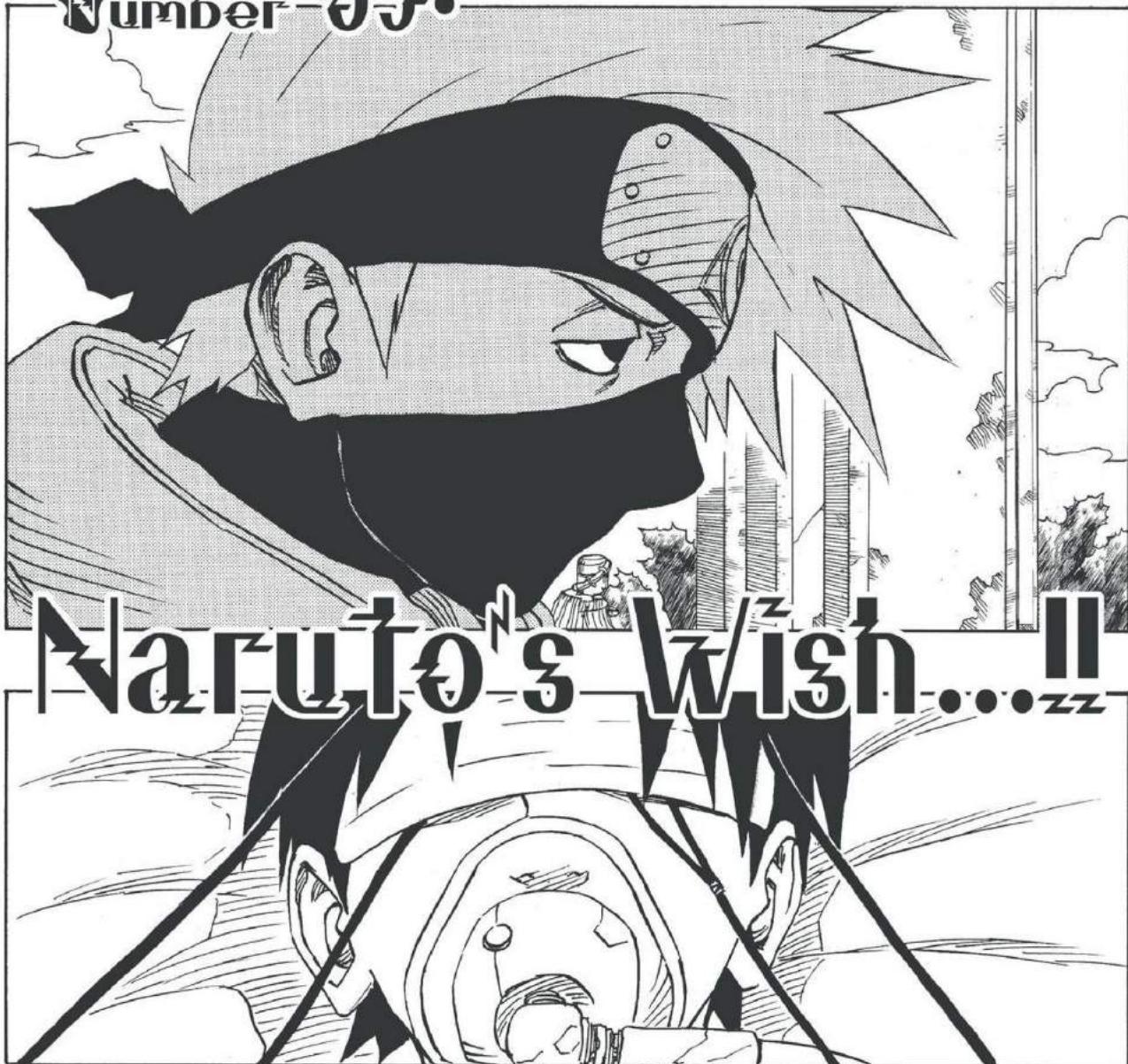
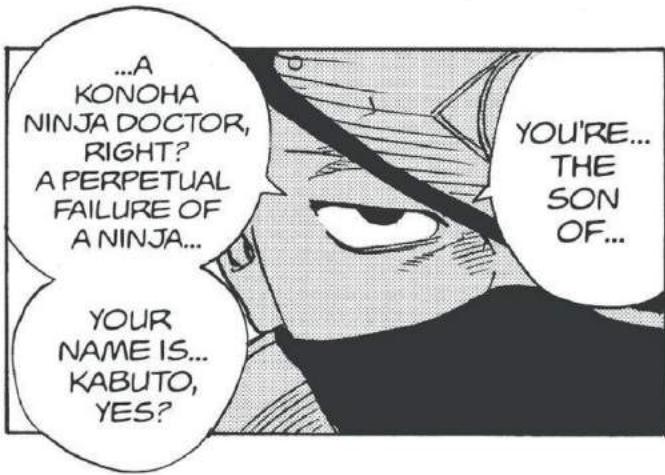
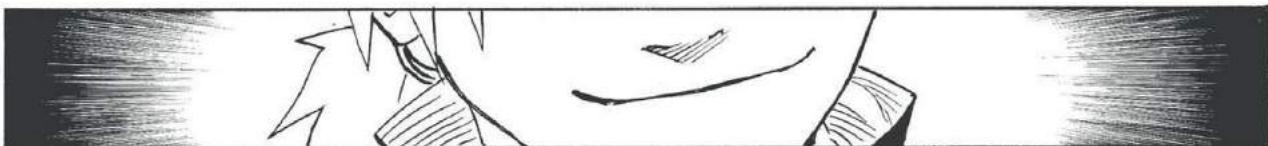
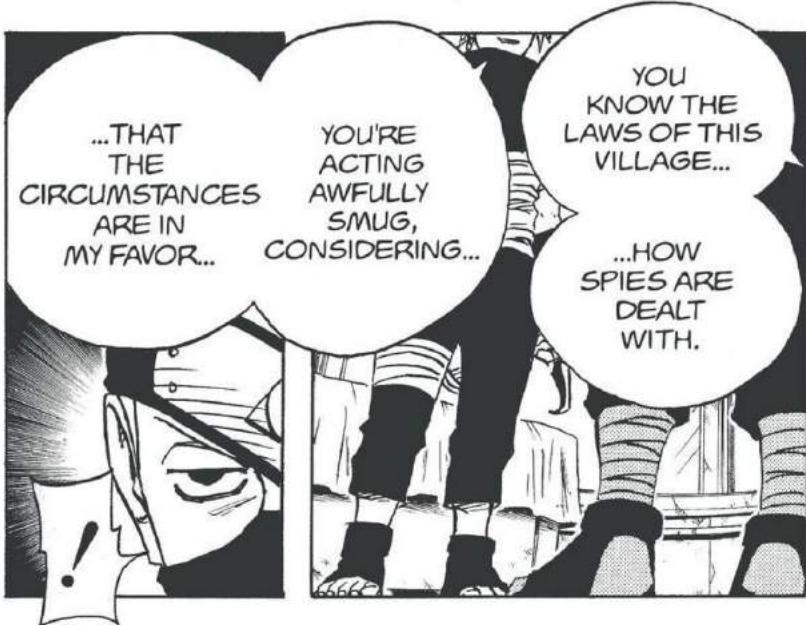
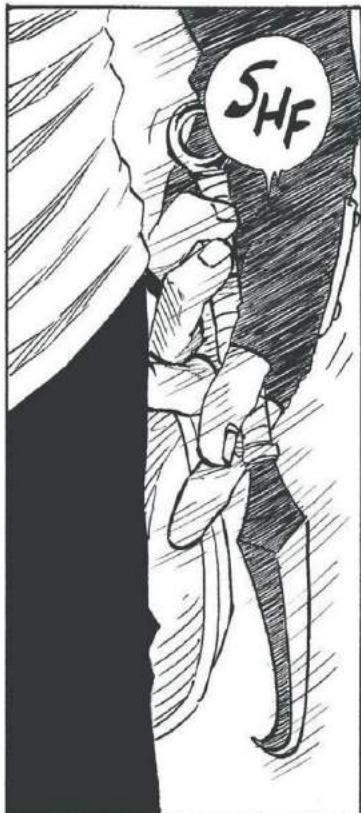


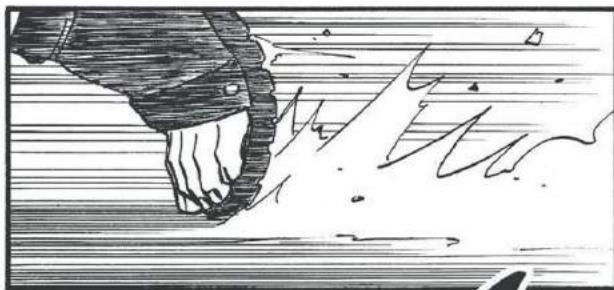
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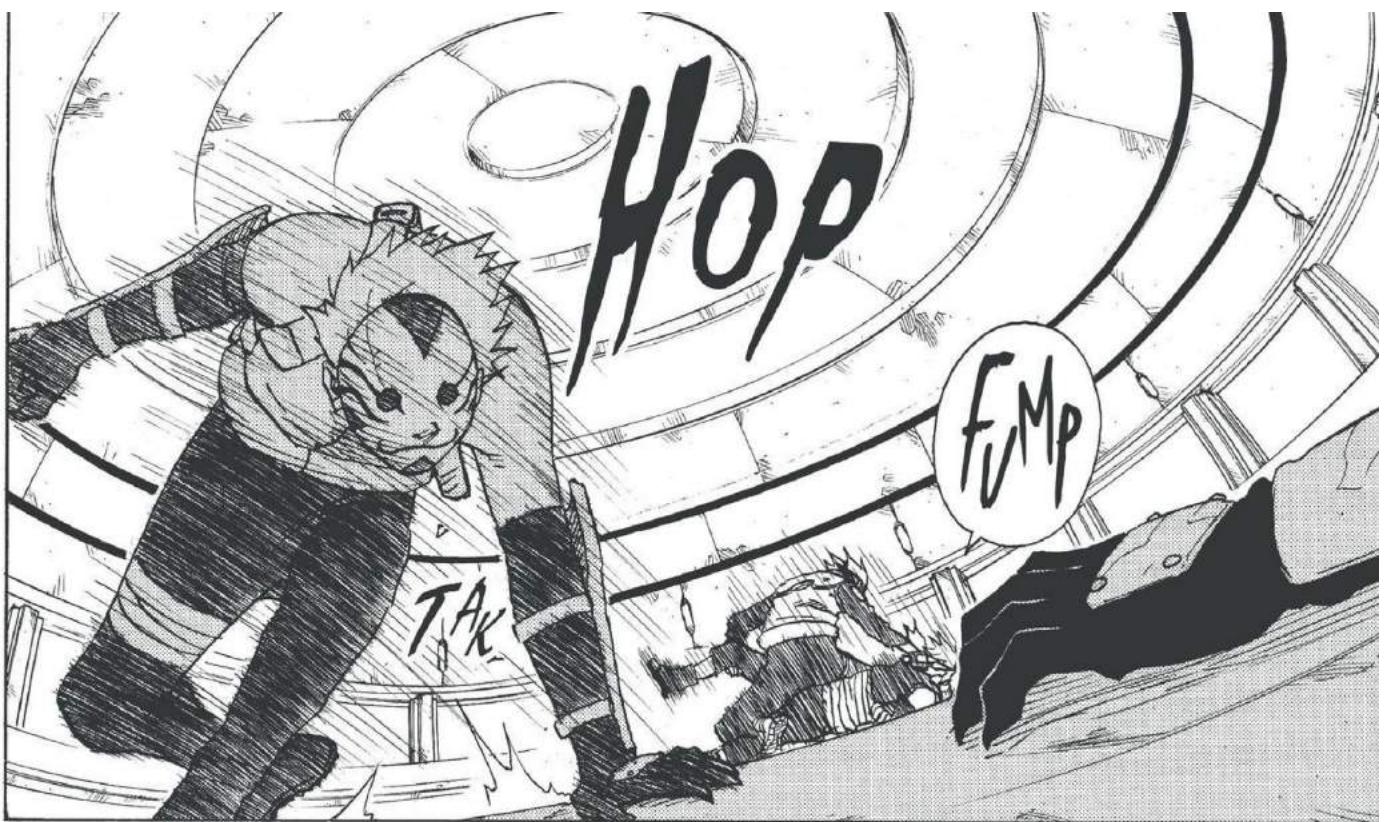


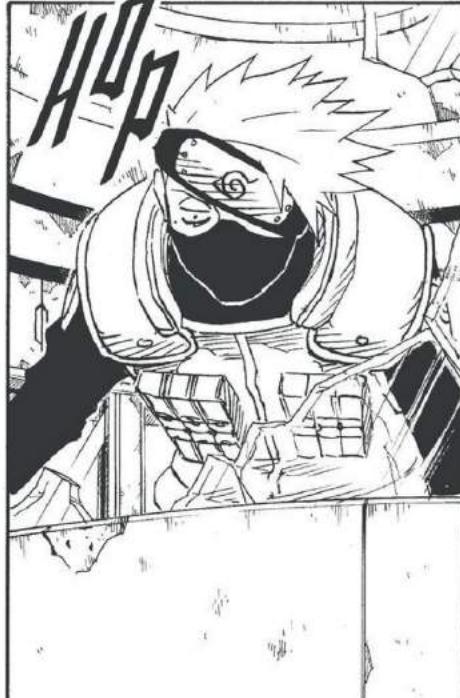
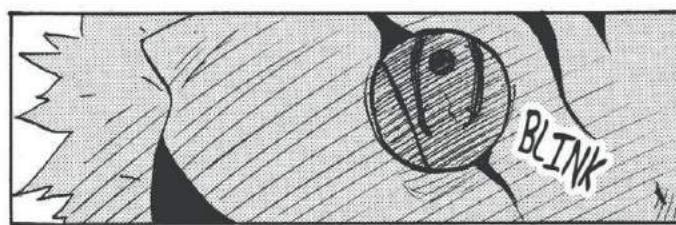




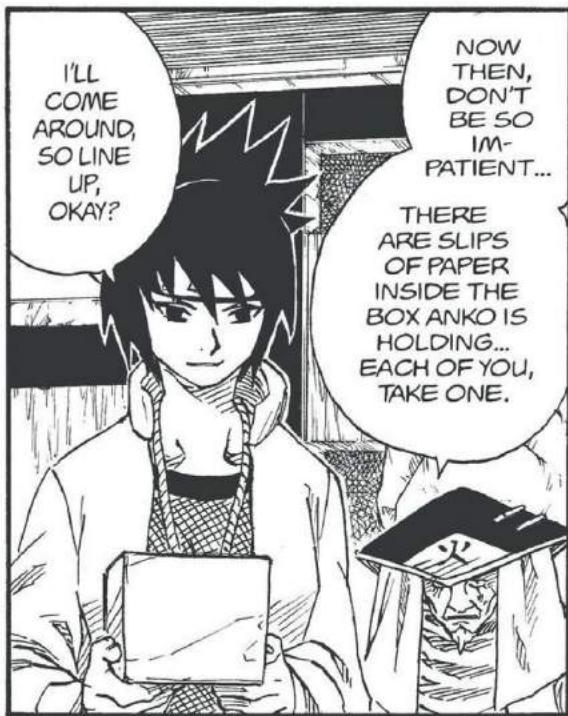
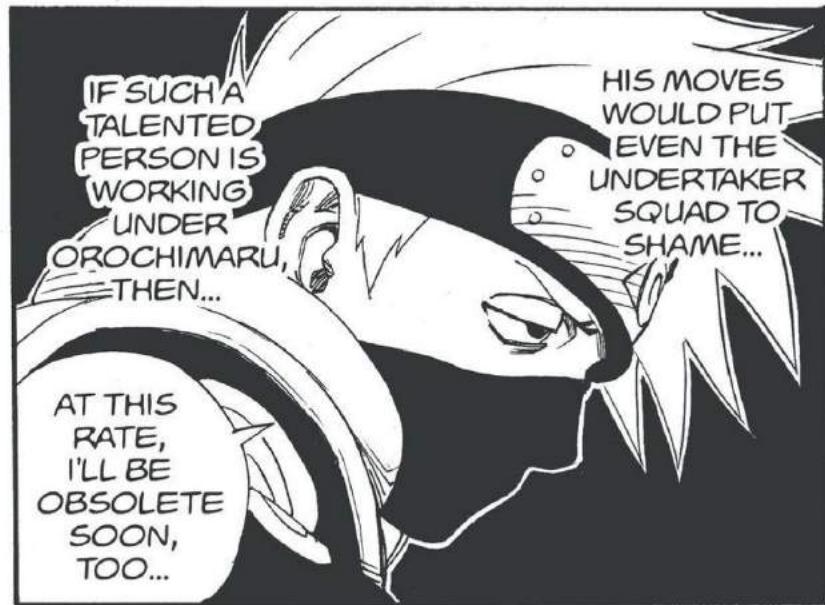


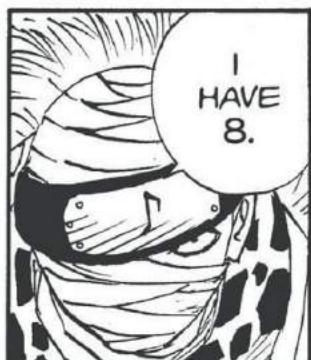
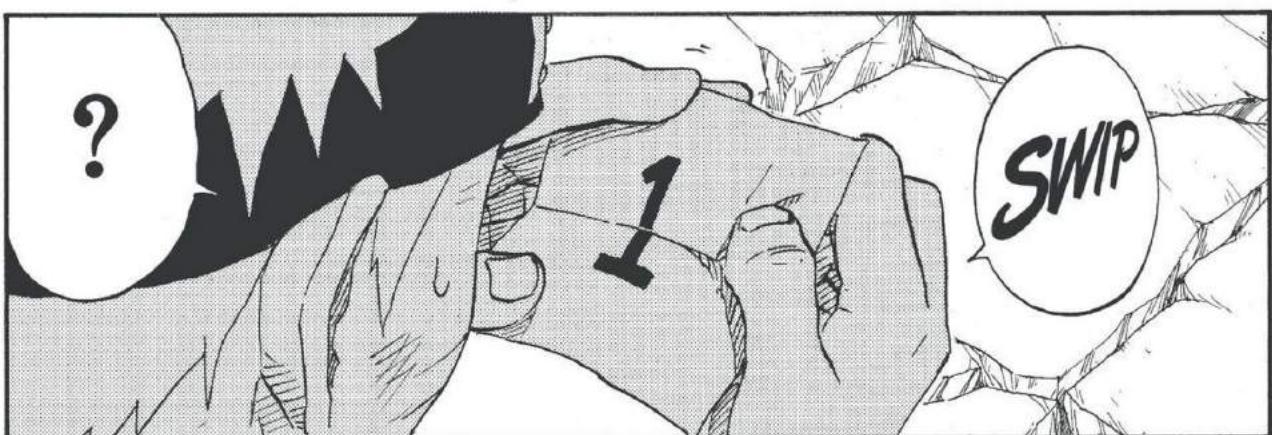
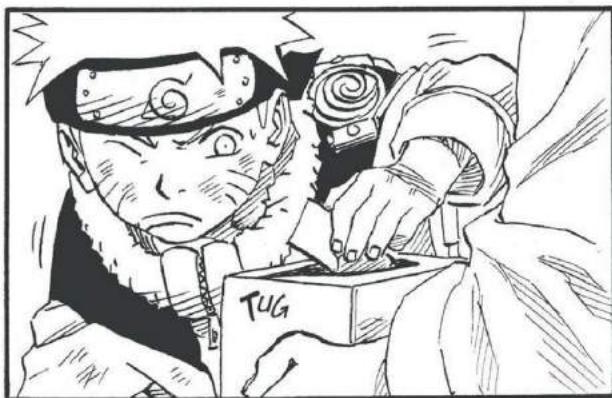




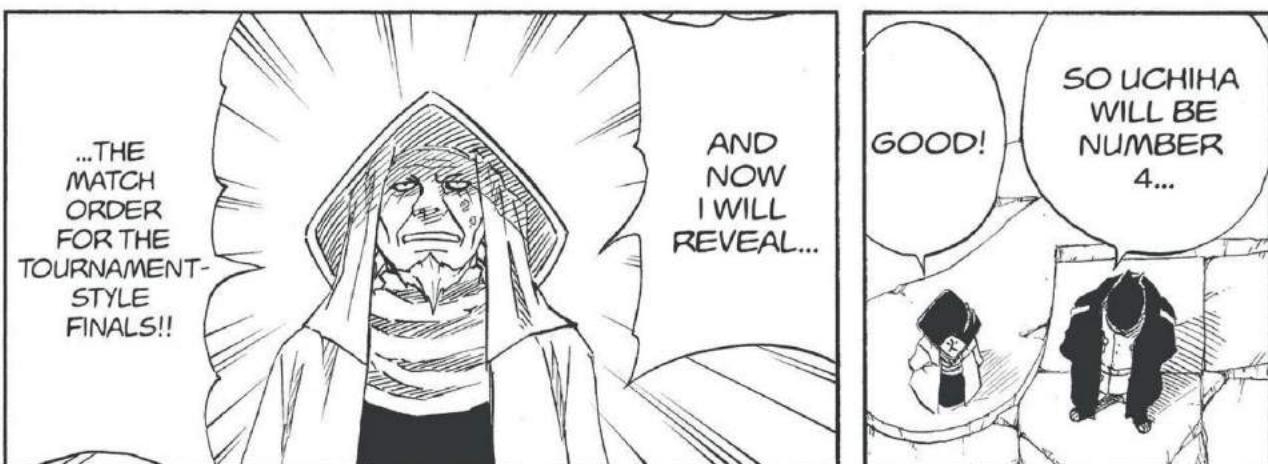


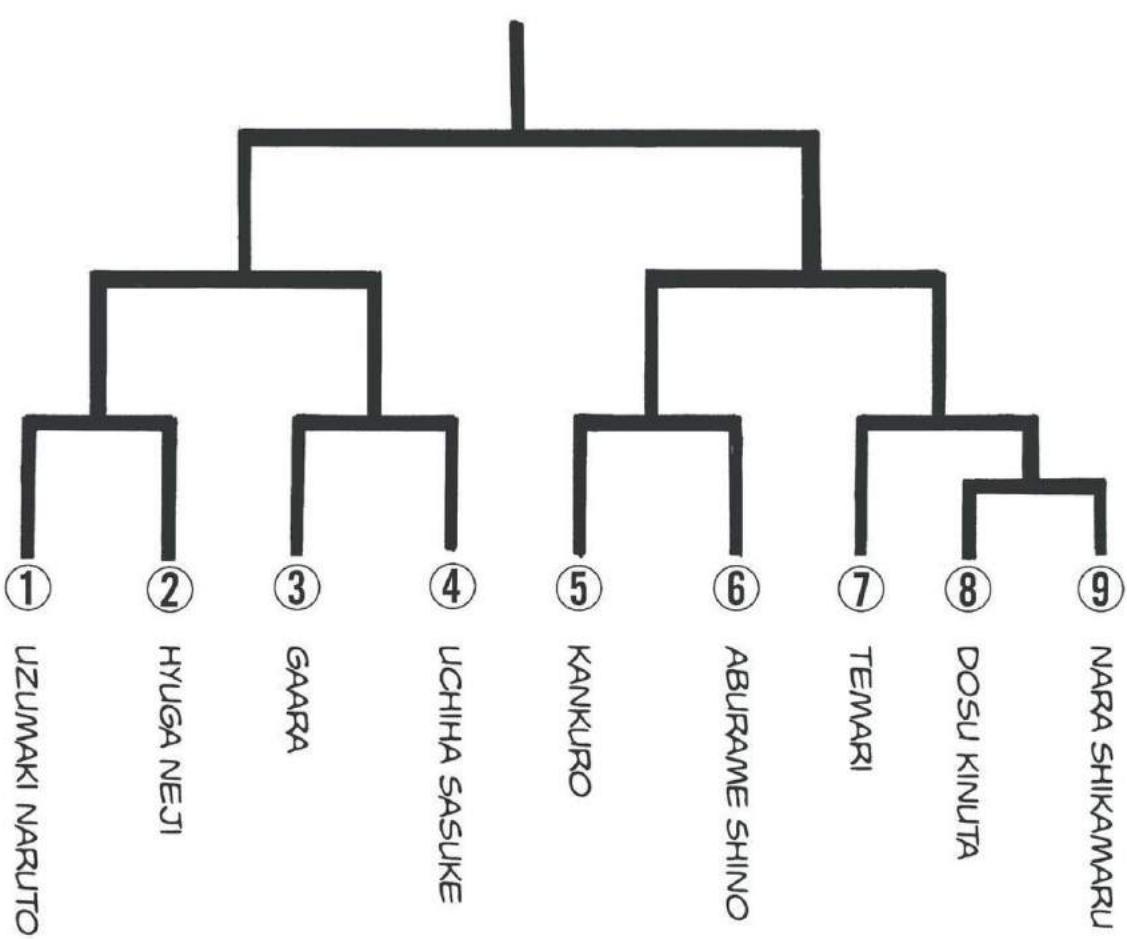
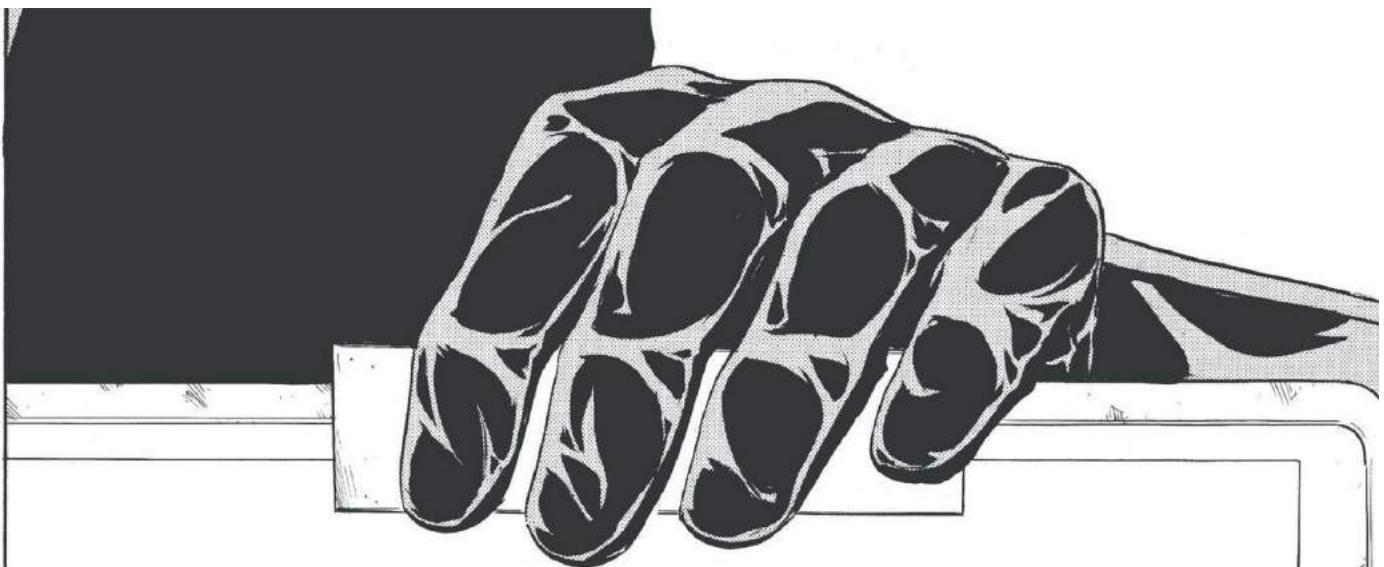




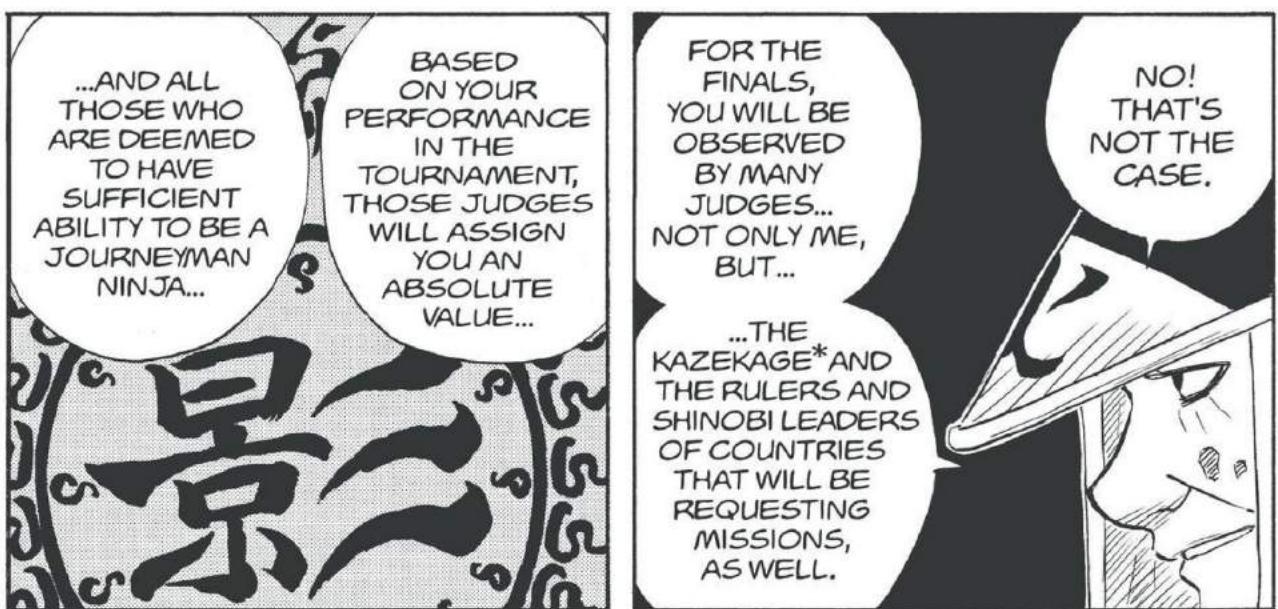


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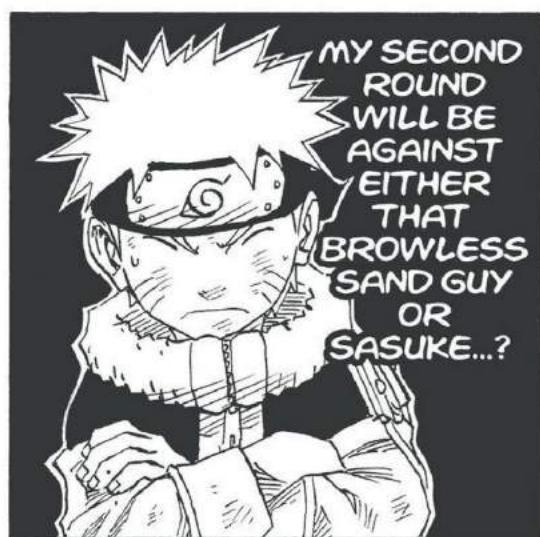
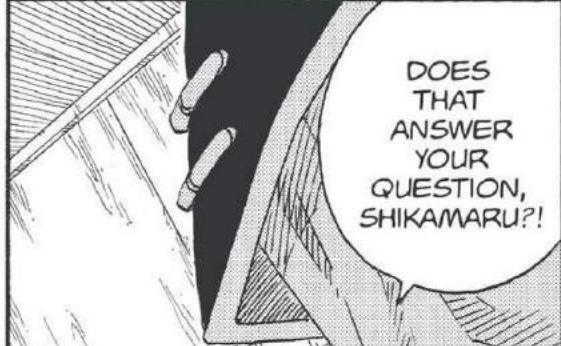


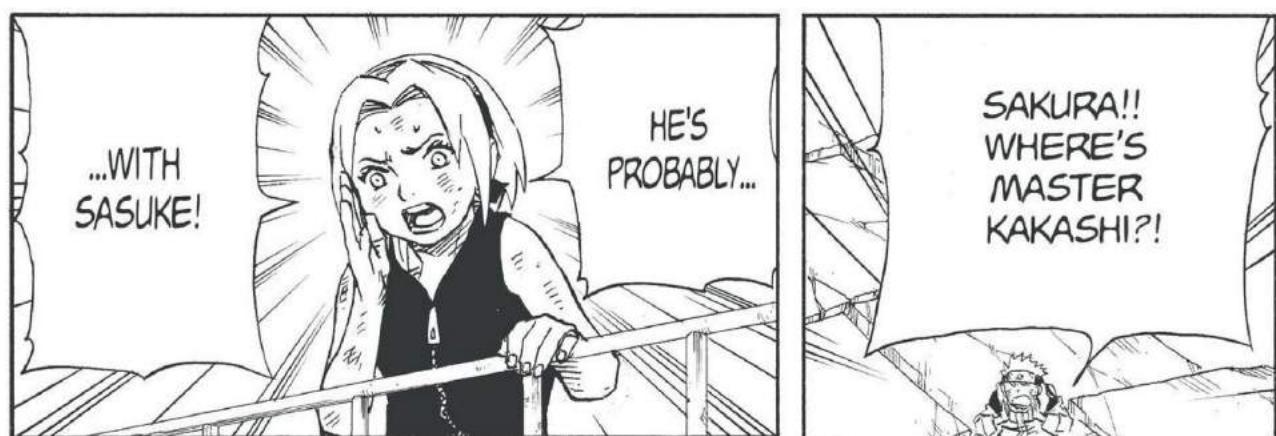


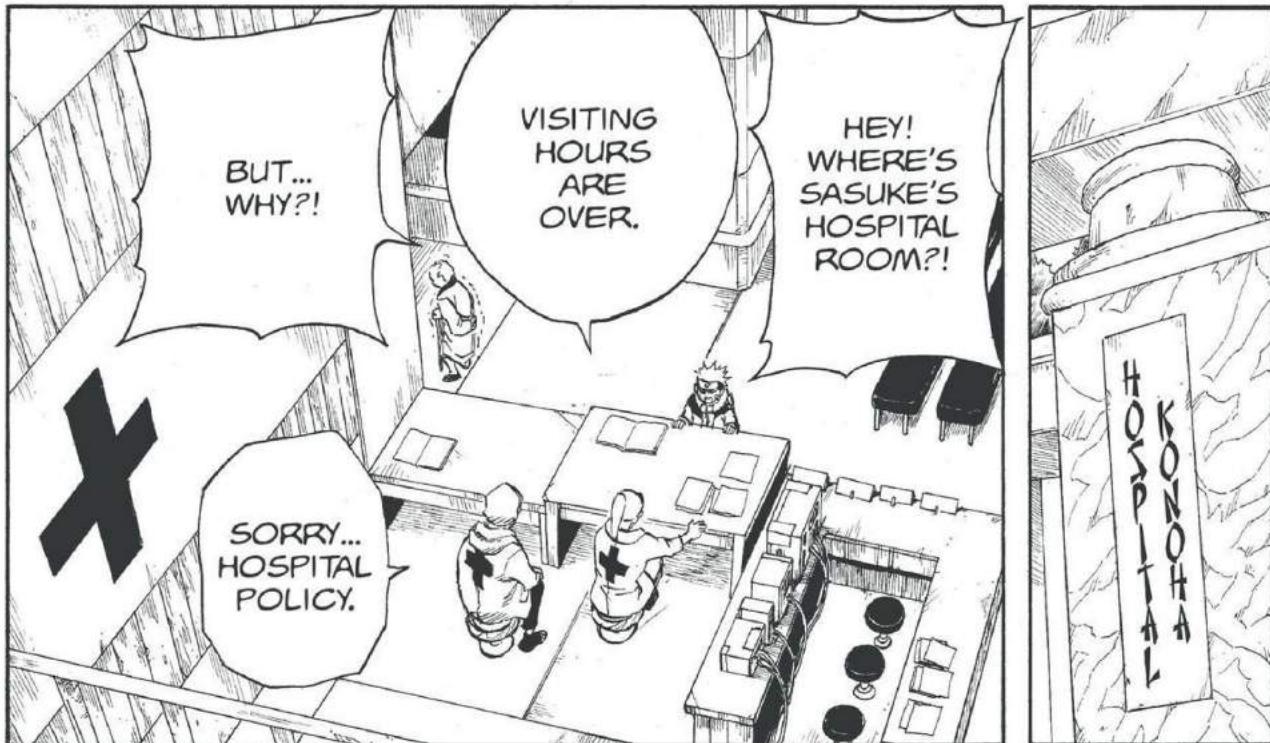


*THE LEADER OF THE VILLAGE OF SUNAGAKURE (THE VILLAGE HIDDEN IN SAND).











THE WORLD OF KISHIMOTO MASASHI MY PERSONAL HISTORY, PART 13

ONCE I WAS EXPOSED TO AKIRA, MY ATTITUDE TOWARD ART BEGAN TO CHANGE DRAMATICALLY. I DID SOME RESEARCH ON THE STYLE OF MR. OTOMO, THE AUTHOR AND ARTIST OF AKIRA, IN AN ATTEMPT TO LEARN WHICH ARTISTS HAD INFLUENCED HIM... BUT I COULDN'T FIND ANYTHING. SO I CONCLUDED THAT IT WAS COMPLETELY ORIGINAL... AND THAT'S WHEN IT CAME TO ME: "WOW, THIS IS THE FIRST TIME SINCE SEEING MR. TORIYAMA'S WORK THAT I'VE BEEN SO STRONGLY AFFECTED BY SOMEONE'S ART."

I HAD ABSOLUTELY NO IDEA WHY MR. TORIYAMA'S AND MR. OTOMO'S ART WERE BOTH SO FASCINATING, BUT THERE WERE TWO THINGS THAT I WAS SURE OF. BOTH OF THEM DID WORK THAT SEEMED ORIGINAL AND HAD A GREAT SENSE OF STYLE. I HAD THE FEELING THAT THEIR EFFECTS, DESIGN AND ATTENTION TO DETAIL WERE TOTALLY DIFFERENT FROM THOSE OF OTHER PEOPLE. IN OTHER WORDS, I STARTED THINKING THAT WHAT "FASCINATING ART" MEANT TO ME WAS "ORIGINAL ART," AND THAT COPYCAT ART, NO MATTER HOW TECHNICALLY SKILLFUL, WAS MEANINGLESS.

AFTER THAT, I TRIED TO MAKE SURE THAT EVERYTHING I DREW WAS TRULY ORIGINAL... BUT I ALWAYS ENDED UP LETTING OUTSIDE INFLUENCES CREEP IN, AND MY END PRODUCT WASN'T ORIGINAL AFTER ALL. STILL UNSATISFIED WITH MY RESULTS, I BEGAN STUDYING THE WORK OF MANY DIFFERENT MANGA ARTISTS, ONE BY ONE, WONDERING IF I COULD FIND ANY OTHERS WHOSE ART COULD RIVAL THAT OF THE TWO I ALREADY REVERED.

THAT'S WHEN I REALIZED THAT THE ARTISTS WHOSE WORK I FOUND INTERESTING WERE ALL INFLUENCED EITHER BY ONE OR BOTH OF THE ABOVE TWO, OR BY SOMEONE ELSE, AND THAT A TOTALLY ORIGINAL STYLE IS VERY RARE. IN ANY CASE, I THOUGHT MR. OTOMO HAD THE BEST STYLE OF THEM ALL, SO I STARTED IMITATING HIM. IN THE BEGINNING OF EIGHTH OR NINTH GRADE, I BOUGHT ALL THE AKIRA-RELATED MATERIALS I COULD FIND -- THE ART BOOK, MANGA AND MOVIE MANGA -- AND FURIOUSLY COPIED THEM. BUT I CONTINUED TO STRIVE FOR MY OWN STYLE AND WORKED HARD AT ALL DIFFERENT SORTS OF ORIGINAL ART AS WELL. (LATER, I WOULD ENCOUNTER TWO OTHER ARTISTS WHOM I CAME TO CONSIDER ORIGINAL AND STYLISH, BUT THAT IS A TALE FOR ANOTHER DAY.)