

DEN-ON-BU Part 2 Novel First Half:

Chapters 1-13 Summaries

The part 2 novel chapters are behind a paywall, unlike the part 1 novel and the two part 2 prologues which are free. So, instead of fully translating and releasing them like I did with the first part of the novel I've decided to instead summarise them in as much detail as I can (so that bamco don't come for my ass). I hope everyone enjoys reading these summaries of the part 2 story! (Warning: it gets dark)

TL: @syrupsealpha on twitter

CW: Detailed descriptions of suicidal ideation, trauma and depression

Chapter 1: Illicit DJ Attack

Mimito notices an unusual looking student wearing a fox mask on the dance floor during a Harajuku party event. She's dancing really weirdly and against the rhythm of the music, almost like her body is being controlled by a nonhuman entity. The other students on the floor back away, and she makes Mimito feel uneasy. This girl turns out to be Maya, and Matoi and Reml plus Pomemori also appear from behind her. Mimito wonders how on earth Pomemori is floating, and then thinks it must have the same mechanics as a DJ unit perhaps before feeling stupid for thinking that.

Maya suddenly jumps on stage and cuts off the music Mimito is playing, and the dance floor goes silent. Maya pulls off her fox mask and tells Mimito that 'she doesn't know her place in this world.' Mimito feels very uneasy looking into Maya's lifeless eyes. Matoi and Reml jump onstage beside Maya, Mimito nervously tells them to fuck off and get down from the stage but the three of them aren't intimidated by her at all. Matoi, Maya and everyone else in the venue don't say a word whilst Reml starts viciously verbally abusing Mimito. Reml says things such as 'you're so disgustingly terrible', 'the songs you choose suck and you're so bad at connecting them', 'you can't even really DJ in the first place because you're so bad at it', 'your entire existence itself is an accident', and even goes as far as to tell Mimito that she 'has no reason to even be alive in the first place'. Mimito can barely speak whilst these horrible things are said to her, but Reml smiles happily as she verbally abuses Mimito.

Mimito knows that she bitches a lot about Shibuya and can sometimes be shitty towards Hina and Shian, and vents out her frustration at the world often, but the way Reml is behaving towards her is fundamentally different. She completely freezes up and Reml then declares that Kabuki will be taking over the party. Mimito realises they're being hijacked but can barely get the words out to tell Reml to stop, which Reml ignores anyway. Reml then punches Pomemori in the stomach as hard as she

can, and it spits out a mysterious object much larger than its own body. She praises Pomemori, but instead of petting it, she punches it in the face, hard. The mysterious object reveals itself to be a sort of DJ unit. Reml challenges Mimito to a STACK battle and tells her that if Kabuki loses, they'll go home.

Mimito is mentally considering Reml's proposition when Reml tells her to either battle or 'get the fuck off the stage.' She sees Hina and Shian staring at the ensuing scene before them with shocked and anxious faces. Mimito then thinks about how hard she's fought to have them by her side, the clubroom, the great turnouts to their parties nowadays and the entirety of the Harajuku Denonbu in general. She responds defiantly to Reml's challenge in her usual 'I'm the cutest and best DJ in the world' way. This defiance against the unknown three girls deeply resonates with Hina and Shian, and they're moved by her resistance. Matoi then starts up the DJ unit that Pomemori puked out, and tells Mimito that it can't be found in shops and isn't available to buy (totally not illegal GR equipment at all...). Mimito points out nervously that the shape of it looks a little bit like an owl. Matoi says that in myths, owls were used as messengers of the gods and declares that 'this owl is my messenger' referring to the DJ unit.

She wears an audio jack thing around her wrist, and she connects it to the owl-like DJ unit using a cable. Matoi then makes another unhinged speech and says she feels like all the corruption in her mind and all her evil feelings are being drained out of her. She is described in that moment as 'looking as if she was on drugs'. When her DJ unit finishes activating, a dark green Music Crystal begins to float above it. Matoi describes it as being her soul. She asks Mimito what colour her soul is without waiting for a response, and hacks into her DJ unit. A pink Music Crystal then appears above Mimito's DJ unit and the display on it starts glitching out. Matoi quickly starts the STACK battle before Mimito can even process what's happening, and starts playing an edgy rap song. Mimito's Music Crystal starts to crack and the percentage '80%' appears above it. Matoi tells her that it's her soul's endurance, and once it reaches zero and shatters, her life will come to an end. The rest of Mimito's life is all just a game to her. Matoi tells Mimito that she'll feel despair to the point of never being able to stand up again.

Despite being told this, Mimito pushes on and after a delay, starts playing her first song. Since Matoi is playing hip hop/rap and she's playing her usual Harajuku style songs, she believes she can win, as Matoi's genre isn't popular in Harajuku at all. As she thinks this, the Music Crystal figure changes to 90%, and some of the cracks in it seem to disappear. Matoi switches songs and the sound of her music starts to dominate over Mimito's. Matoi DJs in an unfamiliar format and with a genre that Mimito is unfamiliar with, so she can't tell if her DJing is good or not. More people are listening to Matoi than Mimito because of her different style. Matoi remarks 'this is only Harajuku after all, Shibuya is a whole garbage dump.' Mimito gets mad at being compared to Shibuya and retorts, but Matoi harshly snaps back at her. Mimito starts

to feel like a small animal in front of a predator, and Matoi tells her that it's disrespectful for a 'sacrifice', as she calls Mimito, to question God.

The sound of Matoi's DJing becomes more and more unsettling, like it's foreshadowing something. She tells Mimito that she'll destroy her. A red glow starts to be emitted from her DJ unit, and it releases little red particles of light. They look pretty, but Mimito has a really bad feeling about them, and she turns out to be completely right. For some unknown reason, when these are released, all the Harajuku students that are still on the dance floor in the venue start to destroy the clubroom, as if possessed. They start knocking glasses on the bar counter onto the floor, and destroy the desks and chairs. Mimito is stunned seeing this and after freezing up for a second, starts shouting into her mic for them to stop, but it's like they can't even hear her.

As Matoi switches to an aggressive trap intro, Mimito notices that she isn't smiling like she was before. Instead, her smile is filled with anger and hatred, and Mimito's entire being trembles just from looking at her. A large crack appears in Mimito's Music Crystal, and the number above it is now only at 50%. Reml calls out to the students and jumps back onstage, and they cheer in response to her. Mimito notices that no one is even looking at her anymore, and her Music Crystal figure drops to 30%. The students destroy the pretty decorations on the clubroom walls that had been made by Shian. They spray black graffiti over the art on the walls that had been drawn by Hina. At this, Mimito cries out for them to stop again and tries to leave the DJ booth and get down to the dance floor. However, Maya stands in the way, not letting her leave and tells her that 'fleeing the enemy means you must commit seppuku.' She demands that Mimito must fight to the death.

Mimito screams again for everyone to stop even more desperately, but they don't seem to hear her whatsoever. Her Music Crystal drops down to just 10%. Maya switches her headset mic on and she, Matoi and Reml continue to encourage the students to destroy the place. At this point Mimito can't even link songs anymore, and just cries as her Music Crystal drops to 0%. It then shatters and Mimito's DJ unit completely breaks. Matoi then remarks that she finds Mimito's pigtails 'an eyesore' and in the original novel there are three completely black pages after she says this, one with an image of Matoi seemingly standing over Mimito- heavily implying that Matoi cuts off Mimito's hair.

Mimito can see Hina and Shian both huddling together in a corner, terrified. Mimito starts to blame herself for everything that just happened, and cries out that she'll quit Denonbu and DJing. She can only sit there and cry as she starts to feel unspeakable despair, knowing her fate is in the hands of the mysterious Kabuki girls. Reml then speaks out and says they need to hurry up and visit the next school, and orders Pomemori to swallow the DJ unit again. As Maya tells the others to go, Matoi seems like she's just woken up from a kind of trance, and the students on the dance floor

seem to be feeling like that too. Remi runs back to Mimito, picks up the twintails that Matoi just cut off, and dumps them in the bin as she leaves. The confused Jingumae students are terrified and in disbelief that they'd just caused that much destruction, and they all run off out of the clubroom and escape. Only Hina and Shian are left, and Mimito is inconsolable.

Chapter 2: Utsusemi

The exam period is over, meaning Reina is finally free from having to study (and very tired). Kazune being Kazune rubs Reina's shoulders like an old man and congratulates her on working hard (but mainly just cares about rubbing her shoulders because she's gay and weird.) The two of them are about to go find Futaba when she suddenly bursts into the clubroom. A classmate just told her about some concerning posts about the Harajuku Denonbu online and she shows them the forum where people are talking about the previous chapter's events to Reina on her phone. Reina immediately runs off and Kazune and Futaba chase after her, and the three of them get a train over to Harajuku, worriedly checking their phones to see if Jingumae Sando or an official news source has posted anything about it. Reina's hands are sweating so much she almost drops her phone several times.

The three of them try to call the Harajuku girls and message them, but none of them respond. Reina thinks about how the three of them usually attend the Harajuku parties, but hadn't been at the previous one as it was Sotokanda's exam time so the three of them skipped. As soon as the train arrives at Harajuku station, they rush off to the Takeshita Street entrance where the clubroom is, and confirm that there's an off-limits hologram floating above it with their own eyes. Despite the entrance being closed off, they can't see any police in the area. Reina is freaking out and Kazune grabs her sleeve to stop her running off again. They can see Jingumae students passing nearby, and then Kazune suggests going to the school and using her student council president status to talk to the student council and the teachers there.

They arrive at the school, and talk to a teacher in her 30s dressed in mode kei fashion who tells them she's the Jingumae Denonbu adviser through a hologram monitor interface. Despite being the Denonbu adviser, she admits to knowing nothing about music and just specialises in fashion, and tells them she only took on the role because 'someone had to be in charge of them'. When Kazune explains that they're friends of the Jingumae Sando Denonbu, the teacher instantly recognises them from their performance at the dedication DJ event (in the Harajuku novel). Apparently, more kids in Harajuku have been exploring music-themed fashion since then according to the teacher. Kazune then asks the teacher about the party being gatecrashed, and she reveals that she knows it was gatecrashed, and that the three Harajuku girls weren't injured, luckily. However, she doesn't have any further

information nor does she understand what actually happened. She tells them that she called for a morning meeting with the Harajuku Denonbu and asked for students who were there to come forward about what had gone on, but so far no one had come forward, not even the three Denonbu members themselves.

Kazune asks if they've checked the security camera footage, but the teacher tells her that the data was scrambled and they weren't able to watch any of the footage back. For a second, Kazune suspects that the teacher is hiding something from them, but then remembers that they're just students and from a different school after all, so she would be unlikely to tell them much. The teacher then goes on to complain about what a pain the Harajuku Denonbu has been since they'd apparently always been causing her trouble. She mentions having to deal with Mimito forcing Hina and Shian to join and them apparently fighting with other students (which doesn't surprise the Akiba girls). She also adds that all three are absent from school today, which further surprises Kazune. She can't think of why they would be keeping their mouths shut about the incident, as it's very out of character for the three of them.

This is all the information they can get out of the teacher, so the three of them leave the school, wondering what to do next. Since they can't reach the Harajuku girls on social media and they aren't answering their calls, Kazune suggests talking to them in person. Futaba points out they don't know their addresses, but then Kazune realises that they know where one might be. The Akiba girls head to Kamizono Jingu, the shrine near Jingumae Sando and the Inubousaki family home, where they think Shian might be as she isn't at school. Reina walks behind Futaba and Kazune in very low spirits, so Futaba starts to talk more as if making up for Reina's silence. They know that Shian works at the shrine a lot, so they think it'll be pretty likely they can find her there. Sure enough, Shian's there in her shrine maiden uniform sweeping the pathway. The three of them are surprised she's working but are glad that she doesn't appear to be injured.

Kazune and Futaba nervously call out to her but Shian completely blanks both of them. They wonder what to do when Reina steps in front of Shian and asks that she talk about it. However, Shian also acts like Reina is completely invisible to her. Reina can't get through to her, and she turns and heads back the way she came, Futaba and Kazune worriedly following, and the three of them leave the shrine without Shian saying a single word to them or even acknowledging their presence. When they leave the shrine grounds, Reina stops and explains that she thinks that 'the Shian-chan we just met is different from the normal Shian-chan'. Futaba remarks that it was definitely unusual to be ignored by her that much, but then Reina explains that every person has an aura. Kazune thinks about how well Reina can read her audience whilst she's DJing, and even people individually, and she's so frighteningly accurate that Kazune almost believes she must have psychic powers. She asks what Reina could feel from Shian's aura, and Reina says that she could feel nothing from Shian, and looking at her felt like she was walking through a dark cave and not being

able to see anything. Once seeing that, she didn't know what to do anymore, and ran away.

Futaba says that confessing painful things must take a lot of courage, and that it's probably best that Reina just left her alone. After having this conversation, Reina starts to look less down and Kazune and Futaba are relieved to see this. However she then argues with Kazune and states that if they can't contact Mimito or Hina, what they can do is to find out who gatecrashed their party. Kazune argues back and tells her they might be dangerous and Futaba also says that she would be really worried about Reina if she started investigating it on her own. They persuade Reina to let Kazune use her student council president status to get information from other schools, to which she reluctantly agrees.

Over in the Roppongi area, it's night time and Tama is working in Babel. She's cursing out her dad, the owner of Babel, for being badly organised and not ordering enough supplies. A lot of rich customers were in yesterday and ordered so much that almost all their supplies had been used up, and Tama is panicking about what to do. She values rich customers because of her love of money, and is scared that if they come back they'll have no supplies and won't be able to provide them with good service. But then, two girls walk in, Matoi and Maya. Tama watches them observantly with an unfriendly gaze, thinking that Maya's old fashioned clothes and fox mask are pretty weird fashion sense. She thinks Matoi looks a little butch, but still cute and looks a lot more normal compared to Maya. The two of them sit down at a table. Tama guesses that they probably won't spend much, so she mentally wishes for them to leave.

She brings over glasses of water to the table and asks what they'd like to order with hardly any enthusiasm, praying that they wouldn't complain. Any ounce of professionalism she has completely flies out the window however when Matoi asks her if she's an elementary schooler, and she tells her to 'shut the fuck up', exclaims that she is in fact a high schooler at Minato Shirokane and remarks that they're the kids there and she won't be serving them any alcohol. Maya stands up and says to her, 'You've got some fucking balls. I'll give you some credit for talking to us like that.' Tama isn't intimidated despite Maya being much taller than her and straight up tells them to get the fuck out.

The atmosphere changes when Tama says that she's the Minato Shirokane Denonbu's ace, and Tama is then able to sense that the two of them are dangerous. She can recognise danger easily due to working in a bar at night and having all kinds of customers, and also witnessing all sorts of incidents in the past. Matoi points out that there's a DJ booth in the back of the bar, and Maya challenges Tama to a STACK battle, saying that if she's really better than the Roppongi kids and the ace of Minato Shirokane, she'll beat her. Tama then asks how much Maya can pay her for the battle. Maya is taken aback, and Matoi laughs at her reaction.

Matoi then asks Tama why she belongs to a Denonbu in the Azabu area despite the fact that she lives in Roppongi. Tama explains that Azabu hired her to DJ for them and she's there basically because they pay her a lot of money. Maya glares at her and says she just sold her soul for money, and calls her money hungry. Tama exclaims that there isn't anything wrong with wanting money and something to aim for, and expresses her dislike of working in Babel and how old and shitty looking it is. Matoi remarks that since Babel is one of the low tier bars in Roppongi and Tama intends to build a new one in the hills when she gets enough money, she's working towards uplifting it and believes that money will get her there. Therefore, according to Matoi, money is Tama's 'God'. Tama doesn't understand what Matoi means, and says 'people betray people, but money never betrays people.'

Matoi and Maya share a look that seems to Tama like they both silently agreed on a decision. Before walking out, Matoi tells her that they have something in common between them, and invites the confused Tama to come visit them in Kabukicho sometime. The two of them abruptly leave and Tama is left confused from what just happened. She then realises she forgot to charge them for entry and gets pissed off. Chapter 2 ends with her mumbling, 'I wouldn't go to that lawless place even if they asked me to.'

Chapter 3: My sister's friend. My friend's sister.

It's the morning after the almost bar fight in Babel. Kazune wakes up to the news that last night, the Roppongi Denonbu's party was hijacked and the venue destroyed after a STACK battle with three mysterious invaders. The incident seems very similar to what happened to Harajuku, as all the security camera data and even videos on people's phones who were there are all unplayable, so no one has much knowledge of what happened at all.

Kazune walks down to the kitchen to get breakfast, her parents apparently still asleep. They'd told her that they'd been having a gaming tournament with their friends last night and Kazune assumes this probably carried on until the early hours of the morning, and hopes that they'll wake up before the arcade's opening time. She gets some eggs out the fridge to make herself a nice fancy breakfast, but then her phone vibrates as Reina messages her. She asks Kazune if she'd also seen the news about the Roppongi area, and in a very Reina-like way says she's going to go visit the Roppongi area now (after reading that message Kazune almost crushes an egg in her hand).

Kazune tells Reina to come to her house instead, and Reina obeys. Instead of making herself a fancy breakfast, Kazune just says fuck it and drinks some

nutritional meal replacement thing, speeding off to let Reina in. She unlocks the arcade entrance but instead Reina just runs up the outside stairs to Kazune's apartment (Kazune's family lives on the 6th floor of the arcade). Kazune remarks that it's much better that Reina came to her house instead of going rushing off to the Roppongi area by herself. Kazune is still in her pyjamas, so leads Reina to her room and orders her to sit down and play some video games or something whilst Kazune changes into her school uniform.

Reina notices that the display on Kazune's computer monitor has changed from Xevious to Pac-Man. Kazune says that she doesn't think going to the Roppongi area will help anything, and Reina protests by saying that they need to do something about it. Kazune tells her that if she skips school by going to the Roppongi area, all she'll take from it is just being there to see it for herself. She then asks if Reina has heard from any of the Harajuku girls, which she of course hasn't. Reina regularly messages the girls as she thinks barging into their homes to find them would be too pushy of her, but thinks messaging them would surely be ok. She messages them all again, but she's losing hope of getting a reply more and more as time goes on. Kazune says she's been exchanging information with other schools, and that if anything happens to them they'll contact each other. She plans to get in touch with Roppongi after school that day.

Kazune finishes changing and even though it's still pretty early, the two of them head off to school. Reina starts mumbling that she just can't understand what the party hijackers even get out of it. What about doing these horrible things and being hated by everyone makes them happy? Kazune thinks to herself that this was a very Reina thing to say of her, as the way Reina works is she makes people happy and in turn this makes her feel happy herself. The party hijackers seem to them like people that would enjoy being hated, and Reina simply can't even comprehend that. Kazune says they're the exact opposite type of people compared to Reina, but also asks why they should try to understand how those 'terrorists', as she calls them, feel.

They pass Futaba's house and greet her as she comes out to walk to school with them. Futaba immediately turns serious and asks if they'd heard the Roppongi area news, and Kazune fills her in on what she and Reina talked about. Futaba wonders about how there is seemingly no evidence. Reina tries to message Mimito again. She tries to not give up hope, unable to stop herself from constantly trying to contact the Harajuku girls. She knows that this messaging app is now the only thread that connects her to Mimito and carefully tugs at it, trying not to break it. However, Reina has already thought about the worst case scenario in which she never receives a reply, and so has Kazune.

Mitsuki is in a taxi on the way to the Akiba Denonbu clubroom, thinking to herself. Noticing how quiet the engine of the taxi is, she mentally compares it to the noise the old Hidaka family car made. She doesn't remember much about it except the sound

of the engine and seeing Reina and her beaming smile in the back seat next to her. She searches for articles about the recent Roppongi Denonbu party incident, and wonders how there's still hardly any information. Her mindset about it is very 'I'm not involved, so there is no need to voice my opinion, and taking action is out of the question.' Of course, if it happened to Shibuya she definitely would have to be involved, but if it ever did happen she isn't worried about it since the 'bloodthirsty mobs' would destroy the culprits, and Karin and Lucia would enjoy watching it. Mitsuki's glad that Karin is overseas right now as the situation would probably be a lot messier if they got Kabuki'd and Karin dealt with it.

She wonders where Lucia is, as she hasn't seen her for nearly a week now, and hopes that she hasn't run into any trouble like being mistakenly kept as a cat by an old lady (which has apparently actually happened before.) Mitsuki then recalls the reason why she's on her way to Akiba, the fact that Kazune texted her last night telling her that Reina was feeling very down at the moment, and seeing her sister might help. Mitsuki being Mitsuki is very unsympathetic and cold towards this and thinks that Reina needs to grow up and is being a 'pain in the ass'. Also being the tsundere she is, she worries that visiting them the day after getting Kazune's message will make her seem like she's very worried about Reina, and intends to get the message across to them that this is not the case. She doesn't know why Kazune thinks her visiting Reina will even help her, and thinks that surely she enjoys being around her Akiba friends much more.

Mitsuki is wondering about how close Kazune and Reina are when the taxi arrives at Akiba. Kazune awkwardly invites her into the Denonbu clubroom, and Reina is very surprised and happy to see her sister. Surprisingly, Futaba is the first one to break the awkwardness and gets everyone tea and fried manju buns, relaxing the atmosphere between them all. After making small talk, Mitsuki asks to see the basement, where the DJ equipment is. She helps them out by giving them advice on where they should place the speakers and how to sort out the EQ in order to get the best quality sound in the room whilst they perform. The three of Akiba are thankful for her honesty.

Mitsuki then asks if they have regular parties, which at the moment is a pretty awkward question given the fact that Reina hasn't touched a DJ unit since the Harajuku incident happened. As Mitsuki pushes, Reina breaks, and explains the situation with Harajuku and how Shian wouldn't talk to them whilst starting to cry. She expresses her worries about how all of them are unreachable, and how she can no longer get her feelings across to them whilst DJing. This is painful to hear for Mitsuki, and she understands how much not being able to get her feelings across must hurt Reina. She also notes that Reina is very sensitive to any kind of rejection and apparently the reason for this is rooted in her past, but the novel writer teases us and cuts Mitsuki's thoughts off before we can find out what she means by that.

Mitsuki then gives probably the most Mitsuki advice anyone could ever imagine. Which is to just forget them. Reina is shocked at her response. Mitsuki tells her that becoming estranged from someone and then them seeing you as an enemy happens a lot, and that Reina wasting her time and feelings thinking about people who won't listen to her is wrong. Reina protests that the Harajuku Denonbu could crumble, but Mitsuki just says she's lost count of how many people she's seen fail at both piano and DJing, and that she doesn't see that as unfortunate, and those people would have to live their lives another way. She then reminds Reina that she won against her in New Legend, and that it's her responsibility to keep being Mitsuki's opponent and confronting her. She tells Reina to think about herself from now on.

Mitsuki then goes to leave, but asks to speak to Kazune privately. Once the two of them are out the (soundproof) door, Mitsuki violently shoves Kazune against the wall and asks her what the fuck was up with Reina. Mitsuki apparently has never seen Reina that depressed before. She asks why Reina feels like this, and pushes the responsibility for it onto Kazune and Futaba. Annoyed, Kazune makes a throwaway comment that maybe Reina doesn't trust them as much as they thought she did. She tries to escape, but Mitsuki slaps her right in the face and continues to pin her against the wall. Kazune is too furious about this to even be her usual gay self. She knows now that she's met the real Seto Mitsuki. Mitsuki threatens her to talk more, and in response Kazune just says that she did not expect to be kabledoned by her friend's sister at all.

We get more context on the Azabu area now in addition to what the Azabu novel told us, and the Shirokane capitalist empire is further emphasised. Aki's ultimate celebrity status is further emphasised too, and apparently parents and pupils from Minato Shirokane try to get close to her for business opportunities which really isn't surprising at all given that she is the richest 17 year old in Tokyo. Even without their parents' ulterior motives, the pupils of Minato Shirokane just straight up worship Aki (in a super totally not gay way). If she even walks past them in the corridor they won't stfu about it for the rest of the day. Everyone watches even her most mundane behaviour, and despite the fact that the attention she gets annoys the shit out of her, she believes it comes with being 'the one on top'. Aki knows she's constantly in the limelight, and what she says influences people even if she doesn't mean for it to, so she must say and do things responsibly, and must never act on emotion alone.

However in Part 2 Chapter 3 she does indeed act on emotion alone when she goes over to a group of students who are chatting with Ginka and basically tells them to go away in the most polite ojousama-like way possible for her. Ginka flirts with her in front of them before they run off, to which Aki is annoyed by but also desperately tries to hide any kind of gay reaction from, which actually just gives her an even scarier bitch face. Ginka tells her that she doesn't have to be so intimidating, to

which Aki loudly shouts that she wasn't, but then realises she just shouted and gets embarrassed. Not fruity at all.

Chapter 4: Picked up by the Ojou-sama

We carry on straight from the ending of the last chapter, the reason why Aki wanted to speak to Ginka was about Denonbu. We're taken back to about a year ago, and Aki is persuading Ginka to not leave her Denonbu team. Ginka remarks that Aki has now become the No.2 Minato Shirokane DJ as she's improved a lot recently, and right now Ginka is the No.1. Ginka points out that them leading two different teams will increase the overall level of their Denonbu, but Aki says she wants to make an 'Azabu dream team' so she can appeal to her father, the Azabu Denonbu sponsors and attract attention in order to make the Azabu Denonbu 'supreme'. Ginka asks why she's in such a rush, and Aki explains that she wants to raise Azabu's cultural value. Azabu is an area that only really has its large, successful economy, but no form of artistic culture. In the time period (around the year 2060) that Denonbu takes place, all areas within the Tokyo area have their own unique culture, which is what attracts people to each area. People move to the areas where the unique area culture attracts them. Living the life that you love is becoming more important to people than accumulating wealth.

Ginka then points out that to do that, Denonbu isn't necessarily needed, and she could raise Azabu's cultural value in many other ways, like with art or classical music. Aki argues back that a Denonbu in Azabu would attract the most attention, as it's widely popular and has a big audience as well as many DJs involved. Ginka then argues that if so, Aki should have a producer role, and doesn't have to be a DJ herself. Aki then says that if she DJs, she can be used as a symbol of Azabu since she's the Shirokane family daughter, and they're of course the governing family of Azabu. Ginka then smiles and asks Aki if she can beat her team. Aki no longer has any more comebacks, thinking that beating Ginka will be impossible. She asks Ginka why she's being so harsh, and Ginka says that Aki can just sit on the throne giving out orders, but Ginka will do everything in her power to get to the top of Denonbu. She's about to walk away, but then Aki, remembering what the strongest connection is and scared she'll lose Ginka, asks Ginka to sign a contract with her for Ginka to be on her team, and in return she'll pay her, even build a specialist studio just for her if money isn't enough- but Ginka just laughs and remarks that suggesting a contract is so like Aki. Ginka then challenges Aki to a STACK battle. If Aki wins, then she'll do anything she says. Aki is lost for words, knowing that beating her would be impossible. Ginka then leaves, giving the excuse that there's only 1 minute until lunch starts, and Aki can't think of anything else she can say.

Aki sits in a bar, venting her frustrations about Ginka whilst drinking a cocktail. Her voice is drowned out by the noise the other customers are making, but she welcomes this. Instead of the expensive, members-only bars Aki would usually go to, this one is a run-down one in the backstreets of Roppongi. She couldn't come to a place like this alone, and has two bodyguards with her. The bodyguards try to get on her good side by asking her if she'd like a reservation to be made for her at a high class bar, but Aki refuses, saying she's in the mood for something more chaotic today. She thinks about how she has another bodyguard waiting outside, and how the maids in the Shirokane mansion always check the security footage, and even if terrorists attacked, they wouldn't be able to inflict a scratch on her.

Aki sighs, knowing she has all kinds of things others want, yet can't get what she wants most- Ginka. She thinks of all the Minato Shirokane students she saw talking to Ginka earlier that day, and the ways in which their families are connected to the Shirokane family. She casually thinks of how easy it would be to cut them off and let them go bankrupt. Aki knows full well that every student at Minato Shirokane's family is affected by and connected to her family, and she has immense power over them all. Ginka is the only exception, as her father, Haijima Fuuga, is a self-made famous music producer who moved to Azabu thanks to a music project several years ago, so the Haijima family don't have any financial ties to the Shirokane family. This fact makes Aki uncomfortable, and she's tried to form a contractual relationship with Ginka, but hasn't had any success. She just wants Ginka to stay in Azabu if anything. For some reason Ginka doesn't seem to want to participate in official Denonbu matches, but she's an amazing DJ nonetheless, and Aki has heard rumours about Houou Karin taking a shine to her.

Just as Aki is thinking about how no one in the Minato Shirokane Denonbu could beat Ginka, she gets distracted by Eurobeat music playing. She turns around, expecting the DJ to be a middle-aged man, but surprisingly a small girl is DJing. Drunk customers yell song genre requests at her and insult each other rowdily. Aki presumes that the girl must be terrified at this and is about to signal to her bodyguards to help her out, when the girl yells at them to 'SHUT THE FUCK UUUUUP!', and calls them all 'cheap sons of bitches'. She yells and swears at the old drunk men for not buying enough when they come to the bar and blames them for the fact that BABEL is closing tonight, and proceeds to loudly argue with them. She readjusts her cap, and then tells the customers to listen to her final DJ set.

Aki listens to Tama's DJing, astonished at her skills. She takes all of the customers' insane song requests and manages to give them all a really natural flow into each other. Aki also notices that she's great at judging which song to play next from the customers' reactions, and there was a context to the way she DJed. A drunk guy shouts for Tama to play house music, and since this is Azabu's signature genre which Aki is very familiar with, this helps her to realise Tama's pure DJing talent. Aki realises that Tama is skilled enough to beat even Ginka. The bar owner speaks to

Aki to apologise for his daughter's behaviour. He also explains further about how the bar is going out of business tonight, and when Aki is asked if she'd like another drink, she smiles and tells him she'll buy the entire bar. She also asks if Tama is for sale.

Tama is taken to the Shirokane mansion, instantly in awe as soon as she sees it. It looks to her like an extravagant king's palace out of a movie. A dozen maids standing in a line bow to Aki as she enters. Tama is so overwhelmed by Aki's wealth, she starts to feel like she's been isekai'd. She's a little suspicious of Aki's actions, however, and doesn't quite trust her. She knows buying a run-down bar like BABEL is a strange thing for Aki to do, and wonders if she's being deceived in some way. Despite being wary, her heart is defeated by Aki's ginormous wealth, and knows she's the real deal in terms of Ojou-samas (Ojou-sama meaning the daughter of a very rich, high class Japanese family). Rich people usually make Tama jealous and angry, but she thinks to herself that maybe she should get close to this one. As they enter Aki's room, Tama tries to flatter Aki by commenting on her wealth, telling her that she's pretty, has big boobs and seems smart. Aki just ignores her, not feeling like pointing out the weirdness she just spewed out and tells Tama to sit down. Instead of sitting on the sofa, Tama sits on the floor and exaggerates about how comfy the carpet is. Aki also ignores this and gets straight to the point and tells Tama that investing in her bar was not an act of charity, and she wants something in return, which doesn't surprise Tama at all.

Aki tells Tama she'd like for her to work in the Shirokane household as a maid, and Tama is enthusiastic about this. She also tells her she'd be transferring to Minato Shirokane if this was the case, expecting Tama to be a little sad as some school friendships of hers might be affected, but instead Tama is overjoyed to start attending a school for Ojou-samas and celebrities, and exclaims that 'THIS IS THE FUCKIN BEST!!!!' She then realises she can't afford the school fees, but Aki tells her she'll pay them if Tama will work as her personal maid. Tama declares that she'll be by Aki's side for the rest of her life at this. She moves on, wondering if Tama is really ok and getting a little annoyed by her, and tells Tama she wants her to join the Minato Shirokane Denonbu. Tama is to be on Aki's team once she joins, and will fight the No.1 of Minato Shirokane and win.

Tama replies in a very confident, assured way and says 'Ah, that's what you want?' and Aki doesn't like this response at all. Aki thinks that such a thing as beating Ginka shouldn't be treated lightly and brushed off as just 'that'. She wonders why she resents Tama's confident attitude so much, as sometimes she thinks she has a chance of winning against Ginka. Aki calls the head maid who takes Tama, and then starts to feel strangely tired. She collapses onto her bed, and thinks about how she doesn't feel much like herself at the moment.

Chapter 5: Even black cats don't forget a favour

Aki introduces Tama to Ginka, and tells her that she's the newly hired Shirokane household maid and will be starting at the middle school at Minato Shirokane. Ginka is confused and asks if Aki meant the elementary school, which angers Tama. After scolding Tama, Aki then tells her that Tama will be joining the Minato Shirokane Denonbu as her teammate, and battling against Ginka. When Ginka asks where on earth Aki found this girl, hearing that Aki picked her up from a bar in Roppongi further confuses her. As Aki and Tama go to check the sound system, Tama sticks out her tongue at Ginka without Aki noticing. Ginka thinks to herself that she hasn't seen anyone do that since kindergarten.

We're time jumped to Thursday, and are taken inside Ginka's thoughts. To Ginka, Aki seems to be very busy and she's finding it unusual that she and Aki haven't talked for a while, as they usually find ways to keep in touch with each other. Ginka walks home from school, which she likes doing as it makes her feel free, and reaches her own large apartment where she lives alone, as her parents are very busy workaholics and she hardly ever sees them. Ginka checks the time, and it's 3pm. It's 4 hours until dinner time, so she goes to her own personal studio to prepare for the STACK battle. However, all she can see in her mind is Aki's angry face and Tama sticking out her tongue at her. She isn't in the mood to make a new remix or anything, so she reclines back in her chair and gets lost in her own thoughts again.

She thinks of her own identity as Haijima Ginka as a part she plays daily. Ginka likes to meet people's expectations, so continues to behave the way she always has and dress in masculine clothes. Ever since she was very little, her parents treated her like a dress-up doll and put her in boys' clothes and praised her for being 'stylish' and 'cool'. She was too young to understand it at the time, but liked being praised by her parents. She went to a normal kindergarten before moving to Azabu, and there her peers and teachers were very pleased at her 'boy' act and liked it when she imitated lines from ikemen prince-like anime characters. It was fun for her to act like this and she enjoyed making girls blush.

Ginka moved to the Azabu area when she was in elementary school, and then she met Aki once she started attending Minato Shirokane. Since Aki was apparently a special student and the 'princess' of the Azabu area, Ginka thought it would be fun to make moves on her. She enjoyed Aki's reactions to her princely moves far more than that of the other girls. Ginka thinks she got too carried away with this as one month later Aki confessed her love to her. Aki's confession was very serious, and she told Ginka she wanted to marry her. This scared Ginka and made her want to run away. After Ginka explained to Aki that she's actually a girl and not a boy, Aki stopped going to school.

Every day during the time that Aki didn't go to school, Ginka would visit the Shirokane mansion and wait in her back garden every day after school for a set time, until the sun set. She did this for a month until finally Aki came out onto her balcony and invited Ginka in. Ginka thought she looked extremely beautiful, but she also noticed that Aki looked pale and her once shimmering golden hair was dull, and blamed herself for this. Thinking she'd broken her heart, Ginka told Aki that she would always be by her side. Even if she couldn't be her prince, she would continue to support her.

Ginka thinks that ever since that day, her and Aki's relationship has remained the same. But even so, the fact that she failed Aki's expectations haunts her and she still feels guilty. To Ginka, Aki is an idealist, ambitious, and can think of practical ways to fulfil her own dreams. This makes Aki shine to her, and also why she's so scared of Aki ever losing her sparkle. Ginka thinks of Aki as the light, and herself as the shadow. She plays a support role in 'the princess's fairy tale.'

Lately, Ginka has noticed that Aki's been acting strangely and looks very pale and tired often. Since Aki is the Shirokane heir, her schedule is much busier than that of other Minato Shirokane students and Ginka knows this schedule doesn't allow her enough time to be involved with Denonbu, yet she does it anyway. Ginka worries she'll collapse if she keeps up her busy schedule, and is trying to stop Aki from DJing. Yet there's a part of her that wants to keep her DJing since through them doing that together, she feels closer to Aki, close enough that she can 'feel the warmth of her skin'. She wonders if she's afraid of getting too close to Aki. If she gets too close, maybe 'no shadows will form and everything will be captured by the light'. Ok imma just quote directly from the novel for this last bit pls forgive me officials if you see this lol

'What happens if I pull her towards me?

I have a feeling that when our skin touches, we'll melt into each other. I don't want to imagine that too much, though. Because- I feel like we're going to fall down together, no matter where we go.'

(None of these words are in the bible)

Skip forward to Friday and Ginka passes Aki with Tama in the corridor. Ginka calls out to Tama without thinking, and then realises she doesn't even know why she did. She asks Tama why she's fighting her instead of Aki, and Tama says it's part of her job. Ginka reminds her that her boss is the heir to the Shirokane group, and tells her that Aki doesn't have time for Denonbu. Tama then asks why Ginka can't just tell Aki that herself, and Ginka says she can't, because then Aki will push herself too hard even more, so Ginka thinks she has no choice but to push Aki away. Tama is confused at this, and then runs off after Aki.

Skip forward to Sunday and Aki is slumped on a couch in her room thinking about Ginka. She was planning to check the final STACK battle playlist but she can't concentrate, and wonders to herself why she's so obsessed with Ginka. Ginka has always been by her side, not too close but not too far either, which she has found both comforting and unsatisfying. Denonbu brings her closer to Ginka, yet Ginka runs away when Aki tries to reach for her. The two haven't spoken to each other much lately, and Aki thinks to herself how she feels lonely without Ginka. Even if she talks to other people, she's still lonely because none of them are Ginka.

She wonders what she really means to Ginka, and if Ginka just wants to be on the good side of the Shirokane family. However, there's no reason for Ginka to stay in Azabu, and there are no strings attaching her there unlike the other Minato Shirokane students. She'd tried to offer Ginka employment under herself, but she kept refusing. Aki picks up her tea and then realises it's cold, so calls for Tama to get her another cup.

She stands at the balcony, and is reminded of how Ginka declared that she'd always be at her side back when they were in elementary school. Then she realises that Ginka is actually standing in her garden again, and asks her what on earth she's doing there in surprise. Ginka doesn't really know herself, and replies that she just wants to see Aki's face for a little while. She asks Aki if she still wants to do the STACK battle tomorrow, and Aki tells her if she agrees to join her team, she won't have to. She then accuses Ginka of not caring about her feelings, and when Ginka replies that she always thinks about her, Aki bursts out that Ginka is probably about to leave her. She reminds Ginka that she said she'd always be at her side, to which Ginka falls silent.

Tama then bursts back into Aki's room with her tea, and when Aki looks back at the garden, Ginka is gone. She scolds Tama for opening the door with a bang, drinks the new cup of tea that she brought, and realises it's lukewarm. Aki is about to yell at Tama but then realises that she's only a middle schooler and Aki is the one who is forcing her to do work she isn't familiar with yet. The other maids are experienced and great at their work, yet they're underperforming. Tama however doesn't have that experience.

Thinking that her and Ginka's future won't change even if Tama wins against Ginka, Aki gently fires her. Tama profusely apologises, but then realises Aki seems depressed rather than angry. Aki explains she wanted to bond with Ginka, but it wasn't possible, and even if Tama wins the STACK battle and brings Ginka over to Aki's team, there isn't a point in a bond from that. Tama desperately tries to hang onto her job, but Aki smiles at her and says there's no point in hiring Tama if she won't be STACK battling, but she'll continue to fund BABEL. Failing to change Aki's mind, Tama sadly leaves the Shirokane mansion.

The next day is Monday, the day of the STACK battle. Many students are gathered in the Minato Shirokane Denonbu hall, and two DJ booths are set up onstage. Aki and Ginka stand in the wings of the stage. Ginka asks about Tama, and Aki explains she dismissed her and will be fighting against Ginka herself. Ginka tells her she'll publicly lose and damage her rep, but Aki says she's fine being a stepping stone for the future No.1 star of the Azabu Denonbu and that this STACK battle will be the end to her Denonbu career. Ginka enters her DJ booth. Aki is about to enter hers when a shadowy figure jumps onstage and scans her ID-J on the DJ unit in Aki's booth. Aki exclaims in surprise, and Tama winks at her and tells her she'll get the battle over in no time. She asks Ginka if it's still ok for Ginka to battle her instead of Aki, and Ginka has no problems as after all it was the original plan. Aki demands Tama to step back but there is nothing she can do to stop the STACK battle.

Tama begins her set with an Azabu-style house track, and Ginka begins hers with a romantic melody suited to the taste of the Minato Shirokane students. Ginka remarks to Tama that she didn't expect that from her. Tama creates a looped drumroll to build tension and hype the audience up very early on in the battle, which further surprises Ginka. She plays Eurobeat songs which most of the Minato Shirokane girls have never heard before and react to in surprise, but they start to dance to it. The usual definition of 'dancing' at Minato Shirokane is just swaying gently to the music, but the girls listening to Tama's set start properly dancing. Ginka looks at the floor and the colours of the headsets tell her that most of the audience is listening to Tama.

Tama increases the BPM as she continues to shoot out short mixes of songs at the audience, which they respond to very well and some even start jumping up and down. Ginka praises Tama. Aki notices that Ginka is DJing with a genuinely happy smile on her face, something that Aki hasn't seen in a long time. Aki wishes she could live like the atmosphere Tama created with her DJing; a way of life where she would be free to take risks, and be selfish sometimes. As she thinks about this, the STACK battle ends.

After being told she won, Tama grins smugly at Ginka and Ginka praises her, which surprises Tama a little. Ginka tells her honestly that she is now Minato Shirokane's ace. However Tama explains that she's no longer a student there due to Aki firing her and starts to leave sadly, but Aki stops her. She tells Tama that she's not going to cancel her contract and Tama will continue to work for her. Tama explodes with joy and begs Aki to raise her salary, since due to being the Minato Shirokane ace she's surely more valuable now. Aki tells her to stop getting carried away. She tells Tama she'll be more strictly disciplined as a maid, to which Tama asks her to stop saying such scary things.

Ginka tries to hold in her laughter at their conversation, thinking to herself that Tama perfectly balances out the relationship between herself and Aki. When it's just her

and Aki, they're unstable, but Tama balances them when she's there. She goes over to them and proposes they have a welcome party for Tama joining the newly formed Azabu team, and tells them they can eat whatever they'd like. Tama is very happy about this, but when Ginka calls her a cutie and pats her head she snaps back at her and tells her not to treat her like a little kid. Ginka thinks to herself that with Tama, she and Aki will be able to have a more stable relationship, and she has hope for the three of them.

We're taken back to the present day, 5 days after the Roppongi Denonbu was attacked. Aki, Ginka and Tama arrive 10 minutes past the starting time for a party held by the second team of the Minato Shirokane Denonbu, but when they arrive they see an off-limits hologram in front of the venue with police officers working behind it, police cars and ambulances lined up in front of the venue, and Minato Shirokane students dotted all over the place, wailing in despair. Aki tries to talk to one but they're all crying so much they can't even respond. Ginka finds one that has calmed down slightly and she tells them that before the party started, three strangely dressed people she'd never seen before had entered the venue without permission. They started to get worried when no one was letting them in when the party was due to start, but when they got in they found the members of the second Azabu team unconscious on the floor. That student had called the police and an ambulance to the scene after seeing what had happened.

Aki asks further about the three intruders and the student describes one of them as wearing a fox mask- to which Tama reacts. She remembers Matoi and Maya coming into BABEL and remembers Maya's fox mask. She thinks at first that surely it must be a coincidence, but the student goes on to describe what must be Matoi and another girl that Tama hadn't seen (Remi). Thinking that it must be Matoi and Maya who had done this and also remembering that Matoi told her to visit them in Kabukicho sometime, Tama dashes off to the Kabuki area on her own.

Chapter 6: The Gathering of the Beasts

Kurogane Tama arrives in Kabukicho, thinking how even Roppongi's shitty neon lights and signs aren't as bad as the ones in Kabuki. She tries to avoid making eye contact with everyone she passes and thankfully doesn't get into any conflict with drunk people. She eventually arrives at a square in the middle of town where a crowd of people who seem to be a similar age to her are gathered, and looks for Matoi and Maya. However they find her first as Matoi grabs Tama's shoulders, scaring the shit out of her. Despite this, Matoi's friendliness makes Tama initially doubt that she's responsible for what happened to the second Azabu team. Maya is suspicious of Tama however, and sharply accuses her of coming to Kabukicho after

finding out what happened to the second Azabu team, hitting the nail right on the head.

Tama stutters, and then lies and says she doesn't give a fuck about the second team. Matoi smiles at her again and starts her carefully worded manipulative introduction to illegal STACK battling, to which Maya protests, but Matoi raises her hand and Maya goes silent. Matoi tells Tama about how she knows a place where she can make tons of money and get rich really fast, and Tama decides to walk with her and Maya to this place, which Matoi also says is the club that her and Maya usually hang out at. Matoi then asks Tama if she's ever thought it unfair that she doesn't make money directly from STACK battling, and with her skills, she definitely should be. Tama listens to her intently, and asks her more about it. Matoi then tells her that this kind of STACK battle involves gambling and that the winning DJ wins a lot of money, and Tama instantly knows that this is against the law. She quickly becomes noticeably nervous but Matoi reassures her that this is Kabukicho, an outside area, and there wouldn't be any police raids. She also continues to talk about how it's unfair that people around the world are exploited for their skills and not paid fairly, and how Tama is just some hired help to Azabu.

They arrive at a staircase, and the further down they go, the darker it becomes. The orange lights turn blood-red. Tama can feel herself internalising Matoi's words, and considers her options. Working as a Shirokane maid and Azabu DJ pays much better than working at BABEL or any other part time job, but on the other hand she could cut ties with Shirokane Aki and make a ton of money fast by STACK battling. However, thinking about leaving Aki makes her feel sad, for a reason she doesn't really know. Tama thinks that Azabu are far too dependent on her and are probably lost without her already- but if she ever needs to make money, she can just come here.

Matoi gets a scary looking man to let them in, and Tama is thrust into an underground DJ arena. Reml, standing on the stage as a sort of battle announcer, announces that a new challenger has entered the ring. As soon as Tama sees Reml with Pomemori by her side, she knows that this is the third intruder that the Minato Shirokane student had described. She realises Matoi had set her up to be challenger, which Matoi responds to by saying she just wanted Tama to have some fun, and reminds her that if she wins, she'll get a lot of money. She asks Tama if she's really a free cat, and if Azabu are just using her, then her real place is right here. Tama feels as if her world has been flipped upside down hearing this. She gives Tama a choice to run away, and tells her that if she decides to leave, this will be the last time she and Tama will ever see each other. Tama then thinks to herself that she doesn't have enough information to report back to Aki, and decides to stay and battle just to gather information.

Tama jumps onto the stage, and Reml hypes the audience up again and tells them to bet everything they have on this battle, as Azabu's ace is battling. As Tama scans her ID-J on her DJ unit, Reml hands her a USB stick, and explains that it turns an ordinary DJ unit into something special and illeg- sorry, magical (*^_^*) Tama does what she is told and plugs it in. Not much changes at first except the colour of the display screen. Then, Tama's opponent enters the arena. She's wearing a tiger patterned cape and tiger mask, and has an afro dyed in seven colours (Nanairo stage reference???) she does a forwards somersault and lands on her DJ unit. When she takes off her mask, Tama realises that this pro wrestler looking creature is Taiga Lucia. Lucia also recognises Tama, and smiles at her, saying that this place is super fun.

Reml announces into her mic that this is a huge battle, a Shibuya vs Azabu showdown to which the crowd roars. Tama asks Lucia wtf she's even doing in Kabukicho, to which Lucia replies that the battles are great and she can battle any time she likes, without worrying about who her opponent is. Lucia plugs a USB stick into her DJ unit just like Tama did, but then a string of unfamiliar text appears on Tama's DJ unit, and a strange black-coloured crystal hologram appears, floating above it. A percentage number underneath it reads 95%. Lucia also has a crystal above her DJ unit, except it's yellow. Tama asks Reml what the fuck the crystal thing is but Reml ignores her, and yells for the battle to start. Lucia starts playing happy hardcore, to which the audience responds immediately by cheering and dancing. Tama's first song is a little delayed, but she starts off with a high quality house track made by Minato Shirokane students.

However, Lucia's sound is already overwhelming Tama's. The audience's headphones are all set to listen to Lucia, even on Tama's side of the arena, and are all watching Lucia DJ. Lucia raises the BPM of her mix even more, making the audience not able to stand still whatsoever. Tama starts to feel as if Lucia's sound is erasing her own, and notices the percentage underneath her crystal reads 50%, and cracks are starting to appear in it. She tries to hype herself up by declaring that she's the Minato Shirokane ace, and the only STACK battle she's ever lost was an accident at New Legend and switches to a new song, but her efforts are useless. Lucia's sound completely dominates the audience. Tama's music crystal percentage then goes down to just 20%, and she starts to unusually hesitate before deciding the next songs she's going to DJ. She tries another setlist, but it's useless. Lucia was already the winner from the moment the battle started. At this moment, Tama's music crystal reaches 0% and shatters.

Reml remarks that Tama's doing pretty well, as people can sometimes become physically disabled when their music crystal shatters, so Tama is one of the lucky ones. However, she won't be able to DJ for a while. Tama is about to ask wtf she means by that but then spots an angry audience member trying to get onto the stage. Reml advises her that if she's going to run away, she may as well do it now.

Tama spots Matoi standing on the stage, looking down at her condescendingly, and Matoi tells her that she thought she was a stray cat, but it looks like since she was hired by Azabu she was tamed into a domestic cat. Reml yells that everyone's broke now because they bet everything on Tama, and if they catch her, they'll kill her. Tama tries to run out and escape, but Lucia catches her by the collar and points to a vent on the ceiling, telling Tama it's a better way to escape. Tama at first tells Lucia to stop talking bullshit, but then goes the way Lucia advised as a mob of angry people charge towards her. She jumps up into the vent off of her DJ unit, and is thankfully small enough to crawl through, whilst the people chasing her are fortunately too big to fit through. Tama crawls through the maze of vents and escapes, tears in her eyes.

Chapter 7: Onee-chan can see right through me

Aki sends a car to Shibuya and gets Mitsuki to come to the Shirokane mansion to straight up accuse Teion of being responsible for the party hijack on the Azabu 2nd team. She gets too angry and riles up Mitsuki as she has no idea what Aki is talking about, and Mitsuki almost leaves until Ginka starts talking to her more calmly and explains what has been happening recently. She starts playing Usagi to Kame on her phone and asks Mitsuki if she can hear it, which she of course can. Mitsuki thinks this is a stupid question until Ginka asks Tama if she can hear it, to which Tama gets confused and asks if there's even any music playing at all. She thinks they're just pretending at first, but even when Ginka plays Tama's most favourite Eurobeat songs, her reaction doesn't change whatsoever.

Mitsuki thinks at first that she's deaf, but then realises that Tama can still hear everything, just not any music. Ginka tells her that the recent party hijacking triggered it, and that the day before yesterday, the Minato Shirokane second team were attacked. She also tells her about how Tama went to the Kabuki area by herself, thinking she knew who the culprits might be, and was forced into an illegal gambling STACK battle. Mitsuki panics as Ginka tells her that Tama's opponent in that STACK battle was Lucia, and the loser of these illegal STACK battles gets mysteriously punished, with some kind of disability- in Tama's case, not being able to hear music. When Ginka explains that these illegal STACK battles were done with Neucom DJ units and mysterious USB sticks, Mitsuki starts to understand why Aki had accused her, as Shibuya is Neucom's testing ground. Aki, who's been sulking the whole time Ginka was talking, asks Mitsuki again if she has anything to do with this. Mitsuki tells her she hasn't, and Aki believes her. Mitsuki leaves, telling them that she's going to retrieve Lucia (she calls her the dumbass) from the Kabuki area.

Meanwhile, the 3 Akiba girls are shopping, and are currently on the hobby floor looking at plastic models. Kazune invited Reina and Futaba to go shopping for

plastic models together to try and cheer Reina up, since plastic models are her (special) interest. Futaba looks at a plastic model of a cute anime girl, and we are harshly reminded that Kazune is written through the lens of a creepy male otaku. As Kazune suggests that they all head off to another store purely because they have limited edition swimsuit and bunny girl models, her phone rings. She sees that Seto Mitsuki is calling her and goes to the floor above to take the call. Mitsuki briskly tells her that she has a lead about who the party hijackers are that she can't talk about over the phone, orders her to come to Shibuya right now and hangs up on her right as Kazune tries to ask what she means. When the call ends, Kazune realises that Reina and Futaba are standing behind her and she makes an excuse to go collect a rare computer part she's been looking for, leaves the department store and jumps onto a train to Shibuya.

She arrives at the Shibuya Denonbu clubroom and Mitsuki tells her everything she heard from Azabu. Kazune remarks that it's a tough situation, but then Mitsuki asks her why she talks about it as if it isn't her problem, and tells her that Kazune is coming with her to the Kabuki area too. Kazune asks her why she can't just call the police, and Mitsuki just replies, 'Because of Reina.' She asks Kazune why Reina is still feeling that way, and why Kazune can't just support her as her best friend. The conversation quickly gets heated and Kazune shoots back that Mitsuki is literally Reina's sister, so why can't she reach out to her? Mitsuki explains that she can't comfortably approach Reina and act like her big sister, as she's apparently 'done things'. Kazune starts to find Mitsuki a massive pain in the ass, thinking that she's also hell to deal with just like Karin and Lucia. Mitsuki then changes her mind and says that they should head off to the Kabuki area now, as it would be a better idea to observe it in the day rather than head there first at night. They're about to set off when Reina walks in and declares that she wants to go with them.

It turns out Reina overheard Kazune's phone call with Mitsuki earlier and that she'd found leads, guessed they'd both be in Shibuya, and went there. She begs that Mitsuki and Kazune take her with them, but Mitsuki harshly tells her not to and that she'd be a burden. Kazune calls her out on this, but Mitsuki says she has to be clear with Reina so she'll understand. Reina points out that they'll probably make them STACK battle, and in that case she'll be useful. She reminds Mitsuki that she beat her at New Legend. Mitsuki tells her to not be so confident over one win, and leads Reina down to the basement and challenges her to a rematch.

Kazune watches them battle. Mitsuki looks very calm and confident, whereas Reina looks panicked and impatient. Something is very wrong with Reina's DJing. It's very monotonous, and it just seems like anthems after anthems, with no story behind them at all. Nothing resonated with Kazune's heart like usual. However, Mitsuki plays Shibuya-style EDM and remixes classical music from her piano background. Her DJing is perfect, and Kazune feels like she's witnessing a new generation opera.

Even if the twins were on the same line at New Legend, the distance between them now reaches out beyond the horizon.

Naturally, Reina loses the battle.

Chapter 8: Sword to sword

Mitsuki and Kazune arrive in the Kabuki area. The sun is setting, but there's still some daylight left. Just like Tama, they hate the shitty neon signs. The dangerous atmosphere starts to really freak Kazune out, so she asks Mitsuki if she ever gets nervous to distract herself. Mitsuki says she only really gets nervous before piano recitals, but nerves are needed otherwise she won't perform well. She notices how scared Kazune is and tells her not to worry because if anything happens, the police will come even though it's the Kabuki area because of the security cameras everywhere. Kazune points out a destroyed camera hanging from a lamppost and then Mitsuki is like nvm guess we won't be relying on the police. They arrive at a crossroads where they can see many people around the same age as them hanging around, and Kazune senses that they're getting closer to the underground club. Mitsuki checks the map and nonchalantly goes further into Kabukicho, seemingly unbothered by the very unsafe atmosphere. Kazune asks her why she seems so unafraid, and Mitsuki says that she thought the area would be more violent, like the kind of place where biker gangs fought over petrol, yakuza gangs fought each other and artificial humans got chased by detectives. Kazune thinks to herself that Mitsuki is really just as airheaded as her twin sister.

They arrive at a large square, where many people, a lot of them homeless-looking, are loitering around drinking. Across the square is an old decaying building, and Kazune suggests that they look around. The back door is unlocked, and both of them head in. They go down the staircase that Tama described, but the door at the bottom is locked. Realising they took the risk of going inside for nothing, Kazune suggests that they talk to people in the square, pretending they don't know the time that the illegal DJ battling starts. This is also pretty risky, but Kazune thinks that if they avoid adults and stick to talking to people their own age, they'd be less likely to be in danger.

Kazune walks over to a girl with gaudy but also stained clothes staring up at a hologram video on the side of a building and strikes up a conversation with her, asking her if she likes DJing. The girl doesn't really engage with her at first and tells her to go away if she doesn't have any business with her. As the girl brushes back her hair Kazune spots a yellow and black misanga on her wrist. Kazune persists with her efforts of talking to her and shows her her own misanga, but in response the girl gets wary and hides her arm. Kazune asks her what time the party starts, to which

the girl replies 'I don't know what area you're proud of your skills in, but it's best if you don't come here.' She reveals that she can no longer hear music. Kazune asks if she'd been in an illegal STACK battle, but instead of answering the question the girl tells her that she's been coming to the same place every day for 3 months to watch the same hologram video on the side of the building, and when she can hear it, she'll know she's cured. She tells Kazune that some people completely break down, but she hasn't yet unless she already has and doesn't realise it yet. When Kazune asks if she's planning to go back to her own area, the girl tells her that she's a total Kabuki resident now.

Mitsuki steps in and asks the girl if she's seen Lucia, and gives her a brief description of her (short like a child, blonde hair and monstrous seeming) the girl replies that she hasn't, but she's heard about a girl being on a roll winning at illegal STACK battles recently. She further interrogates the girl by asking her reasons as to why she participated in an illegal STACK battle. The girl reluctantly replies that she brought a 'cartridge' from a dealer, 'cartridge' being what the Kabuki locals call an illegal USB stick. She explains that without it, you can't participate in illegal STACK battles in the Kabuki area, and people deal them out illegally. The girl turns around after that, signalling that their conversation is over, and Kazune tries to leave. She doesn't want to further interrogate the girl in case she gets angry and causes a scene. However Mitsuki still stands there, staring at the girl. She tells her that the video playing on the side of the building has no sound before they leave.

Kazune and Mitsuki ask a man on the side of the road if he has any 'cartridges', but he doesn't. They try again three more times before taking a break and going to an international ramen place. Mitsuki orders seafood and pork ramen, and Kazune orders sesame miso duran ramen. Kazune doesn't think that it's really the time to be having ramen, but Mitsuki says they have a long night ahead of them so they may as well. It's pretty retro, but it's clean and 'low on the weirdness scale' according to Kazune. Kazune remarks that she's glad that this ramen place accepts electronic payments, and Mitsuki agrees. The dealers they spoke to all said they wanted to be paid in cash, since electronic payments can be traced. Kazune changes the subject and says that she's surprised that Mitsuki's getting ramen, as she thinks a stylish cafe would suit her better, but Mitsuki says that she doesn't like pretentious food.

Kazune hopes that there are cash changers nearby as the banks are probably closed. There's a cash changing machine back at Fardraut, but Kazune doesn't usually carry cash on her. Mitsuki says that the worst case scenario would be that they might have to go back home and get cash. Kazune really wants to get her hands on an illegal USB stick to take back home as physical evidence, however. She wonders if they could use it to find out the identities of the party hijackers. If they didn't manage to do that however, it could possibly be traced back to its manufacturer by being disassembled. Kazune suggests wandering around Kabukicho until the time the party starts, and Mitsuki agrees. She says that they

might see Lucia going to a bar for food. Kazune asks about what Lucia is like at Teion, and Mitsuki replies that she's a troublemaker, and so is Karin. But at the same time, the two of them are prodigies. Kazune feels a little sad, and remarks that she wants to be like that, however Mitsuki tells her that there isn't any point in wanting something she doesn't have, and working out how to win with her own skill set is the constructive thing to do.

Kazune says that surely everyone agrees that Karin is a genius, but asks if Lucia is really a genius too. Mitsuki explains that Lucia is driven by her instincts, and has the same desire for music as she does for food, and doesn't try to hide it or hold it back. She also directly expresses her emotions, and Lucia's actions fulfil her desires and feelings. Lucia is in the Kabuki area because she wants to be there. The two of them finish their meals and leave the ramen place. They carry on walking further into Kabukicho and stumble across an old-fashioned area full of people drinking. There are a wide range of age groups, ethnicities and fashion sense from many different time periods among these people, and Kazune feels a little like she's travelled to a different country. The two of them scan the area but Lucia is nowhere to be seen.

They overhear two boys of around the same age as them (underage) drinking and having a very interesting conversation. One of them mentions 'Azabu's ace' losing, and tells the other boy he's been betting all of his money on Lucia lately, but it's about time she'll stop winning. The two boys mention that the 'wolf' or the 'fox' might enter the ring soon. Mitsuki goes up to them after overhearing this conversation and asks them where she can find Lucia, however the boys are hostile and very unhelpful and have no info on Lucia's whereabouts. Kazune interjects more politely before Mitsuki gets into a fight and asks them when the party tonight starts. One of the boys tells her that it starts around 10pm, but 'only gets interesting past midnight'. Kazune thanks him and tries to leave, but then they stop the girls and tell them that they've heard rumours that Lucia is hanging around some sort of kindergarten, and vaguely point in the direction of it. Just as one of them is about to recognise Mitsuki, Kazune thanks them again, leaving and pushing Mitsuki with her (pissing Mitsuki off). She ignores the boys' invitation for them to drink together.

Kazune reflects that the two of them had been pretty careless going to the Kabuki area without any sort of disguise, especially since Mitsuki is Teion's No.2, but Mitsuki seems unbothered by the risk of getting recognised. Kazune worries that they might've been recognised and should hurry home, but Mitsuki argues that they haven't even been to the party yet, which was the most important thing they needed to do. Kazune says that they didn't even know what the Kabuki area was even like before, so their trip was a good initial inspection and they could come back once they make a better strategy. Mitsuki agrees to go home as long as they can take a look at the kindergarten that the boys mentioned, and Kazune pulls up directions on her phone.

It turns out the place the boys called a kindergarten is actually Kabukicho Children's Home. It's right next to a hotel district, both girls thinking that this is definitely the worst possible place for a children's home to be located. Kazune suggests asking the staff if Lucia is there since the two of them can't see much from the entrance, but once she opens the gate, Maya appears behind them, asking them what the hell they're doing there. Kazune instantly recognises Maya as one of the party hijacking culprits from the description she'd been given. Unlike Kazune, Mitsuki responds brightly, happy that the two of them hadn't come in disguise after all as they were now talking directly to one of the perpetrators.

Chapter 9: Kojou Rakujitsu

Maya remarks that Mitsuki is clearly very self absorbed, just as she'd expected from Shibuya's elite. Her murderous smile makes Kazune tremble, but Mitsuki doesn't seem bothered and sarcastically remarks that she's honoured to be recognised. Maya threateningly asks what their business is in Kabuki and steps closer to Mitsuki until their noses are almost touching. She further tries to rile Mitsuki up, but Mitsuki doesn't back down. Maya then pulls a knife out of her pocket, and tells the two girls that this is their territory and she has every right to kill them both. Kazune's blood runs cold as soon as she sees the knife. She worriedly tries to think about what to do, if she should try and convince Mitsuki to step back or do nothing, and eventually decides to try to interject and apologise to Maya when Mitsuki suddenly pulls a pair of scissors out of her pocket, breaking Maya's small knife in half. Mitsuki sneers at Maya and tells her that her blade can wound, but is too flimsy to actually kill anyone. Maya then smiles, putting her broken knife back in her pocket, remarking that it's too early for them to be hijacking Shibuya, but now that they have a good reason for it, it's unavoidable. She turns around, telling Kazune and Mitsuki to follow her and she'll give them what they want, a Kabuki-style DJ battle.

Mitsuki follows straight after Maya, fully intending to go through with the battle. Kazune asks her what the hell she's doing, unaware that Mitsuki was actually planning to take part in an illegal STACK battle. Mitsuki says she wants to experience one of these battles for herself as she heard from Azabu that something was off with them when the Tama vs Lucia battle appeared to have been very one-sided. She tells Kazune she doesn't know too much about Kurogane Tama's abilities as a DJ, but she did watch the New Legend Reina vs Tama qualifier battle and noticed that Tama also DJs with her audience in mind just like Reina does. Kazune then tries to ask if she spoke harshly to Reina to try and keep her away from these battles, but Mitsuki ignores her question and says there isn't much difference between Tama and Lucia. She reveals to Kazune that she checked both of their playlist records and whilst there was evidence that Tama had been tripped up at the

start, it still seemed really weird that the result had been so one-sided, so there must be some kind of secret to illegal STACK battles.

Kazune thinks about how the Minato Shirokane venue and the Jingumae Sando clubroom had been so damaged, and that level of damage wasn't possible for only three people. She also remembers how no one has come forward about it, and no matter how much she thinks about it, she can't find an answer. She starts to realise that this lack of evidence is why Mitsuki wants to take part in one of these battles herself. However, she still warns Mitsuki that this is too high of a risk, but Mitsuki just says she'll be fine. Kazune hears Mitsuki mumble to herself, 'If it protects her, it's a small price for me to pay.' When she's about to ask her what she meant by that, Maya announces that they've arrived. They enter an old, run down building through a door that has a CLOSED sign on it, but Maya enters anyway. A woman stands behind the counter there but quickly leaves when her eyes meet Maya's.

Maya takes out a small object from her pocket, and Kazune instantly recognises it as an illegal USB stick. Maya grins wickedly when she realises Kazune knows what it is, and connects it to the DJ unit in the room. She goes over to the storeroom and gets out another DJ unit, and connects the illegal USB stick to it the same way. She tells Mitsuki she can have the second one, which is a dusty, cheap, outdated DJ unit for beginners. Mitsuki asks incredulously if it even works, but Maya shrugs and tells her to lower her expectations, as this is Kabuki. Mitsuki disgustedly scans her ID-J and activates the shitty unit. Maya pulls out an ID-J from beneath her sailor collar and scans it on her DJ unit, however it doesn't appear to be hers, and Kazune can see the name 'Hori Susumu' displayed. Kazune wonders at first if this is an alias of Maya's but then realises it's a man's name... meaning this is most likely a stolen ID-J.

Mitsuki then gasps as a weird sound and scrolling of garbled text is shown on the hologram monitor of her DJ unit. When it finishes, a dark blue crystal appears and floats above it. In front of Maya is a dark orange crystal. Both crystals have '95%' displayed next to them. Maya tells Mitsuki to 'at best enjoy this battle, as this will be the last time in her life that she will ever DJ', and abruptly starts the battle, catching Mitsuki off guard and giving herself an unfair advantage. Mitsuki demands that if she wins, Maya has to come clean. Kazune watches the two of them nervously, mentally reminding herself that she needs to observe and remember as much of this battle as possible.

Mitsuki plays Shibuya-style EDM with incorporated elements of classical music, whilst Maya plays hip hop and rap style songs. Mitsuki appears outwardly calm, but Maya has a vicious smile on her face. Kazune remembers what Tama said about her crystal shattering when she lost the battle, and starts to worry about that happening to Mitsuki. As the battle goes on, Mitsuki confidently transitions into her third song and isn't making any mistakes at all, which reassures Kazune a little. After all, she

knows that this is a playlist that Mitsuki has thought hard about and arranged carefully to make sure it would give her the highest score possible. Maya on the other hand was also doing very well, having a smile of battle joy on her face and being seemingly intoxicated by her own music. Mitsuki isn't conveying any emotion at all however, but her DJing is so perfect that Kazune can't find a single thing to critique. Kazune thinks that surely if she keeps this up, she'd be very unlikely to lose.

However, Mitsuki's music crystal begins to show cracks, and the percentage number drops to 85%. Mitsuki asks Maya what this means, confused, but Maya just laughs at her and sarcastically asks why Mitsuki even challenged her in the first place given the fact that she has no idea how these battles work. Maya switches to her next track, carving out a deadly sounding rhythm around Mitsuki. She grows more and more manic, twisting the equaliser as far as it can go and overdoing the effects, not minding when the music sounds crunchy. Kazune looks at her music crystal and realises that the percentage has risen to 100%, instead of falling like Mitsuki's. Unfortunately for Mitsuki, more and more cracks begin to appear in hers, and the percentage falls further down to 60%. Maya starts to rap along with the music she's playing, saying things like 'Where's your true spirit at? Where's your mind at?' 'Don't lie to me. Don't mask yourself to me.'

Mitsuki is thrown completely off-guard and she stops DJing entirely. Maya's uneasy folk song-like track is the only sound left, and she says 'You can't give enlightenment to those who have been abandoned.' Mitsuki feebly tries to say something back, but then Maya hits her with her iconic line (from Kitsune Tsuki) 'Stop fucking pretending to be smart, Imao' (ATAMA II FURI YAMENA! W)

Mitsuki's music crystal shatters.

After they leave the DJ bar the battle took place in, both girls walk out of Kabukicho back to Shinjuku station in silence. Kazune thinks about how she was the only witness to that battle, and feels like she had a bigger shock than Mitsuki, even though she didn't actually participate in the battle herself. As they arrive at the station Kazune suddenly stops and says how it's strange, no matter how you look at it, that Mitsuki lost. Mitsuki DJed perfectly, so surely Maya must have cheated. Mitsuki thinks the same, but says that if you can't see through your opponent then it is a true loss. Kazune wonders how Mitsuki can seem so unbothered and unconcerned when she herself is sweating and panicking, wondering what she's going to tell Reina. Since Mitsuki seems so unbothered Kazune hopes that maybe she hasn't lost her hearing like Tama and the girl they met in the square. However, Mitsuki looks up at a holographic billboard on the wall of a building advertising a live tour for a popular band, and asks Kazune if there's any background music. Kazune confirms that Mitsuki has also lost her ability to hear music, the light fading from her eyes.

Mitsuki is admitted to a hospital in the Shibuya area the next day, but they can't figure out what caused her condition at all. She's admitted there for a while so the doctors can monitor her. Reina comes to visit her. Mitsuki complains to Reina that being trapped there is annoying, and aside from not being able to hear music, there's nothing wrong with her. Reina's eyes fill with tears and Mitsuki has to look away. She remarks that Reina found out fast and Reina replies that Kazune told her what happened. Mitsuki grunts in annoyance, as she had told Kazune not to tell Reina. Reina starts to ask about how it happened, to which Mitsuki replies that surely no one else would try it, and she had never intended to lose. This just makes Reina more distressed, and Mitsuki tries to reassure her that she'll be fine, and she'll definitely be able to hear music again sometime. Reina says that she'd rather be the one that can't hear music anymore, but Mitsuki yells at her and asks her to promise that Reina won't try to avenge her. Reina reluctantly promises her she won't. Mitsuki says that it's almost time for her checkup and tells Reina to go, and not to skip school next time (Reina skipped class to go see her in the hospital). Mitsuki also tells her not to complain about her to Shinonome Kazune, and to apologise on her behalf for making her come with her to Kabuki.

After Reina tells her to take care of herself and leaves, the room feels quiet again. Mitsuki plays a song on her phone, feeling the sound vibrate on her fingertips, but can't hear the song at all. She suddenly feels a massive emptiness. Now music is gone for her, there is nothing for her to live for. She feels loneliness so intense, it's like the whole world doesn't want her to exist. However, she used to hate everything in the world, so what did it matter if she's alienated from everyone? In her past, she used to hate music itself, so isn't it refreshing that music is no longer part of her world? Yet, she feels such an overwhelming sadness, so much that she can't even cry because it's like her mind is paralysed. Is there even any meaning to her life anymore now that she can't hear music? Music is all she has.

Even though Mitsuki can't hear music anymore, she still wants to hear a voice that will make her feel something. She closes the music app on her phone and calls Karin, only remembering the time zone difference between them after she starts the call. She wonders if she should just hang up after all when the call connects and Karin says that if she has a problem with her, she should wait until Karin's back in Japan. Hearing Karin's voice makes Mitsuki feel like she's been brought back to reality out of a tragic dream, and she tells Karin she isn't calling to complain. Mitsuki asks about what Karin's doing, expecting her to still be studying in Europe and to her surprise, Karin tells her she ditched that and went to America for a big event. She gushes about how big the country is and how the food portions are even bigger. Karin also tells her about wanting to rent a car, go on a huge road trip across America and visit NASA and Area 51. Hearing about how much Karin is recklessly fucking around and having a good time whilst she is suffering so much is too much for Mitsuki, so she quickly tries to end their conversation and hang up the call. Karin

is thrown off by this and asks Mitsuki what's up, perceptively remarking that it's weird for Mitsuki to be calling her if she has nothing to talk about.

Mitsuki tells her it isn't a big deal and hangs up.

Chapter 10: Maybe she was painting on water

The day after visiting Kabukicho with Mitsuki, Kazune visits Minato Shirokane Girls' High School and tells Aki and Ginka about what happened to Mitsuki. Aki says that she feels somewhat responsible for it happening, and Ginka says she underestimated the culprits and really didn't expect them to get Mitsuki. Kazune asks about Tama and Aki tells her that she's had multiple tests at several hospitals, but none of them have been able to figure out the cause of her inability to hear music, so Tama returned to her normal life. Ginka implies that Tama was probably kicked out of hospital for her insane behaviour.

Kazune takes an illegal USB stick out of her bag and hands it over to the very surprised Azabu girls, asking them to analyse it. She explains that whilst they were on the train home yesterday, Mitsuki told her that she managed to steal the USB stick that had been plugged into her DJ unit when Maya wasn't looking, and gave it to her. Kazune decided to give it to the Azabu girls since she expected them to have much better technology for analysing it than what they had in the Akiba Denonbu's clubroom. Aki promises to take great care of it. She then asks Kazune what she's going to do next, which Kazune doesn't know the answer to. Aki then says that no damage has been done to Akiba so far, which Kazune interprets as her putting pressure on them to get even more involved. However Aki says she didn't mean it that way, and was just stating the facts, which Kazune doesn't quite believe. Aki continues, remarking that it's only a matter of time before they attack another Denonbu. Since Akiba participated in New Legend and had become quite well known for that reason despite being newly established, it would only be natural to assume that they were likely to be on Kabuki's hit list. Besides, Kazune had been seen with Mitsuki in Kabukicho. Kazune realises she could possibly even be a priority target for them, and worries that something might happen to the Sotokanda students because of what she'd done.

Aki tells Kazune that she'll contact her once the USB stick has been analysed, and Kazune thanks her and leaves. Once she leaves, Ginka starts to murmur about the Kabuki STACK battles having strange rules, seemingly wondering about them. Aki fiddles with the USB stick and says she'll have the companies under the Shirokane umbrella analyse it. Ginka wonders if they could possibly cooperate with the police by sharing their information, but Aki points out that they don't have any concrete information to give them. Maya's name could be fake and all they know about her is

that she's hiding in the Kabuki area, so even though they're experiencing such pain and humiliation from being attacked, the police might not even take them seriously. Aki then remarks that she'd like Kazune to collect them a little more evidence. Ginka laughs, telling Aki that she's scary. Aki clarifies that she doesn't mean forcing Kazune into anything, she just wishes she'd do more voluntarily. Ginka muses about what the culprits were thinking, and then says she's 'curious about what Kazune-chan said'. Even though it isn't uncommon for Ginka to refer to girls affectionately like that, this pisses Aki off. She remarks that Ginka and Kazune have had a previous offence (referring to the time in the Shibuya novel where they ate gyuudon together at New Legend), and this makes Ginka wonder if Aki is treating her interactions with other girls as a sort of criminal record.

Ginka then changes the subject by saying that surely Mitsuki would have won that STACK battle under normal circumstances, since her insight and knowledge of how the Iris system works is so good. Aki agrees, remarking that it's hard to understand why Tama lost so one-sidedly, and Ginka says despite the fact that they're both Shibuya Denonbu members, Lucia and Mitsuki's battle results were completely different. She wonders if Maya is from the same group of culprits behind the party hijacks. Aki then remarks that Ginka seems oddly interested in the illegal STACK battles and the party hijacking culprits. Ginka gives her a throwaway answer, not confirming or denying it, and then makes an excuse to leave. As Ginka walks towards the door, Aki calls out to her and asks her what she thinks the culprits are after. Ginka replies that she doesn't know, as you never know what other people want. Having left the room, she thinks that she doesn't even know what she herself wants.

Back in the Kabuki area, Maya is making her way to the rooftop of the abandoned building to meet Matoi. The three of them use this building as their hideout, as no one ever went there and they didn't have to pay rent. The building had been scheduled to be demolished years ago, but the plans were never actually carried out. The downside to it is that the elevators don't work. She finds Matoi perched on the edge of the rooftop, looking at the night view of the city. Matoi remarks that some people say Kabukicho is a city full of pretence and deception, but she thinks the city is very honest about what it wants. She asks Maya if she hates the city, to which Maya responds that she does hate it, however there isn't anywhere else for her to go so she always ends up coming back to it eventually. Matoi smiles kindly, and says that the city mirrors the person. Those who say the city is full of deception and falsehoods are deceptive and false people themselves, as they lie to themselves and deny that the city reflects people's honest desires. If anyone hates the city, it's the idealists, she thinks. Maya asks if Matoi is referring to her, and Matoi says she is, more than she thought she would. Matoi tells her that she knows Maya likes to think people are beautiful and good, but she knows she can't escape reality. Maya is a realist who can't let go of her dreams according to Matoi.

Maya dares her to keep talking as the atmosphere grows tense, but their conversation is interrupted by Reml arriving. Reml's in a good mood, completely ruining the atmosphere of their conversation. She apologises cutely for being gone for 3 days, making peace signs in front of her face. This annoys Maya, who snarkily says she didn't even notice Reml wasn't there. Reml then asks in a singsong voice if the two of them heard about Seto Mitsuki getting beat, and Maya defensively asks where she heard that from. Reml says that her ears remember everything. Matoi, seeming surprised, asks Maya if that's true, and Maya confirms it. That was what Maya came to talk to Matoi about. She's a little nervous that Matoi might be angry since it wasn't part of Kabuki's plan. Reml angrily says that she's ruining the plan, but Maya tells her she's missing the whole point of the plan, since these DJs are coming to Kabuki of their own accord. Matoi stops their argument and says she understands why Maya had to do it, as she must have had a reason. Reml explains in a very cutesy way how one of the Akiba girls came to Kabukicho with Seto Mitsuki, and Maya gets angry at her way of speaking again and asks her if she's even taking the plan seriously.

When Matoi begins to speak again, both of them fall silent. She says that the three of them must put this wrong world right. There is no justice in a world that single-mindedly pursues its own desires, where people are willing to feed on others for the sake of their own desires. The world sees that as a good thing, the rich get everything and the poor are permanently stuck in poverty, and authority and power is inherited instead of earned. Everything is determined by chance, such as birth and circumstance. Matoi declares that the only one that can play sound that liberates such undeserving sentient beings is a god. When her sound reaches the world, Matoi says she will become a god. Trembling with fear, Maya assures her that she will make that happen.

In the Akiba area, a large popular artist exhibition is currently being held, and Kazune goes to it to get a personal sign from Minakami Hina. She tells Hina she's missed her reactionless face and asks her if she's surprised to see her, to which Hina, annoyed, responds that she expected Kazune to see her there. Hina quickly draws one of her own bird characters and puts her signature next to it, shoving the piece of paper back towards Kazune. However, Kazune asks her to sign it 'to Kazune-chan' and Hina takes the piece of paper back, asking Kazune what her real intentions in coming to see her really are. Kazune just says that she's a fan of hers and wanted a signature, and Hina remembers that she'd said something like that when the two of them first met. She writes 'to Kazune-chan' in hiragana on the piece of paper and shoves it back towards Kazune, irritated. Kazune takes the piece of paper, thanks Hina, and leaves. Hina feels relieved, but wonders why Kazune didn't ask her any in depth questions.

Hina agreed to come to the exhibition on a whim. She hasn't been back to school even once since the Harajuku Denonbu had been attacked, or even been near a DJ

unit, and instead she's keeping herself busy with her work as an artist. She takes every commission she receives, because as long as she's holding her drawing tablet and her pen, she can forget about everything else. She used to hate jobs like this because of the people, but now it has become her safe haven. It's all ok for her as long as she's working, but once she stops, the day of the attack always crawls back into her mind. It's a horrific memory for her, a memory full of despair and of the worst possible version of herself. That's why she's now taking on jobs that she wouldn't normally do, like signing autographs at exhibitions like these. The fact that this exhibition was in Akiba concerned her a little, as she knew the Akiba girls might notice she was there, but in the end she came anyway. Hina wonders if she was secretly hoping deep down that she might run into the three of them.

She opens the door to the staff room to quickly get her stuff and get out of there once she finishes signing autographs, however she runs into Kazune there, who offers her a bottle of green tea. Hina tries to point out that Kazune isn't allowed back there, however Kazune smugly holds up her lanyard and reveals that she actually got a staff position at the exhibition since Sotokanda was cooperating with the event, so she isn't breaking any rules. Hina asks why she even bothered queueing up and Kazune replies that it isn't good to mix public and personal life. Hina starts to ignore Kazune and look for her stuff, however she's caught by surprise when Kazune tells her that other schools have been attacked and the names of the culprits are Matoi, Maya and Reml. She tells Hina that illegal STACK battles are happening in the Kabuki area and that Mitsuki just lost her ability to hear music because she lost one.

Hina has no idea that any of that had happened. She knows she herself can still hear music, but hasn't heard anything about Mimito except that she had been taken to hospital for a few tests. Kazune also tells her that the same has happened to Tama, and asks Hina if Mimito is able to hear music, but Hina shouts back that she doesn't know, growing increasingly upset. She reveals that she hasn't spoken to, seen or heard anything from Mimito since the attack. Kazune presses further, asking if Mimito doesn't respond to Hina's calls, and Hina yells that it's none of her business. For some reason, this question really bothers her. She tries to calm down, and tells Kazune that she hasn't heard about Mimito's music hearing ability, and that the doctors or the school should know about it. Hina tries to exit the room, but Kazune stands in her way, saying that some questions can only be asked by the people who were there when the incident happened. Hina spits self-deprecatingly that she was just a bystander. She thinks to herself that if she was standing face to face with the Hina that was there at that moment, she would strangle her to death for simply standing there and not doing anything about what was happening to Mimito. She had just stood there and watched the clubroom the three of them had worked so hard for and decorated lovingly be destroyed, as the Jingumae students rejected everything that was good about them before their very eyes. Hina brings herself back to the moment and asks Kazune if she can go now, as she doesn't want to talk about it any more.

Kazune apologises, but says that she still needs to ask Hina some more questions, and Hina can sense her determination in wanting to find out the truth, so she stays. However, when Kazune asks her to tell her more about what happened that day, she regrets coming to the Akiba exhibition entirely.

Chapter 11: I closed my eyes, and held her hand

Haijima Ginka is working on the final mix of a new song in her personal studio at home, but for some reason she just can't concentrate. She heads over to the kitchen to make herself a cup of coffee for a change. Ever since she heard Tama's story, she can't stop thinking about the Kabuki area and the mystery of the illegal STACK battles. She wonders why she's so interested in trying to figure out the rules and how to win them. She then thinks she really knows why, but the truth is embarrassing to admit. Her dad, Fuuga, then walks over to her, and she realises that she'd been so deep in thought she hadn't even noticed him come in. Fuuga looks exhausted from work so Ginka offers him coffee, but he declines, saying he has to go again very soon. Ginka remarks that it's rare for her to see him at home, and he says he's just here to pick up a few things before he leaves for Israel. Fuuga complains that it's a pain in the ass he has to go and starts to leave, holding a big CD case, when Ginka stops him to ask something, saying it's about STACK battles. Fuuga remarks that Ginka seems to be doing a lot of those recently, despite the fact she didn't really seem to like them. Ginka says that she was wondering if there were any types of STACK battles that were completely different, like the rules weren't decided by Iris.

Fuuga looks perplexed at her question. Ginka tries to avoid real life example ones and asks if there might be any STACK battles with different rules for strong DJs like Houou Karin. Fuuga just looks more and more confused so Ginka just tells him to forget it, she was just wondering that because her audience doesn't seem hyped up during her STACK battles recently even though she herself feels super hyped (however in reality, she feels calm and cool during STACK battles. She's lying to Fuuga here). She says she wonders if there's a way she could convey her feelings more directly.

Ginka remembers the first time she met Karin. It was at a party hosted by Fuuga, and she had run into Karin in a lounge space with just the two of them. Karin asked her back then to play her 'some shit, because it's lonely in here without any sound, y'know?' Karin had agreed to DJ back for her if she liked what she played, and Ginka had viewed it as a sort of duel. She thought she had been playing the role of Haijima Ginka that Karin had wanted to see, and didn't think she belonged in such a fiery world. Ginka has always made sure she plays the Ginka that other people want to see, but in that moment DJing for Karin, she had gone beyond her own expectations

and become the Ginka she never knew she was. That was the only time she had ever felt such a hot feeling inside of her, and had felt like her soul and the DJ unit had been directly connected. However, ever since that party with Karin, she could never get that version of herself back no matter how hard she tried.

Fuuga interrupts her train of thought, saying that there is a way to directly convey emotions. Technology that uses music to communicate will be being worked on, but it's only at the research stage so far (according to him...). He says that this technology goes beyond empathy, however, and is more like brainwashing, so it wouldn't be a good idea. He tells Ginka she'll be just fine without using that sort of thing, and then asks her out of the blue if she's decided she wants to be a pro DJ, catching her off guard. Ginka replies that she's considering it, and apologises for taking up her very busy dad's time. Fuuga rushes out, and Ginka thinks that using technology like that with her feelings pouring out would just be embarrassing. If she ever got her hands on something like that, she'd be very scared of Aki secretly using it.

That day, Reina is left to work in the Hidaka Model Shop by her father Reia, which she is frustrated about because she wanted to visit Mitsuki instead. Mitsuki has been very careful not to let Reia know that she can't hear music, as she doesn't think having her father worry about her is worth it. Reina's been visiting her frequently to cheer her up, but every time it feels more like Mitsuki is the one comforting her. She knows Kazune is working very hard on the investigation into the party hijacking culprits right now, but she isn't giving Reina any details. Reina hasn't heard back from any of the Harajuku girls either, and she doesn't know what to do. Her feelings are beginning to spin out of control as she gets more and more frustrated.

Reina is just about to close up shop for the day when Matoi walks in. Seeing a familiar face immediately cheers Reina up and she rushes over to Matoi, asking her why she came to her shop and if she likes plastic models too. Matoi says she just wanted to see Reina. She went to the Akiba Denonbu clubroom, but saw the sign saying parties were suspended for now. She tells Reina she was just wandering around and happened to spot her through the shop window. Matoi remarks that Reina seems in a much better mood than she was before, saying that she looked like she was carrying all the misery in the world on her shoulders before Matoi walked in. Reina explains that she's sad because her close friends were attacked by terrible people at their own party, and since then she hasn't been able to make contact with them. Reina says she wanted to do something about it, but it got her sister into trouble, and she can't hear music anymore. Matoi pretends to empathise with her, keeping her eyes down.

Changing the subject and not wanting Matoi to worry about her, Reina asks if Matoi is free that evening to get dinner together somewhere, and Matoi agrees. Reina locks up the shop and the two of them go to an izakaya (Japanese style pub) that

Reina eats at a lot. Matoi asks Reina if she drinks alcohol, and Reina exclaims that of course she doesn't, explaining that this izakaya has a very good meal set menu. Matoi says she'd go out with her if she ever wanted a drink, and Reina tells her to stop joking around. Reina orders the fish meal set and Matoi orders the chicken meal set. Reina is happy that Matoi is enjoying her fried chicken and offers her a piece of fish to try. This kind gesture makes Matoi suddenly freeze, which Reina picks up on. Reina asks if Matoi doesn't like fish, but Matoi says that's not it, and reaches for a bit of Reina's fish to try it. She tells Reina she likes it, and then offers her some fried chicken in return. Reina initially tries to reject her offer since she eats that fried chicken all the time, but gives in and takes a bite. The conversation changes, and Reina asks Matoi where she lives. Matoi answers that she lives near Shinjuku, and Reina, associating Shinjuku with the Kabuki area, asks if that area is dangerous. Matoi says some places are dangerous there, but where she lives isn't dangerous. Reina replies that she's glad to hear that, and Matoi's family must not be worried in that case. Matoi goes silent, and there is an awkward pause. She says that she lives alone to begin with, so no one would be worried about her. Reina profusely apologises for making Matoi talk about something painful, but Matoi says she doesn't need to. She tells Reina that she's a kind girl. She then asks Reina if she will, as a mark of apology, be Matoi's friend. Reina looks confused, and then tells her they've already been friends for a while now.

Kazune has spent all day talking to students in Harajuku, dragging Hina with her. Hina sits on a bench a small distance away from Kazune as she's talking to a student. She looks at Kazune with resentful eyes, disliking the fact that Kazune is being so enthusiastic about something that isn't any of her business. Hina hasn't been to Harajuku for some time since the incident, and coming here today felt like Harajuku had moved on, so maybe she should think of what happened as just a bad dream. However, being in Harajuku reminds her of what happened. Every day for her used to be exciting, like she was always in the heat of the moment, even if she hid her true feelings. She was genuinely having fun under the mask of her cold stare and cynical attitude. Kazune then pulls her out of her thoughts and drags Hina to a cafe, where she promises she only has two more people to talk to. Hina reluctantly chases after her, remarking that she feels like she's losing her mind. She tells Kazune she's very enthusiastic, but Kazune also says that Hina is very enthusiastic too. After all, Hina has been keeping her company. She perceptively picks up on the fact that Hina deep down really wants to restart Harajuku's Denonbu with Mimito and Shian. Hina responds by saying Kazune is literally dragging her along, giving her a resentful look. Unexpectedly, Kazune smiles at her in response.

Hina thinks Kazune's level of positivity and people skills are rare. She thinks about how she's been on the run from one thing or the other throughout her whole life with none of that sort of positivity, using her art as a form of escapism. When she was cut off by the people around her, she fled to Harajuku, and then fled from her loneliness to Denonbu. But where would she run to this time?

They reach the cafe, and Kazune says that they need to help Mimito in a time where she's feeling such depression. This comment in particular really pisses Hina off. What the hell did Hidaka Reina and Shinonome Kazune know about Mimito? Hina and Shian are the ones who know Mimito better than anyone else. She is annoyed by the fact that to her, Kazune is acting like she knows everything and talking out her ass. Hina gets more and more pissed off and then storms out of the cafe, leaving Kazune to interview the students on her own. Meanwhile, Futaba is making a regular visit to Kamizono Jingu, Shian's family's shrine in Harajuku. Ever since the dedication DJ event (happened in the Harajuku novel), the Harajuku Denonbu members had been important friends to the Akiba girls. Kazune is leaving her in the dark about what she's doing, so Futaba decides to do her own thing as well.

Despite not being religious, Futaba frequently visits Kamizono Jingu, each time to attempt to talk to Shian. She has no idea where Mimito or Hina live or where she could find them, but she knows she can always find Shian at the shrine. The first time the Akiba girls had visited the shrine, Shian hadn't even acknowledged them. However Futaba thinks if she just keeps coming to see her, she'll eventually start talking, but that hasn't happened yet so far. She finds Shian at the shrine office selling amulets, and says hi to her. Shian, as usual, doesn't respond and starts typing something on her phone. Just as Futaba is ready to give up for the day, a woman who appears to be Shian's mother appears and tells Shian to take a break and go on a walk with Futaba, who she presumes is a friend of Shian's. Shian tells Futaba to make it fast, and goes with her.

The two of them reach the Torii gate, and Shian tells Futaba to go home. Futaba explains that she just wanted to cheer Shian up, and tells her that other Denonbu parties were attacked, and Tama and Mitsuki are in trouble right now too. She tells Shian that Reina is really worried about all 3 of the Harajuku girls right now, but Shian just gets out her phone and starts typing something again. Futaba knows what kind of stuff she's probably saying about her, but she tries not to think about it and tells Shian she isn't alone and can talk to her. Shian stops typing, and finally faces Futaba, letting her emotions show for the first time. Futaba can sense deep resentment, rage and hatred emanating from her. Shian finally begins talking, voicing her true feelings out loud instead of on her Twitter priv. What she says is just as hateful as Futaba expected.

'You piss me off you annoying bitch you keep coming back and back you're so goddamn fucking annoying- You talk to me as if you understand us you fucking hypocrite goody two shoes cunt trying to look like such a good fucking person helping out us poor bastards even though you think you're above us and we'll feel grateful to you fuck you if you feel sorry for us then fucking kill yourself!!!'

(Shicchan breakdown)

Futaba is terrified at Shian's outburst of emotions being aimed straight at her instead of on her private account. She wants to run away from the malice being aimed at her, but she doesn't. She knows that these thoughts are the ones that Shian keeps bottled up inside her heart, and her anger, sadness and regrets have nowhere else to go. Shian doesn't know how to vent these feelings, and Futaba can't imagine how painful that must be for her. Futaba smiles widely, happy that Shian finally spoke, even though Shian frowns back at her. Shian gives her a look of hatred, taken aback at Futaba's huge smile.

'W-why the fuck are you smiling at me looking happy like that you motherfucker you're really pissing me off- you're so goddamn fucking annoying fuck off fuck off fuck off fuck off fuck off fuck off fuck off fuck off fuck off-'

Hina then arrives along with Kazune and tells Shian she's talking too much. Futaba and Shian are surprised to see the two of them together, and Hina says Kazune forced her to come with her. Kazune explains that she's been questioning Hina and Harajuku students and wanted to share her findings with Shian, but is surprised to find Futaba there. Futaba apologises for doing something on her own, but Kazune tells her she doesn't need to as she's doing a great job. Kazune then turns to Shian and explains that the students hadn't intended to riot at the party, and it was the culprits who did it. No one knows how they managed to make the students cause so much destruction. Shian is disbelieving, remembering how they destroyed all the decorations in the clubroom and rejected them, so there's no place for them anymore. However Kazune shows Shian her phone screen, where she's compiled a video of tons of Harajuku students commenting on how much they miss the Denonbu and want them back, and loved their parties. Many of the students Shian doesn't recognise, but all of them wanted the Jingumae Denonbu to come back. Hina says she'd be happy to start the Denonbu again if Mimito wants to. Shian asks how Mimito is, and Hina replies that she doesn't know. Apparently, Mimito has been a shut-in ever since the incident happened.

Kazune then suggests that the two of them help Mimito. Hina says surely they can't, as Mimito was the one who was always pushing the two of them around. Kazune then points out that Hina and Shian are surely the only two people who Mimito would listen to. The students of Harajuku are waiting, and Kazune and Futaba can't reach Mimito, so it has to be the two of them. Hina and Shian are unsure, but Futaba passionately encourages them, and the two of them begin to hold hands, as if reassuring one another. They close their eyes as if vowing to each other, and head for Mimito's place. When they open their eyes, it seems as if both of them had died and been reborn.

Chapter 12: Soul Evolution

Reina leaves the hospital after visiting Mitsuki. Mitsuki told her that she was having a lot of tests being performed on her right now and tons of bright eyed researchers were waiting their turn to analyse her, so she felt like a guinea pig. Reina can tell Mitsuki puts on a brave face every time Reina visits her so Reina doesn't worry about her, and Reina does the same, but once she leaves the hospital, her true feelings are written all over her face. Her mind is so occupied with worry she doesn't notice the girl standing next to her, and gets a shock. The girl has long black slightly wavy hair (just like a certain girl from the Kabuki area...) and is wearing a school uniform that Reina doesn't recognise. She introduces herself as a student from the Kabuki area, but hurriedly assures Reina that she isn't one of the party hijackers. She then asks Reina how her sister is, further catching her off guard, telling Reina she knows about what happened to Mitsuki in the Kabuki area. The girl then grasps Reina's hands, saying that she herself isn't strong enough to, but maybe Reina can beat the party hijackers. She pleads with Reina to save the Kabuki area, and after a pause, Reina agrees. The girl then drags Reina with her by the hand, explaining that the two of them are going to have a STACK battle to test Reina's strength.

The girl leads Reina to a studio in the basement of a nearby apartment building, where two DJ units are lined up. Reina can't keep up with anything that's going on, thinking that despite her mature appearance, this girl seems very forceful. When Reina asks her name before they begin the STACK battle, the girl says that she can't reveal her real name or she might face repercussions so tells Reina to just call her 'Mob-ko'. They begin the STACK battle and Reina bases her setlist around Akiba-style future pop songs to best show off her DJing ability. Mob-ko's DJ unit at first looks like it isn't working properly so Reina switches her headset channel to listen to what she's playing, but Mob-ko is just playing basic, popular songs and not making any effort to DJ properly at all.

Reina begins to feel anxious, thinking that this girl is behaving very suspiciously and wonders if the battle they are having is even a real STACK battle. A very bad feeling creeps through her whole body. Mob-ko abruptly ends the STACK battle right in the middle of it and thanks Reina, saying she's gathered enough data. Reina tries to ask her what she means but Mob-ko just says she's going to go back to Kabuki to analyse the data and hurriedly leaves, leaving Reina feeling very confused. She suspects that this girl might be one of the party hijackers, and begins to follow after her.

Kazune, Futaba, Hina and Shian visit the Shirokane mansion. Aki is very annoyed at their arrival, and Kazune explains they're here to report on the investigation into the party hijackers in the Kabuki area. She proudly says that they were able to get the Harajuku Denonbu to cooperate with them, however Hina taking pictures of Aki's home without permission and Shian repeatedly typing [RICH RICH RICH RICH

RICH RICH RICH RICH RICH RICH RI] on her private account does not impress Aki. Kurogane Tama appears holding a tea set and disgustedly remarks that bottled tea would be fine for the lot of them instead of expensive tea. Futaba is relieved to see that Tama appears to be feeling somewhat better. She prompts Kazune to tell Aki about the Harajuku situation, and Kazune explains that the Harajuku students that had been at the party hijacking incident were brainwashed.

Aki asks Tama where Ginka is, but Tama tells her that she hasn't arrived yet. Aki tells Kazune to continue and Kazune explains that she interviewed a lot of Harajuku students who told her they felt uncontrollable emotions that weren't their own when the party hijackers started to DJ. Aki thinks back to the time when the Azabu second team were attacked and remembers that most of the victims were knocked unconscious, but there was still some damage that she assumed had been done by the culprits. Kazune says that one thing happened at the Harajuku incident that set it apart from other incidents, and that was that the party hijackers cut off Mimito's hair. Aki asks Hina and Shian if they have any idea of why the culprits had only done this at the Harajuku party, but they reply sadly that they don't.

Kazune moves on to ask Aki about the illegal USB stick she'd sent to be analysed, but Aki says that they found nothing on it, as it had been equipped with a hardware data erasure mechanism that had erased everything that was on it. However the USB stick is a special specification and it's possible to trace it back to the manufacturer, but Aki doesn't know how far they'll be able to trace it back. Kazune is about to say something but is interrupted by the sound of her phone ringing. She sees that Reina is calling her and excuses herself from the conversation to take the call. As soon as she accepts, Reina rushedly tells her that she's chasing someone suspicious who said she was from the Kabuki area, so it looks like Reina will have to go to Kabuki after all. Before Kazune can even ask her any questions, Reina exclaims that she's losing sight of the girl she's chasing and hangs up the phone. Kazune is in shock from the phone call she just had and looks around to see the other girls looking at her with surprised expressions. Futaba and Aki ask her what's wrong, and Kazune, with dread, tells them that Reina is being targeted.

Reina reaches Kabukicho, and watches Mob-ko enter the tall building that the Kabuki girls use as their hideout. She looks down at her phone and notices that Matoi just sent her a text saying 'come up to the rooftop', which confuses her. She notices she has a lot of missed calls from Kazune, but ignores them and slips her phone back into her pocket, and enters the building. She enters one of the elevators and presses the button to take her up to the rooftop, her heart beating faster and faster as she begins to feel more and more nervous. Reina thinks back to the conversation she had with Matoi the other day and wonders if Matoi lives in this building, then thinks surely not as it's so creepy and abandoned.

When she reaches the rooftop, she sees a lone figure standing at the edge. Matoi turns around, telling Reina that she's come a long way as Reina walks towards her. Reina remarks she's surprised to run into Matoi here, and Matoi says the same. Reina feels relaxed for a second when she sees Matoi's familiar warm smile, but then begins to doubt her when she sees that two DJ units are lined up on the rooftop. Matoi says this isn't what she planned, but if it's fate, she'll follow it, and she still can't blame Maya for 'that'. Reina has no idea what she's talking about, and asks Matoi if they're going to have a STACK battle. Matoi activates her DJ unit, and a dark green crystal appears, floating above it. She tells Reina that this is a battle for her entire existence, and in it she will sacrifice her will, her thoughts, her values, her life, her abilities, her past, her present, her future, and her soul. Reina is stunned, and asks Matoi what she means by this. Matoi explains that the STACK battles happening at the party hijacks aren't just normal STACK battles, they are games that take everything away from you. Unlike the real world, this game is fair. According to Matoi, it's a 'fundamental natural order in which the strong survive after the noise of birth, circumstances and community are eliminated.'

Feeling fear creeping into her body, Reina exclaims that she's serious about wanting to find the party hijackers, and tells Matoi to stop joking around as her friends have had horrible things happen to them. Matoi remarks that the Harajuku girls were seriously weak, especially in terms of their minds. She extends her hand towards Reina, and tells her she's glad that Reina has met the person she's been looking for.

Chapter 13: Tears

The girl who introduced herself to Reina as Mob-ko enters the basement of the Kabuki hideout building, and arrives at a door adjacent to the door leading to the underground club. This door is old fashioned and covered in stickers and graffiti, which hide the sensor on it. She scans her biometric data, and the door opens. Once she enters the room, the door immediately closes and locks itself again. Many devices and machines are in this room, and she passes through them to pick up Pomemori from the sofa, throwing it across the room. She then shoves the memory card she'd recorded the data from her STACK battle with Reina on into Pomemori's mouth, and its eyes then begin to move busily up, down, left and right. After this, the girl moves to the back of the room and changes her clothes. She changes into a purple dress, puts on a black headband with horns on it and ties her hair into twintails, returning to her normal form.

Reml asks Pomemori if it has analysed the data, and Pomemori responds with an affirmative 'Pome~'. She pulls out a cable connected to a console and puts it in Pomemori's mouth, and then turns to her computer screen and keyboard. The speakers play Reina's DJ set from earlier and the monitor displays figures and

graphs analysing Reina's DJing. This analysis could possibly determine Ogami Matoi's next move.

Reina stares at Matoi in disbelief as the two of them face each other up on the rooftop, unable to believe that Matoi is actually a party hijacker. Reina tells her to stop joking around, to which Matoi asks her if she really thinks she's doing all this hijacking as just a joke. The atmosphere around her changes, and Reina can feel her become more hostile. Matoi declares that she will take revenge on the world that threw her away like a piece of trash. She was born without anyone's blessing, unwanted, unneeded by anyone, selfishly integrated into someone else's ideal society. Matoi asks Reina if she can understand that, but Reina exclaims that she can't at all. Matoi tells her that what the people at the bottom of society really dream of is pulling the successful people down, and making the happy people unhappy instead of dreaming of happiness or success for themselves. Reina can't understand Matoi's logic at all, and exclaims that if Matoi is struggling, then why can't she share her struggles so that other people can help her. Reina says that that way would be so much better as then everyone can smile. Matoi bitterly says that having an equal, fair world where everyone is happy is impossible, and people's desires are uncontrollable. Someone else's happiness only comes at the expense of someone else's misery.

Matoi says that people don't deserve to rule over others, only a god can do that. So, Matoi says that she will become a god, and what she is doing right now is a rite of passage where Reina will be the sacrifice to summon a god. Her smile chills Reina to the bone. Reina, terrified, asks why Matoi is doing such horrible things to everyone, and why she cut off Mimito's hair. Matoi doesn't even seem to remember doing it, and only remembers feeling exhilarated after destroying Harajuku. She says that she isn't interested in 'that girl' at all, and instead is far more interested in Reina. Matoi admits to going to Akiba just to meet Reina, explaining that she is a god-favoured person by a god that has never once looked at Matoi. She says that in order to destroy this world, she will become a god, and then build a new world once she destroys this one. The old god will become the mythology of the new god. Reina becomes more and more frustrated that Matoi isn't acknowledging what she did to Mimito. Matoi says that if Reina wants her to apologise, she will have to fight her for it and force her to. She gestures to the other DJ unit, telling Reina it isn't a fake, but a genuine special 'godsent' DJ unit.

Reina wipes the tears off her face with the back of her hand. She's panicking and feeling heavy sadness and rage, but she knows that if she doesn't face Matoi, then nothing will be resolved. If this is the only way, she has to do it. She wants Matoi to give her a proper explanation, and for her to reveal the deepest depths of her feelings. She also wants her to apologise to Mimito and make up with her, if possible.

Reina activates her KAMUI DJ unit, starting the STACK battle.

Kazune, Futaba, Hina, Shian and Aki arrive in front of the entrance to Kabukicho in one of Aki's limousines. Hina and Shian seem nervous so Futaba tells them it's fine if they want to wait in the car, but they refuse. Aki asks Kazune if she has any idea where Reina might be, but Kazune is silent, frantically trying to think of where to look. Reina hadn't mentioned any locations during the phone call and Kazune currently isn't able to contact her back. She thinks back to the time when she and Mitsuki were taken to the underground club for an illegal STACK battle by Maya, and then suggests they go search there. Aki tells her to show them the way, and Kazune pauses for a second, looking Aki over (thinking that 'her whole body is gorgeous') and wondering if she'd be alright in Kabukicho given how rich she visibly is, but Aki firmly insists on coming with them. Kazune quickly rushes ahead, and the 5 girls soon arrive at the square where Kazune and Mitsuki had met the girl who had lost an illegal STACK battle.

Kazune suddenly catches sight of Maya entering the tall building overlooking the square, and starts following her, quick enough not to lose her but slow enough not to be noticed by her. When they reach the building, Kazune notices that the lights on one of the elevators are on, and watches the floor indicator display that Maya has arrived at the rooftop. Aki is the first to get on the next elevator followed by the 4 other girls. Kazune silently prays in her mind that Reina is safe, and hasn't been roped into any illegal STACK battles.

However, when the girls reach the rooftop they immediately see that Matoi and Reina are having an illegal STACK battle. Kazune feels blasted by sound as soon as she opens the door to the rooftop. She has never seen the two DJ units that Matoi and Reina are using before, and notices the crystal holograms floating above them. Maya is also there, watching the battle, but turns around when she senses the presence of the 5 girls arriving. She asks them what the fuck they're doing there with a terrifying expression on her face which is almost enough to scare Kazune away, but she stands her ground and demands that they stop the STACK battle right now. Maya says they can't, and warns her that they don't know what'll happen if they stop the battle before it's supposed to end, the worst case scenario being that one or both of them might end up physically disabled. She tells Kazune that she better not fuck it up, because Matoi is participating in this battle as well. Hearing this from Maya makes Kazune angry, but she can do nothing except watch the battle and wait for it to be over.

Maya looks over the rest of the girls, recognising Aki. She tells her she's lucky she didn't get the shit beat out of her along with the rest of Azabu, but Aki says that Maya is the lucky one, because if her team had been there the Kabuki girls would have been the ones who had to retreat. Maya smiles viciously and laughs, remarking how easy Azabu's ace was to beat, and that Aki too is nothing compared to Kabuki. Aki fires back at Maya's rudeness, saying that Tama would surely not have lost if they

hadn't used underhanded tactics. She tells Maya that if she and Ginka are together, she is no match for the two of them. Maya looks doubtful for a second, but then condescendingly snaps back and tells Aki she doesn't fuck with 'naive, sheltered little rich girls' like her. She loses interest in speaking to Aki after that.

Hina then angrily calls out from behind Maya, asking her if she's just going to ignore the two Harajuku members that are there. When Maya turns around, she seems like she's having difficulty remembering their faces, and Hina exclaims that they're members of the Harajuku Denonbu, who Maya and her group attacked, however Maya says that the only one in Harajuku they dealt with was a girl with pink hair, and Hina and Shian weren't there. This hits Hina where it hurts, and she stops talking to Maya and looks down in pain. Shian then speaks up, saying that the two of them are members of the Harajuku Denonbu no matter if they were there or not. What the Kabuki girls did is unforgivable and Shian says that God's punishment will come. Hina is wide eyed with surprise that Shian dared to speak so firmly to someone as scary as Maya. The atmosphere changes dramatically as Maya asks if Shian believes in God. Shian backs away at the insane glint in her eyes, stuttering and explaining that she's a shrine maiden. Maya is taken aback, saying that Shian is the pinnacle of stupidity, and breaks out in unhinged laughter. Shian asks what's so funny, and Maya says that she fucking hates God. She trembles as Maya declares that the Kabuki girls will destroy every god in this world, and create a new god with their own hands. Maya shifts her gaze over to Matoi as she says this.

Matoi smiles viciously, complimenting Reina on her skills. She selects her next song, and a rhythm that feels like it could beat people to death with sound pressure and lyrics full of violence and murderous intent reverberate from the speakers. She begins to enter the high she gets from these STACK battles, thinking that everyone she battled at the party hijacks had been so lame, wanting to be happy and having fun. Matoi thinks that everyone is an idiot made to dance like a puppet by this world, holding on to baseless happiness. Someone else decides what is fashionable for them, what their safe standard is. They decide they're happy or sad based on someone else's evaluation of them. They think their value is determined by their social media following numbers. They wait carefully before they reveal their true opinions. They live life at the convenience of those around them. Matoi hates them, and thinks they're scum and that their brains and souls are rotten. She vows to herself that she will eradicate those people, destroy this era and destroy this world. She will become a god to rule over these foolish selfish beings, but in order to do that she needs to kill the gods that currently rule over the world. She tells Reina that she must sacrifice her.

Reina is oblivious to Matoi's gaze, fixated on the fact that despite this being the first time she'd ever used a KAMUI DJ unit, it feels weirdly comfortable and familiar to her. She feels like with it, she can DJ better than usual. Matoi's DJing seems to have an unusual power, and it feels as if the cries of Matoi's heart are being launched at

Reina in the form of sound. Reina thinks to herself she has to win, but she freezes up and cracks start to appear in her orange Music Crystal. She looks over at Matoi seeing her murderous smile. It's so different from her usual kind smile. But then, she notices that Matoi's DJ unit has started to emit red light from it. However, Reina's DJ unit isn't doing the same. The red light turns into green particles and floats around Reina in a beautiful yet disastrous glow. Reina starts to question it, but then realises even if she thinks about it she'll never figure out what those particles are. She remembers that her determination when battling Mitsuki in the Shibuya clubroom was actually what caused her to lose the battle, and because she lost, Mitsuki went to Kabuki and lost her ability to hear music. Reina blames herself entirely for this, and begins to feel a fiery feeling of anger flaring up inside her. She remembers how the same happened to Tama, and how the Harajuku girls are so sad right now, and how Mimito is so traumatised she can't even get back up on her feet again, and those flames of rage begin to flow throughout her entire body.

Reina is furious, and feels deep despair and rage at everything being out of her control. Her feelings are so strong that her style of DJing completely changes and becomes much more aggressive than usual. It is as if she's finally releasing the emotions she has been suppressing for quite a while now and expressing them through sound. Reina shows Matoi the fire of anger in her heart, and feels as if she and her DJ unit are directly connected. At that moment, Reina's DJ unit also begins to emit green light. Matoi's eyes narrow as she notices it, and remarks that Reina is meeting her expectations, but cuts herself off as she notices that the green particles around Reina's DJ unit are suddenly turning crimson red. Matoi freezes, staring at Reina in surprise. Reina stares right back at her, a red glow in her eyes. The red particles emitted by Reina's KAMUI unit look like flames surrounding her. Matoi feels like she's being slapped by the sharp kick and bass that Reina is playing, as Reina's broken heart strikes at her in the form of sound. However, Matoi soon recovers, raising the tempo and the faders. Reina angrily yells that she will make her feelings reach Matoi whether she likes it or not.

Matoi says that Reina already got the message across, and Reina demands that Matoi apologise to Mitsuki, Mimito and everyone she has hurt. After that, Reina says she wants the two of them to make up and be friends for real this time, but Matoi snaps at her to not be so fucking hypocritical, and that she knows what Reina really wants to do is strike out at her through music. Reina looks confused, and Matoi tells her that her instincts are to beat up and triumph over her opponents with sound, which Reina profusely denies. Matoi says she understands the feeling all too well and it is what pushes her to greater heights. She wildly turns up the volume of what she's playing and distorts the sound with effects, and demands that she and Reina kill each other with music. Reina turns up her own volume to counter Matoi's DJing, and coloured particles of light cover the rooftop- but then the sound suddenly stops, and all is silent. Reina looks around in confusion, noticing her DJ unit is switched off and the floating crystal above it has vanished.

Kazune wonders if there's a blackout but then realises the lights of the other buildings around them are all still on. When she turns around, she notices a pretty girl dressed in Jirai Kei fashion standing at the door to the rooftop, her face devoid of emotion like a puppet. The girl angrily says that they can't just battle there, and they're 'making their lil Reml angry'. When Reml says her name, Kazune realises that she's the third of the party hijacking culprits. At the moment she realises this, everyone suddenly hears the noise of Matoi, Reina and their DJ units falling over. Maya leaps over and picks up Matoi from the floor, and Kazune and Futaba rush over to Reina, lifting her up off of the floor. Reina isn't hurt anywhere, but feels dizzy, and her head jerks sideways as she faints in Kazune and Futaba's arms. Kazune reassures the very freaked out Futaba that Reina will be fine, and calls an ambulance. Aki calls over to Maya, asking her where she's going. She tells her that if Matoi and Reina get in the same ambulance, they'll both be treated more quickly, but Reml says that Matoi has her own personal doctor. Aki glares at them, swearing not to let them get away as she can't forgive what they did to Tama. When Maya asks her what she's gonna do about that, Aki demands that they STACK battle, but then a certain girl appears all of a sudden and advises Aki against doing that.

Aki at first feels relief when she sees Ginka there, but then her reaction drastically changes when she witnesses Ginka offering to help Maya and the Kabuki girls escape. Aki listens to their exchange with a stunned look on her face and Ginka repeatedly tells her not to get involved with any illegal STACK battles. Aki wonders if this is really Ginka and is so confused as to why she's acting so friendly with the culprits that the two of them were chasing after together. Shocked, she tries to press Ginka for an explanation as to why she's doing this, but Ginka doesn't explain anything and instead keeps telling her not to get involved with Kabuki. Aki breaks down and demands Ginka come back and give her a proper explanation. Ginka just sighs and asks her if she's done yelling, and then says 'I have finally broken free of the curse the witch bestowed upon me.' and walks out the door.

Aki feels like she doesn't understand anything anymore. She falls to her knees, tears welling in her eyes, and stares at the door Ginka disappeared through as she hears the noise of sirens approaching them from afar.