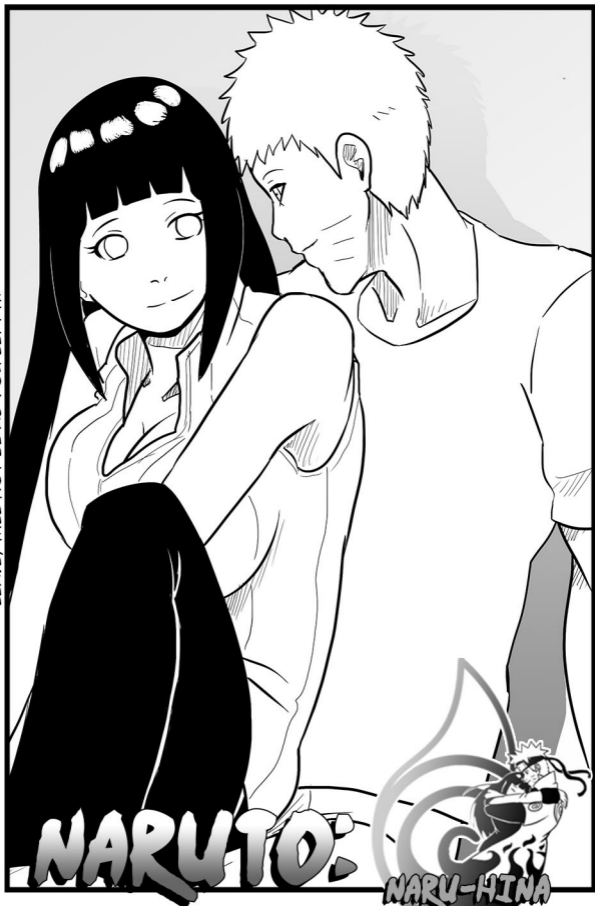
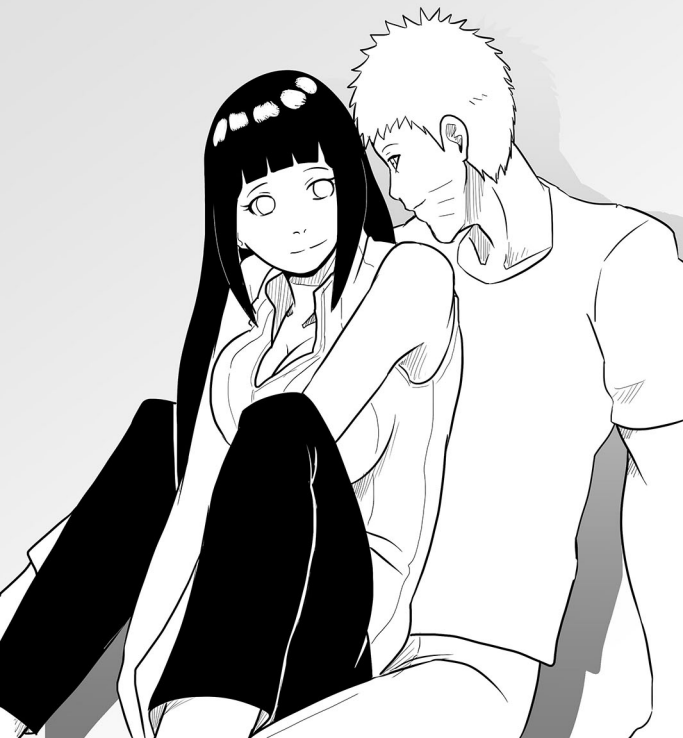
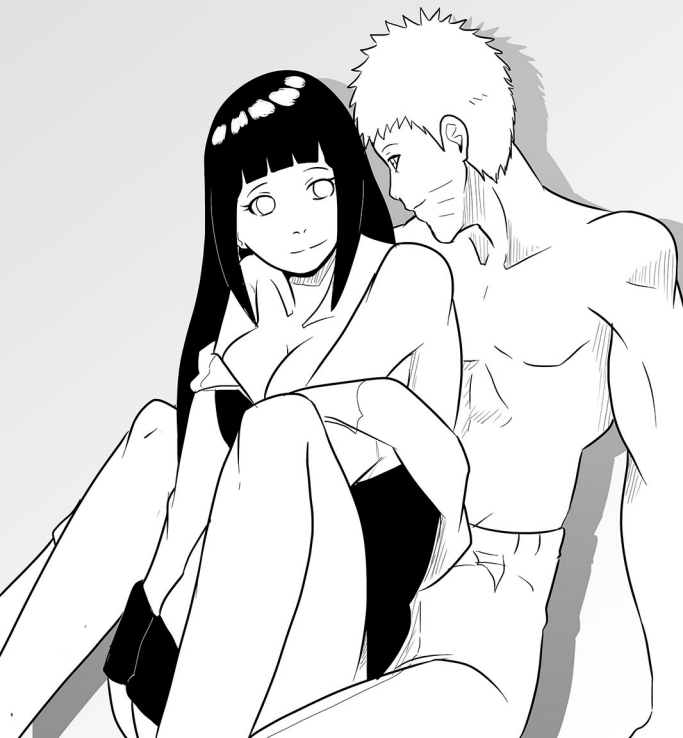


IT IS ALWAYS NICE TO RETURN HOME...
BUT, LIFE DOES NOT PAUSE FOR YOUR ABSENCE, SO THE HOME YOU
LEAVE, WILL NOT BE AS YOU LEFT IT!









THE
CHAKRA
HAS DIED
DOWN.

MUST
BE OVER.

I SWEAR I
FELT NARUTO'S
CHAKRA FOR A
SHORT TIME
THERE.

ME
TOO.



WE
MAY NOT
BE
NEEDED
ANY
MORE.

TRUE.
GIVE IT A FEW MORE
MINUTES, JUST IN
CASE.



SURE;
BUT DID YOU
WANT TO DO
SOMETHING
WHEN WE ARE
RELIEVED?

I WAS
THINKING OF GOING
TO GO SEE ITACHI
AGAIN, ACTUALLY, BUT
IF YOU WANT ME TO
STAY...



AFTER OUR TALK, I'VE JUST NOT WANTED TO LEAVE YOU ALONE SO MUCH.

... I KNOW.



YOU'VE BEEN PRETTY ATTENTIVE TO ME LATELY.

NO.. IT'S OKAY.

I THINK YOU CAN HAVE A DAY WITH YOUR BROTHER.



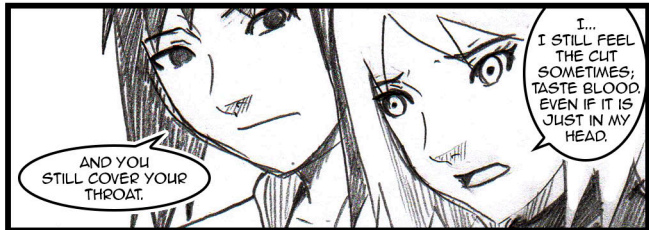
I'M TRYING TO IGNORE IT. BUT THERE ARE... MOMENTS.



FINE...



HOW... HAS YOUR THROAT BEEN?



AND YOU STILL COVER YOUR THROAT.

I...
I STILL FEEL
THE CUT
SOMETIMES;
TASTE BLOOD.
EVEN IF IT IS
JUST IN MY
HEAD.



I DON'T
CARE ABOUT A SCAR.
AND I'M GOING TO MAKE
YOU NOT CARE.

YOU
DON'T HAVE TO
HIDE ANYTHING
FROM ME,
THOUGH.

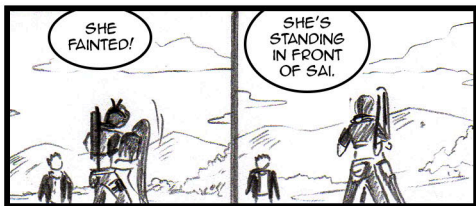
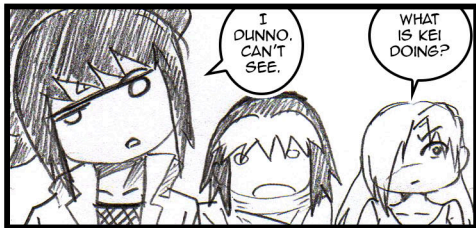


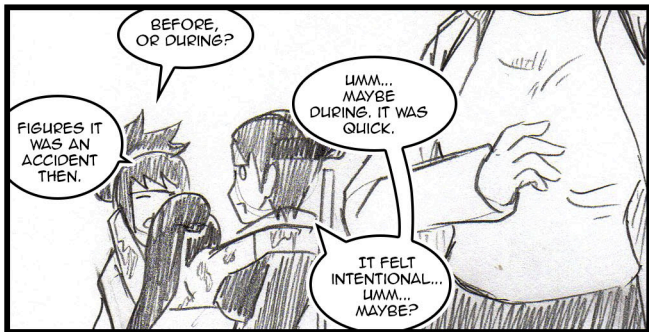
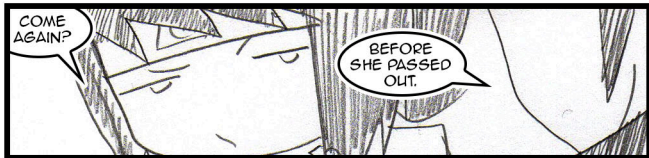
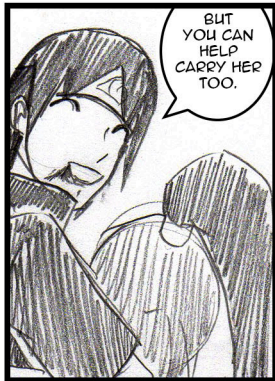
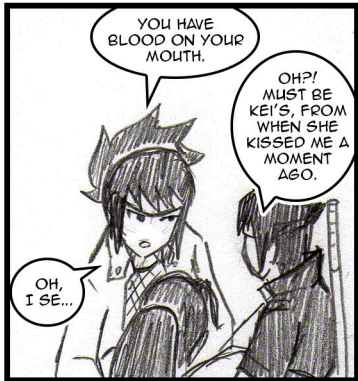
I'LL
KEEP KISSING
IT UNTIL YOU
LIKE IT.

WELL,
I CAN'T STOP
YOU.



HEY!
S-STOP
IT!







N-NARUTO!
ARE YOU
OKAY!

YOUR
FACE!



YOU
SHOULD HAVE
BEEN MORE
CAREFUL!

DON'T
WORRY, I'LL
BE FINE BY
THE TIME
WE REACH
THE
VILLAGE.



JUST
TRY NOT TO
PUT
YOURSELF
SO EASILY IN
DANGER!

THAT'S
WHAT I SAID,
YOU'RE TOO
RECKLESS!

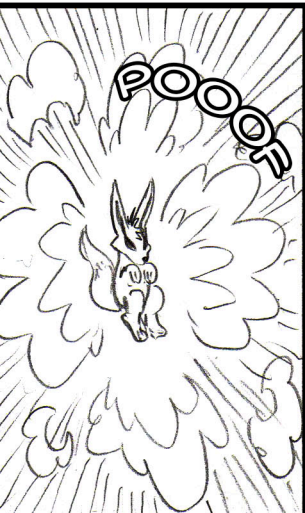
COME ON,
DON'T BOTH
AGREE!



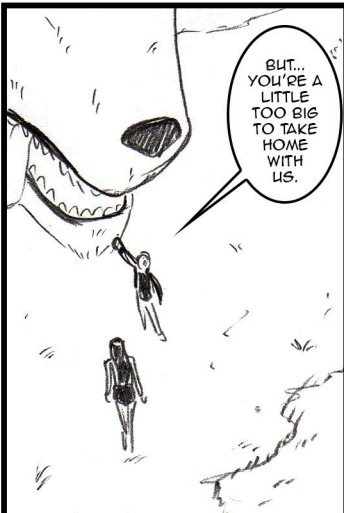
YOU
DID WELL
PAL...
GOOD
BOY.



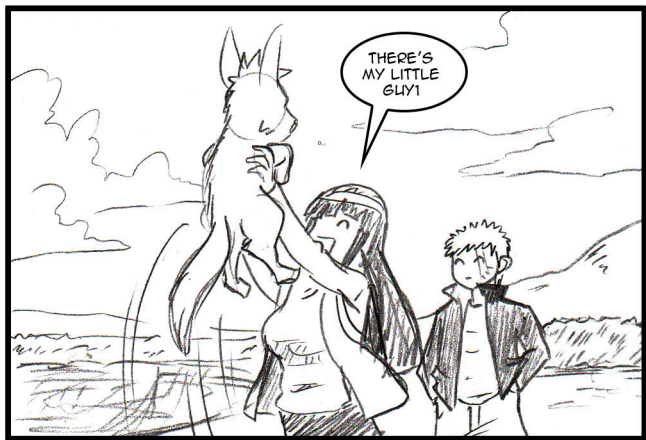
ANYWAY...
WE HAVE
ANOTHER
PROBLEM TO
SORT
FIRST.

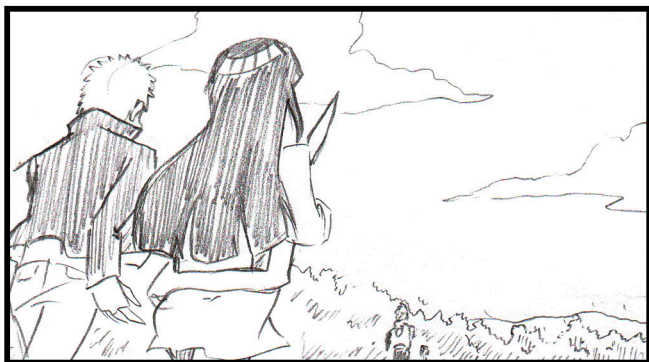
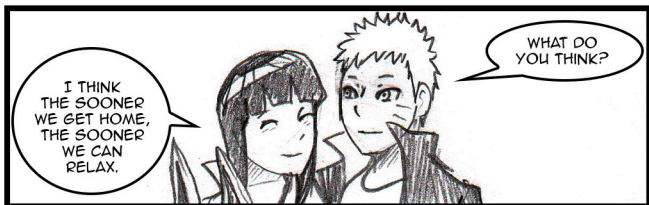


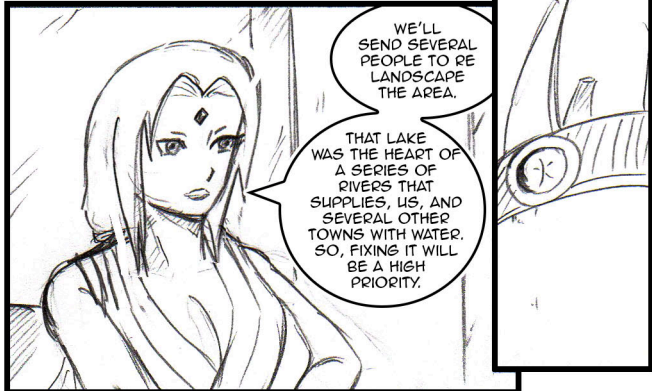
POOF



BUT...
YOU'RE A
LITTLE
TOO BIG
TO TAKE
HOME
WITH
US.







WE'LL
SEND SEVERAL
PEOPLE TO RE
LANDSCAPE
THE AREA.

THAT LAKE
WAS THE HEART OF
A SERIES OF
RIVERS THAT
SUPPLIES, US, AND
SEVERAL OTHER
TOWNS WITH WATER.
SO, FIXING IT WILL
BE A HIGH
PRIORITY.



BUT
THIS IS
GETTING
ANNOYING.

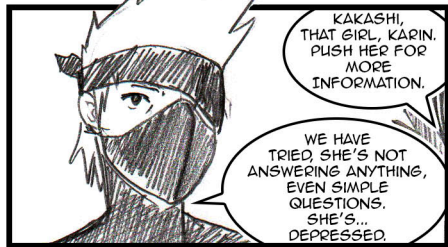
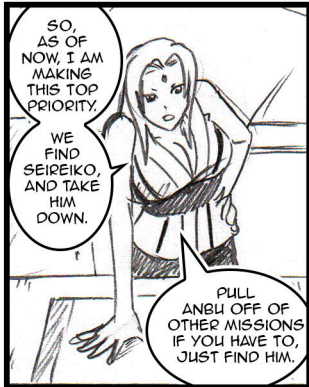
AS FOR
OUR NEW
GUEST, HE'LL
BE
INTERROGATED
FOR INFO
A-SAP.

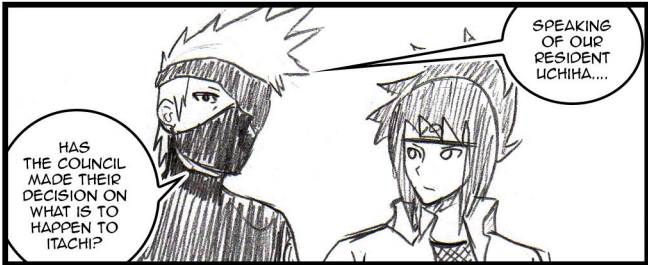


THREE TIMES
HE HAS INVADDED OUR
VILLAGE, THAT WE KNOW
OF.

I DON'T
WANT A
FOURTH.

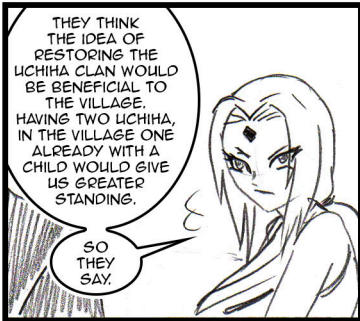
FROM
REPORTS BY ANBU;
FROM OTHER
VILLAGES WHO ARE
SHARING THEIR OWN
INFORMATION,
SEIREIKO HAS BEEN
INVADING ALL OVER,
STEALING BLOOD
SAMPLES FOR WHAT
WE CAN ONLY
IMAGINE IS SOME
FORBIDDEN
RESEARCH.





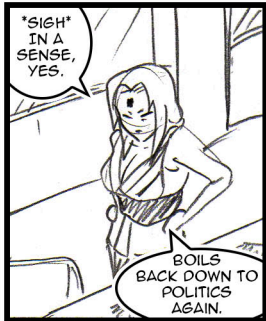
HAS THE COUNCIL MADE THEIR DECISION ON WHAT IS TO HAPPEN TO ITACHI?

SPEAKING OF OUR RESIDENT UCHIHA...



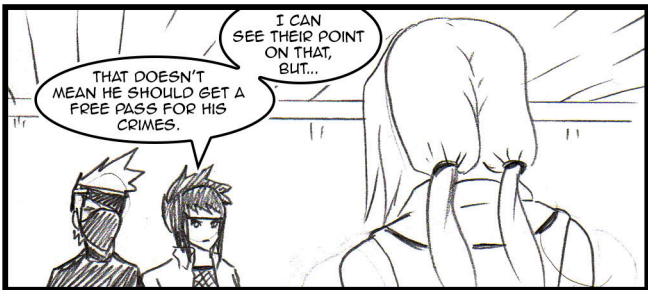
THEY THINK THE IDEA OF RESTORING THE UCHIHA CLAN WOULD BE BENEFICIAL TO THE VILLAGE. HAVING TWO UCHIHA, IN THE VILLAGE ONE ALREADY WITH A CHILD WOULD GIVE US GREATER STANDING.

SO THEY SAY.



SIGH IN A SENSE, YES.

BOILS BACK DOWN TO POLITICS AGAIN.



I CAN SEE THEIR POINT ON THAT, BUT...

THAT DOESN'T MEAN HE SHOULD GET A FREE PASS FOR HIS CRIMES.

A close-up of Naruto Uzumaki with a thoughtful expression, his hand near his chin. He is wearing his signature headband with the Konoha symbol.

WHAT IF
HE REFUSES THAT
CHOICE?

A close-up of Sakura Haruno with a serious and somewhat stern expression, looking slightly to the side.

OF
COURSE
NOT.

HE WILL
BE GIVEN A
CHOICE.

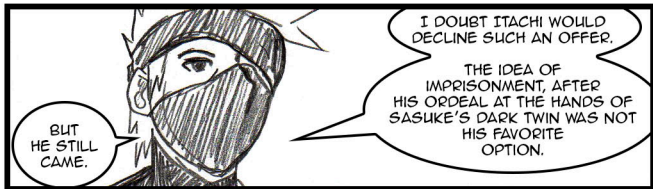
HE WILL
BE FREED, AND
BE ASSIGNED A
DUTY; CALL IT
COMMUNITY
SERVICE IF YOU
WANT. BUT HE
WILL BE
WATCHED,
RESTRICTED.
HIS CHAKRA,
LIMITED.

Sakura Haruno is shown from the waist up, gesturing with her right hand as if in conversation. The background is a simple sketch of an outdoor setting.

HE IS
LUCKY TO BE GETTING
THIS DEAL AT
ALL.

LUCKY
THAT HIS NAME STILL
HOLDS WEIGHT,
THANKS IN PART TO HIS
BROTHERS OWN HARD
WORK IN RESTORING
THE CLAN
NAME.

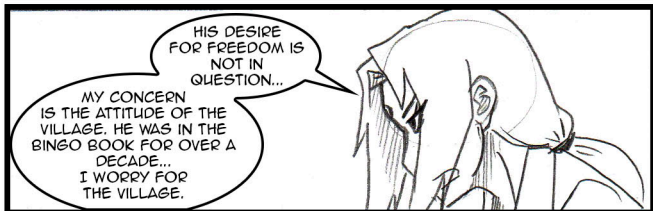
THEN HE
WILL REMAIN IN PRISON
FOR THE REST OF HIS
NATURAL LIFE.
HIS CHAKRA SEALED,
AND BE PUT IN
SOLITARY, TO
ELIMINATE ANY CHANCE
HE CAN ESCAPE.



BUT HE STILL CAME.

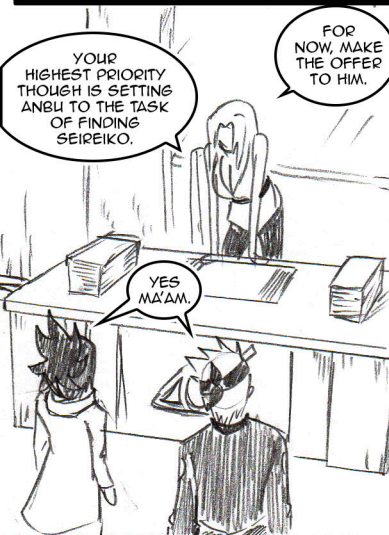
I DOUBT ITACHI WOULD DECLINE SUCH AN OFFER.

THE IDEA OF IMPRISONMENT, AFTER HIS ORDEAL AT THE HANDS OF SASUKE'S DARK TWIN WAS NOT HIS FAVORITE OPTION.



HIS DESIRE FOR FREEDOM IS NOT IN QUESTION...

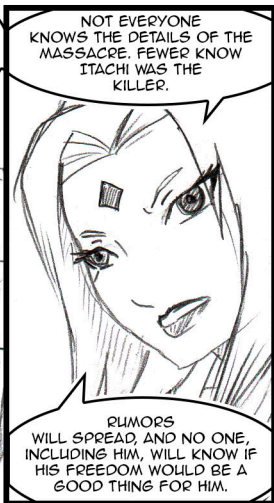
MY CONCERN IS THE ATTITUDE OF THE VILLAGE. HE WAS IN THE BINGO BOOK FOR OVER A DECADE... I WORRY FOR THE VILLAGE.



YOUR HIGHEST PRIORITY THOUGH IS SETTING ANBU TO THE TASK OF FINDING SEIREIKO.

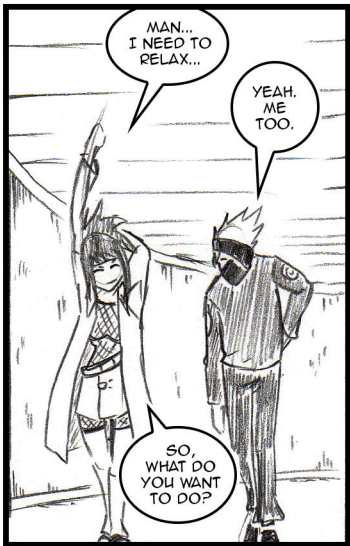
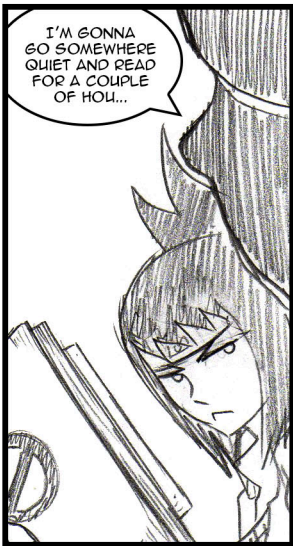
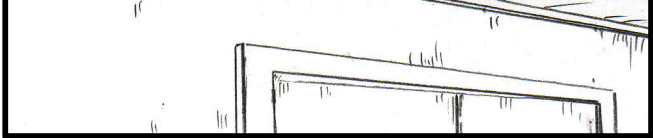
FOR NOW, MAKE THE OFFER TO HIM.

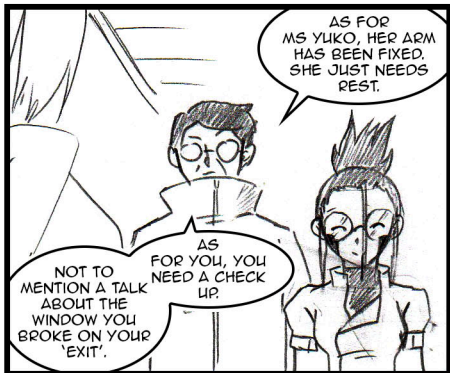
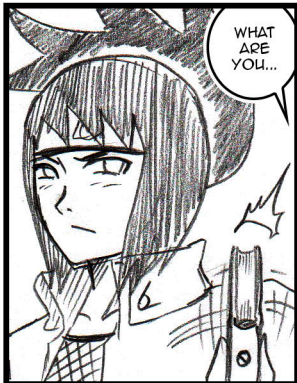
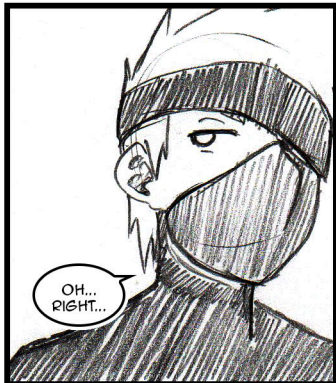
YES MA'AM.



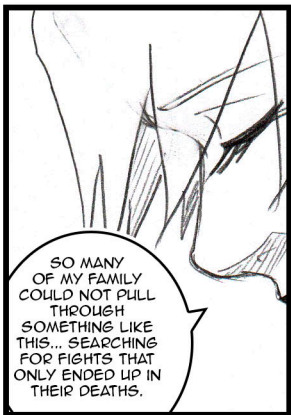
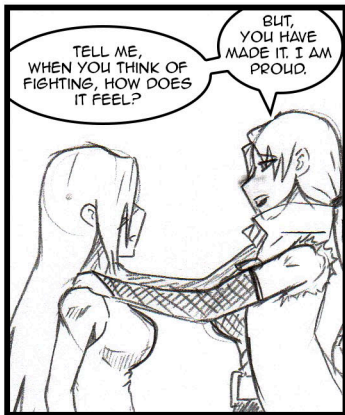
NOT EVERYONE KNOWS THE DETAILS OF THE MASSACRE. FEWER KNOW ITACHI WAS THE KILLER.

RUMORS WILL SPREAD, AND NO ONE, INCLUDING HIM, WILL KNOW IF HIS FREEDOM WOULD BE A GOOD THING FOR HIM.











W-WHAT?!
NO! CAN'T
YOU STA...

NOW...
I WILL BE
LEAVING IN A
FEW DAYS,
TO RESUME
MY DUTY...

BUT...

IF THE
DOCTOR GIVES
YOU THE ALL
CLEAR...

I WOULD
LIKE TO SEE WHAT
YOU CAN DO.

SO WE
WILL SPAR FOR A
FEW HOURS BEFORE
I LEAVE.

YEAH,
THAT IS
AWESOME,
MOM.

RETURNS AND REUNIONS; ALL THE RECES
OR OUR LIVES MOVING BACK IN TO PLACE;
DIFFERENT YET THE SAME AND WALKING
TOWARDS THE UNKNOWN FUTURE



NHC...