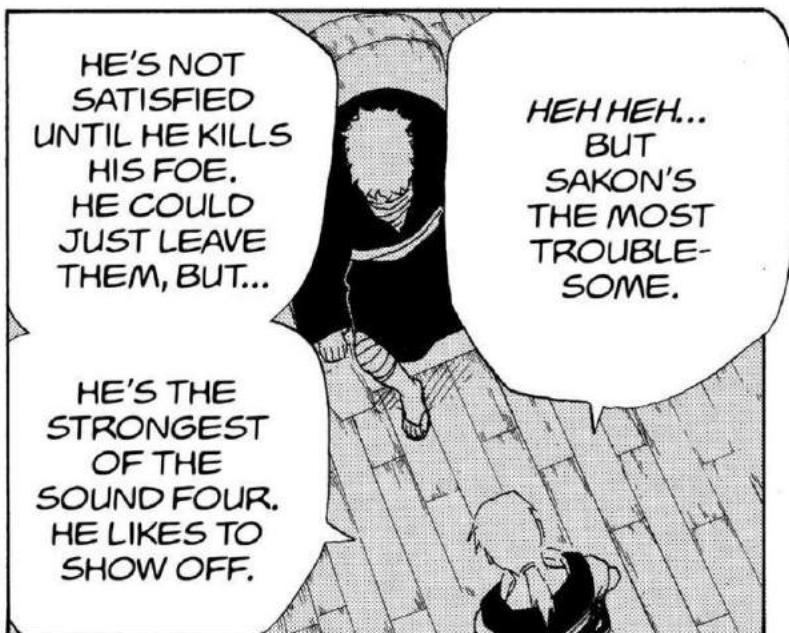
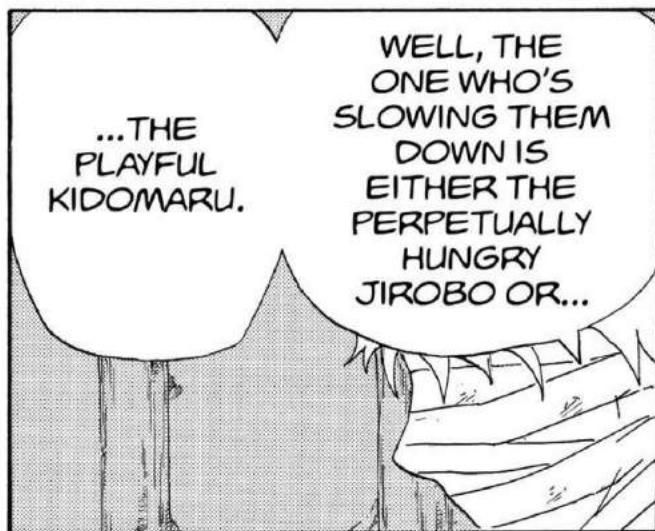
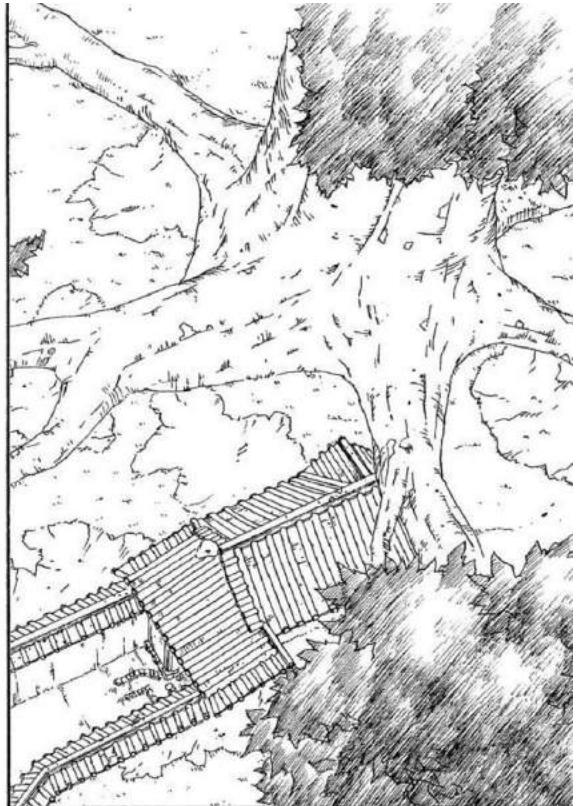
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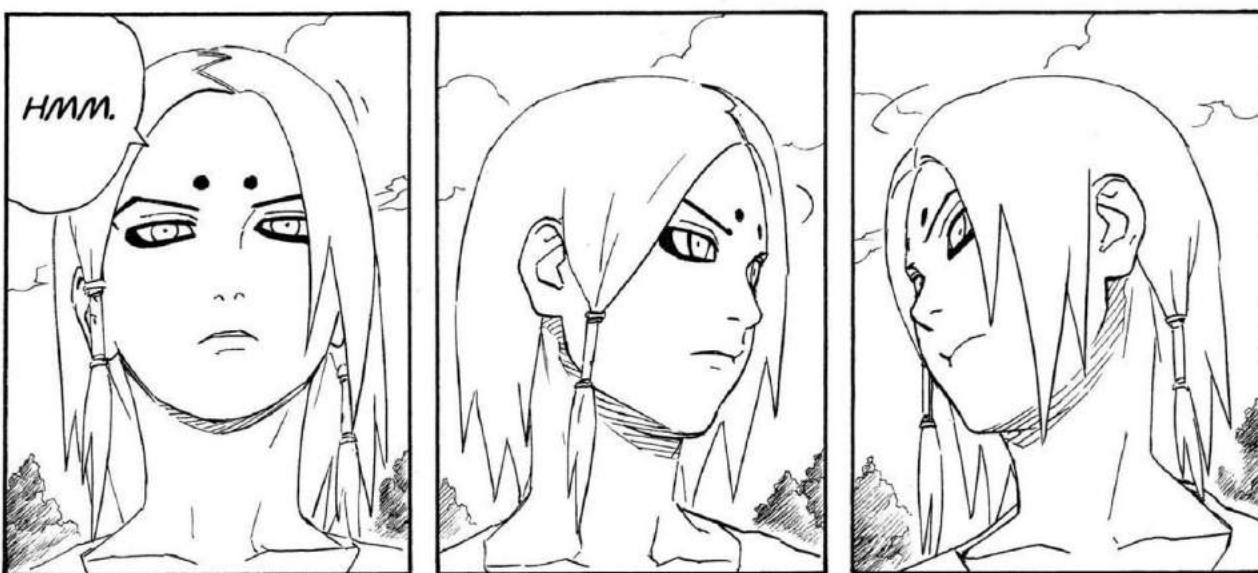
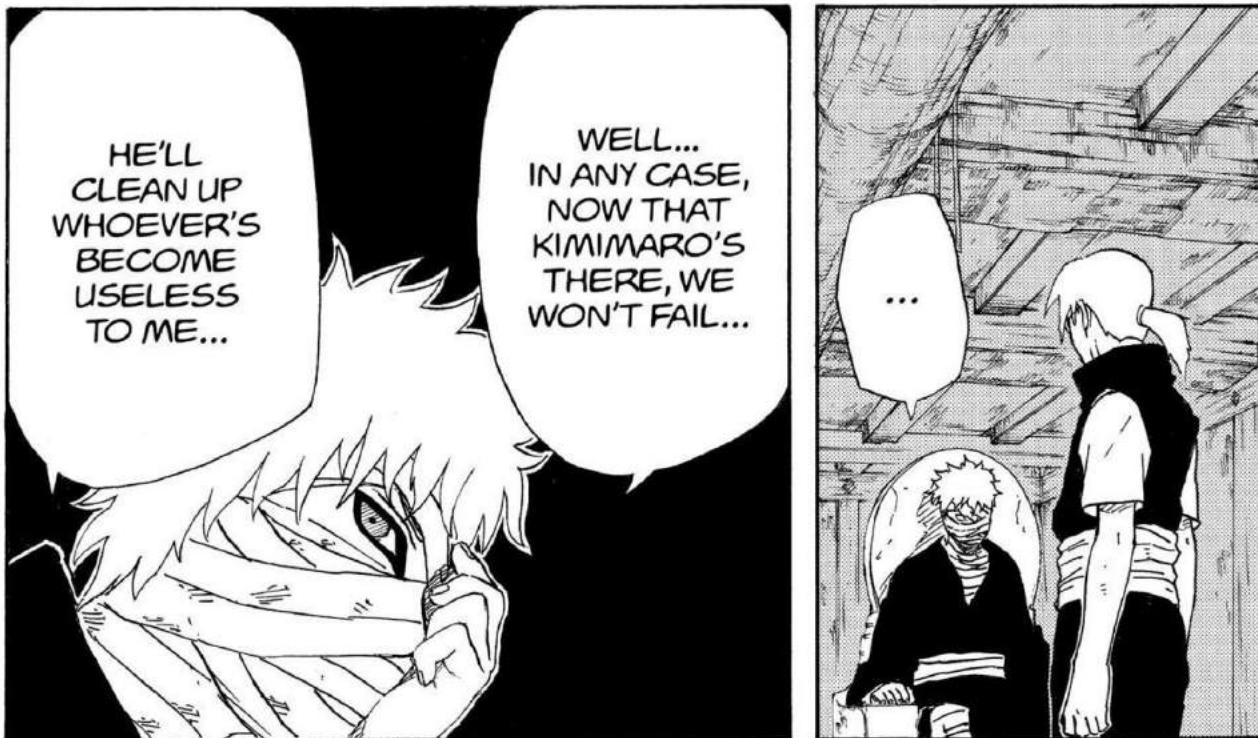


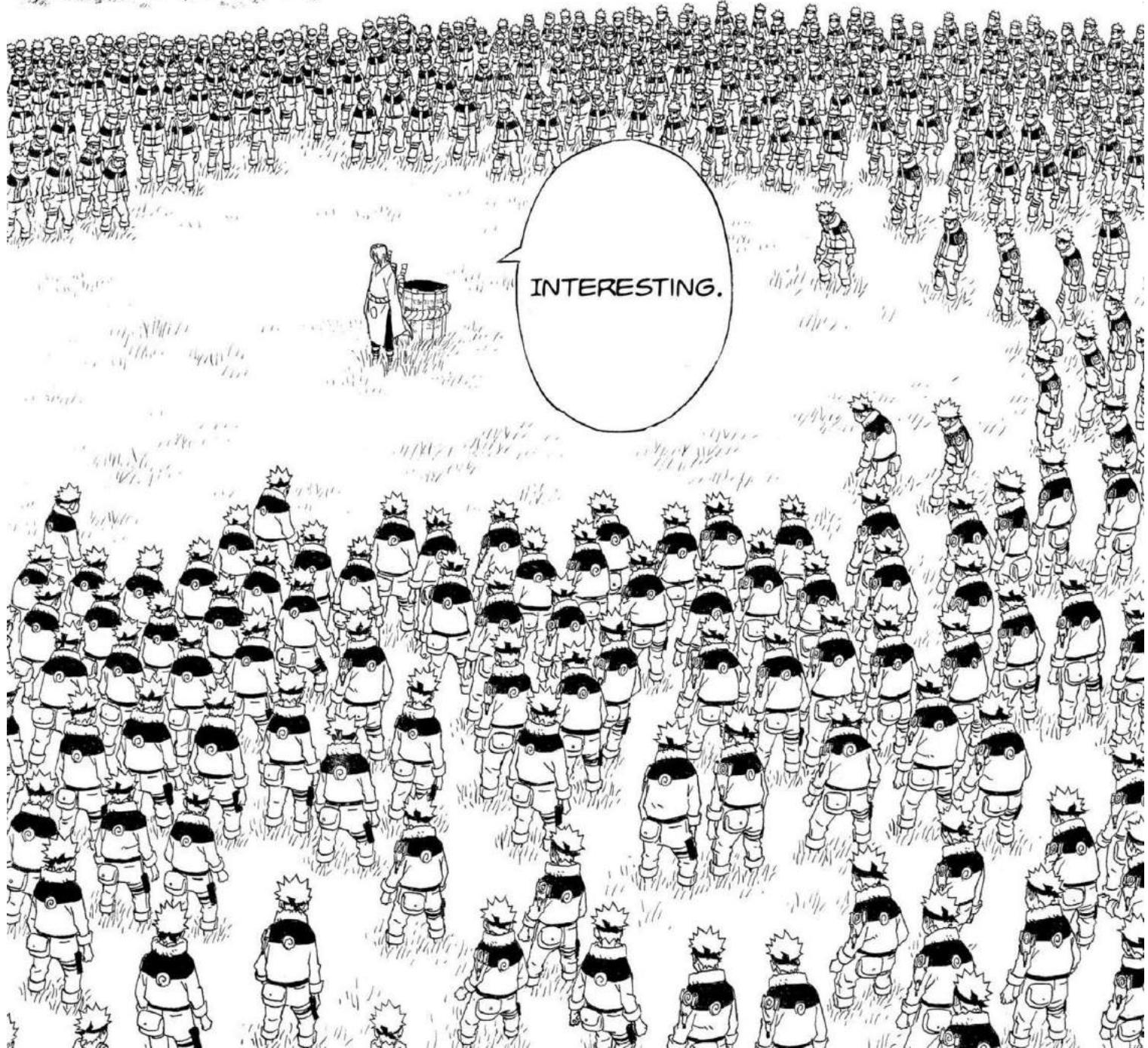




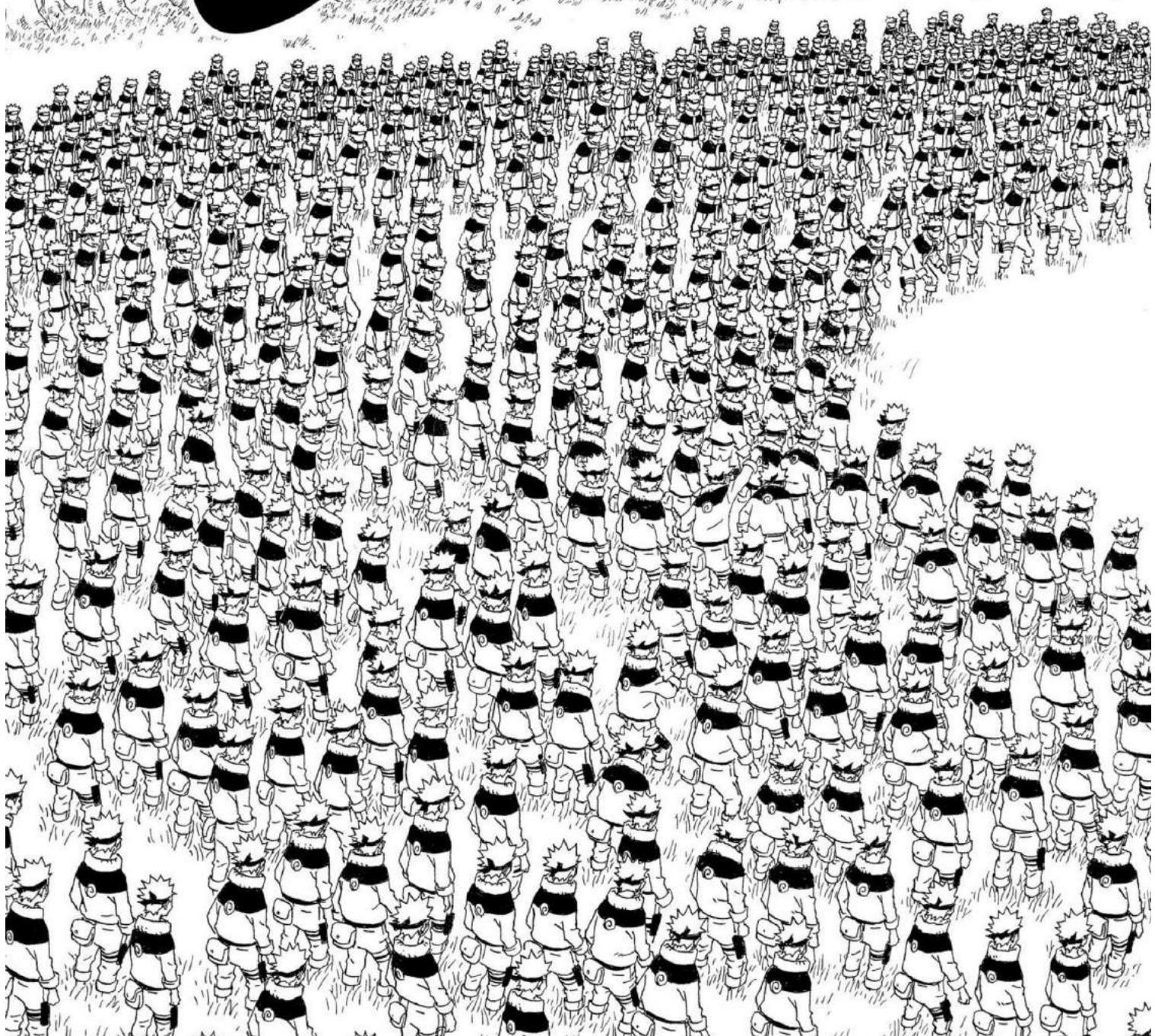


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WIN



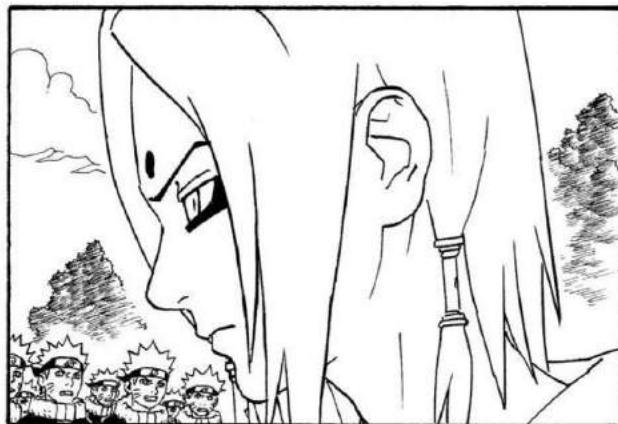
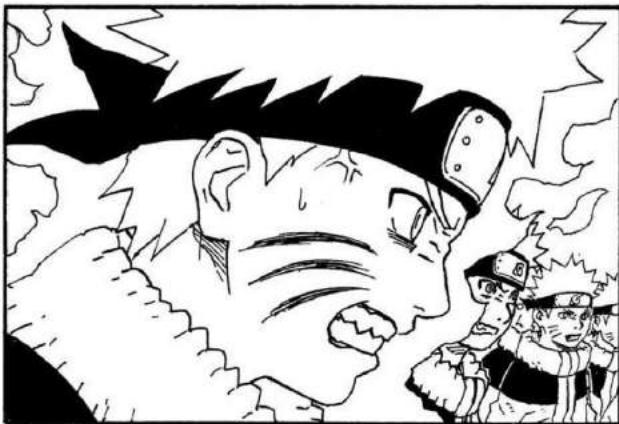
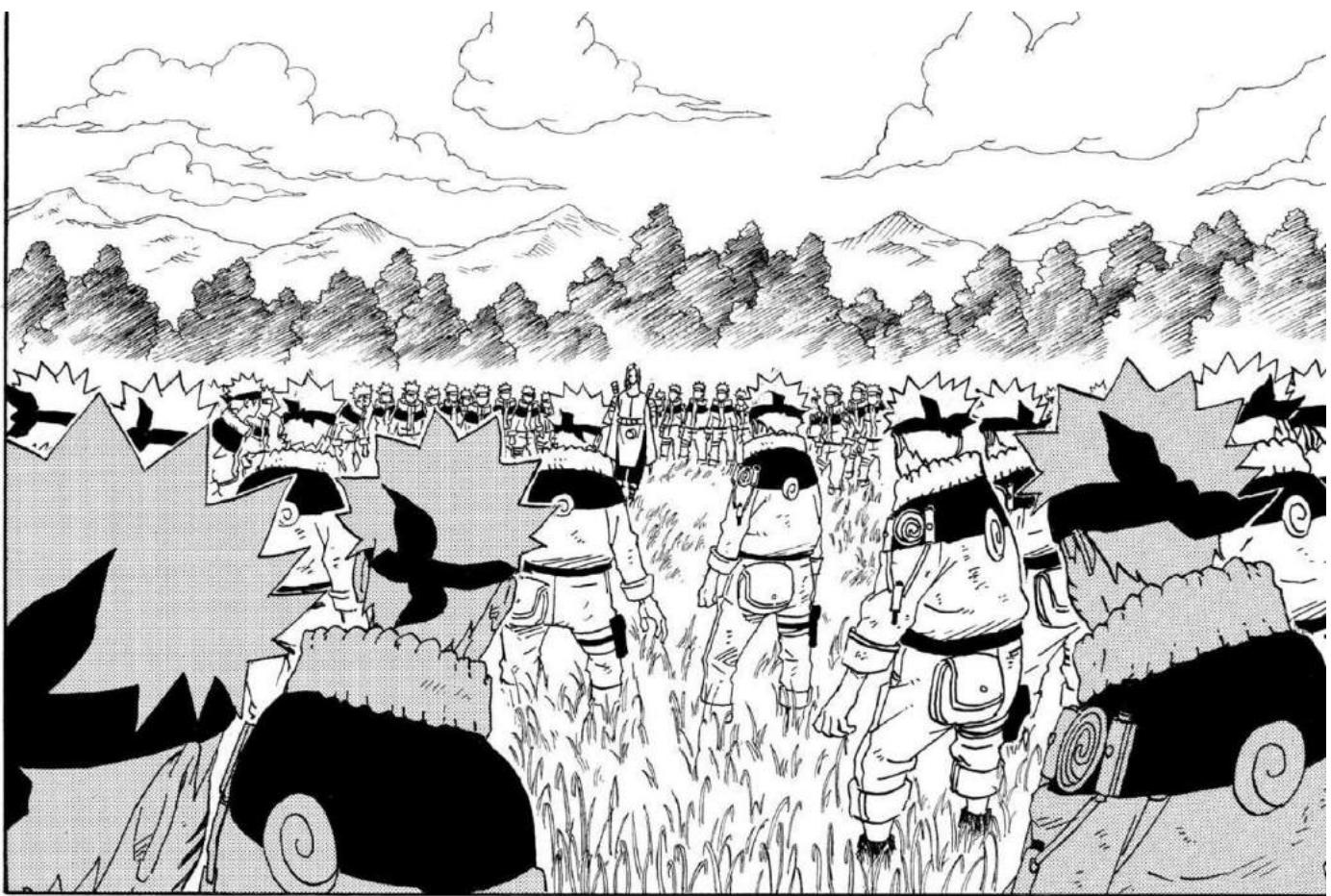
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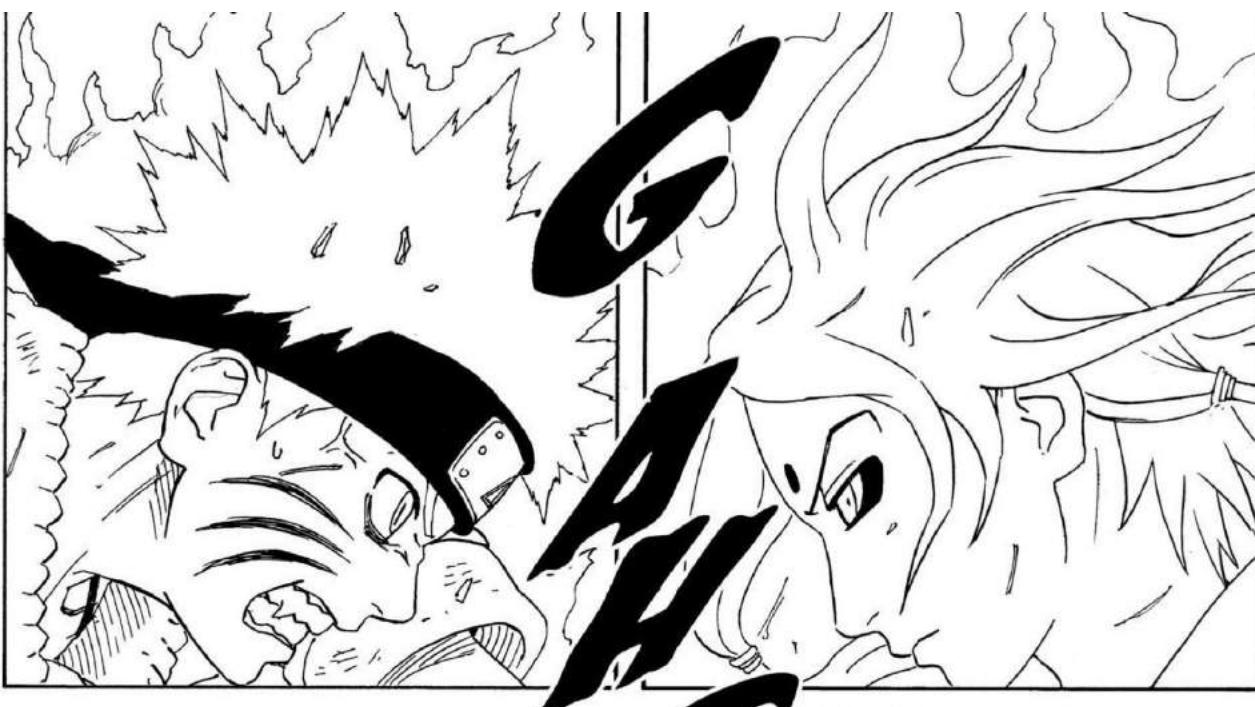
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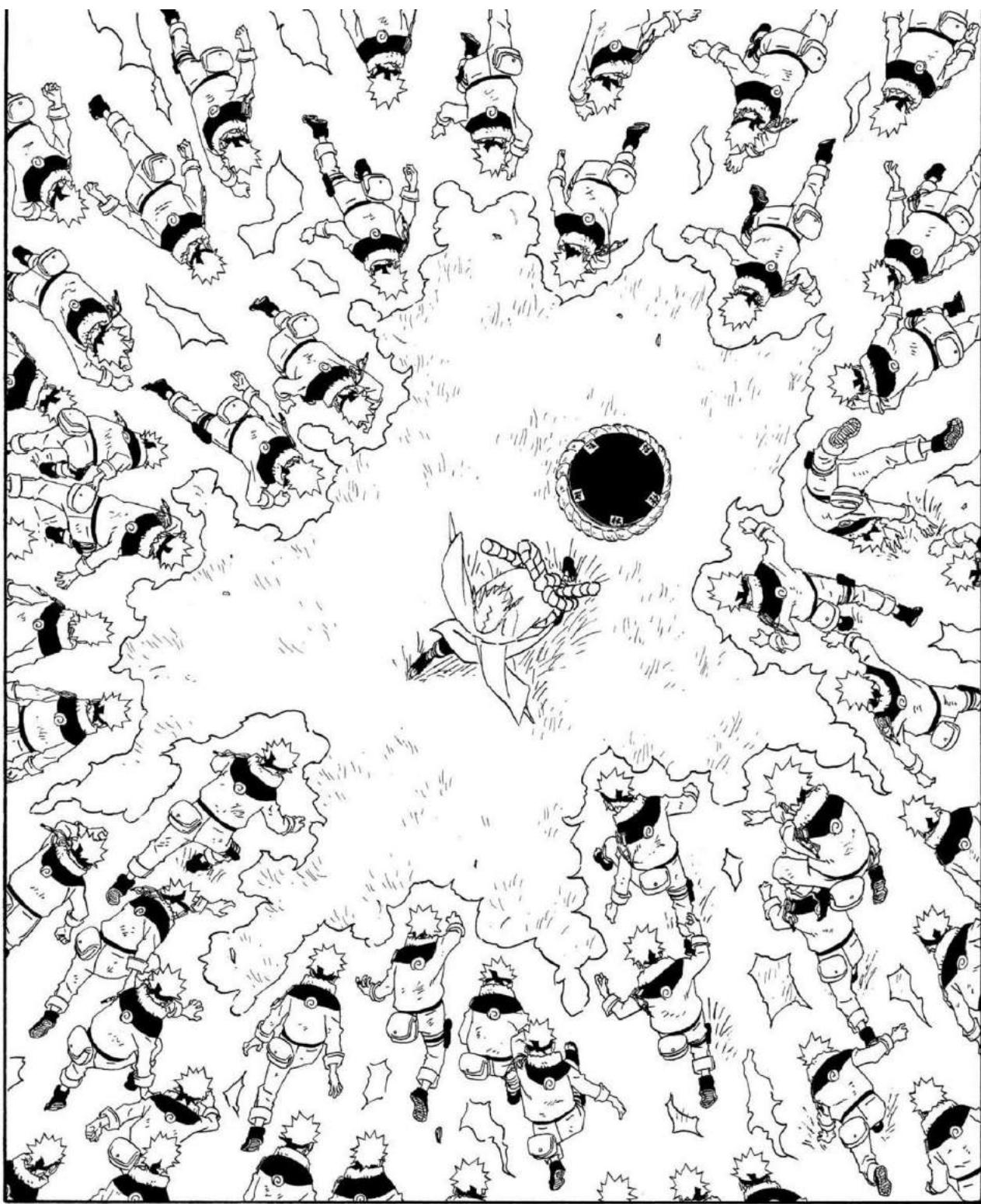


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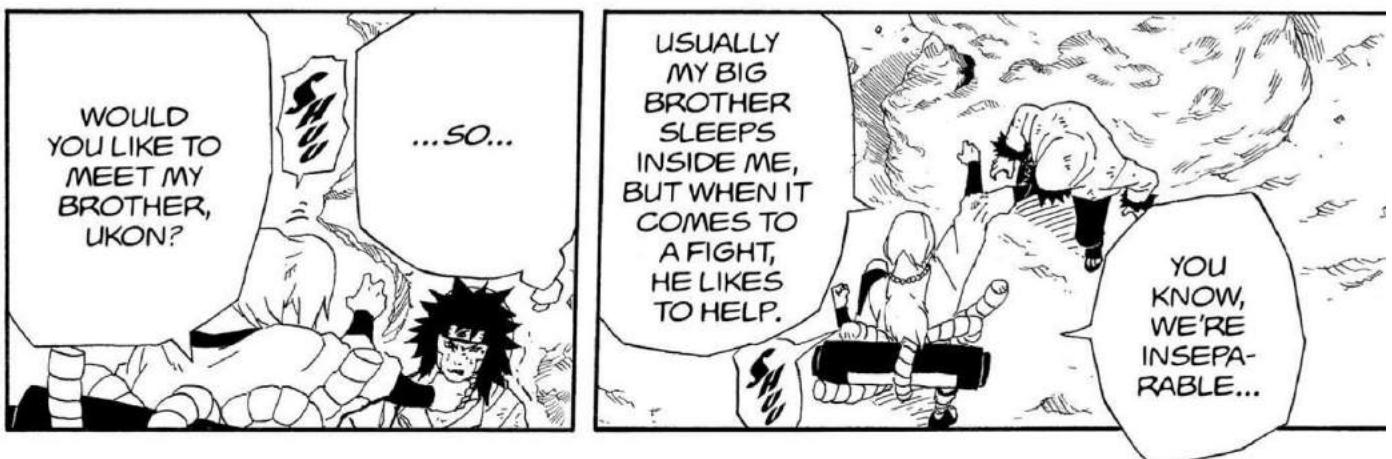
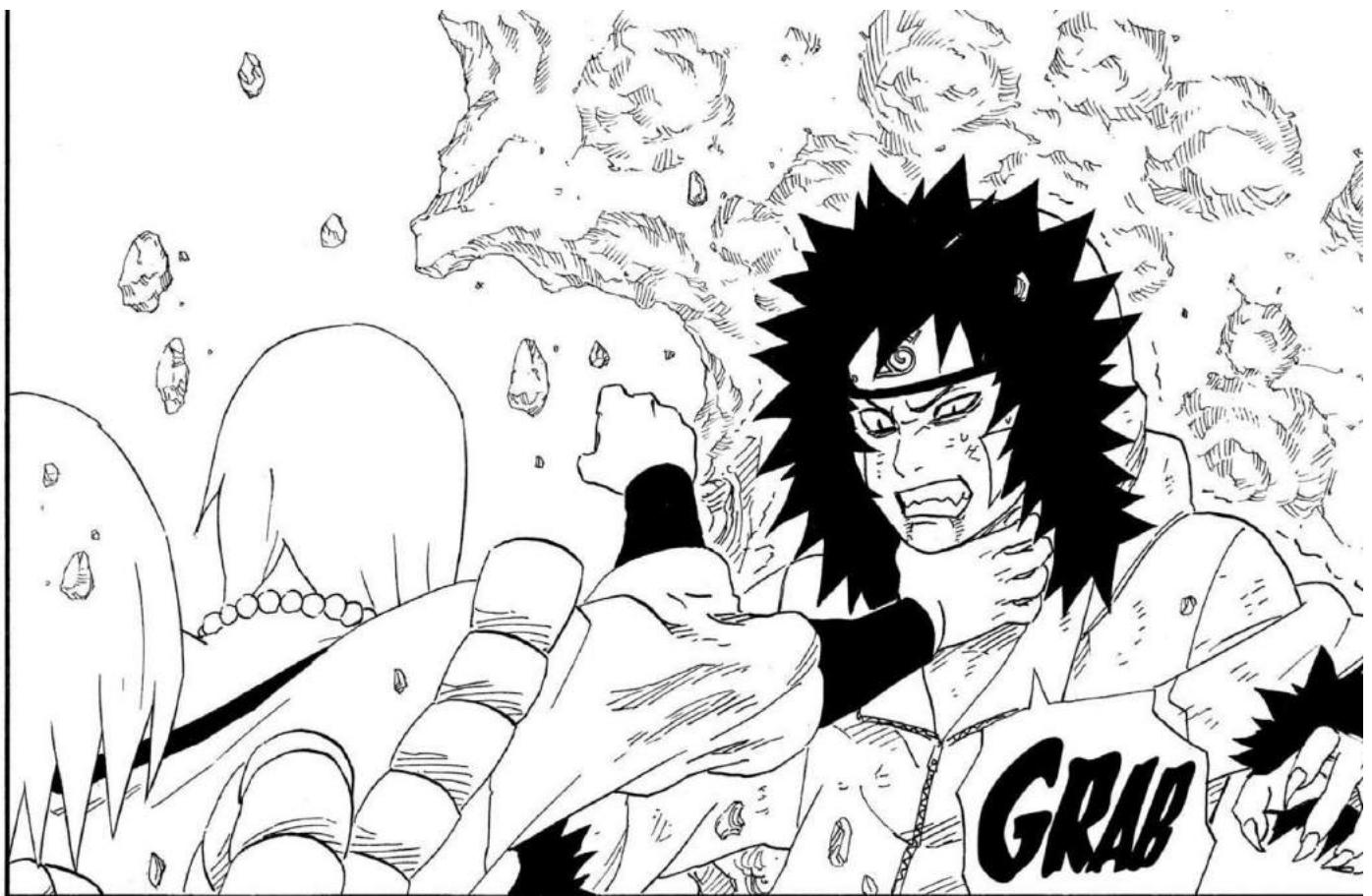






TARENKEN!
MULTIPLE
FISTS
BARRAGE!!





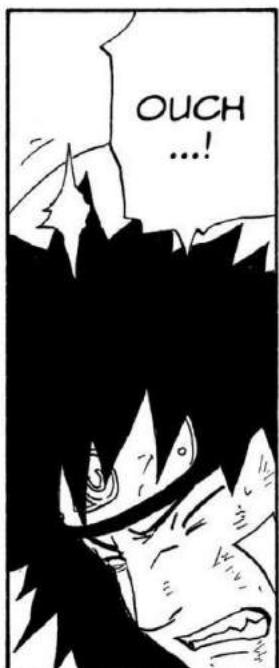
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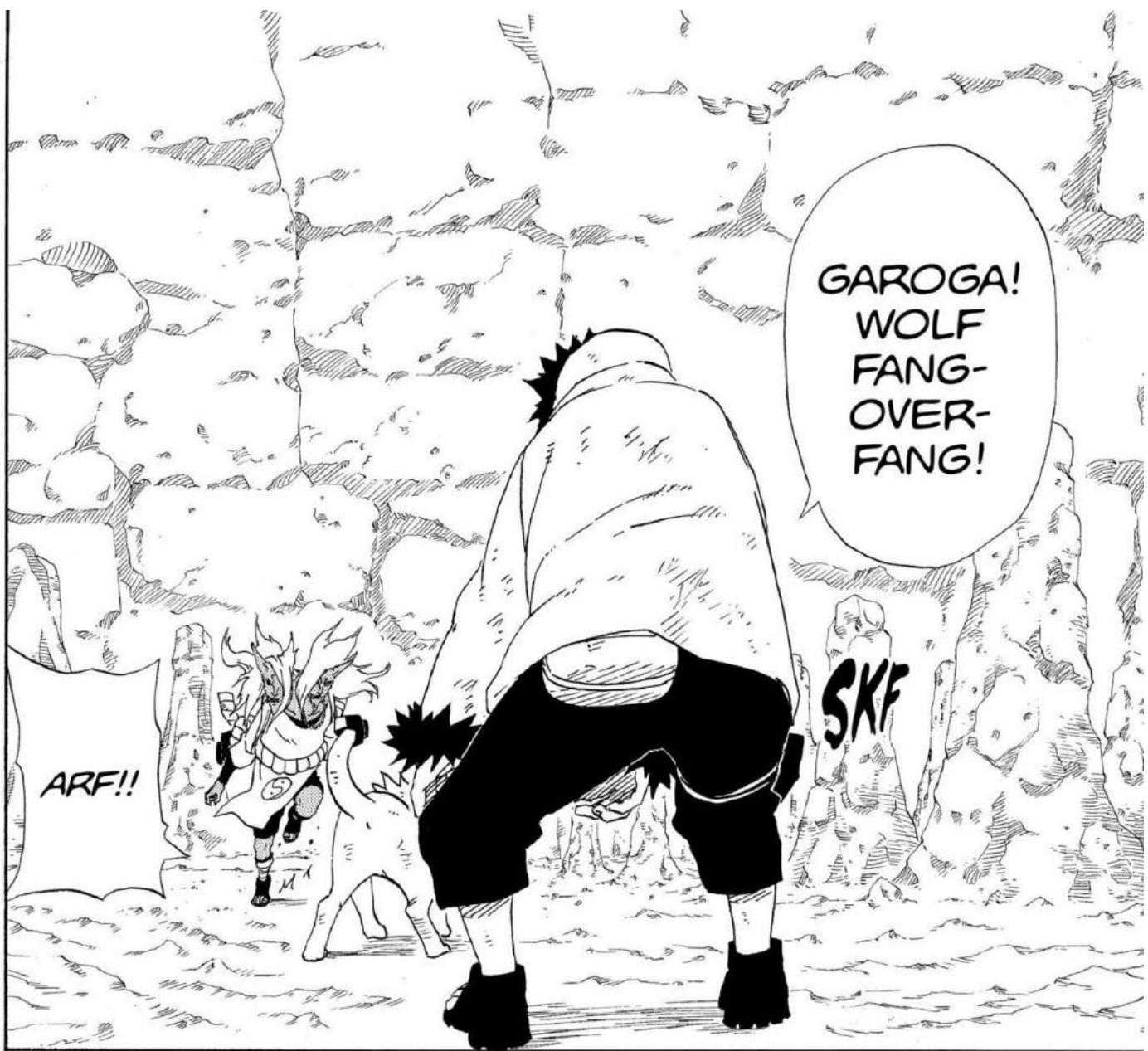
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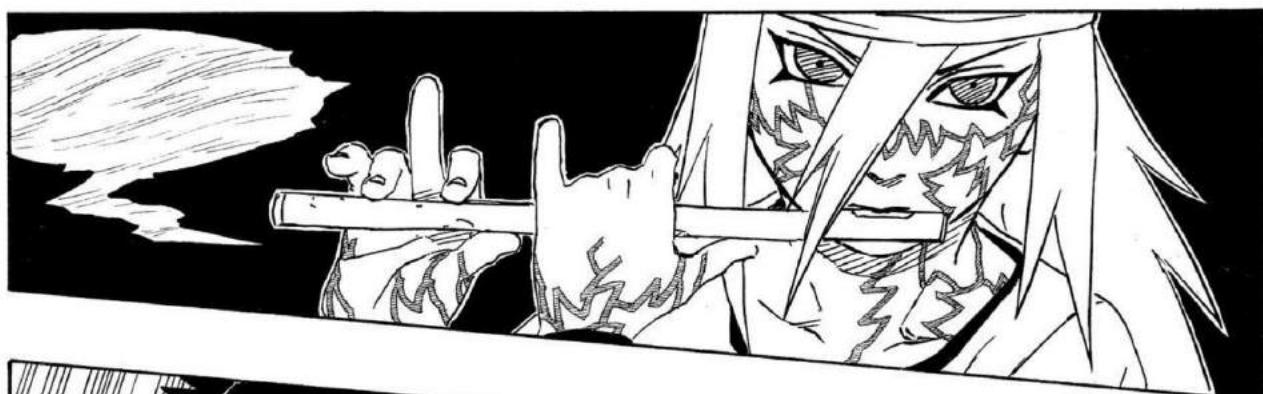


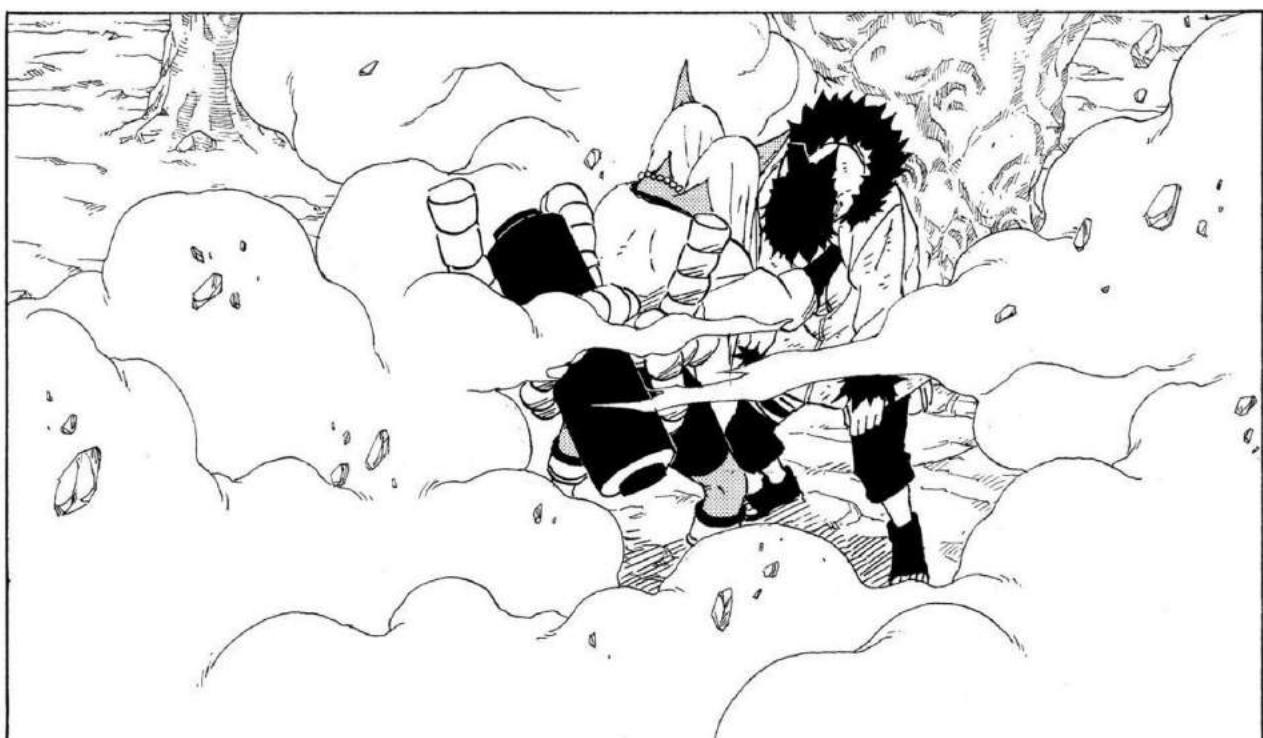
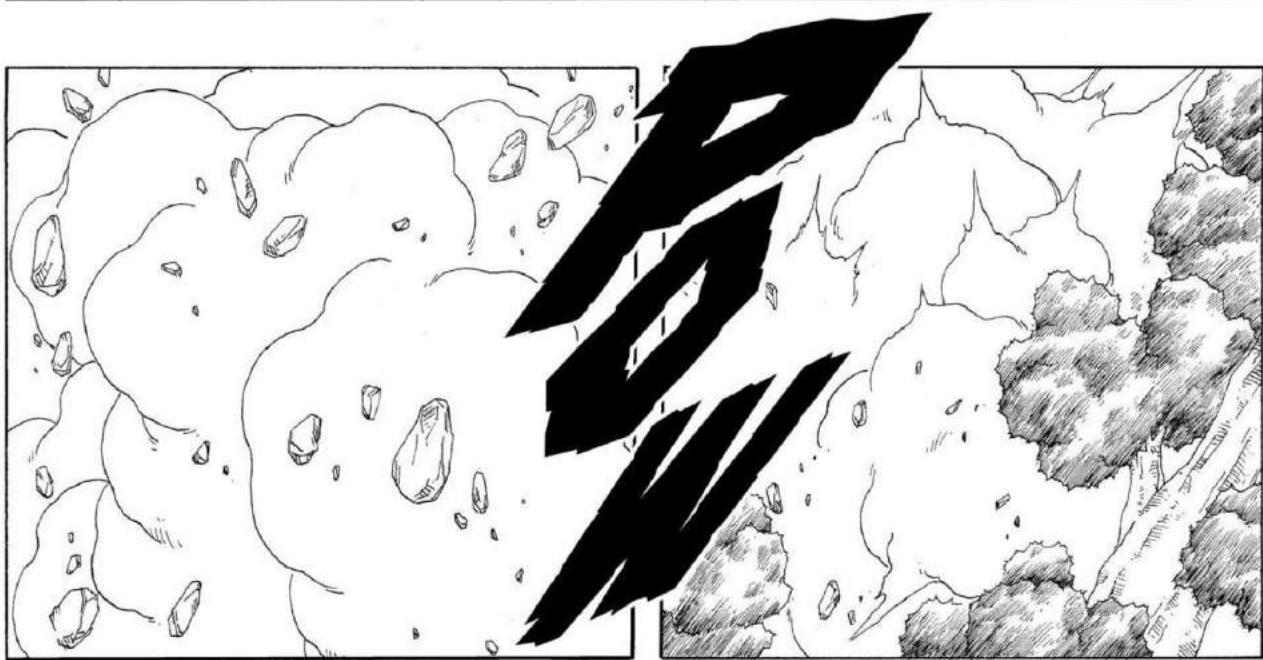
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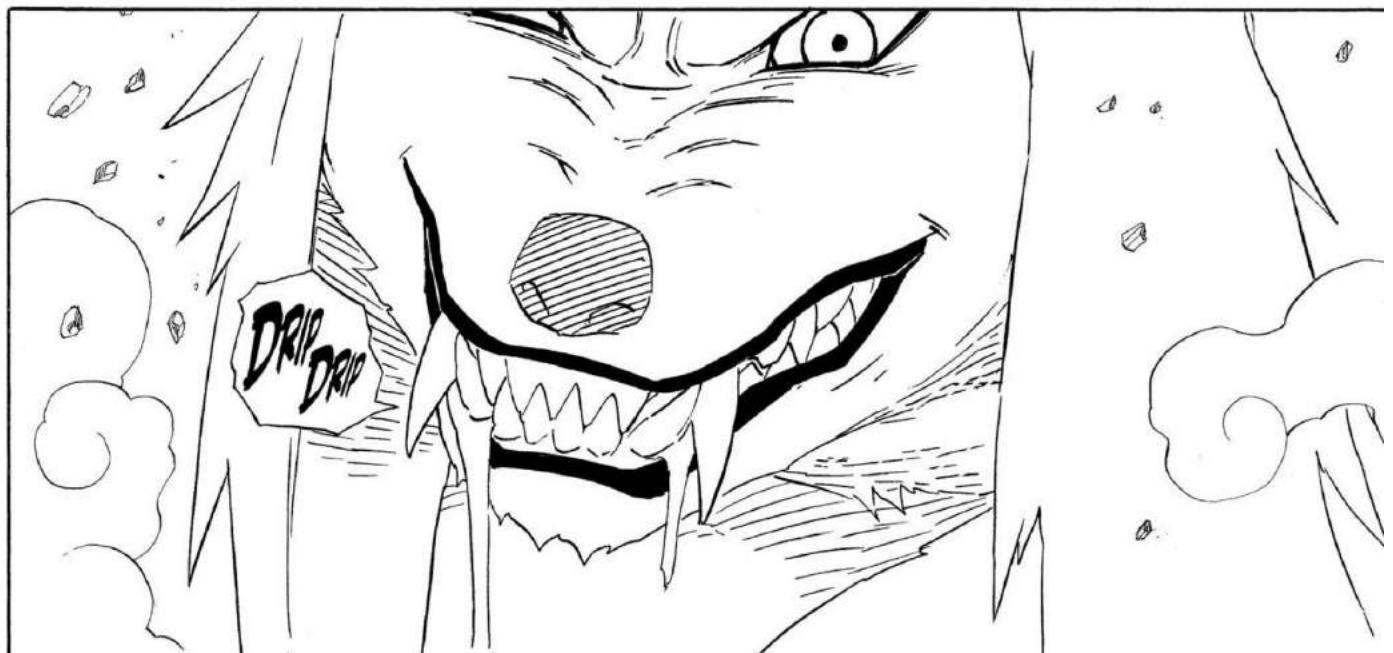
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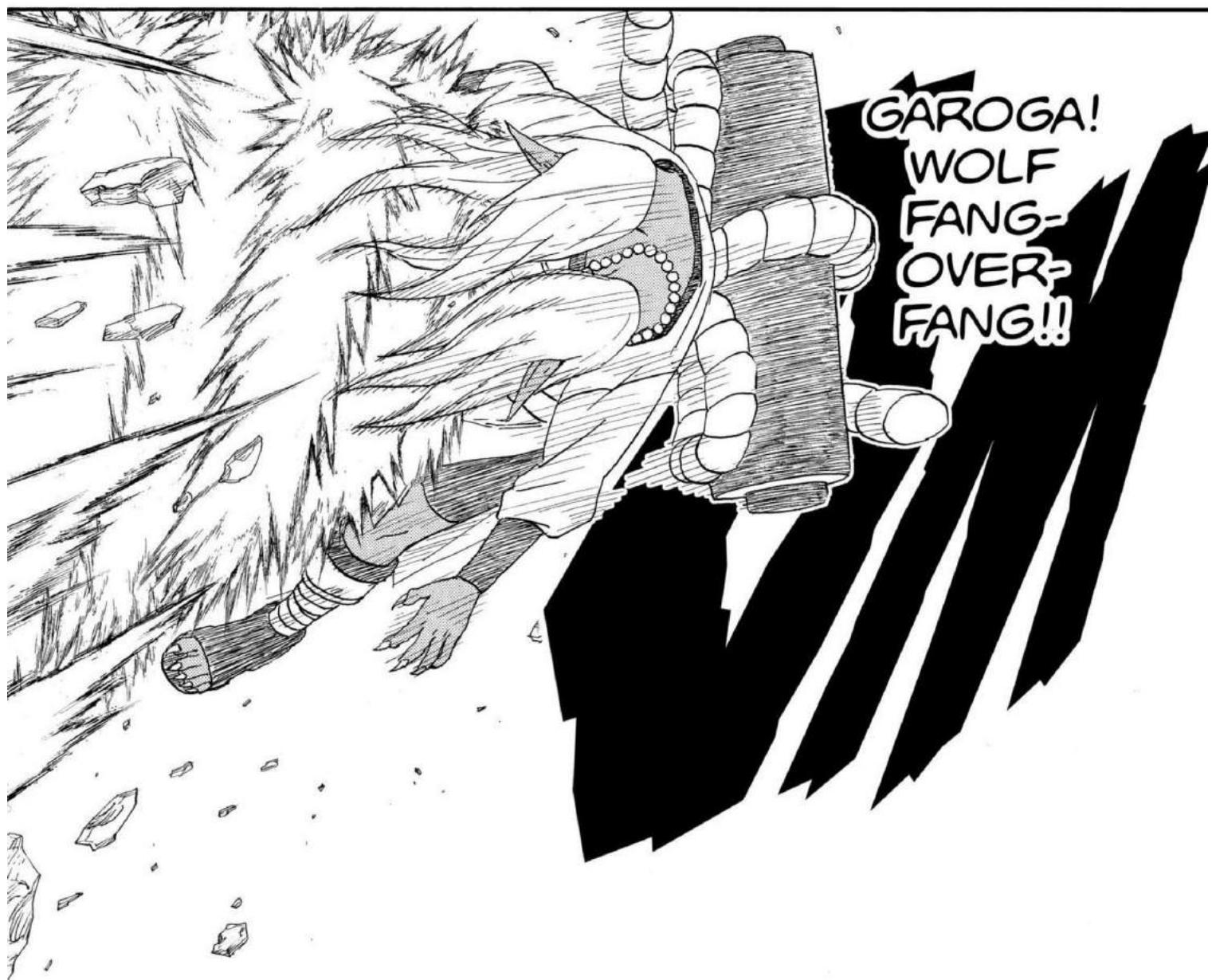


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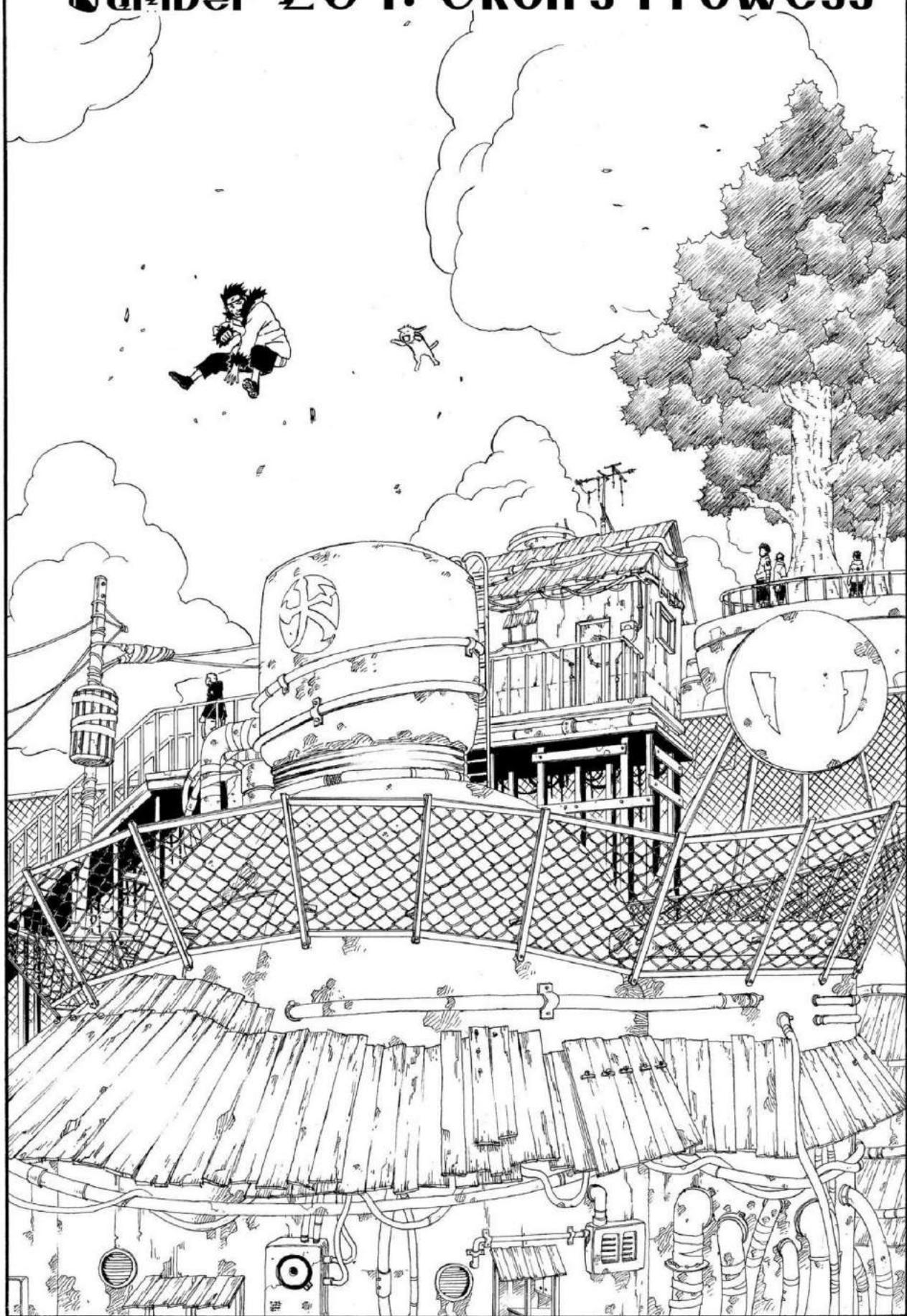


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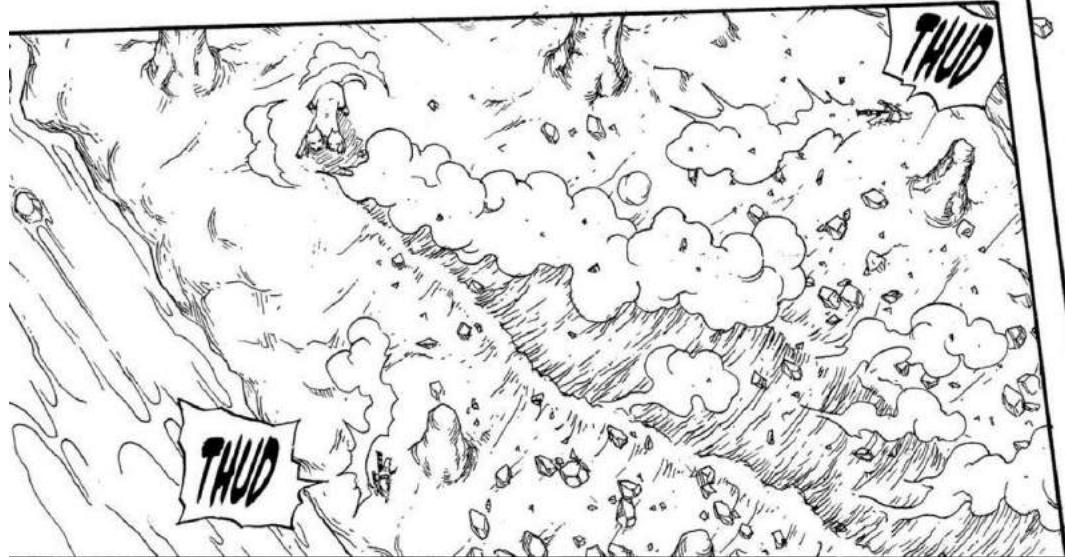
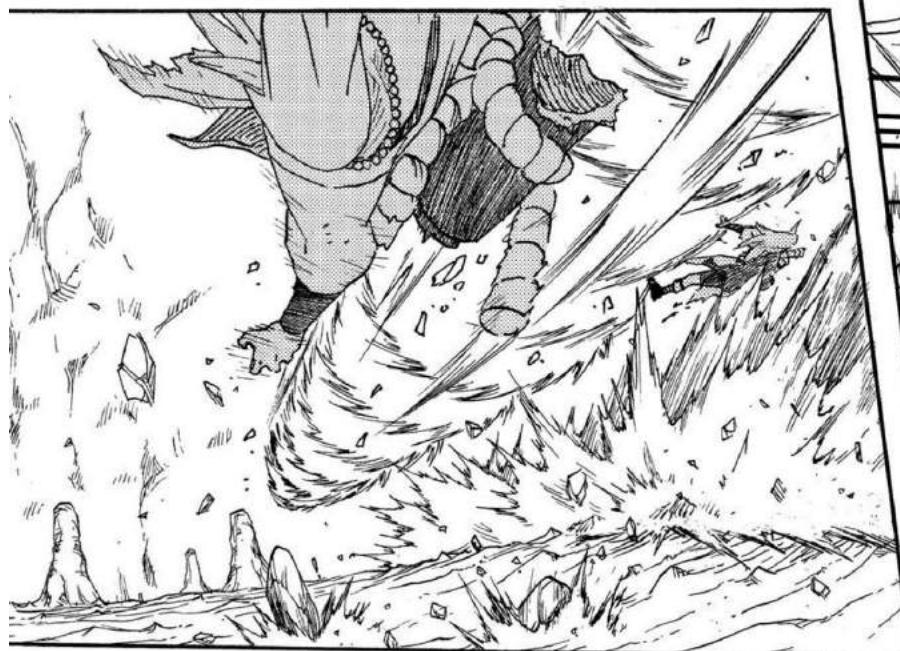
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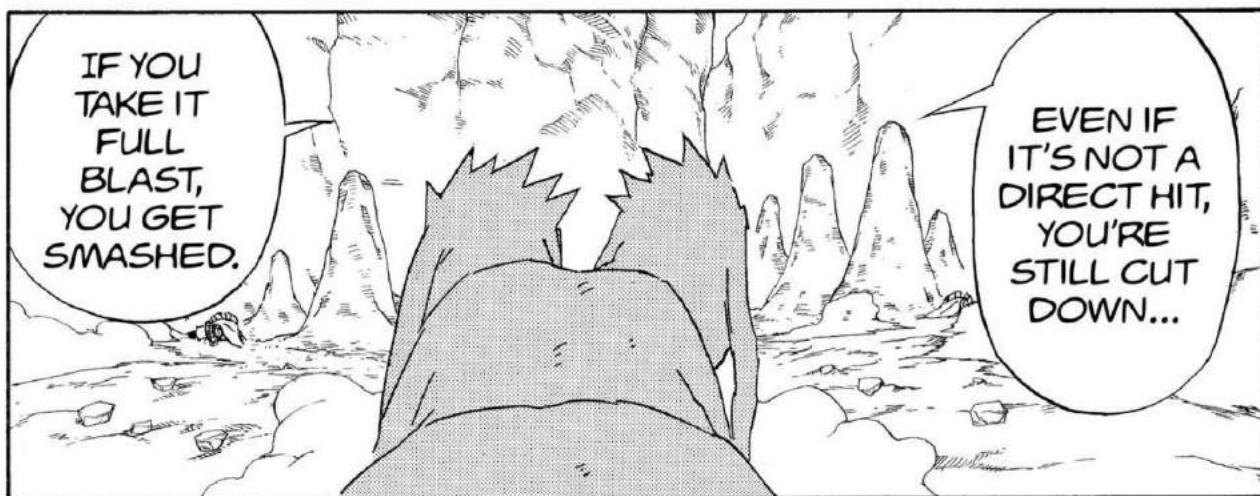
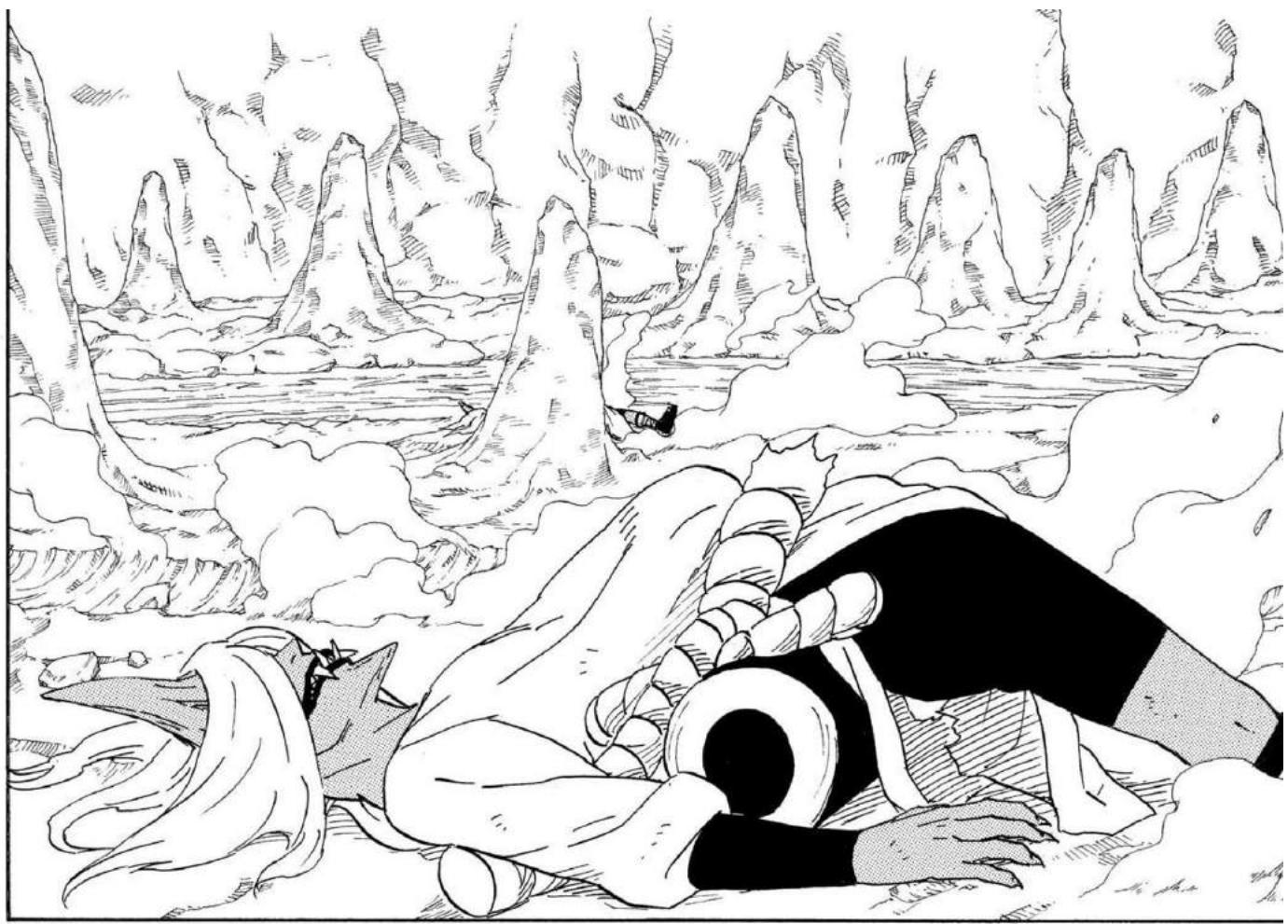


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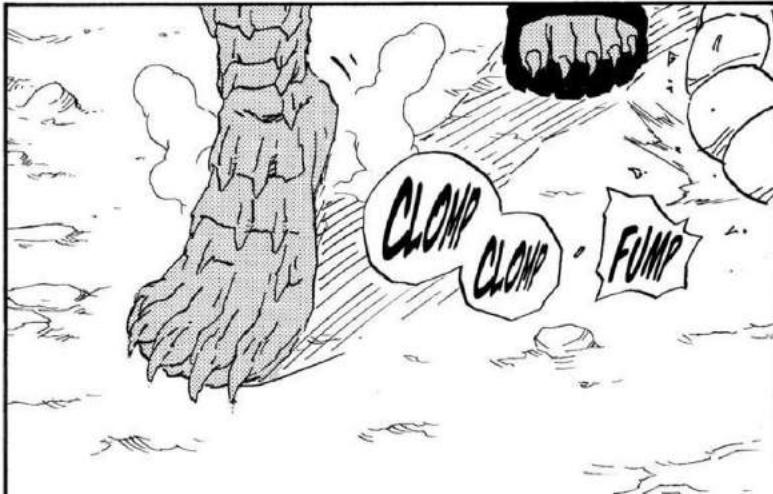
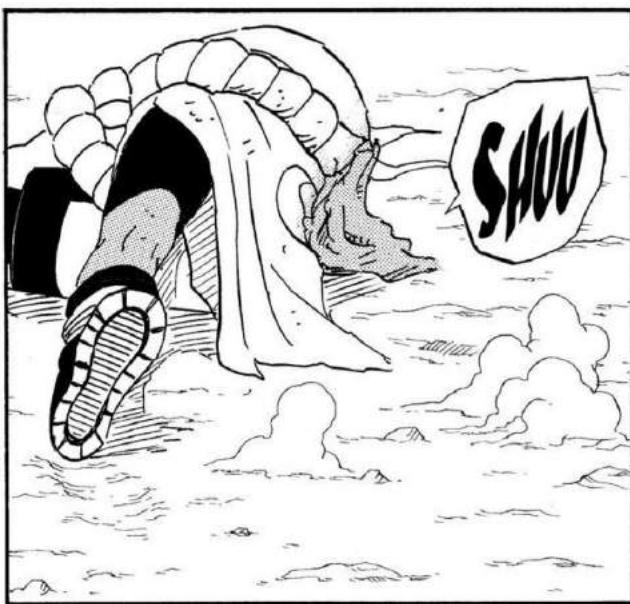
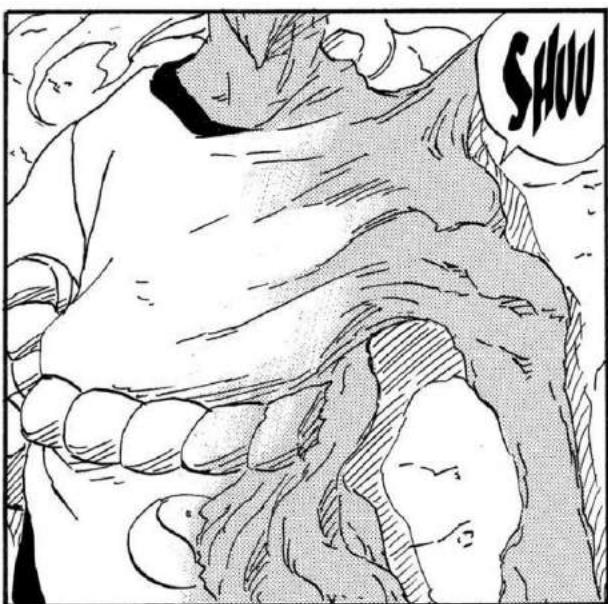


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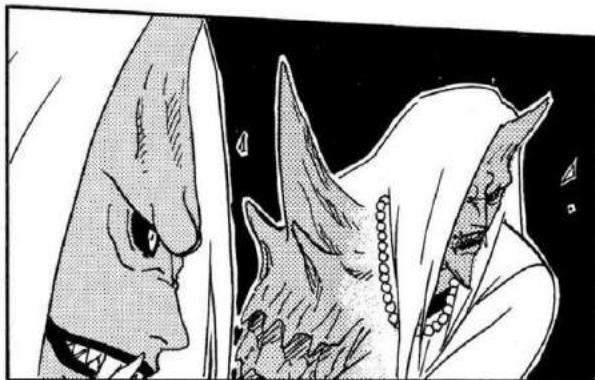
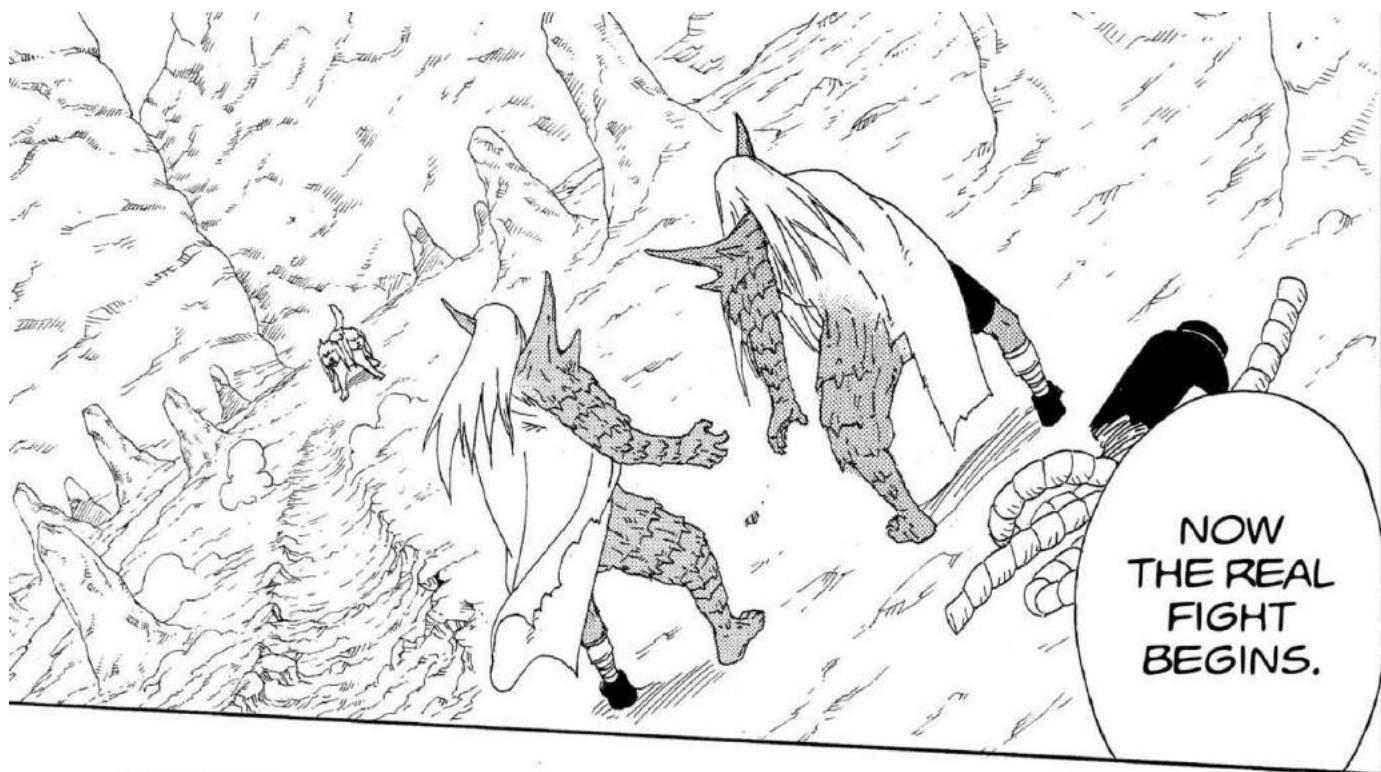




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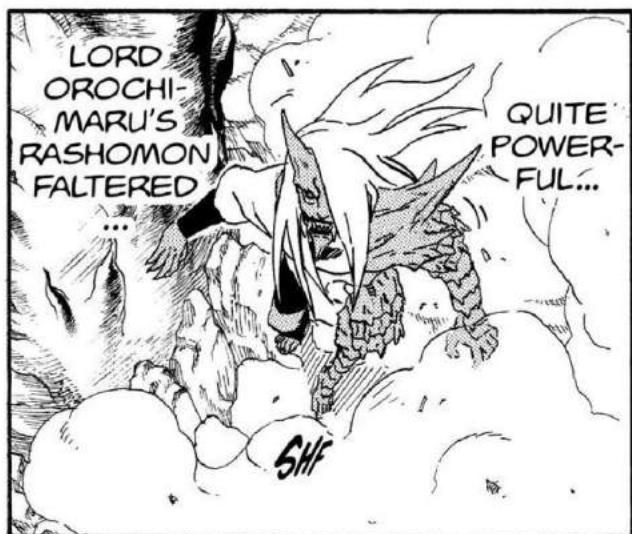














THIS
IS THE
END!!

AKAMARU,
YOU... TOOK
THE BLOW
FOR ME...

WHERE'S
THE
OTHER
ONE?!

?!

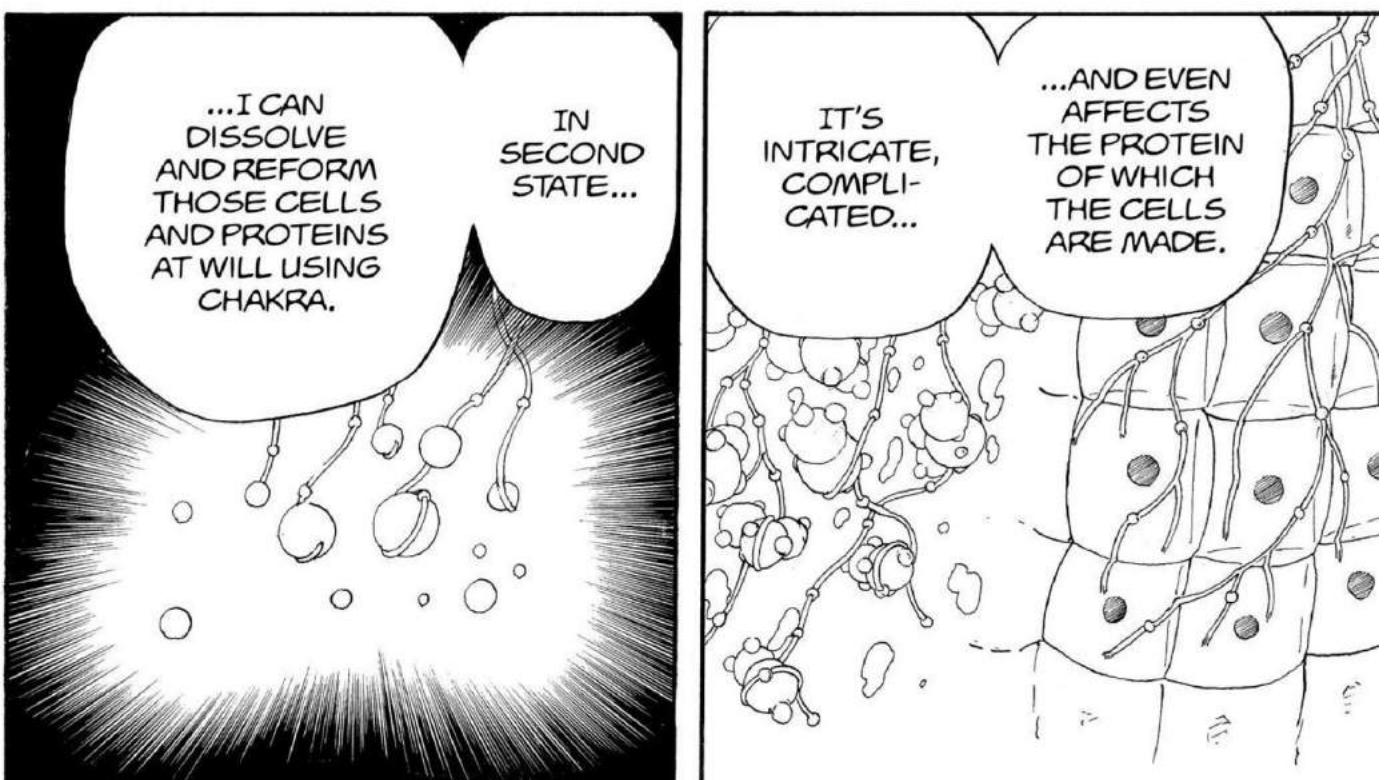
UGH...
NGH...

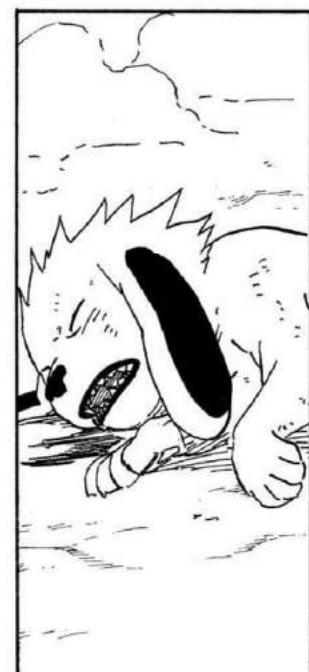
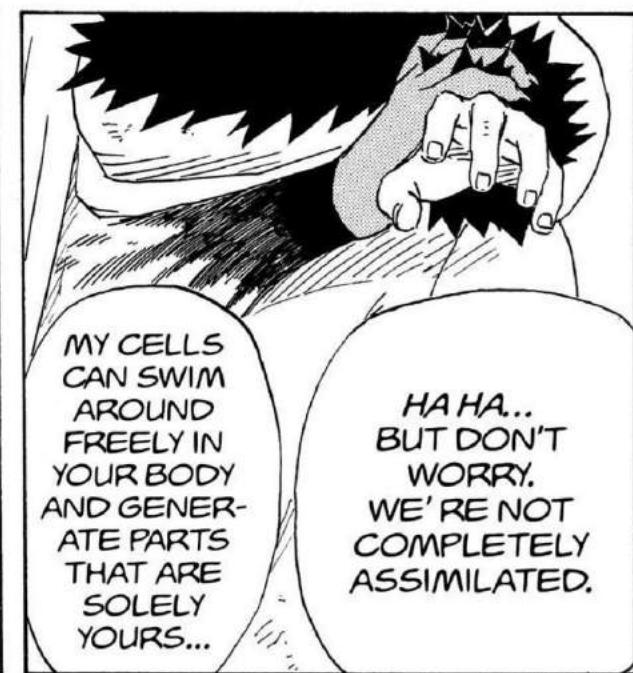
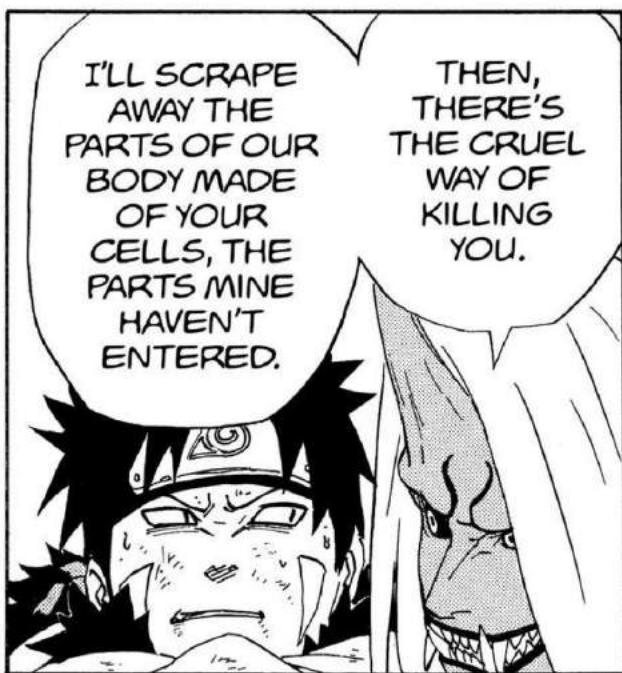
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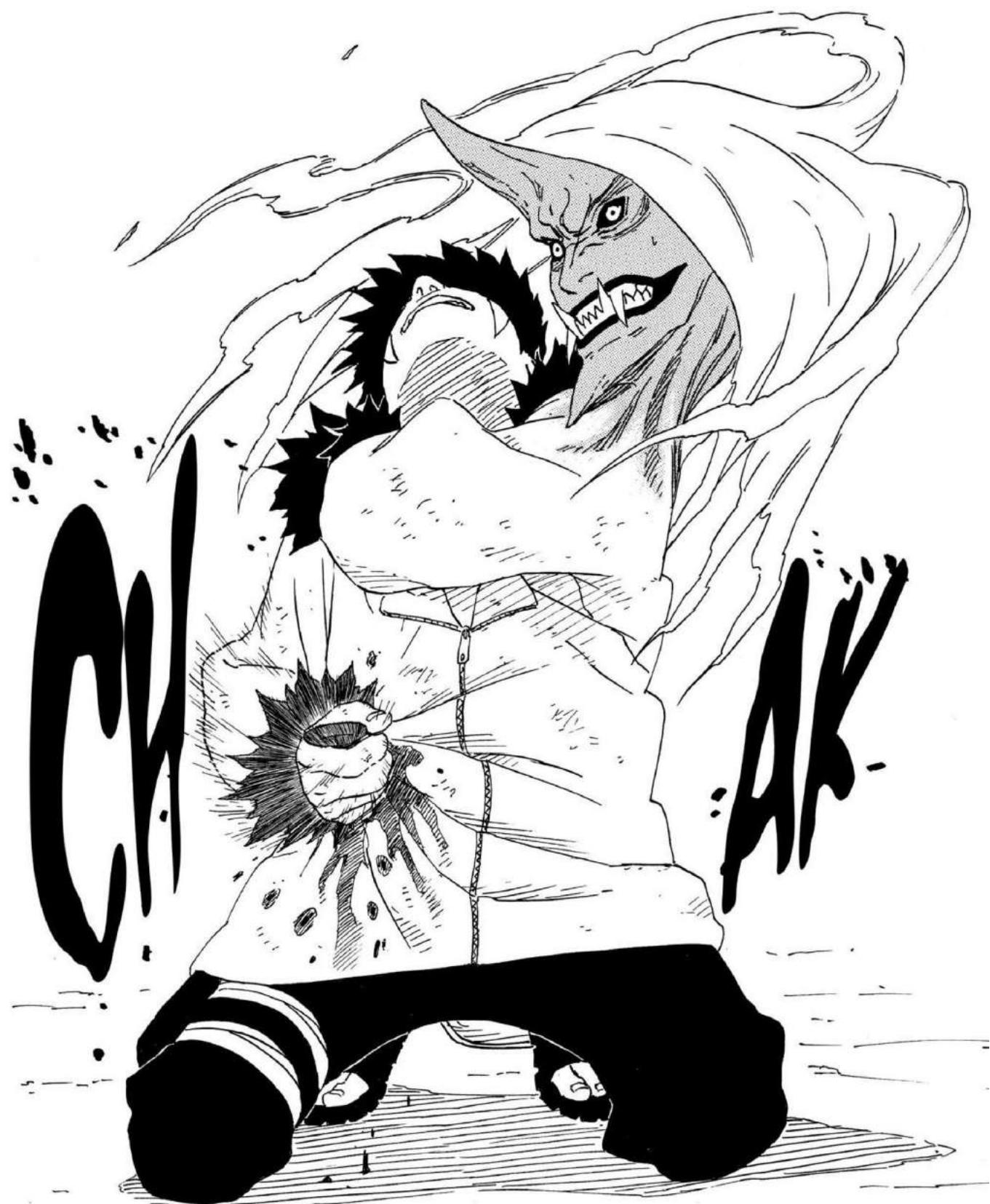
LOOKING
FOR
SOMEONE?













NARUTO

TM

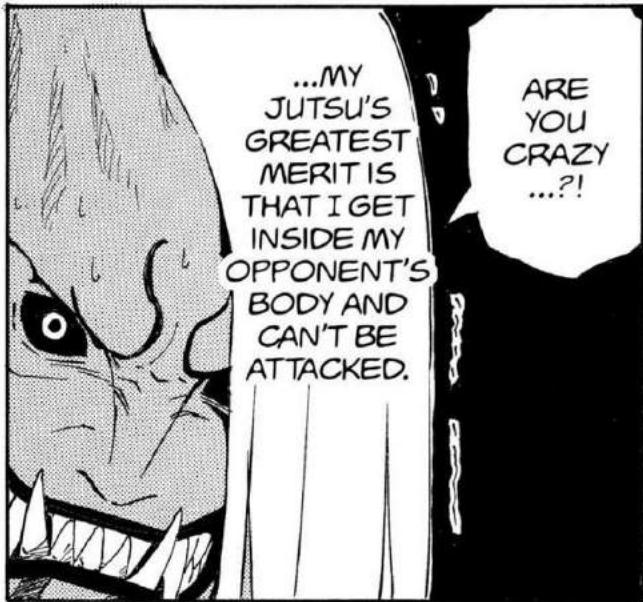


Number 205: Kiba's Decision!!





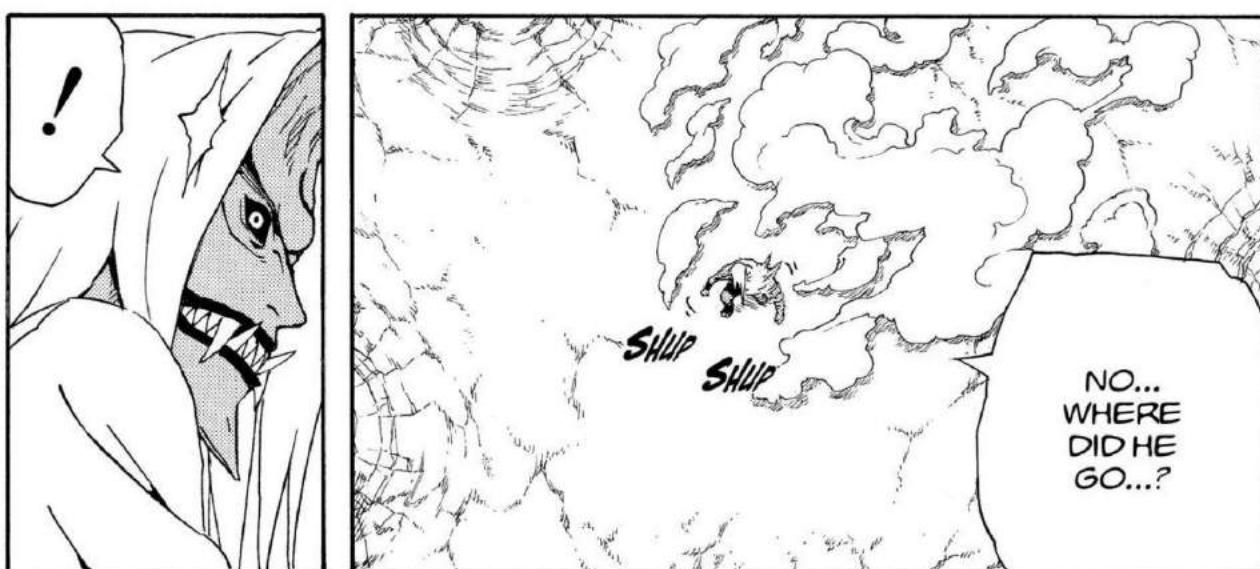
READ
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WAY



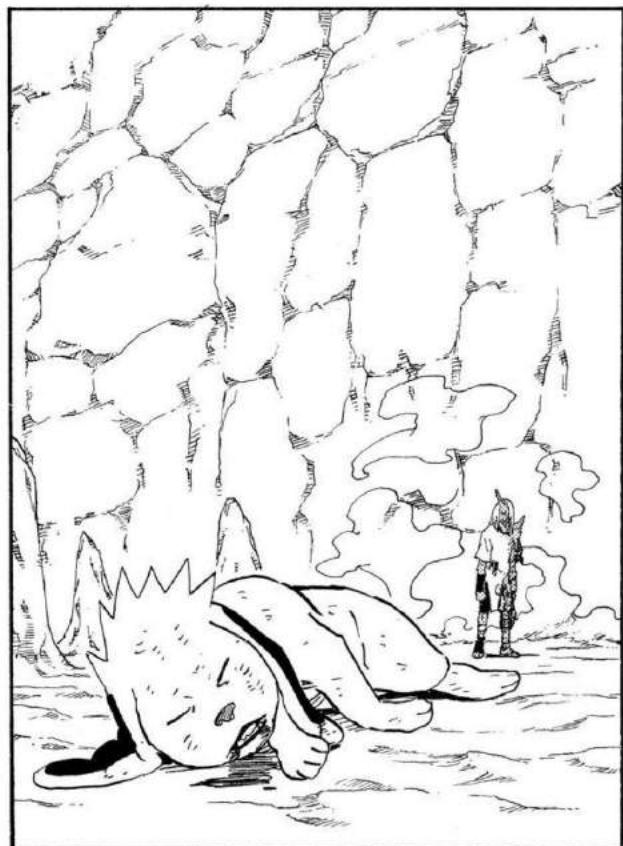


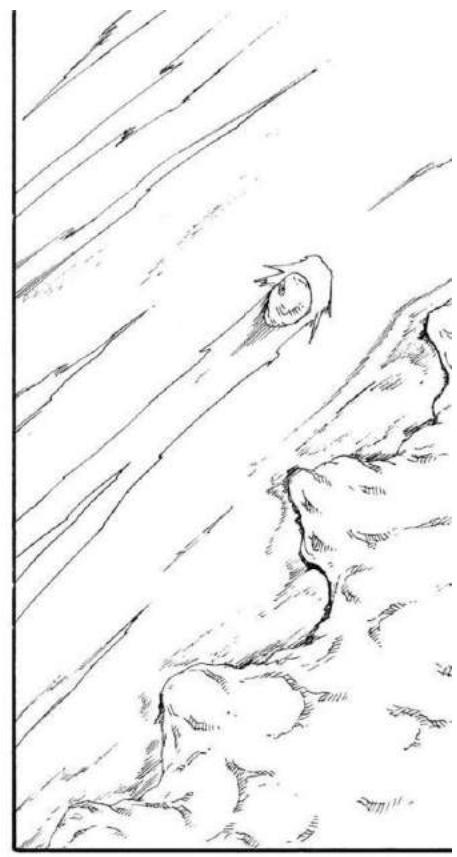
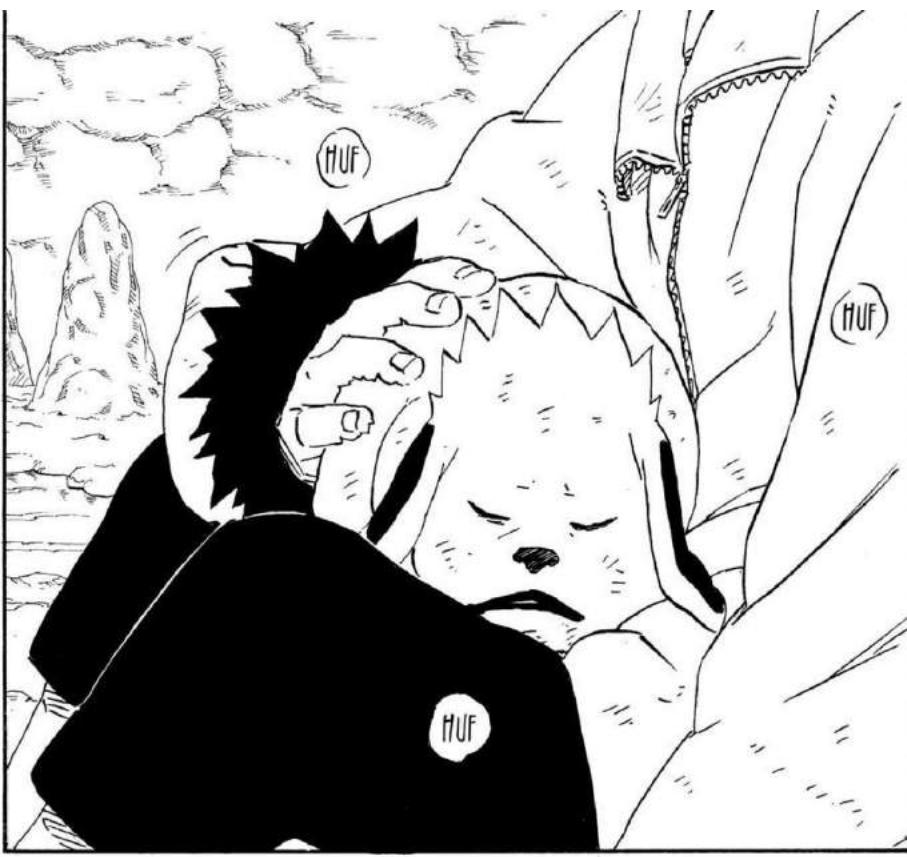
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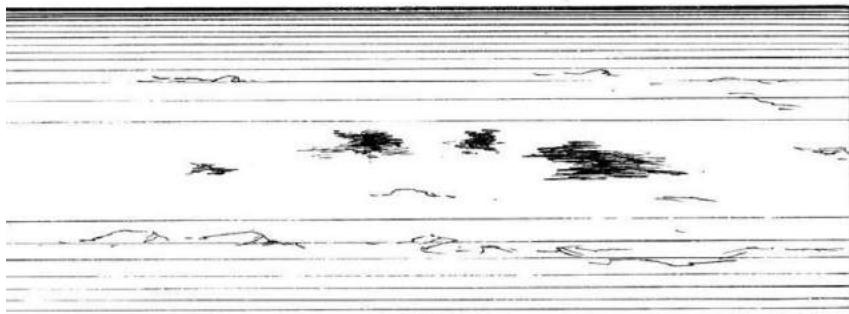
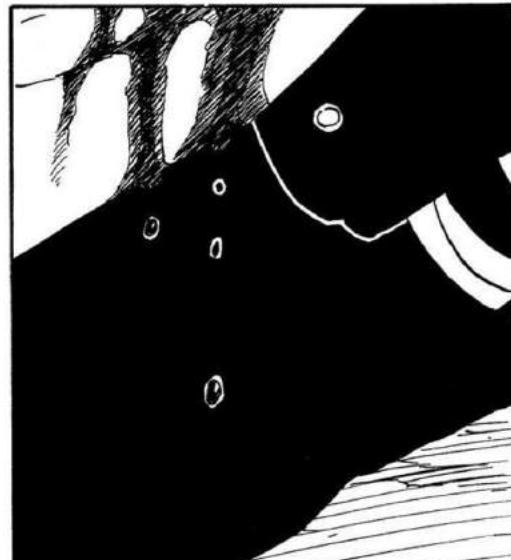


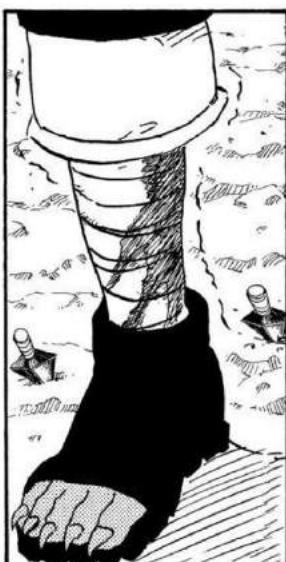
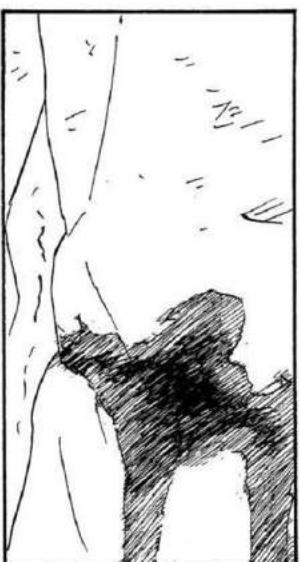
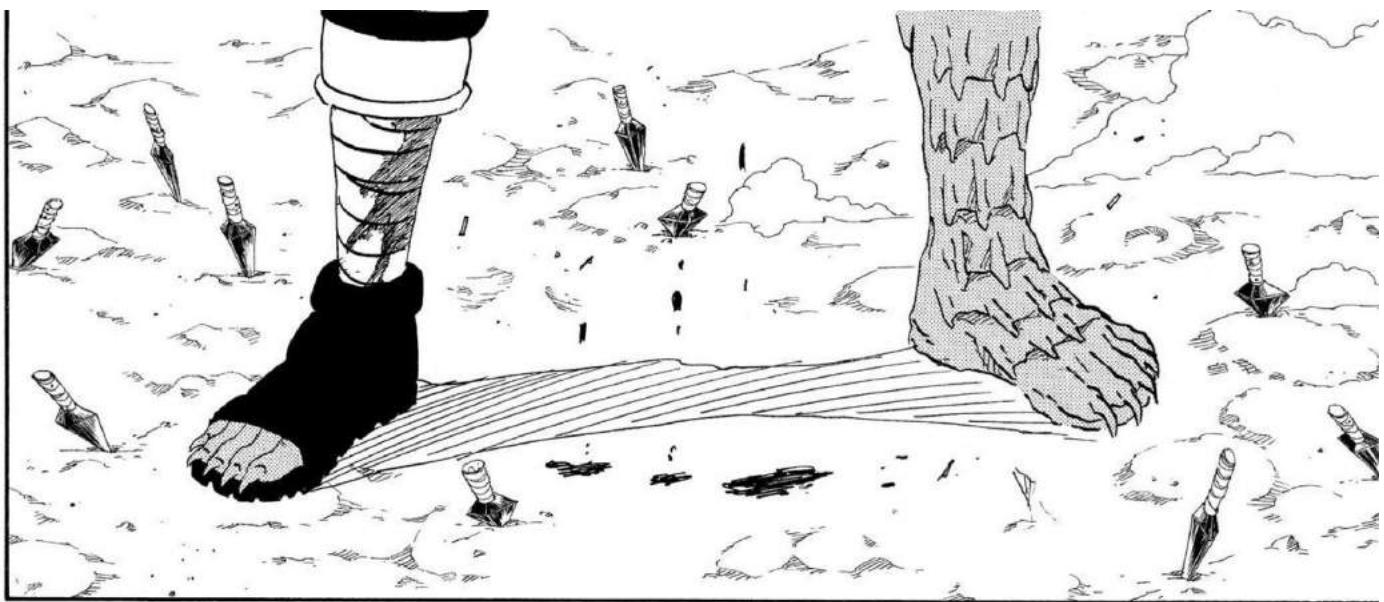
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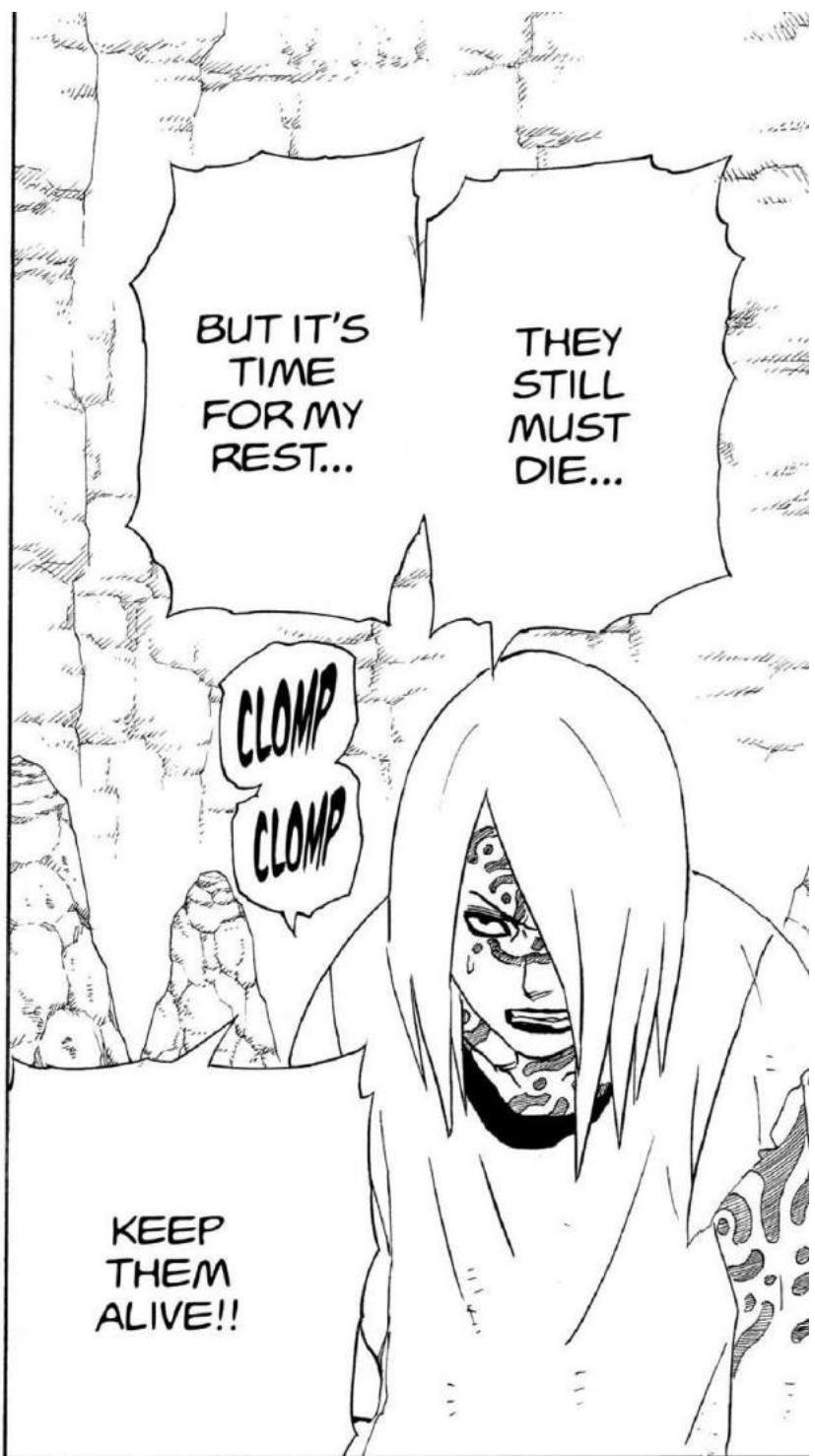
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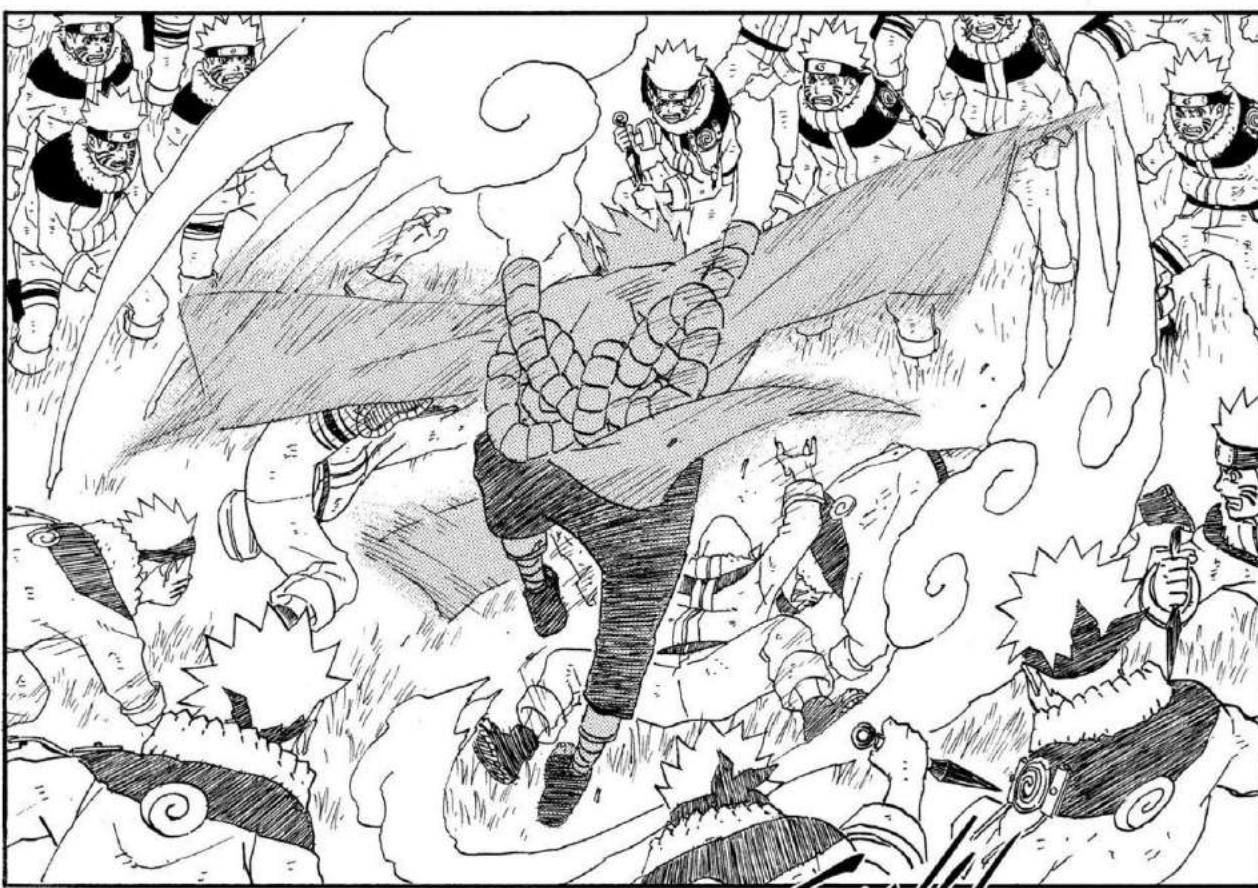
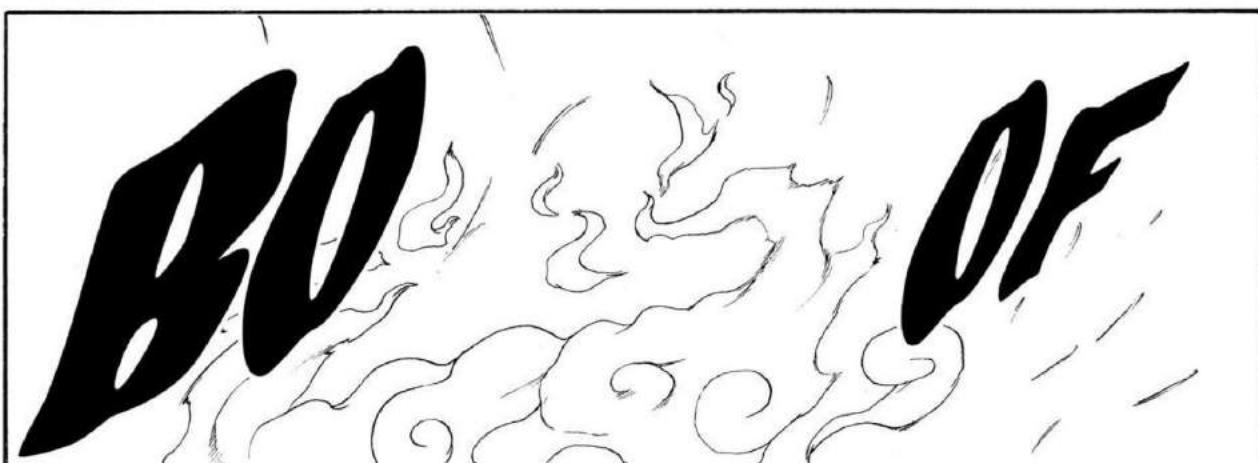


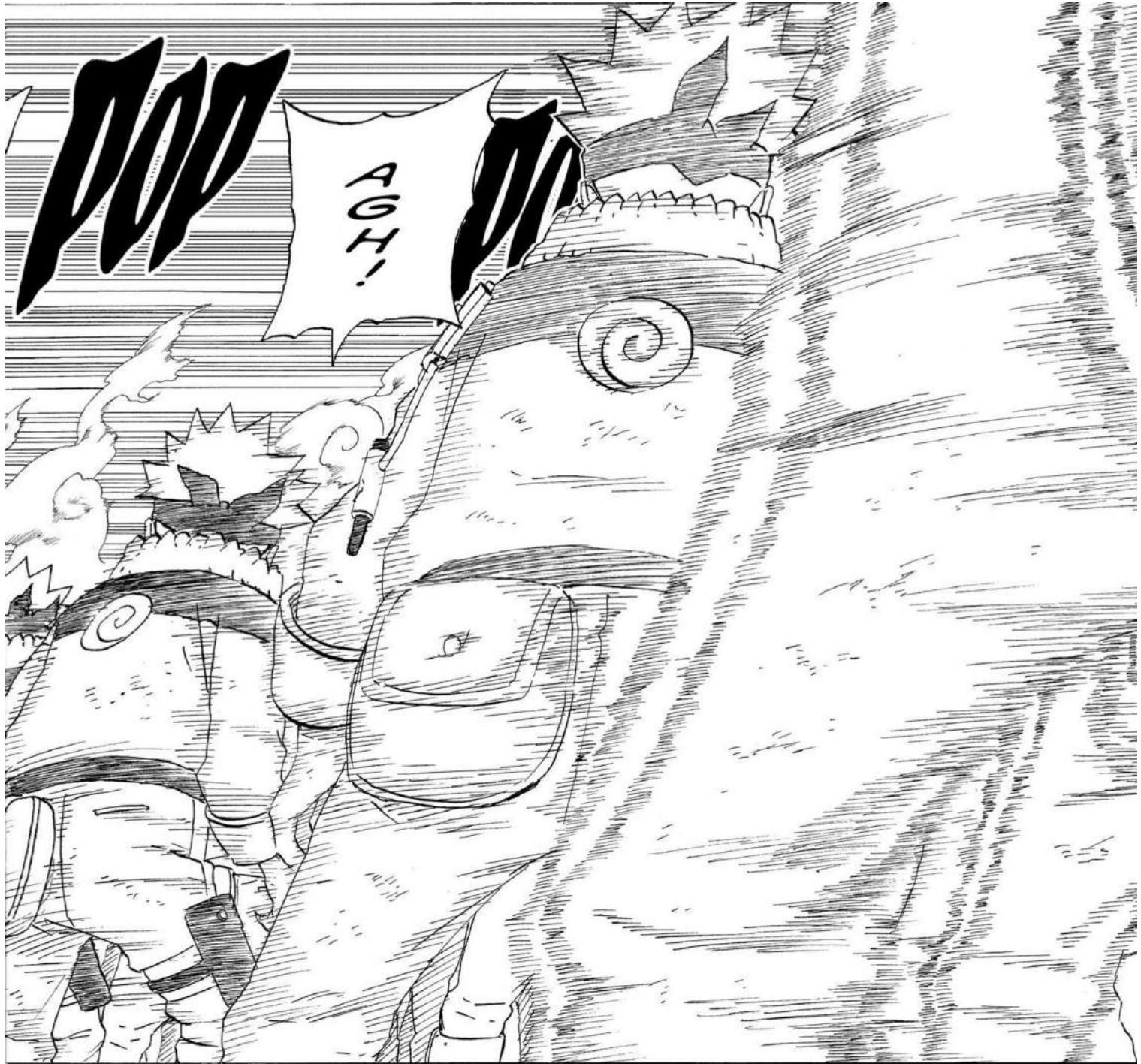
THEY'RE
DEAD!!





READ
THIS
WAY

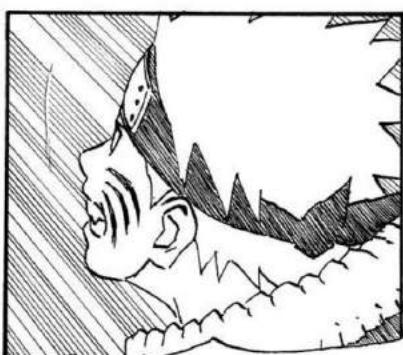
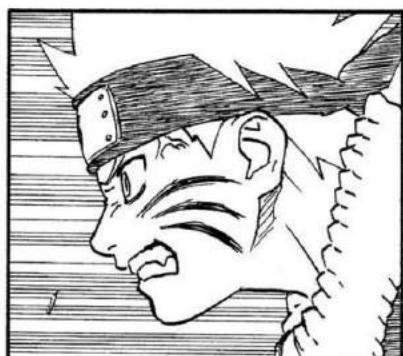






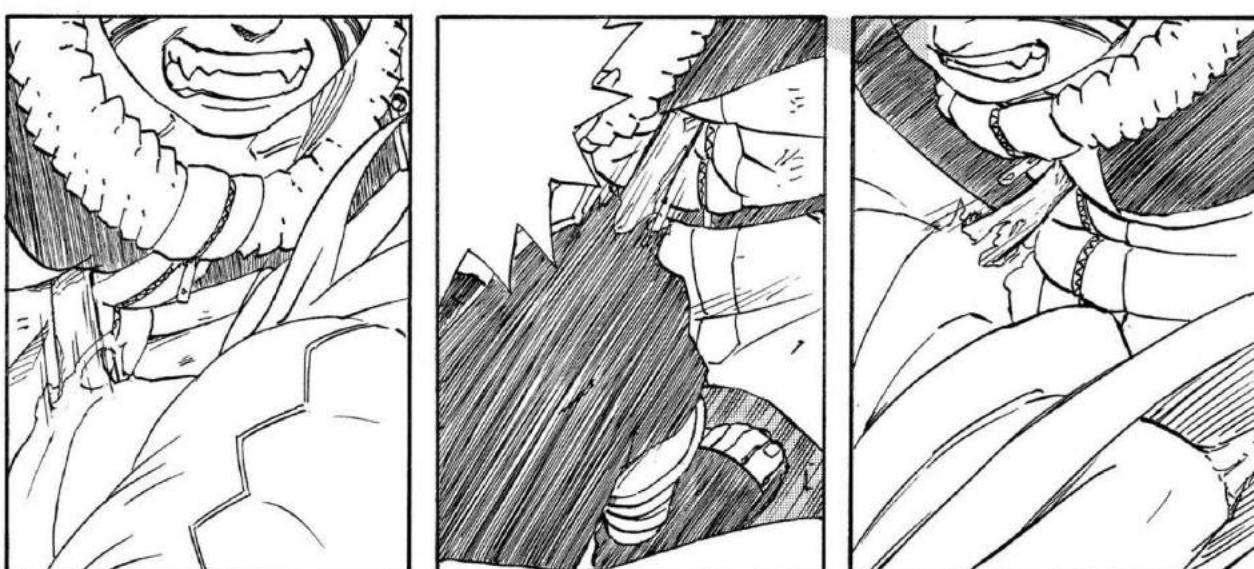


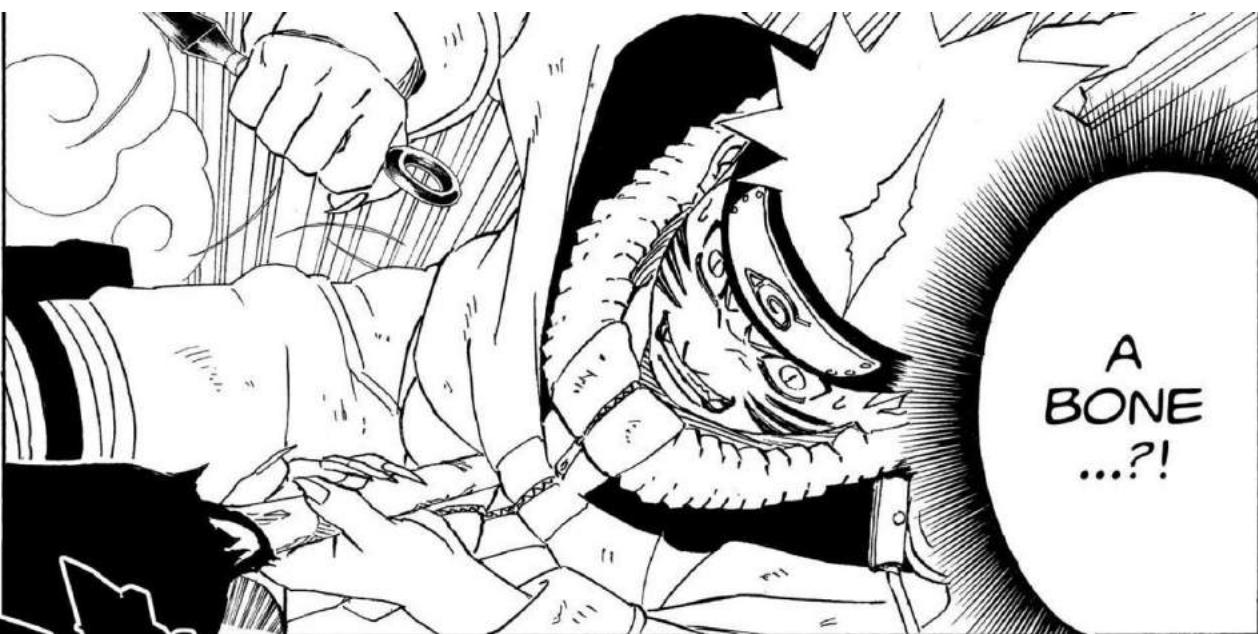
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YAAAAAH!!





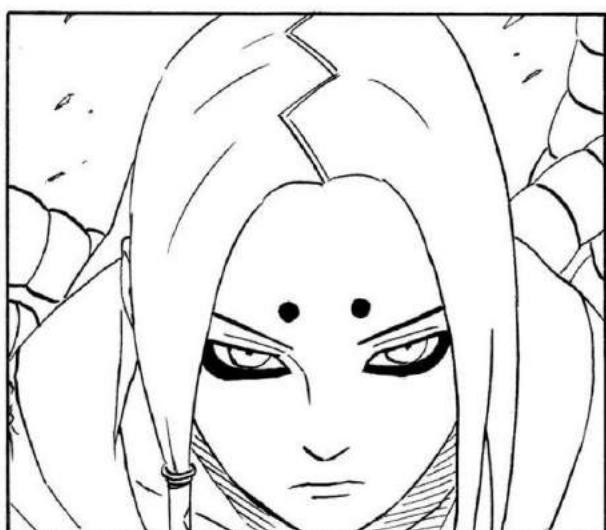
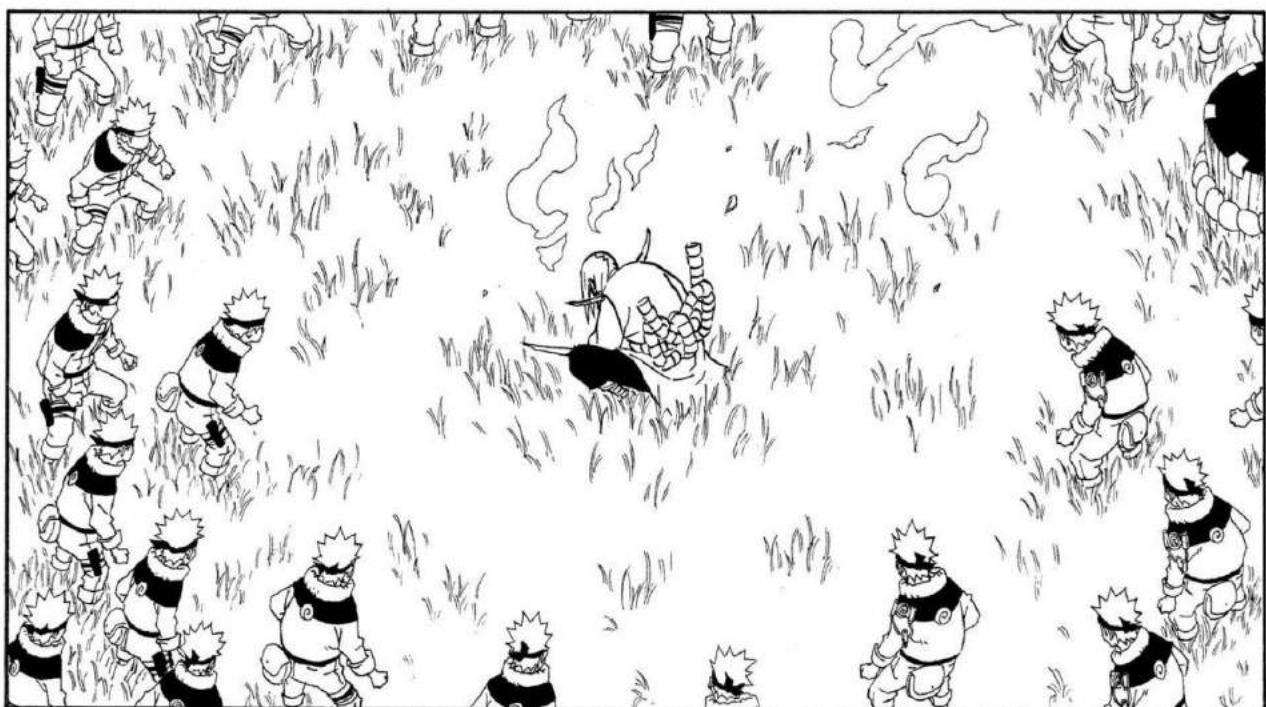






number 206: Predicament...!!



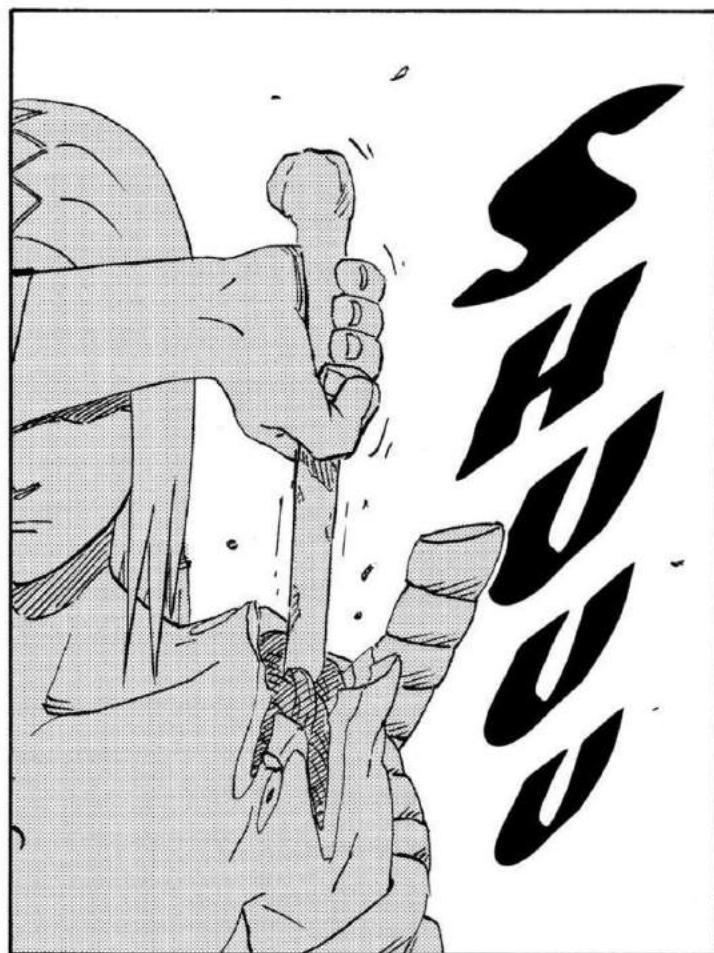


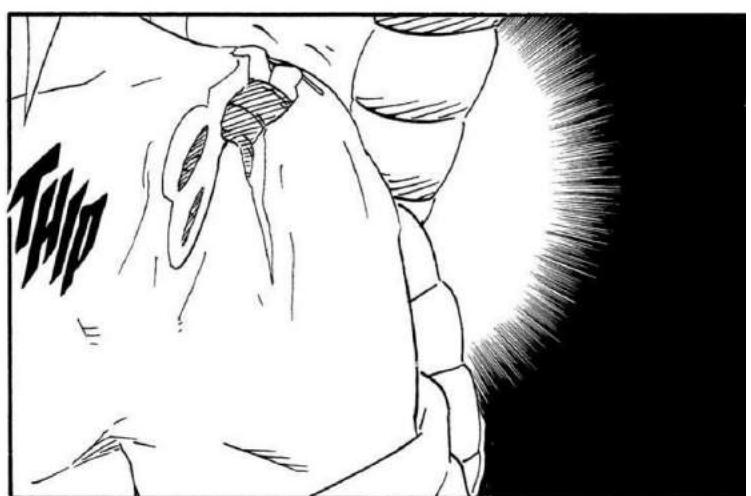
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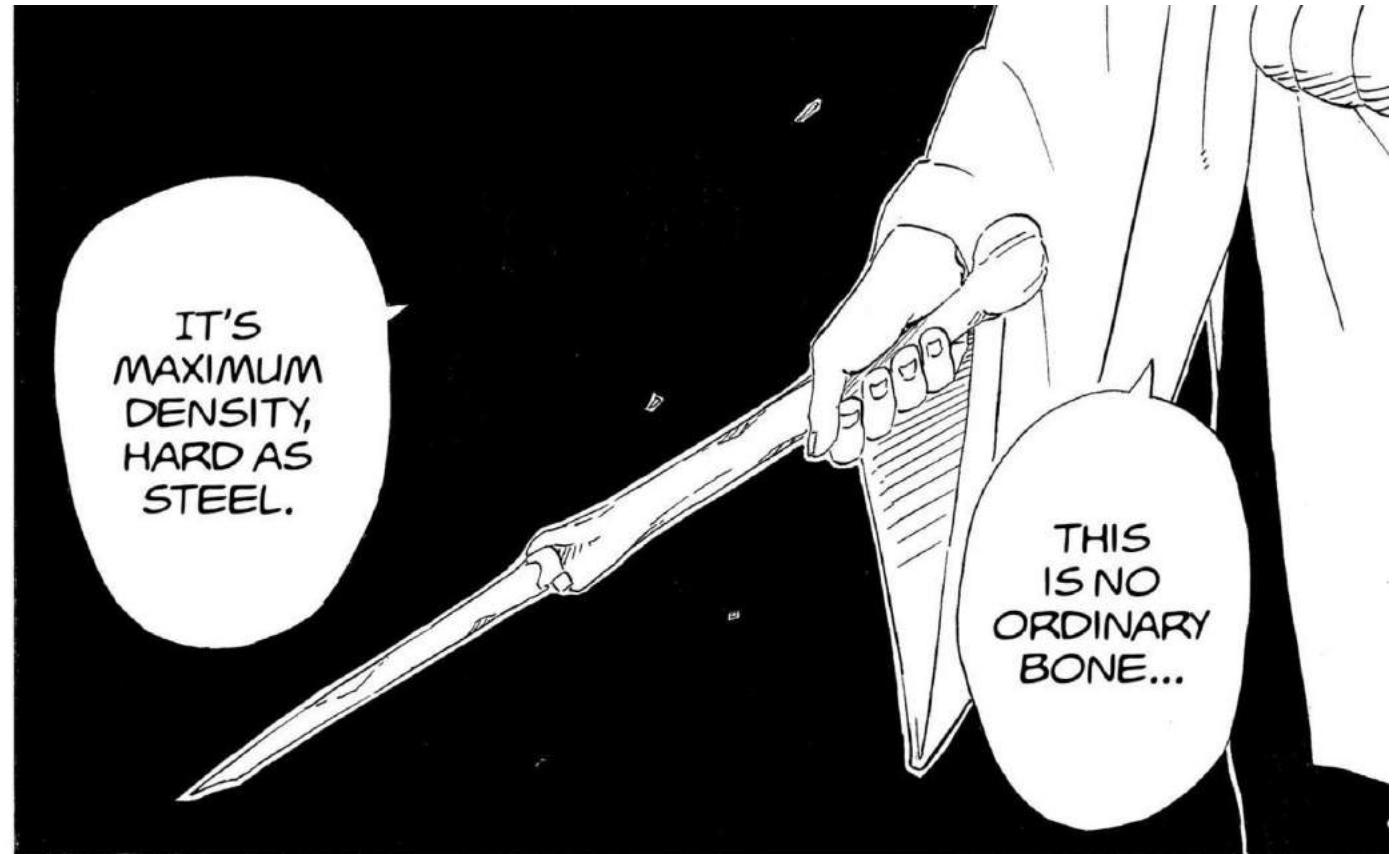
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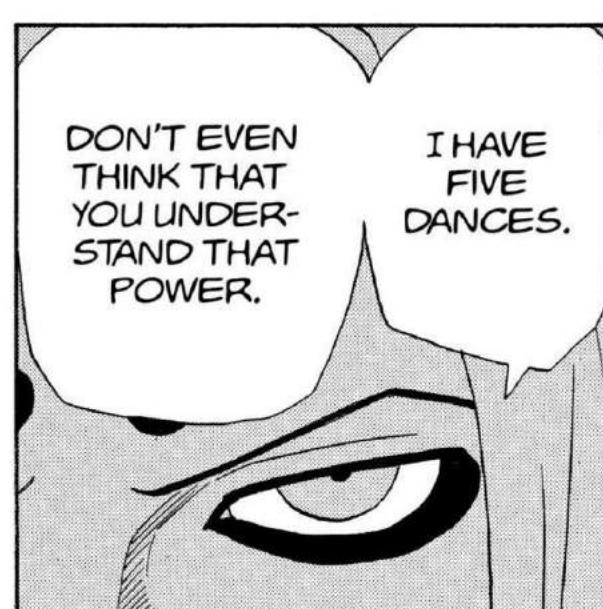
READ
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IT'S
MAXIMUM
DENSITY,
HARD AS
STEEL.

THIS
IS NO
ORDINARY
BONE...



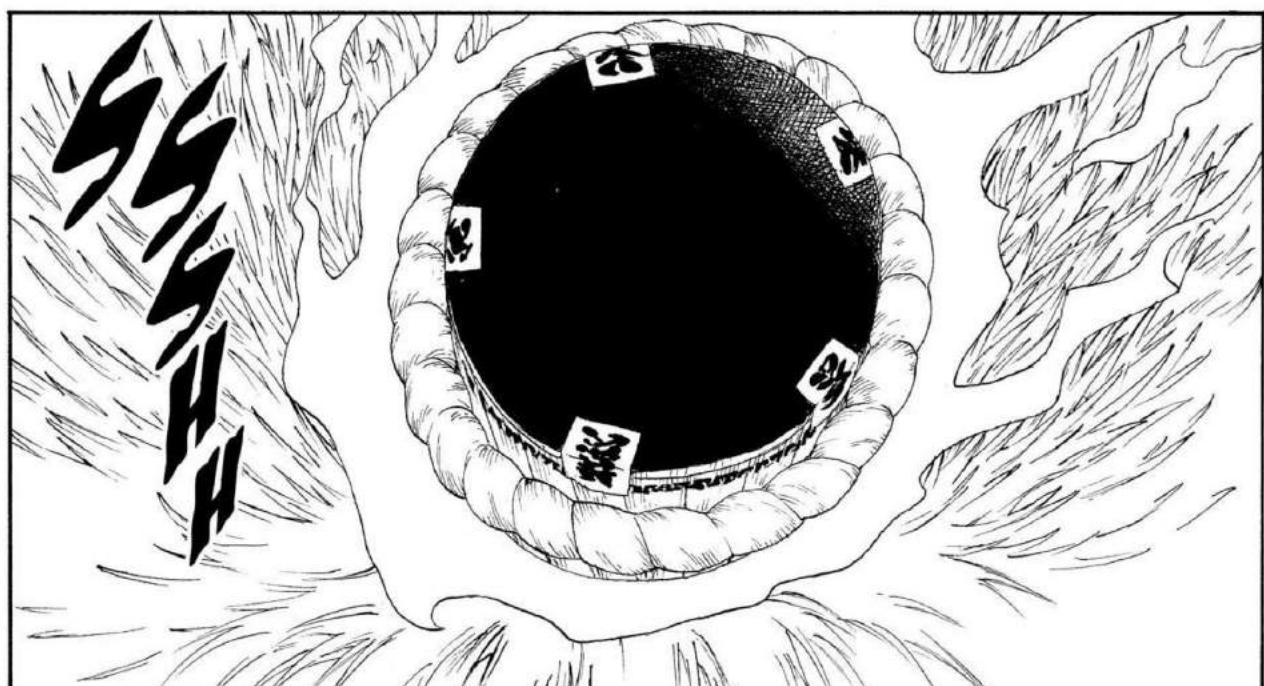
DON'T EVEN
THINK THAT
YOU UNDER-
STAND THAT
POWER.

I HAVE
FIVE
DANCES.

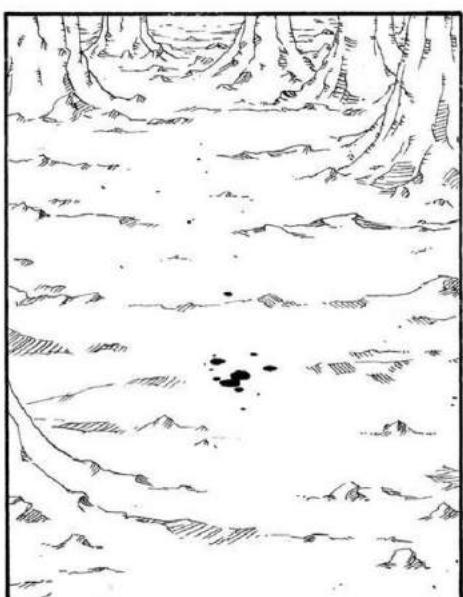
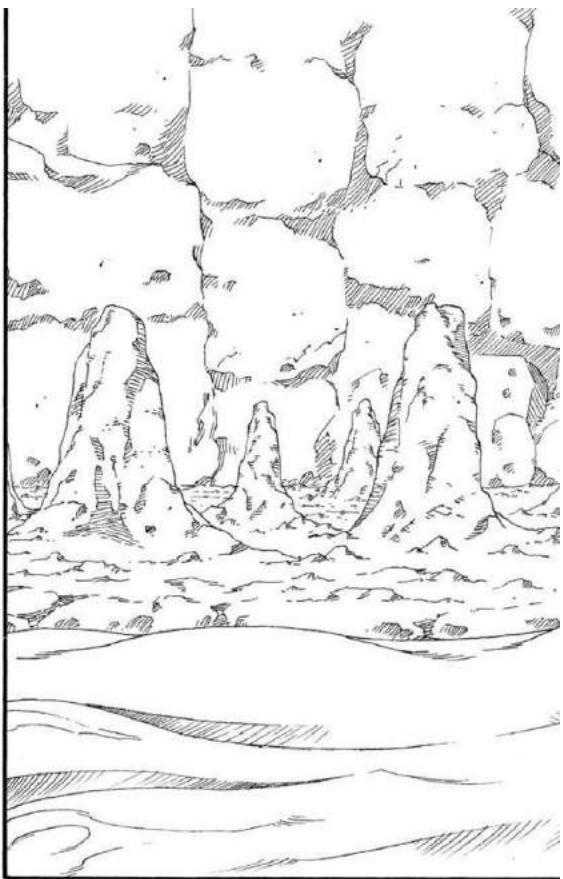


I'M
GONNA
SMASH
IT...

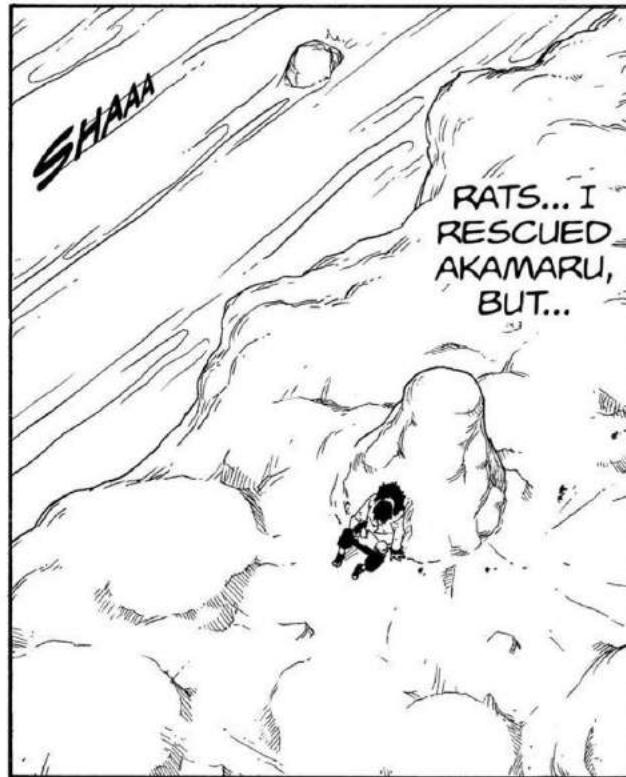
...YEAH,
SO?

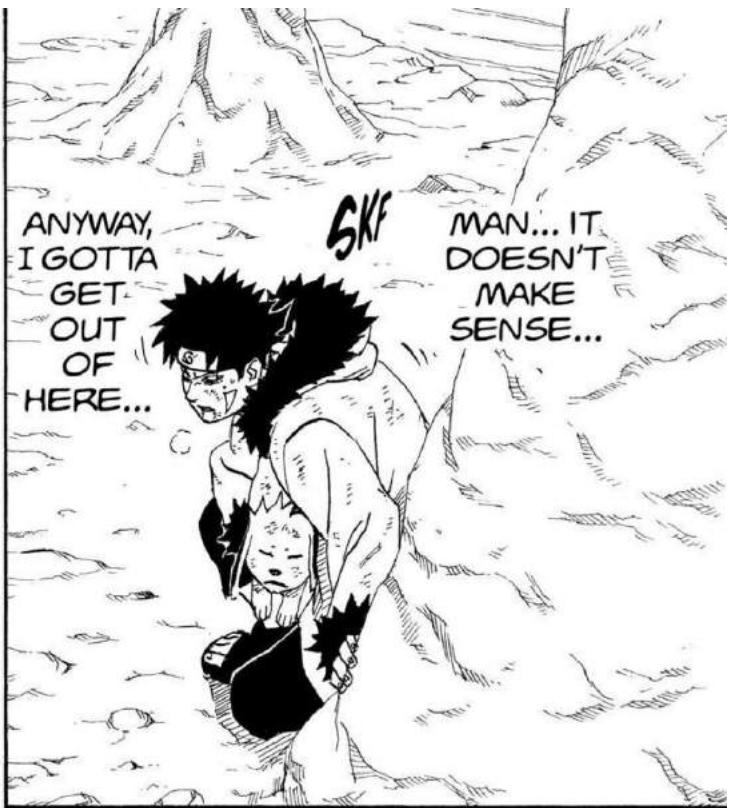




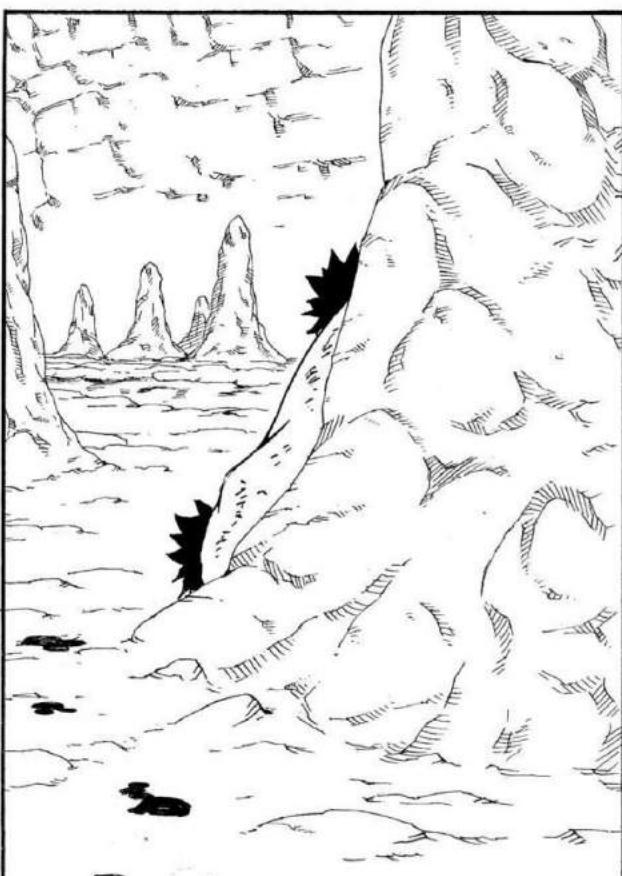


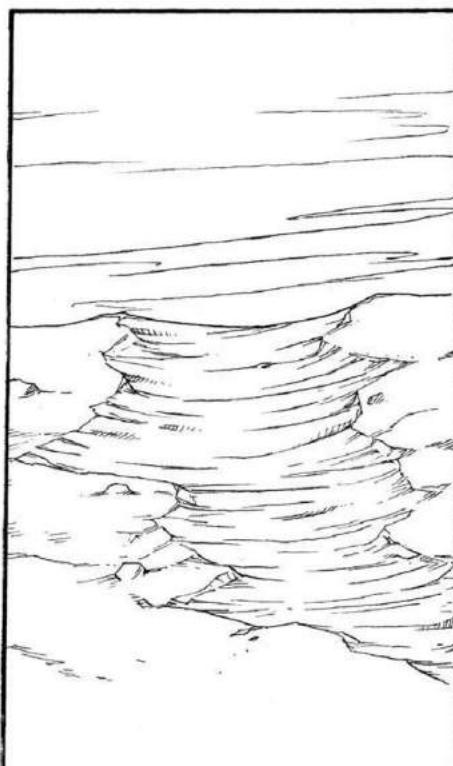
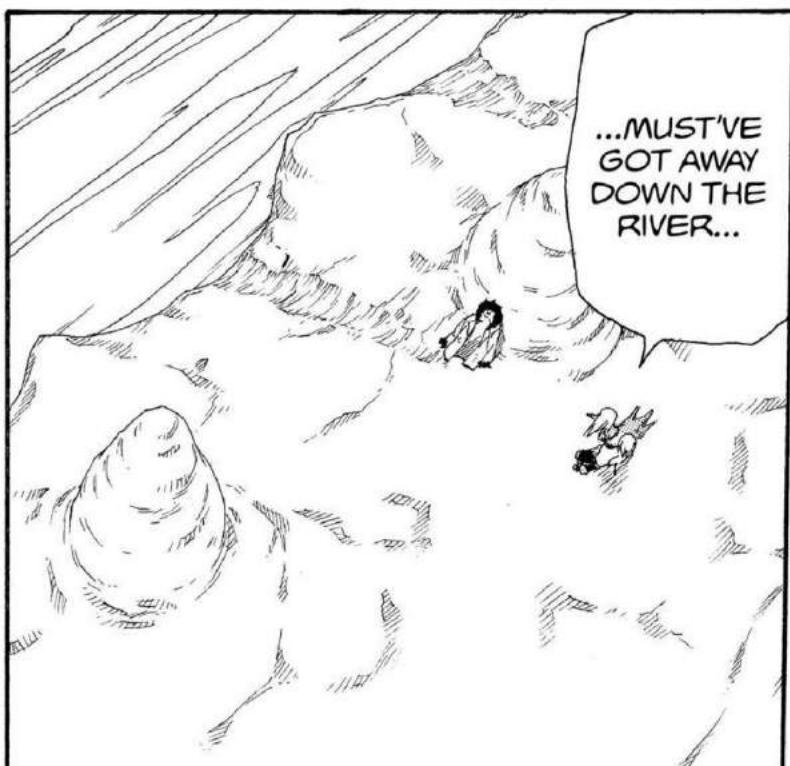
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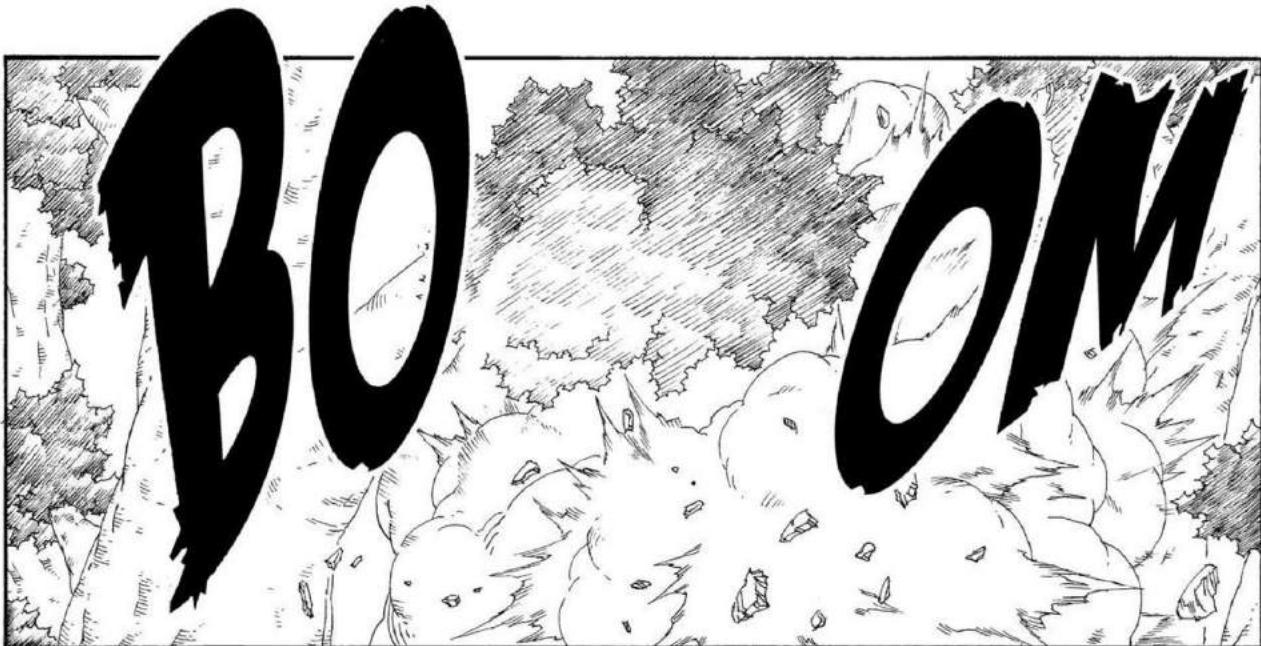


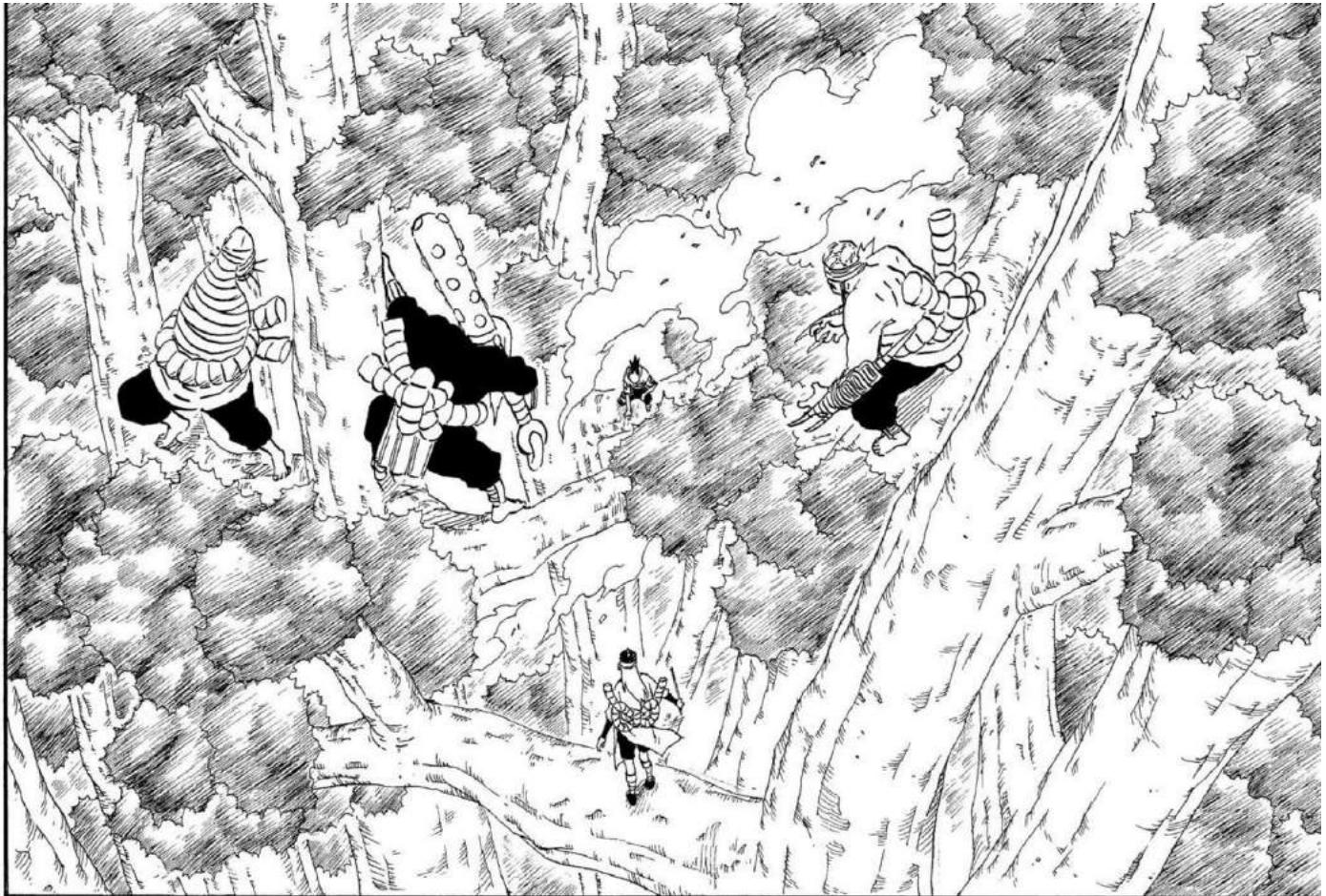
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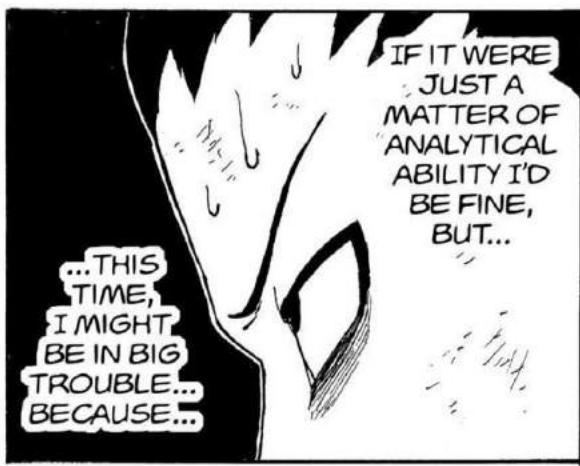




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THE WORLD OF KISHIMOTO MASASHI
MY PERSONAL HISTORY: A STORY TOO EMBARRASSING
TO WRITE DOWN, PART I

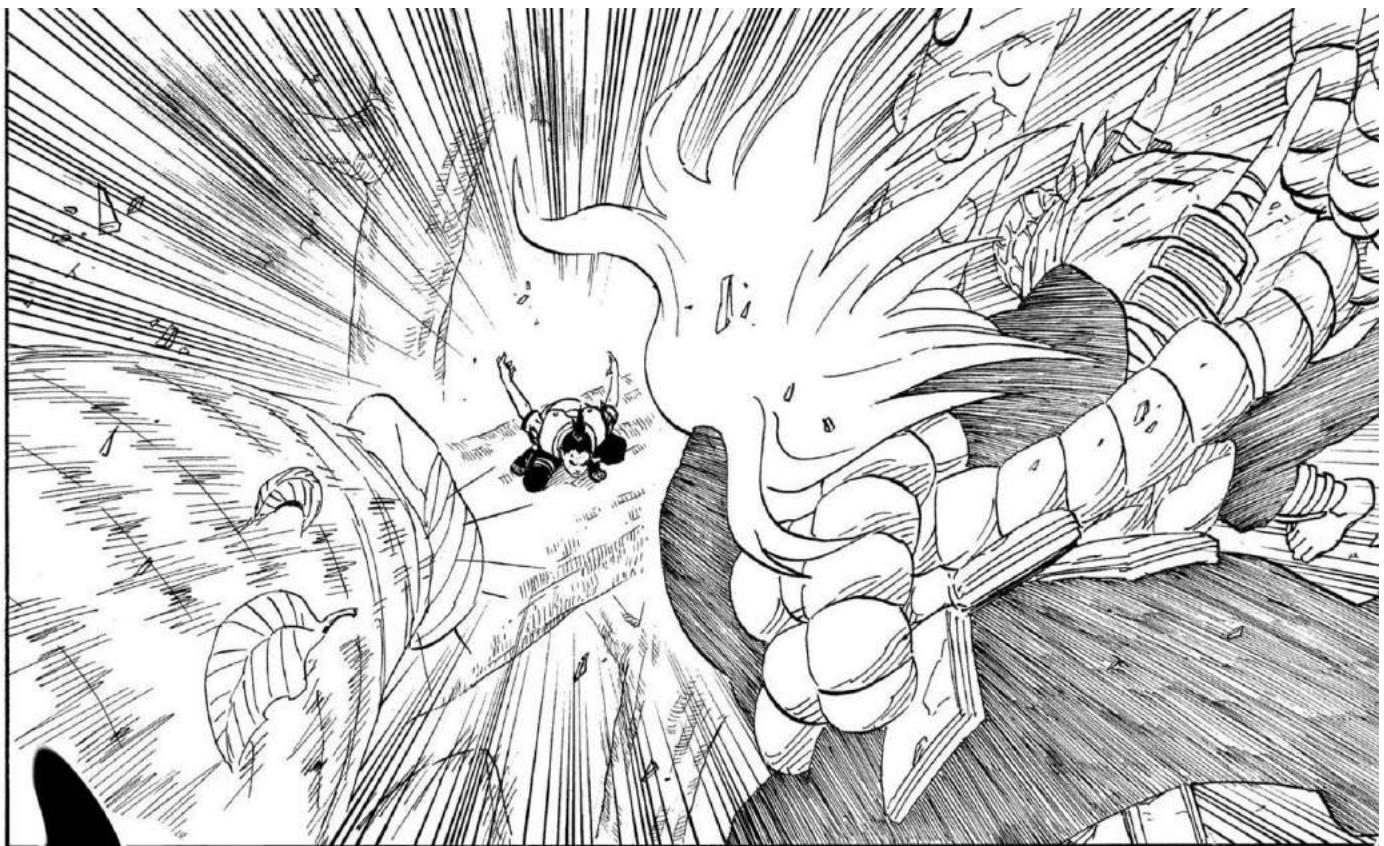
IT'S ABOUT TIME I ENDED WRITING MY PERSONAL HISTORY, BUT I'VE GOT NOTHING TO FILL OUT THIS BLANK PAGE WITH, SO I DECIDED TO CONTINUE WRITING A LITTLE BIT MORE. IT SEEMS THE MORE I WRITE, THE MORE I EMBARRASS MYSELF... BUT, I'M GOING TO WRITE AGAIN ANYWAY, AGAINST MY BETTER JUDGMENT. FIRST OF ALL, THIS STORY IS SO POINTLESS AND SILLY THAT I'VE AVOIDED WRITING IT UNTIL NOW, AND I'M NOT REALLY GUNG-HO ON WRITING IT NOW EITHER. BUT, AGAINST... MY...BETTER...JUDGMENT...

I THINK IT WAS WHEN I WAS IN THE FIRST GRADE. I WAS SO INTO THIS ONE SENTAI, SFX ACTION/ADVENTURE HERO SERIES. THE ONE I PLAYED MOST OFTEN AT THAT AGE WAS TAIYO SENTAI SAN BARUKAN (SOLAR SQUADRON SUN VULCAN). I USED TO PLAY SUN VULCAN FIGHTERS WITH MY FRIEND AND MY TWIN BROTHER A LOT. SUN VULCAN WAS A BIT DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHER SENTAI SERIES. WHILE MOST SENTAI SERIES HEROES WERE MADE UP OF A CELL OF FIVE, SUN VULCAN WAS BRAVE ENOUGH TO SAVE THE EARTH WITH A CELL OF THREE. THE CELL CONSISTED OF VULEAGLE, VULSHARK AND VULPANTHER.

I'VE NEVER LIKED BEING THE LEADER, EVER SINCE I WAS A KID. SO I DECIDED TO PLAY THE ROLES OF EITHER VULSHARK OR VULPANTHER, THE SECOND OR THIRD RANKED GUYS. BUT, BECAUSE VULSHARK'S POSE LOOKED LAME TO ME, EVEN AT THAT AGE, I DECIDED TO GO WITH VULPANTHER. ...ANYWAY... WELL... UMM... I REALLY GOT INTO THE VULPANTHER CHARACTER. OR, IT WAS MORE LIKE... I ALREADY WAS VULPANTHER. BASICALLY, I WAS INTOXICATED WITH VULPANTHER. HOW MUCH SO...? TO BE CONTINUED...

P.S. THE TRUTH SHALL BE REVEALED!

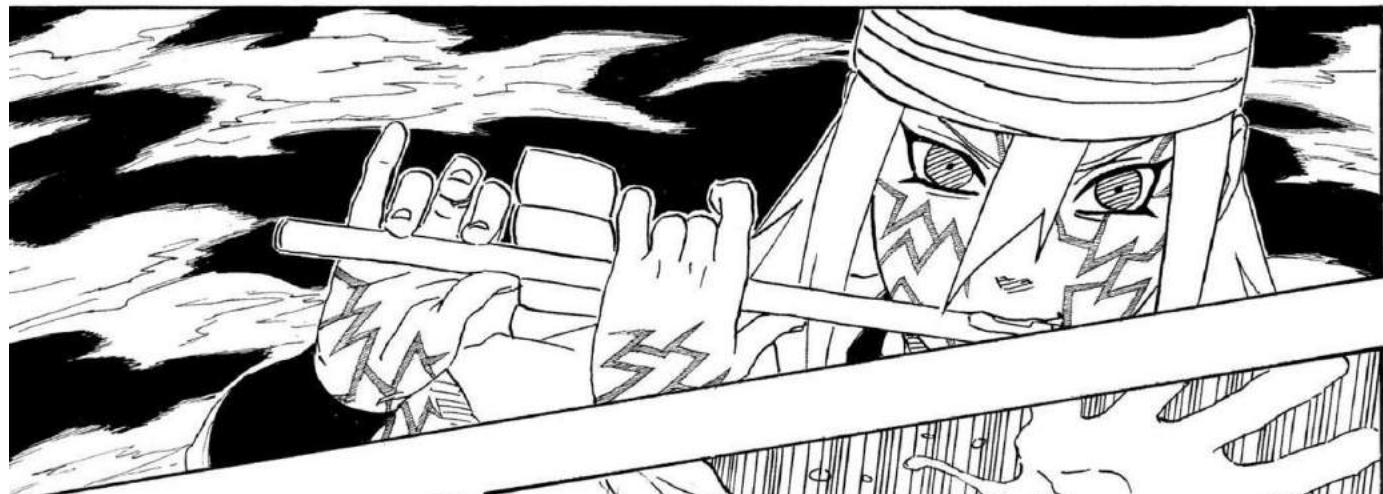


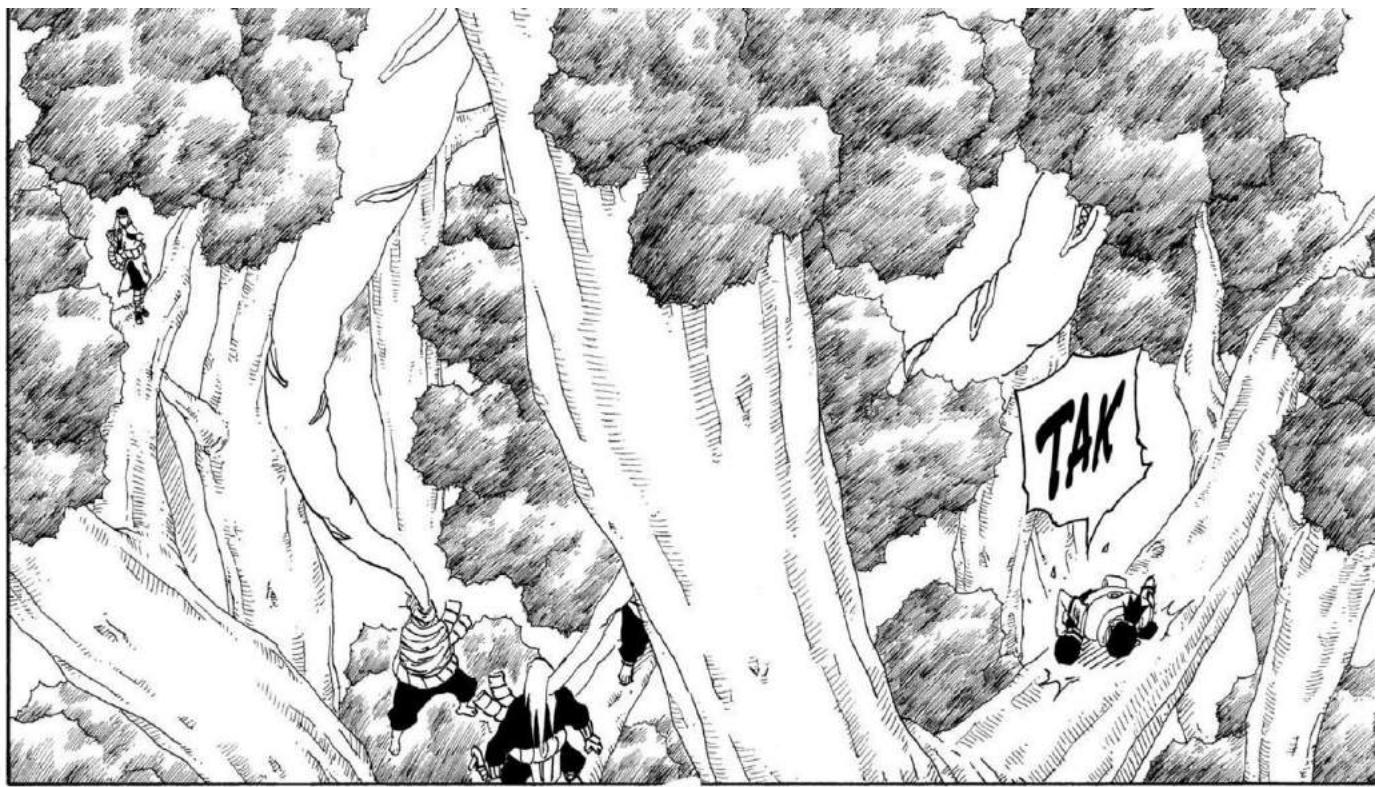


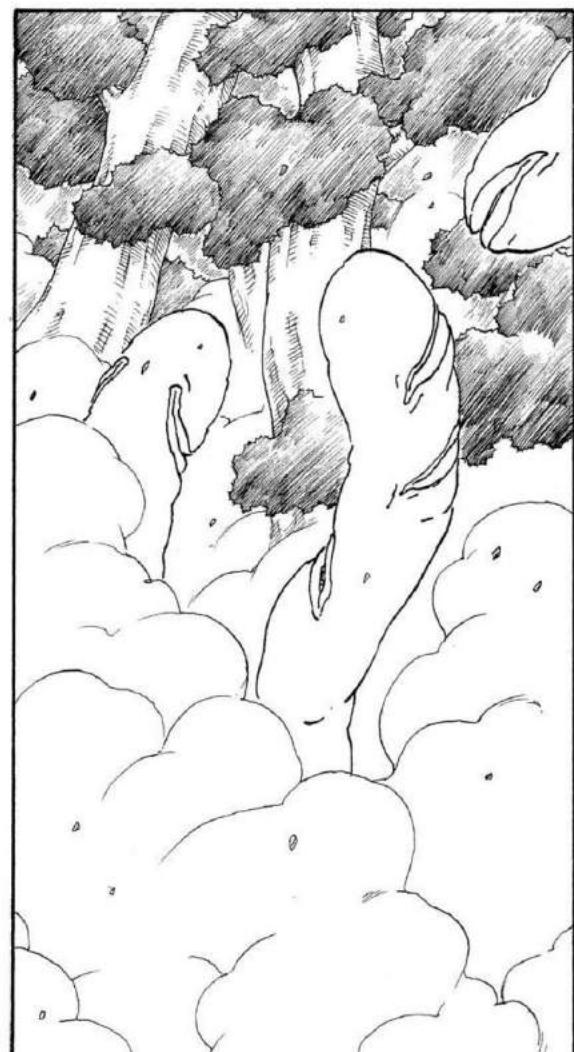
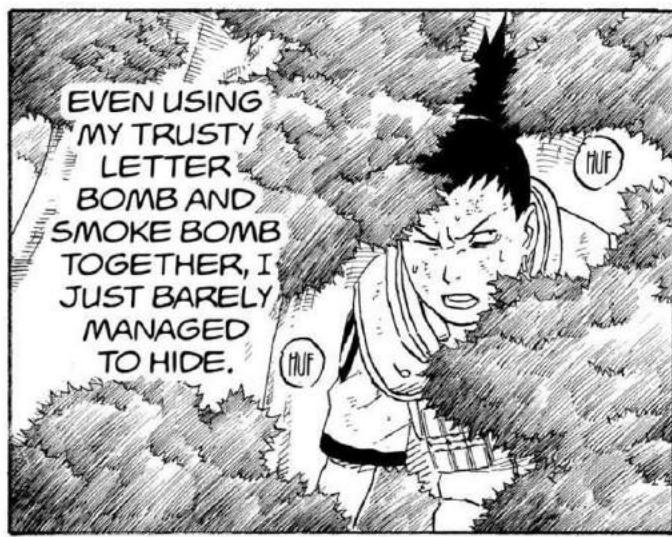
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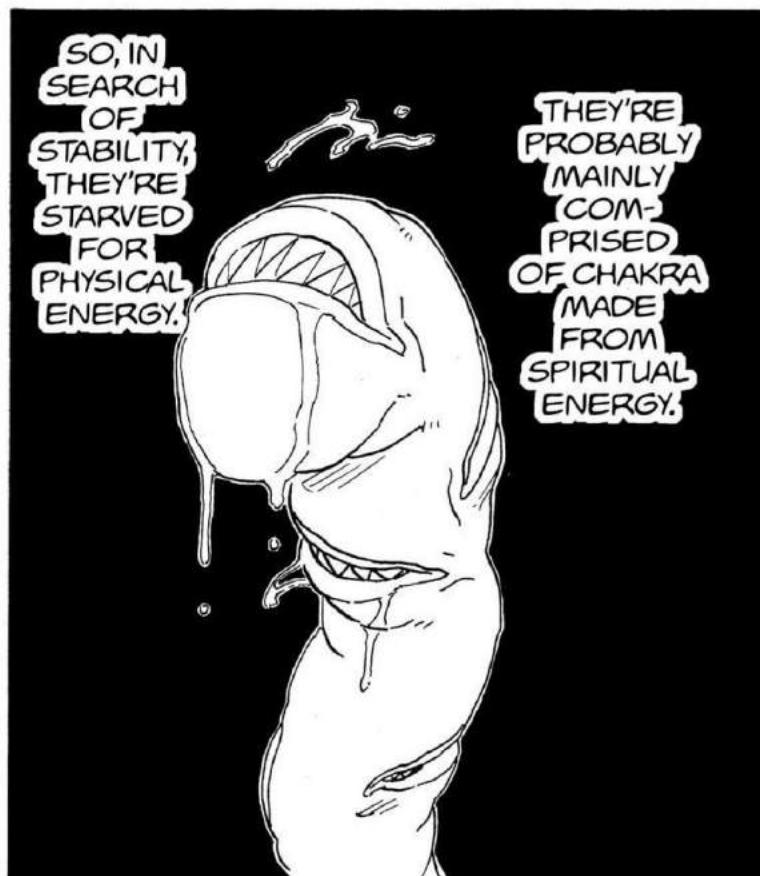


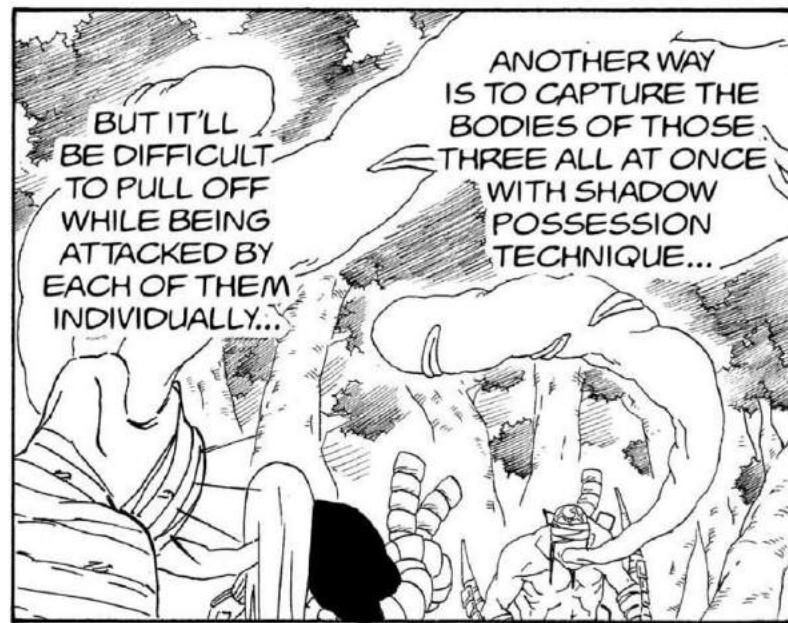


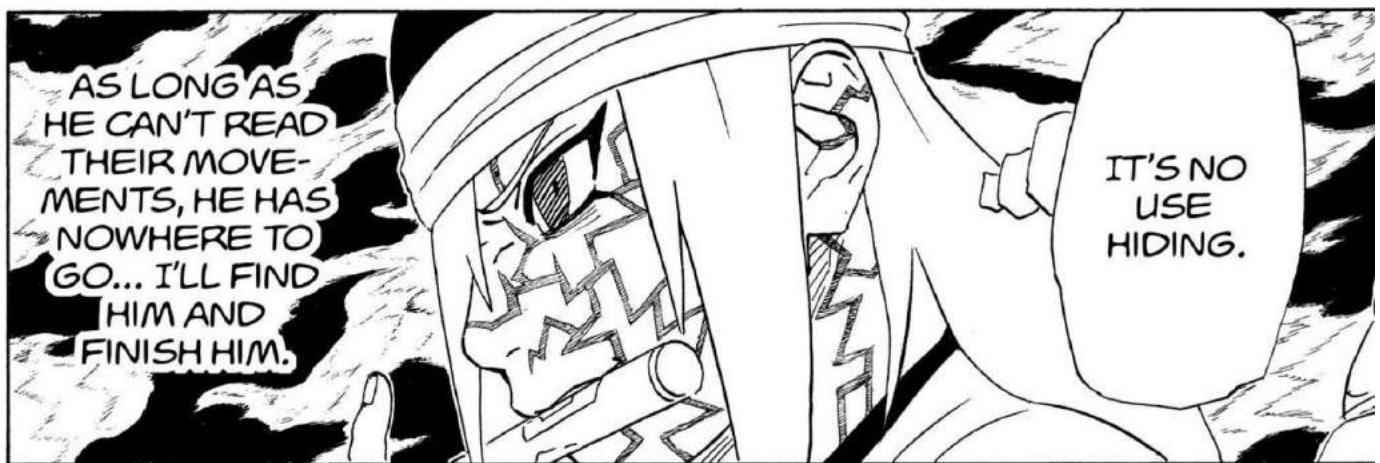








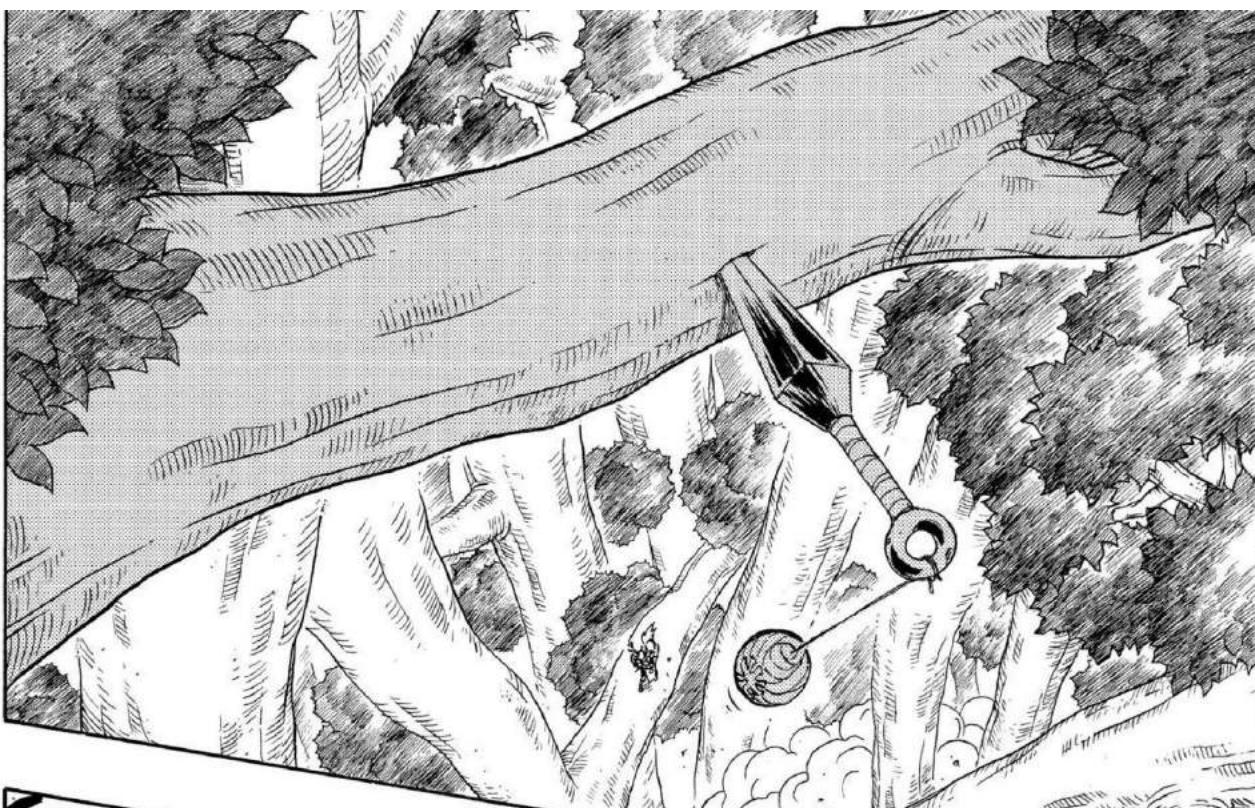


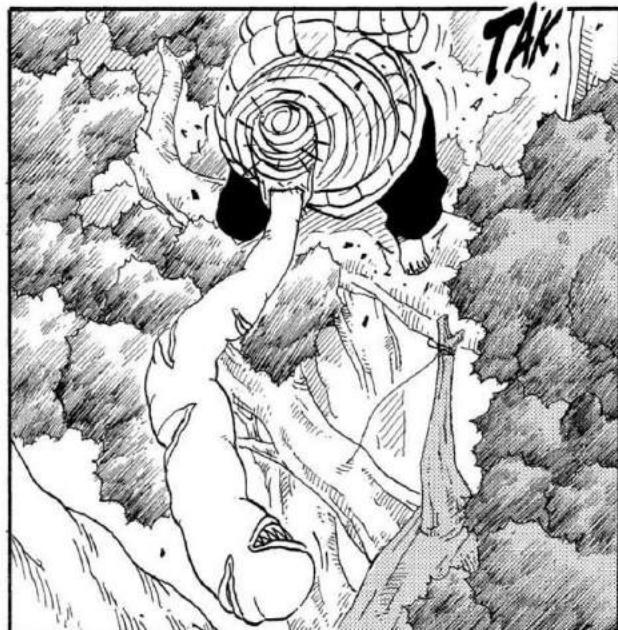
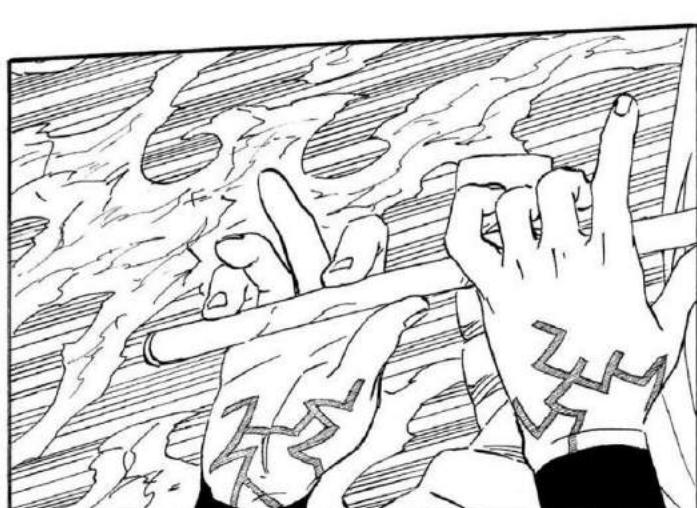
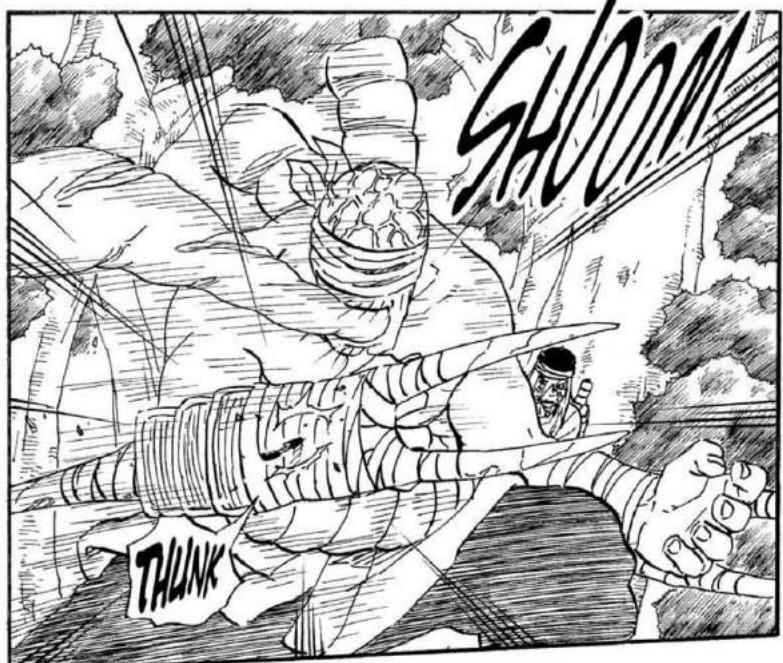


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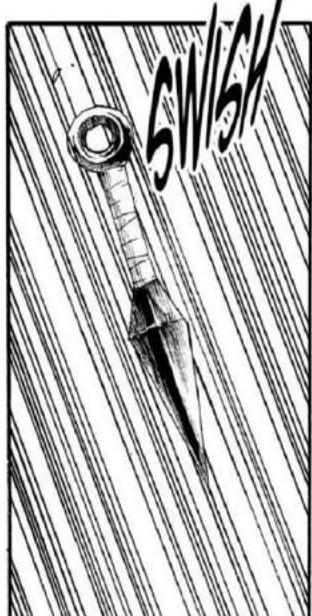


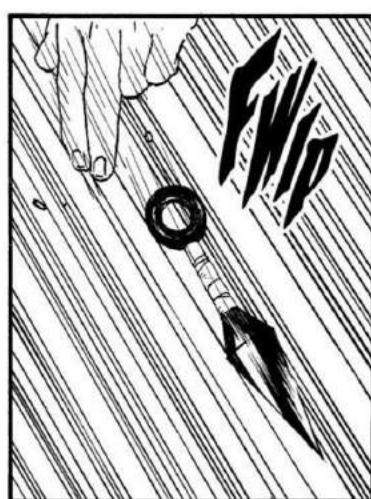
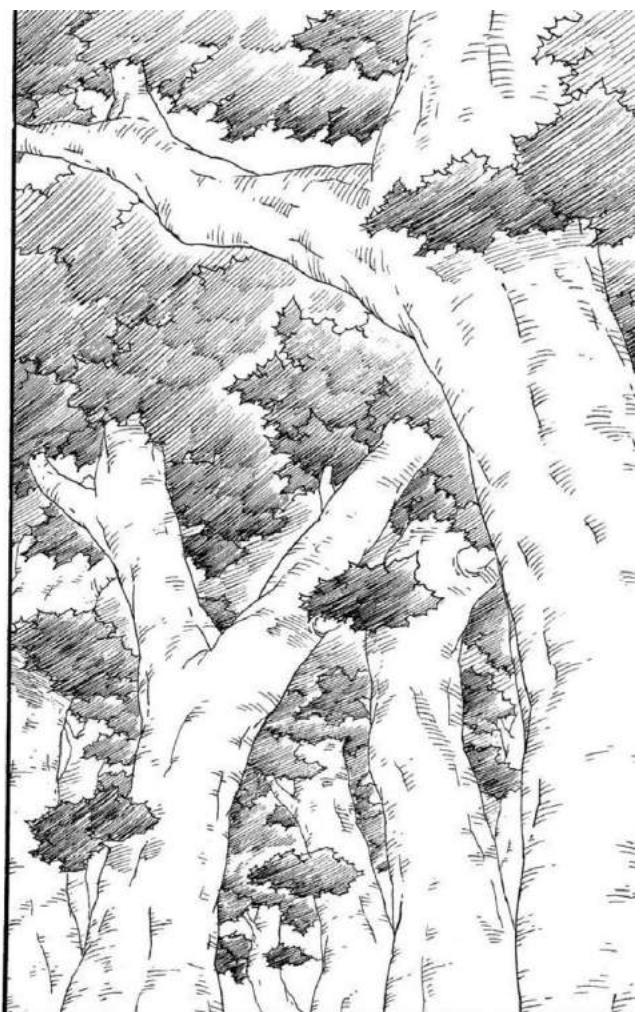


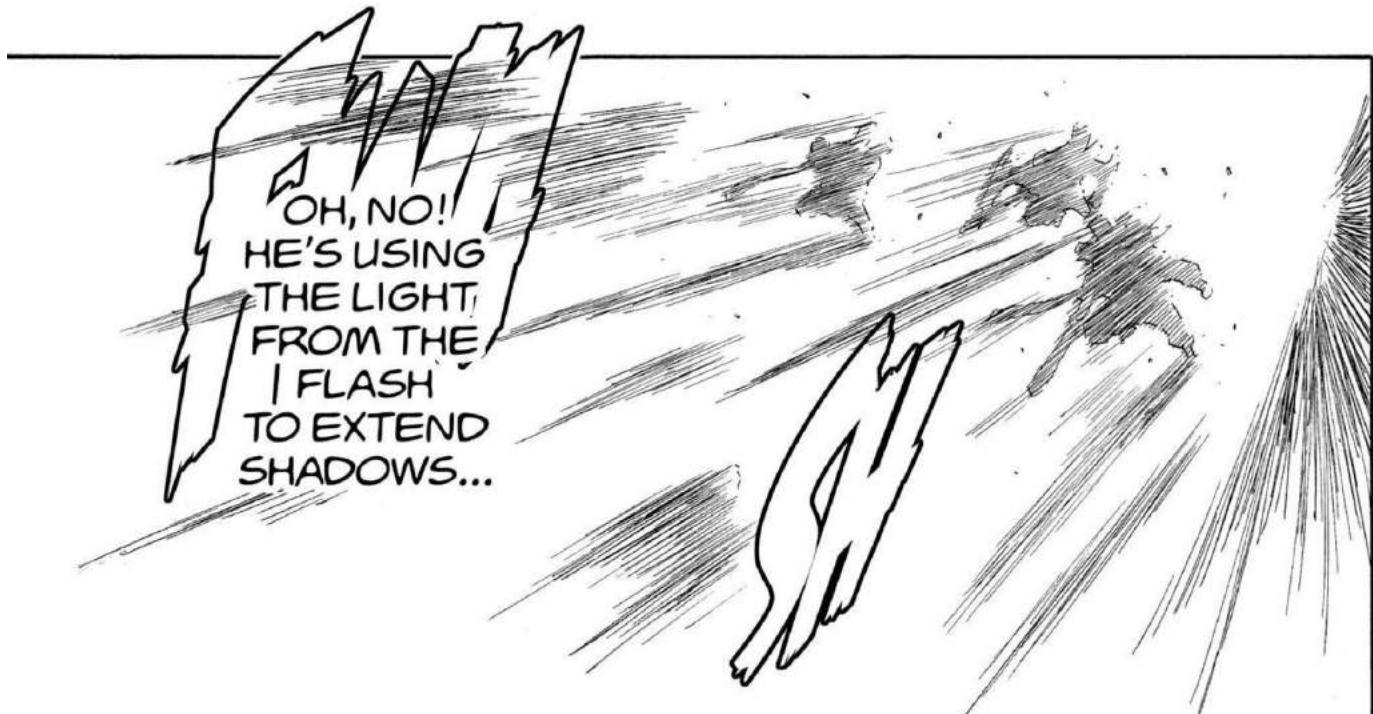
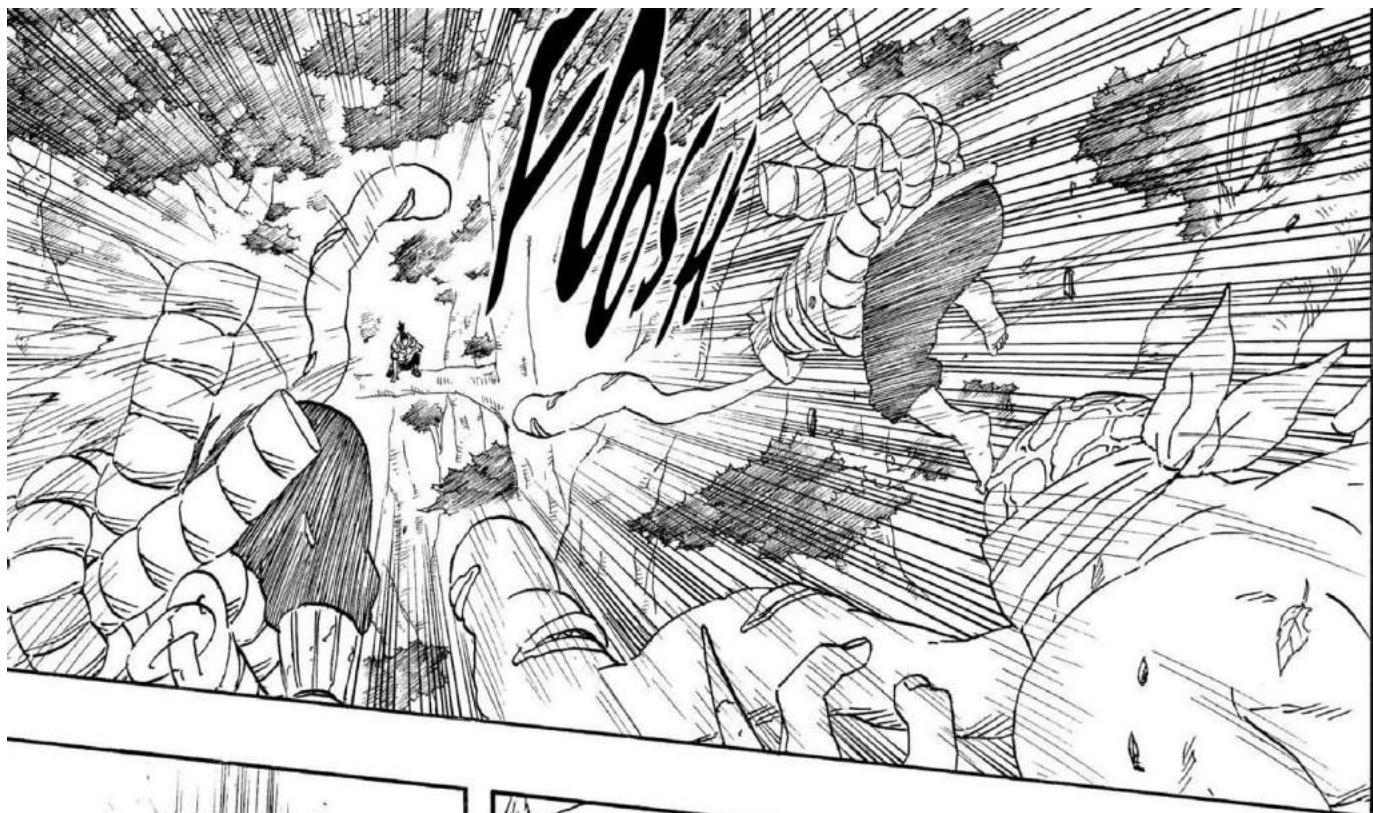




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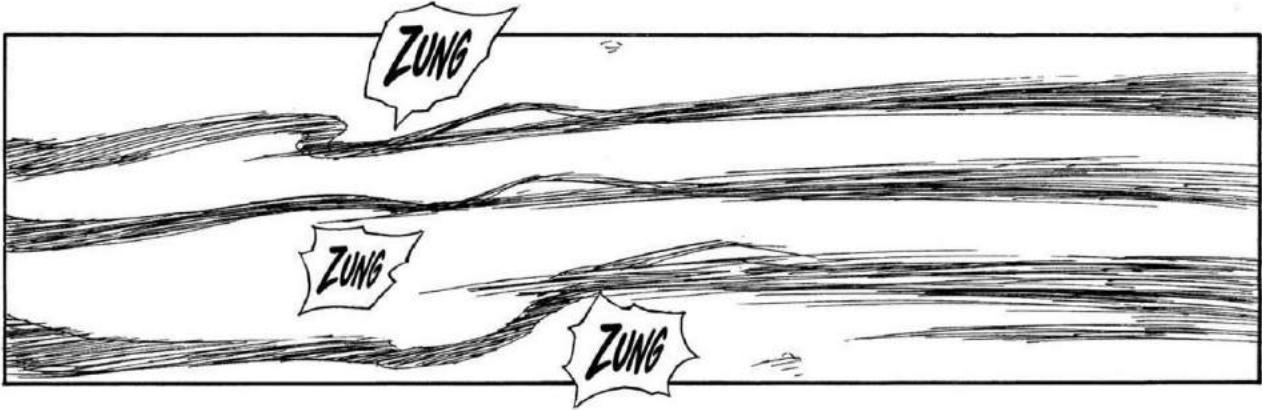








KAGEMANE
NO JUTSU!
SHADOW
POSSESSION
TECHNIQUE!!



READ
THIS
WAY



THE WORLD OF KISHIMOTO MASASHI
MY PERSONAL HISTORY: A STORY TOO EMBARRASSING
TO WRITE DOWN, PART 2

FOR THE ALMOST ONE YEAR I DECIDED TO IDENTIFY MYSELF WITH VULPANTHER, I ENCOUNTERED MANY DIFFICULTIES. VULPANTHER IS YELLOW. BOTTOM LINE, HE'S SYMBOLIZED BY THE COLOR YELLOW! SO, WHENEVER I HAD TO CHOOSE A COLOR, I CHOSE YELLOW! ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING HAD TO BE YELLOW!

VULPANTHER WORE A YELLOW JACKET SO, OF COURSE, I WORE YELLOW CLOTHES. BUT... THE YELLOW CLOTHES LOOKED WORSE THAN I THOUGHT.

VULPANTHER IS [SYMBOLIZED BY] CURRY. BOTTOM LINE, HE LOVES CURRY AND RICE! SO, EVERY TIME SOMEONE ASKED ME, "WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE FOOD?" OF COURSE I ANSWERED "CURRY AND RICE!" ... FOR SOME REASON, IN THIS KIND OF SENTAI SERIES, MANY CHARACTERS WHOSE SYMBOLIC COLOR WAS YELLOW LIKED CURRY AND RICE. THE YELLOW RANGER OF THE GO RANGERS (MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS IN ENGLISH) WAS NO EXCEPTION.

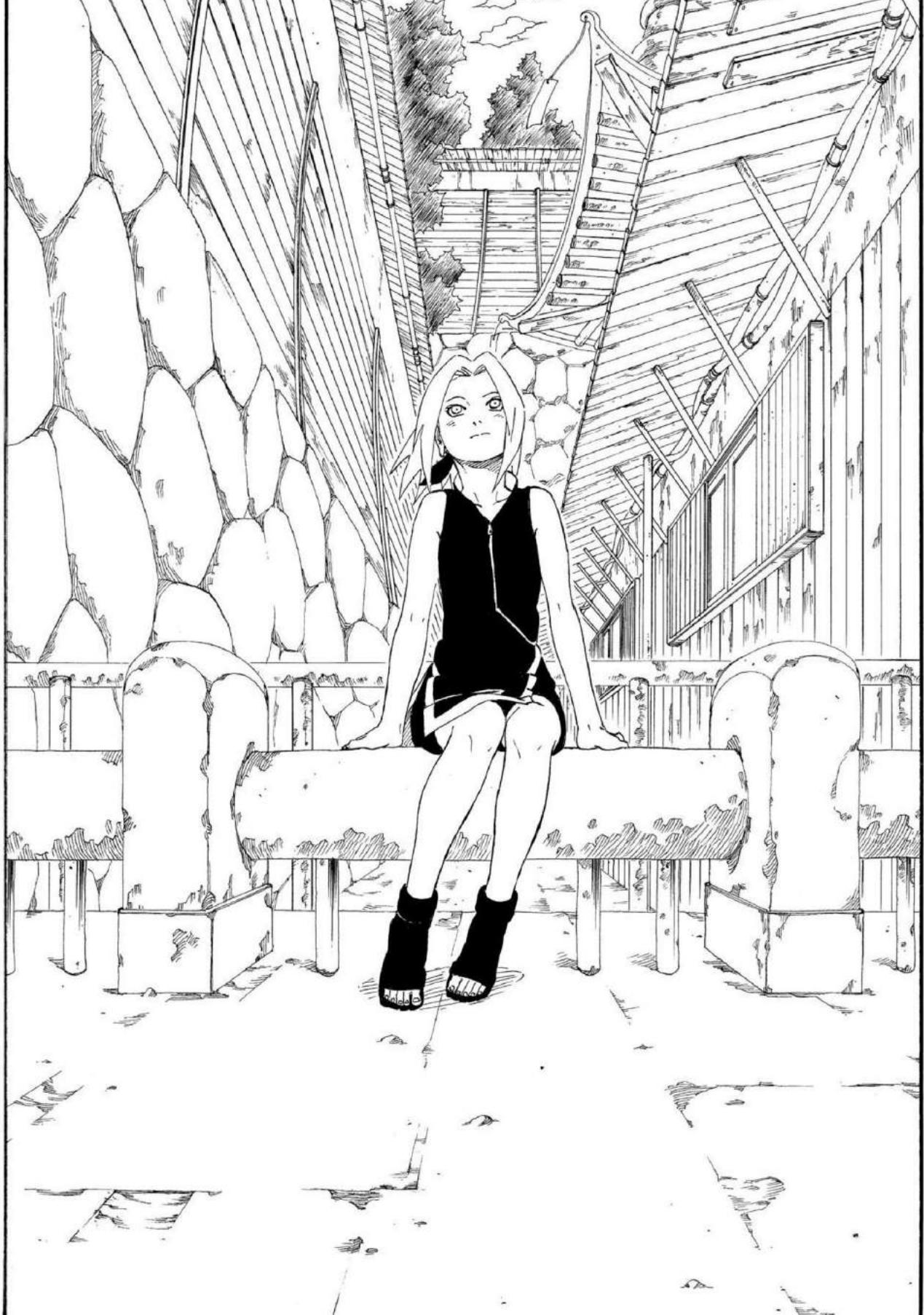
VULPANTHER IS A CHARACTER THAT EATS TONS OF CURRY AND RICE AND ALWAYS ASKS FOR SECONDS. HE PILES UP PLATES ONE AFTER ANOTHER, EATING AS FAST AS WANKO SOBA SPEED-EATERS. AS FAR AS I CAN REMEMBER, HE WOULD PILE UP ABOUT 20 PLATES. BASICALLY, ONE LOOK AT HIM REVEALED CLEARLY THAT HE LOVED CURRY AND RICE.

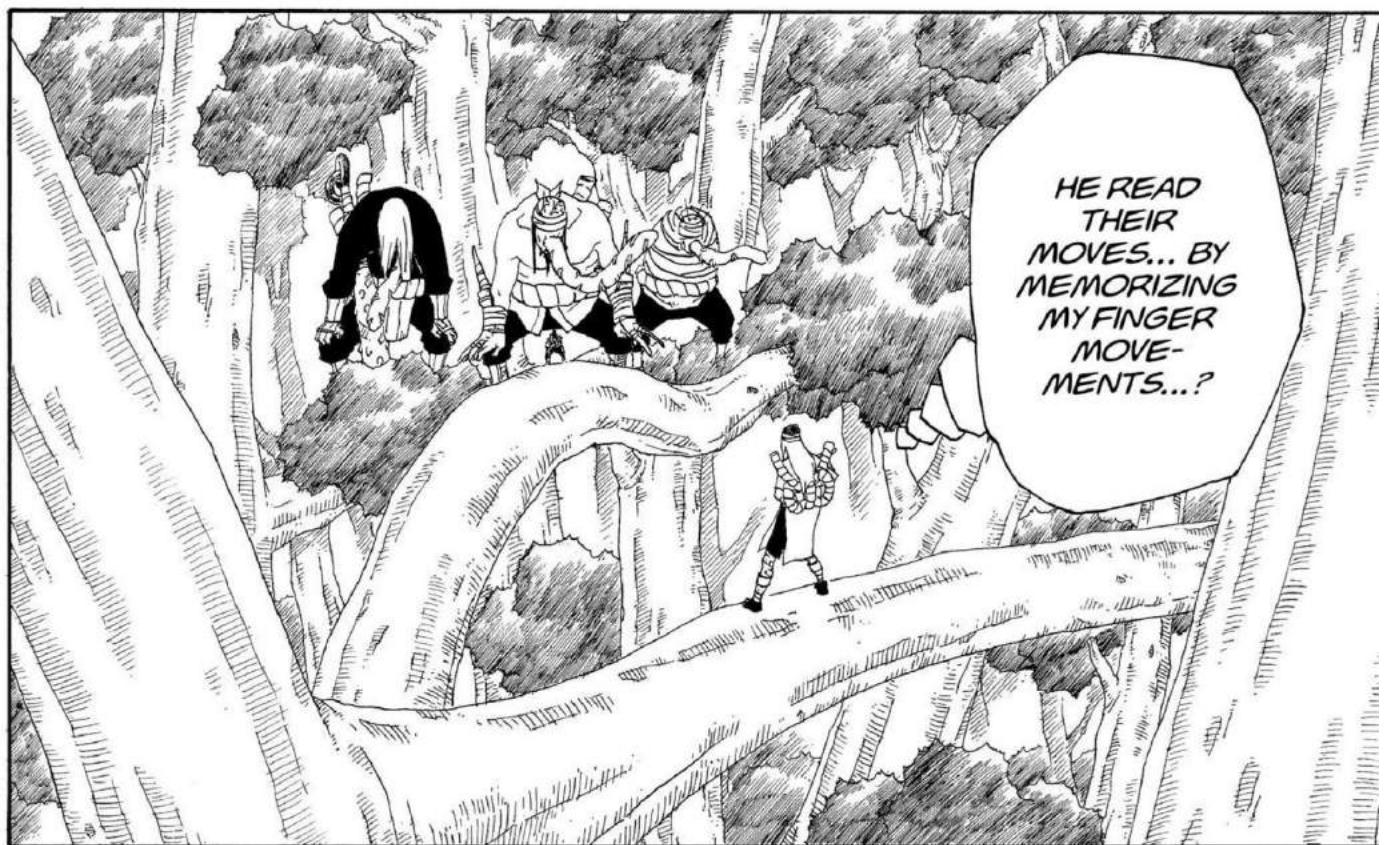
SO YOU CAN IMAGINE HOW EXCITED I GOT ON DAYS WHEN CURRY AND RICE WAS SERVED FOR DINNER!! A WANNABE VULPANTHER DEFINITELY HAD TO ASK FOR SECONDS NO MATTER WHAT, EVEN WHEN HE FELT LIKE THROWING UP OR THAT HIS STOMACH WAS GOING TO BURST. THEN I WOULD SAY TO MY MOTHER, "SECONDS, PLEASE! NEXT PLATE!" MY MOTHER WOULD SAY, "...? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?! IF YOU WANT SECONDS, PUT IT ON THE SAME PLATE YOU HAVE NOW!! NO NEED TO DIRTY ANOTHER PLATE!!" I THOUGHT, "...CAN'T ARGUE WITH THAT..."

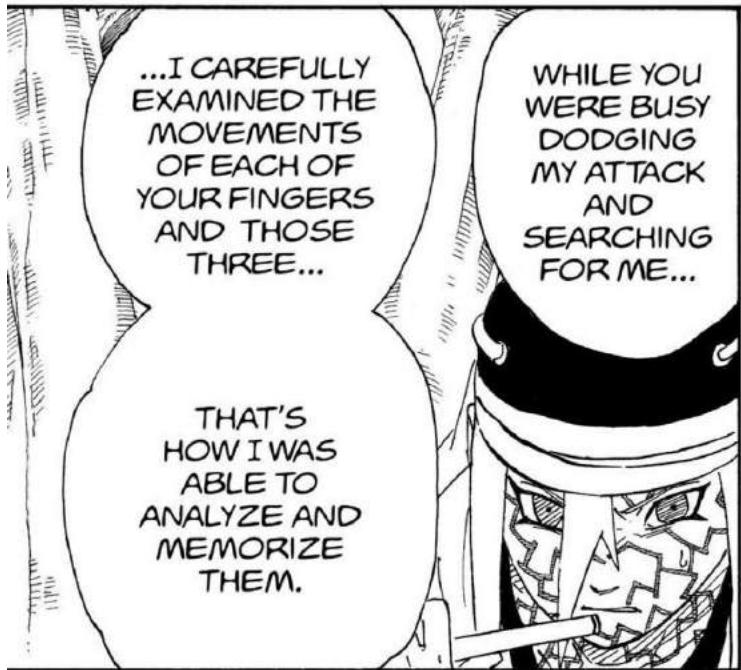
VULPANTHER ALSO CLIMBS WALLS. HE HAS SHARP CLAWS AND CAN CLIMB NO MATTER WHAT, EVEN IF THE WALL IS PERPENDICULAR TO THE GROUND! OF COURSE, I HAD TO CLIMB ANY PERPENDICULAR WALL I SAW WHEN PLAYING SUN VULCAN. ...EVEN I, AS A FIRST GRADER, KNEW THAT NO ONE COULD CLIMB A PERPENDICULAR WALL. BUT, IN FRONT OF VULEAGLE AND VULSHARK, I HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO GO FOR IT. AS I RAN TOWARD THE WALL, I THOUGHT, "...HONESTLY, PLAYING VULPANTHER IS TOUGH..." JUMP!! AND SPLAT, I FLATTENED MYSELF AGAINST THAT WALL! SCRATCH! "OUCH!!" ...MY FINGERNAILS GOT TORN OFF. ...FROM THAT DAY FORWARD, I QUIT PLAYING VULPANTHER.

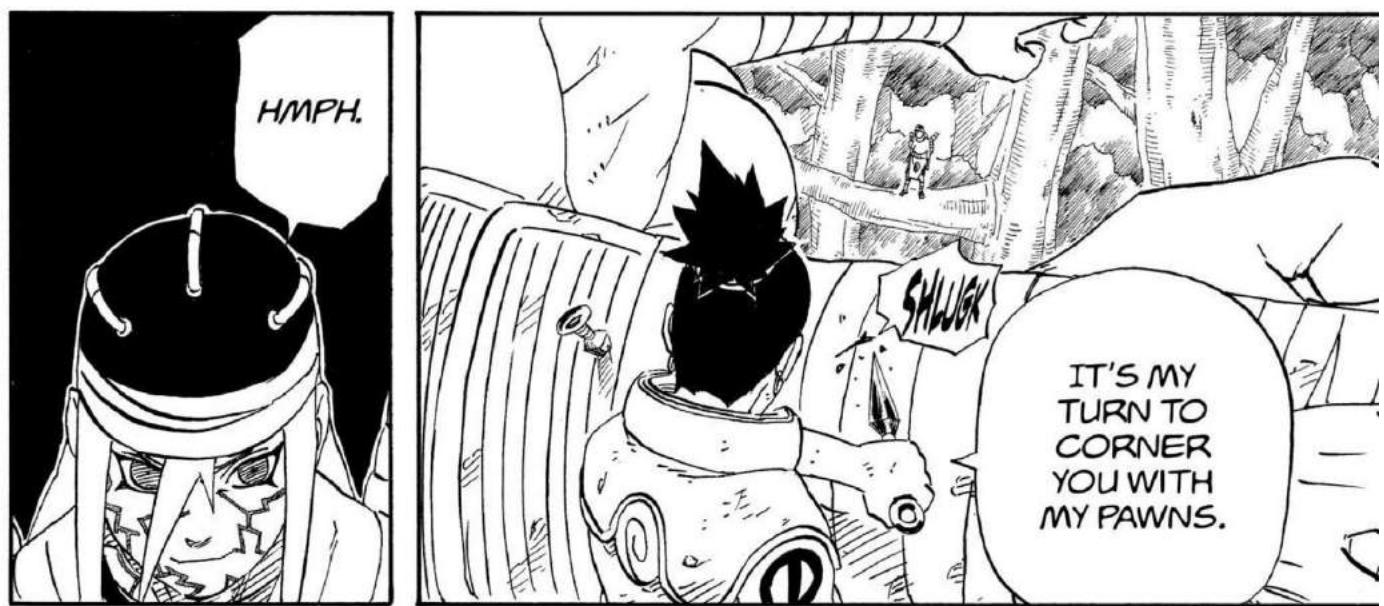
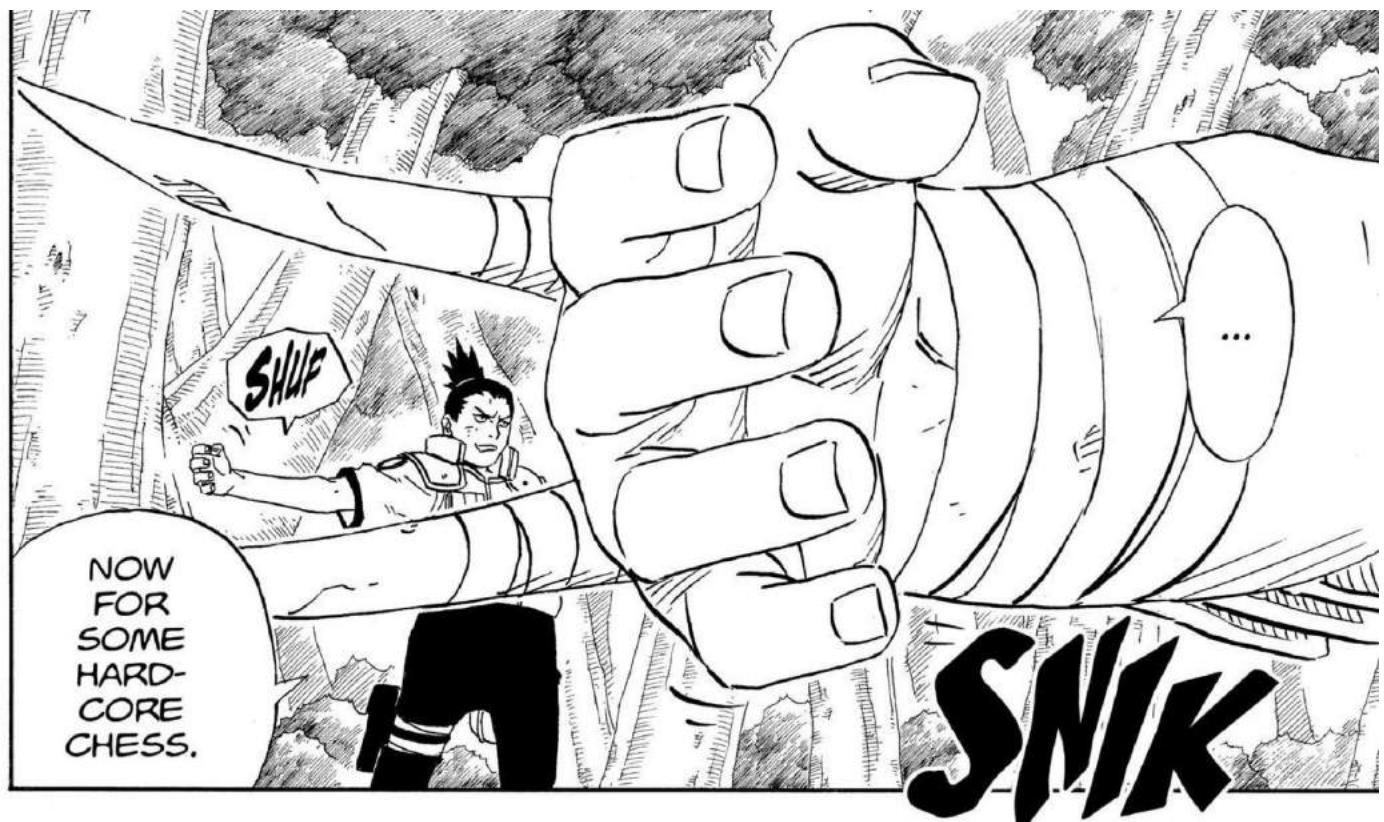


Number 208: Fake-Out!!

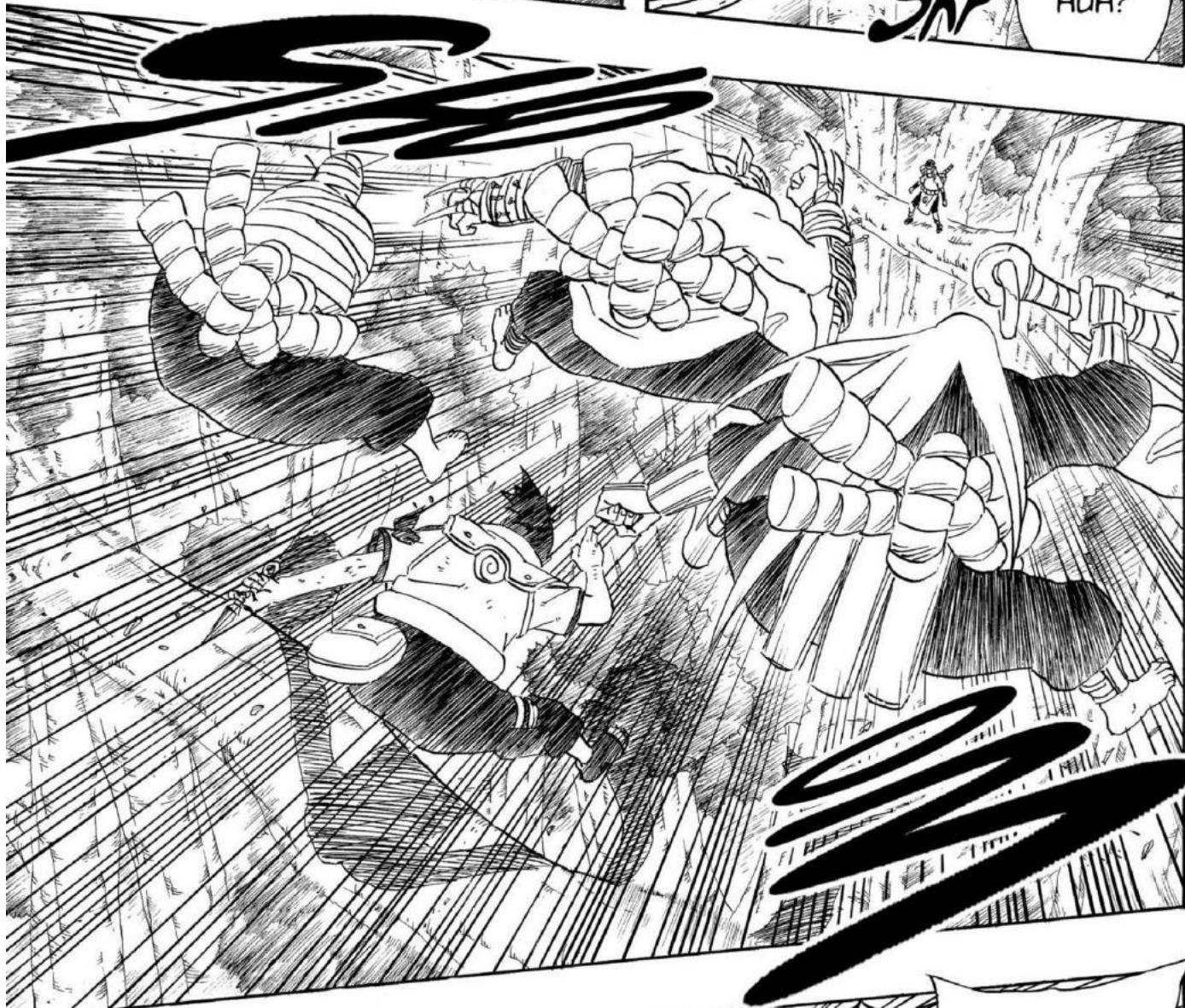
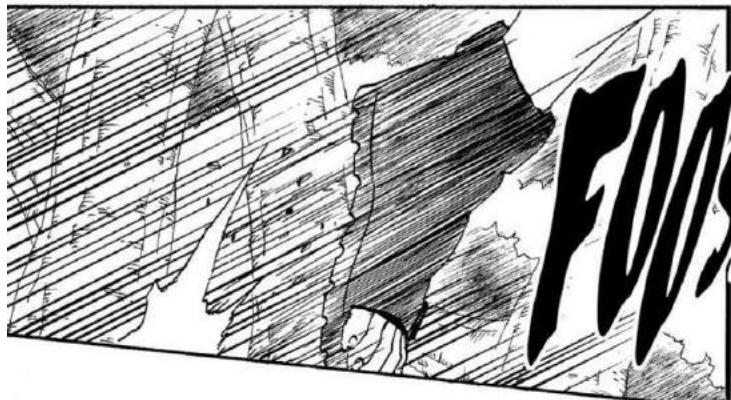


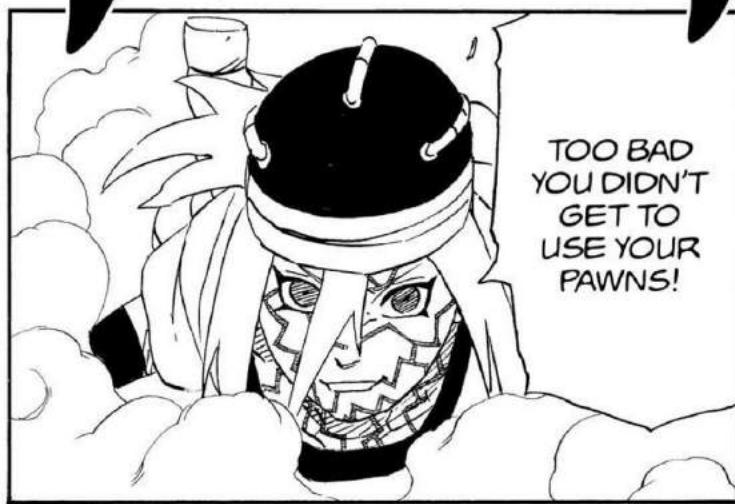




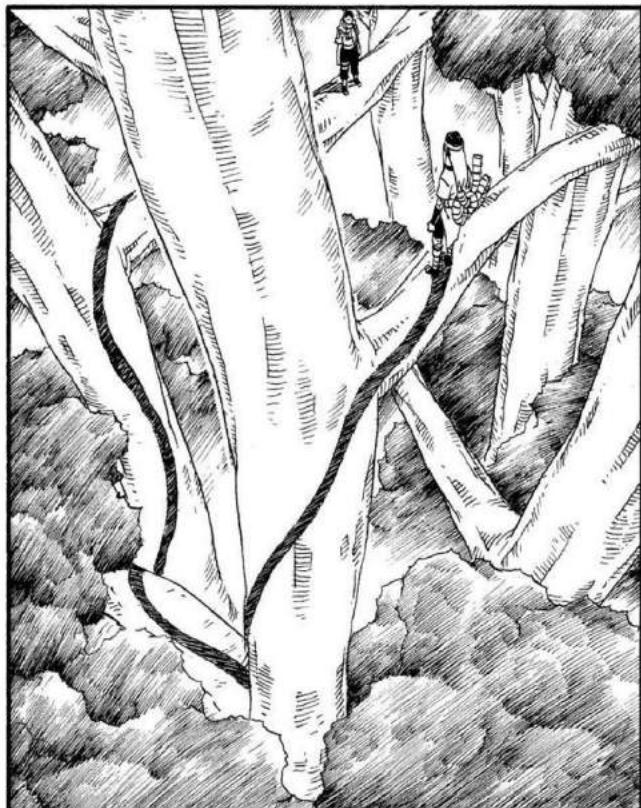


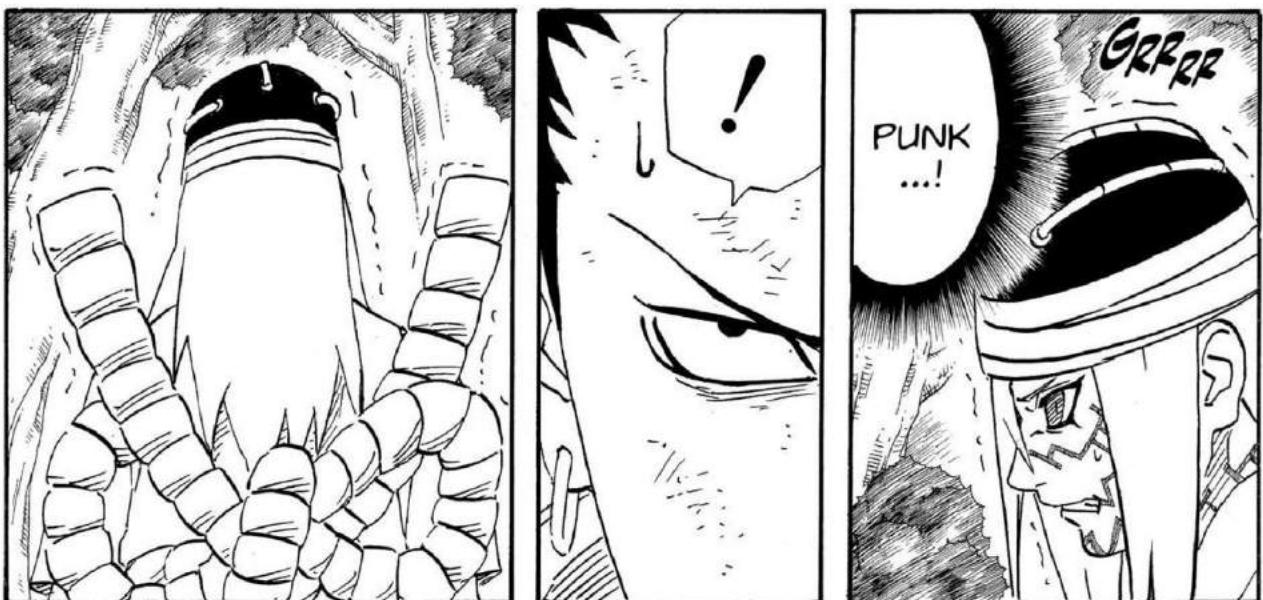
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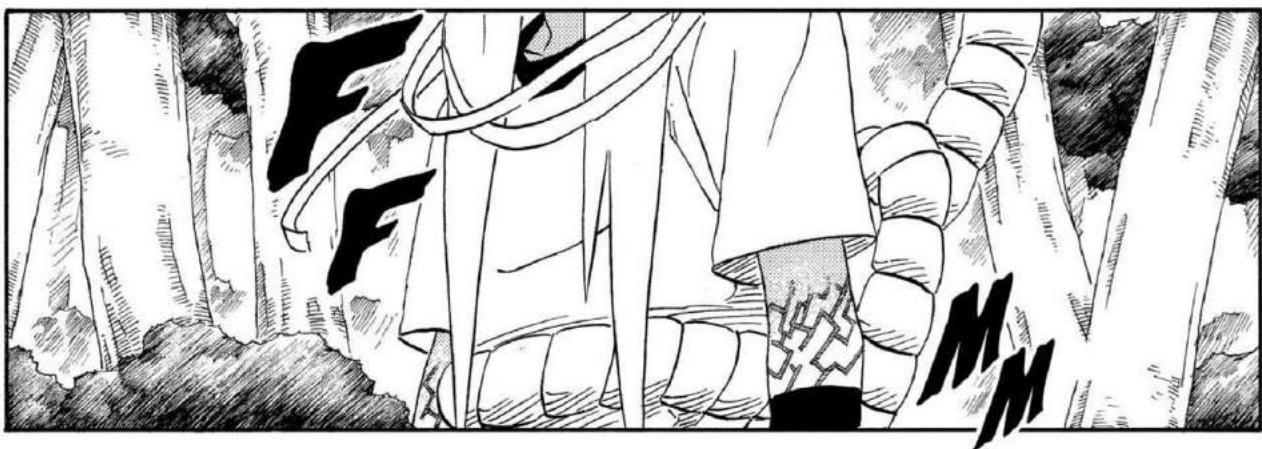
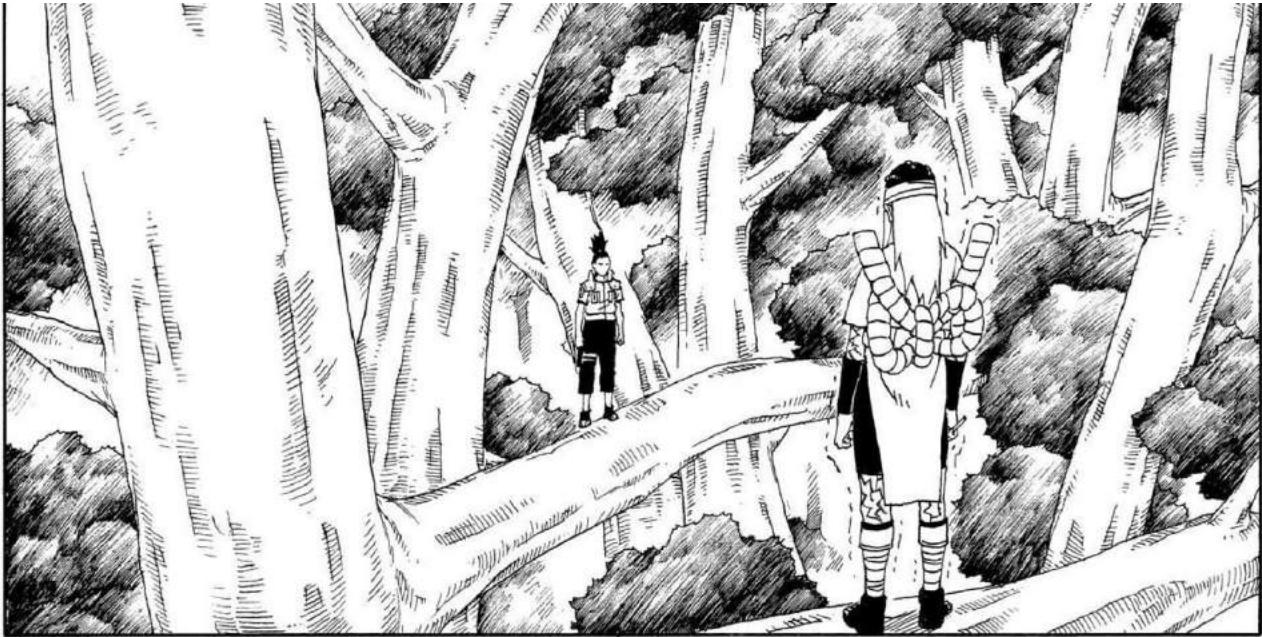




READ
THIS
WAY









READ
THIS
WAY

FROM
HERE ON,
THINGS WILL
NOT GO
ACCORDING
TO YOUR
PLAN!

YOU'RE
SMART,
BUT...

SHIVER

TWITCH

TWITCH

WHAT...
IS SHE
...?!

...

?!

SHE GOT
OUT OF MY
SHADOW
POSSESSION...
WHAT'S THAT
INCREDIBLE
CHAKRA?!

GRRRHH

WHAAT?!

HAVE
TO USE
THAT
TECH-
NIQUE

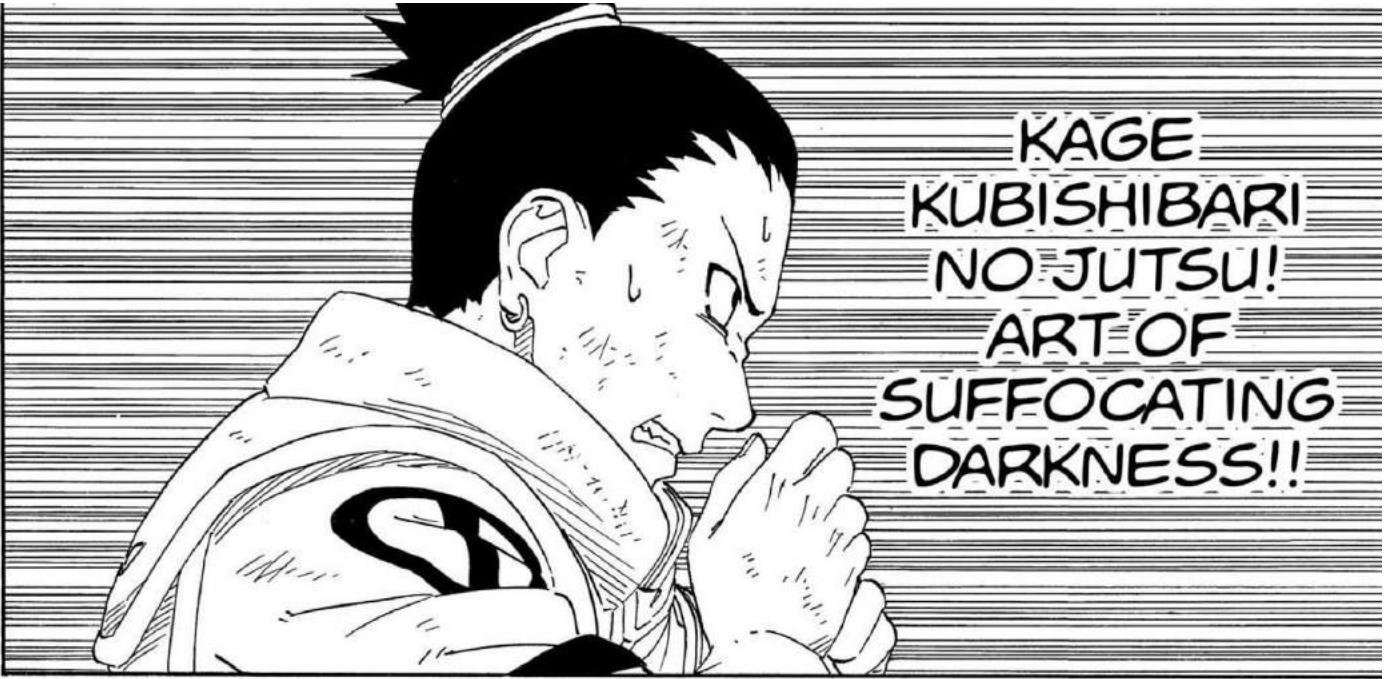
SWIP

SWIP

SHE
CAN'T GET
AWAY...
NO MORE
CONSERV-
ING CHAKRA
...!!

SHE
BROKE
MY
TECH-
NIQUE.

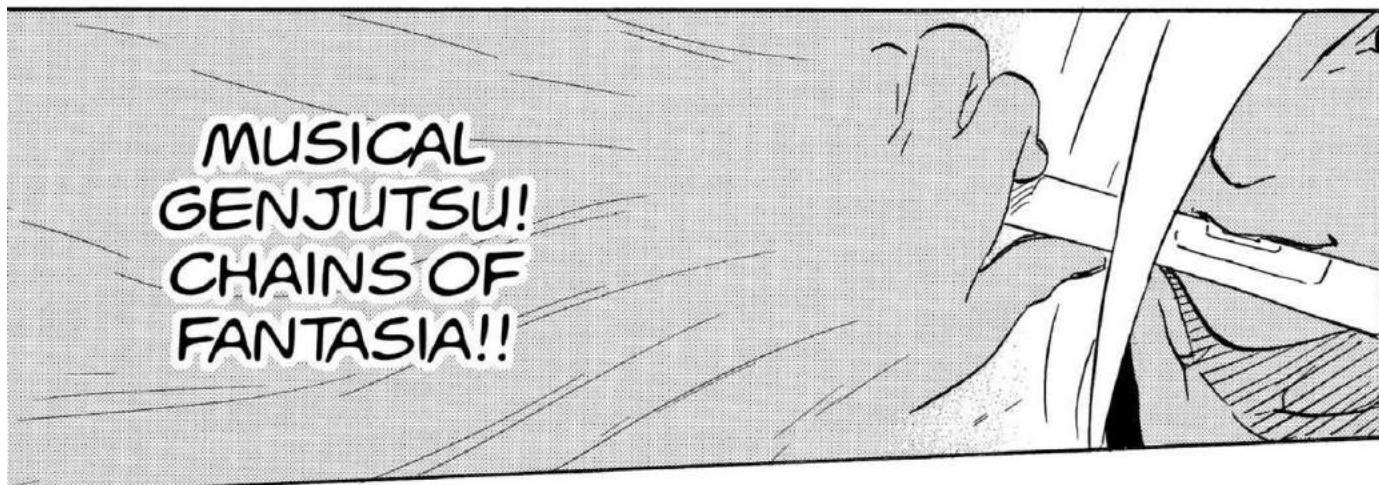
TOK



KAGE
KUBISHIBARI
NO JUTSU!
ART OF
SUFFOCATING
DARKNESS!!

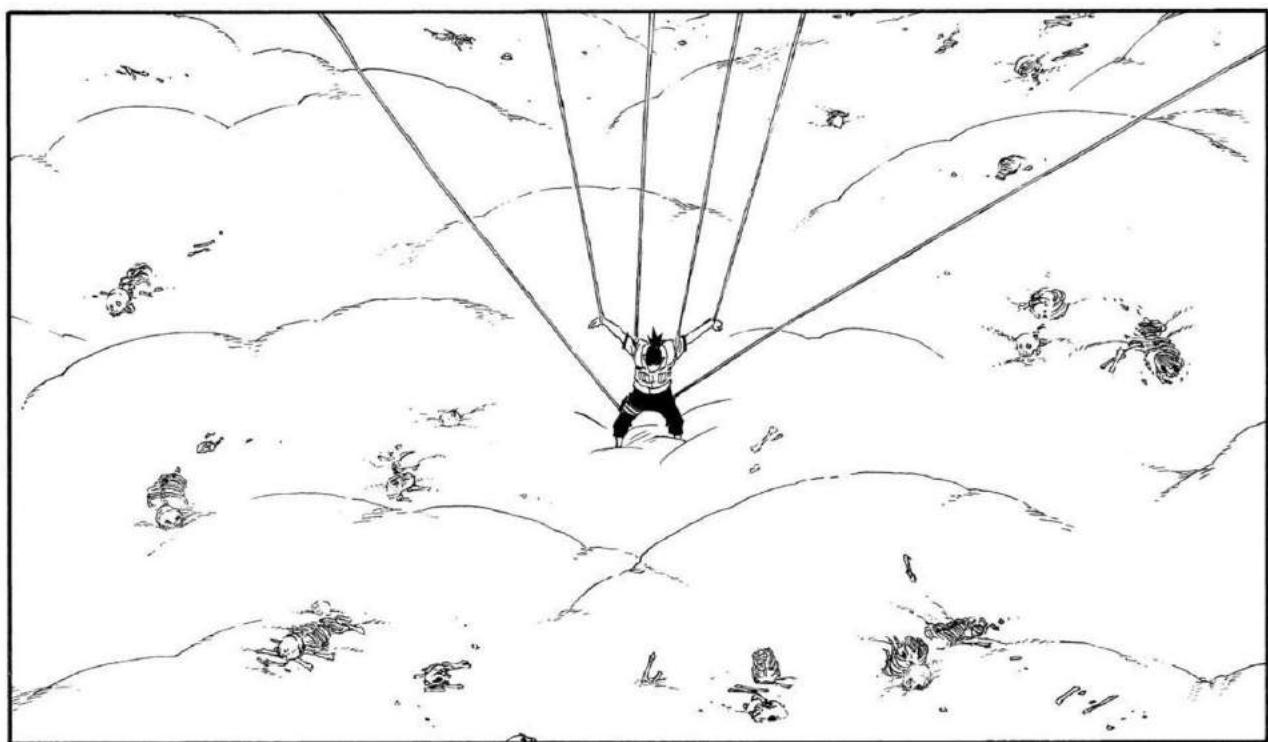
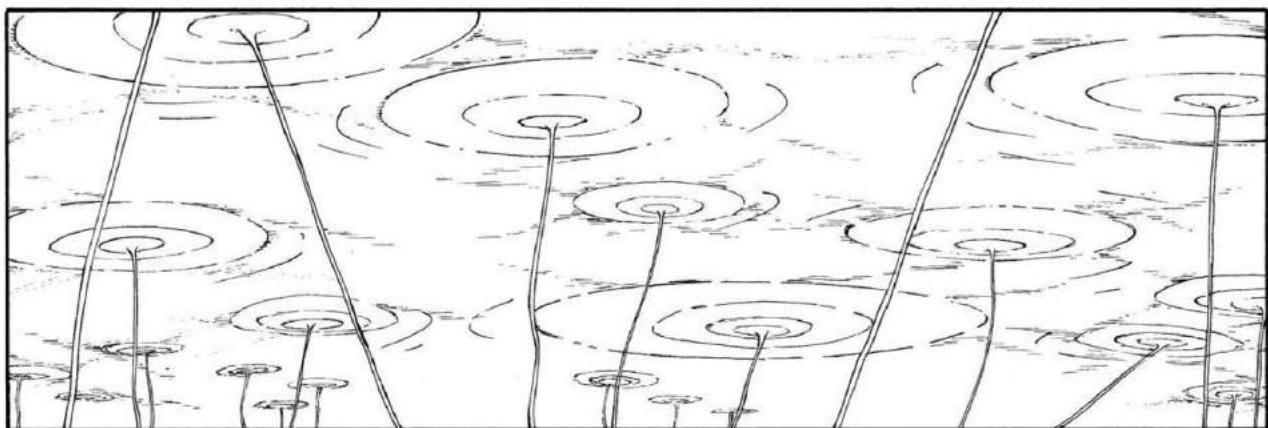


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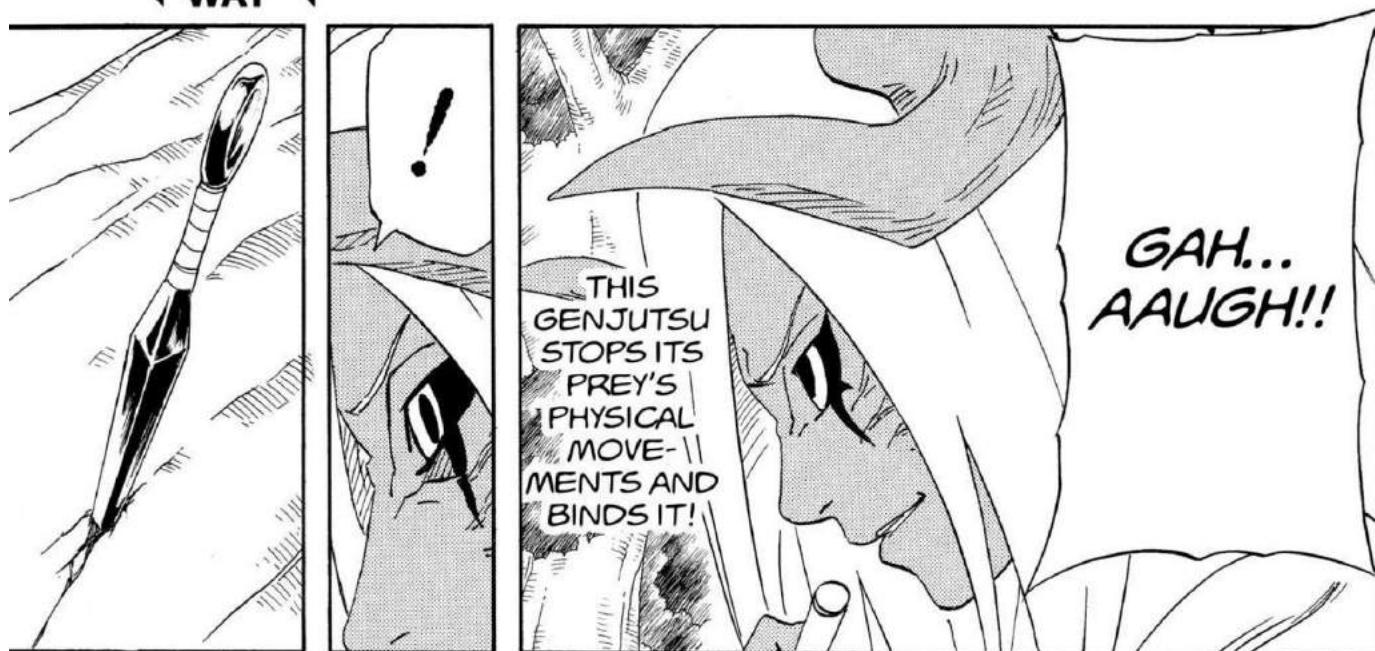


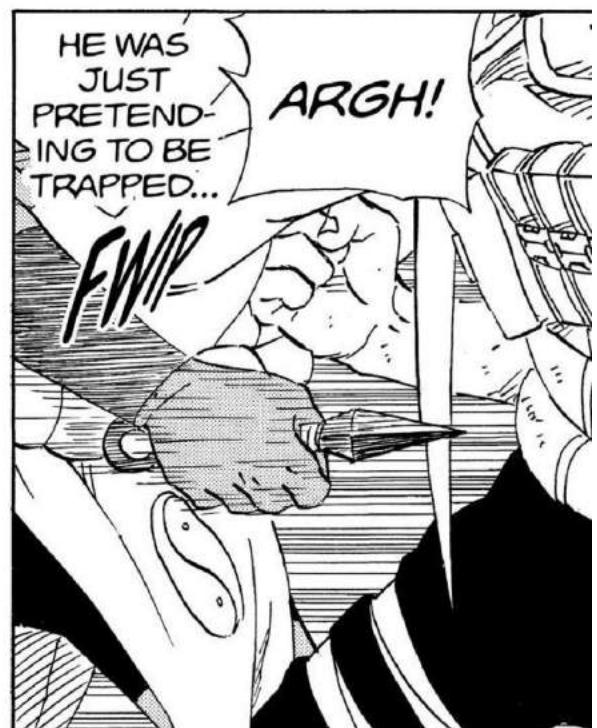
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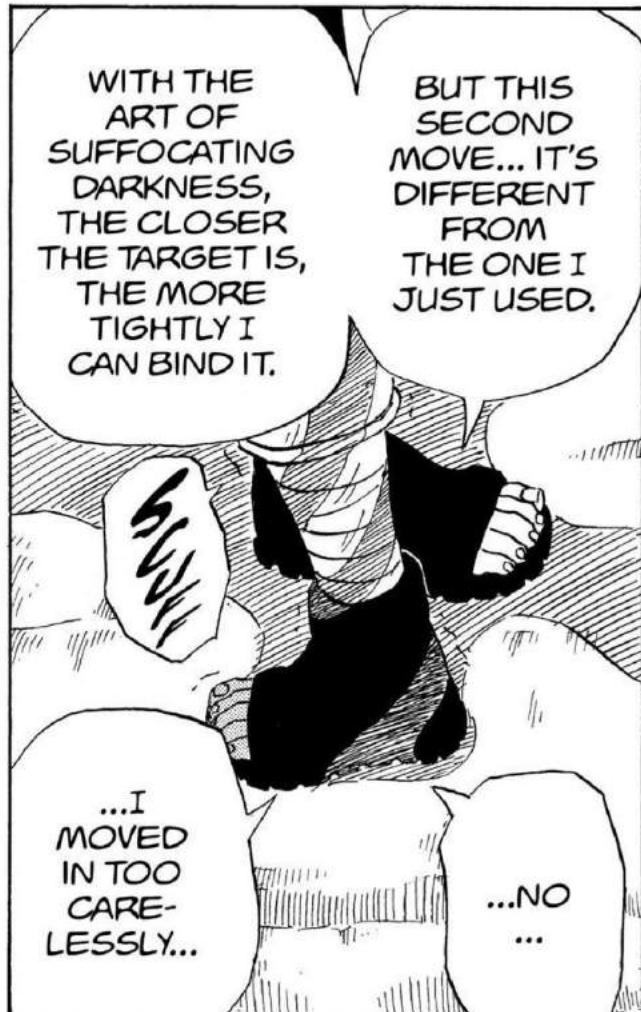




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