

Ramen Gal

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Ramen Gal

by [Ayodaza](#), [OddAiTanijiro](#)

Summary

Kazuki and Koemi, two high school seniors, take on the challenge of running Koemi's late grandfather's restaurant. As they navigate the complexities of running the business, they also confront their own personal struggles for each other. Together, they strive to honor the legacy of Koemi's grandfather while forging a path of balancing school life, restaurant, and their own relationship.

Notes

Thank you to OddAiTanijiro for helping out with making the light novel. This is my first novel I wrote, I hope you enjoy it :)

See the end of the work for [more notes](#)

Chapter 1: Ramen Gal

Chapter Summary

This is the prologue before the events of the story begins, mainly focusing on Koemi's introduction, how she got word about the restaurant, and a brief introduction to Kazuki, our main character.

The sun is setting over the city, casting a warm golden glow that softens the harsh lines of the streets. High school students are walking onto the sidewalks, their chatters fill the air. But among them, I stood out— not just because of my bright, stylish clothes and perfectly manicured nails, but because of my confident stride and the easy smiles I share with everyone I pass. My name is Koemi Watanabe, the granddaughter of Takeshi Watanabe. Being your usual gal, popular and effortlessly charming, likable by nearly everyone at school.

As I waved goodbye to my friends and began to walk home, I felt a familiar buzz of my phone in my pocket. I pull it out and see my mom's name on the screen. Answering it, I am greeted by her familiar voice, tingling with excitement.

“Koemi, are you ready?” she asked me.

I pause, curiosity crosses. “For what, mom?”

But before she could answer, my attention was drawn to a familiar figure sitting on a park bench outside the school. He has earbuds in, listening to music, as it looks like he's napping. Next to him is a sports bag. Although I have known him since we first saw each other in our first year in high school. It is very strange for me to discover, from now, that he's trying to keep his body in shape despite no one in his school caring about him.

“Hey, Koemi?” Mom's voice brought back the conversation.

“Ah, sorry. I saw something that got me distracted...” I continue to walk, crossing the park that leads to an alleyway to my house.

Mom sighs, but her excitement quickly returns. “It’s about the restaurant, remember?”

“We need to talk about you taking control of it.”

I stop in my tracks, her words sinking into me. “Woah? Right now?”

“Yes, once you arrive at the restaurant. I’ll tell you in detail.”

As I approach the restaurant, a mix of excitement and nerves turns in my stomach. This is going to change everything. The restaurant has always been a part of my family’s legacy, and now it is my turn to step up.

When I arrive, a moving truck is parking outside, and I see mom waiting by the restaurant’s entrance. Dress in an elegant outfit that hints at her background in a fashion agency, she stands out with her confident, poise demeanor. Her stylish clothes and impeccable grooming showcase her well-known presence. Her face is alight with anticipation, and her eyes sparkle as she catches sight of me.

She greets me with a warm hug. “You’re going to be great, Koemi. Your grandfather believed in you, I believe in you too.”

I hesitate, the magnitude of this task ahead is weighing on me. “I still couldn’t believe Grandpa was gone. His passing was so abrupt, when I started high school...”

Mom nods sympathetically. “I understand sweetie. Grandpa left a note for you. I won’t tell you what it says, but I think you should read it when you have a chance.”

After our conversation, she gave me a quick tour of the restaurant. She shows me the stairs, inside the kitchen, leading to the apartment above. “This will be your new home,” she tells me with a smile. “You’ll be able to find all your belongings up there.”

Despite her encouragement, I still feel overwhelmed. “Please, I feel you’re making a mistake. I don’t know if I could handle all of this.”

As my mom looks at me with a reassuring smile. “You got this Koemi. Remember, I believe in you. Grandpa believes in you, too. You can do this.”

As mom left the restaurant with the moving truck, I looked out the window, feeling a mix of anxiety and determination. Just then, Tetsu, my loyal pet dog, pops his head out of my backpack. He gives me a comforting nudge, helping me get ready for this next chapter in my life.

As I enter the restaurant’s kitchen, once again, with Tetsu now by my side. The reality of the task ahead begins to settle in. The kitchen, familiar from my visits as a child, seems to feel larger and daunting as it is now my responsibility to take care of it. I begin to look for the cleaning supplies, determined to get the restaurant ready for tomorrow.

As I begin searching through the cupboards and drawers, my eyes land on a small yellow note stuck to the fridge. Curious as I am, I reach for it and begin to read it. The words, though simple, carry a weight that makes my heart ache. Grandpa Takeshi’s voice seems to echo in my mind, filled with warmth and encouragement.

While reading, thoroughly, I could feel tears flowing down my eyes as I read this heartfelt message. It was like Grandpa was still here, asking me how my life has been going. This realization of his absence and this new responsibility I’m now carrying is overwhelming.

As I continue reading, the note starts mentioning Kazuki. My tears flow faster as confusion and sadness mingle within me. Why did Grandpa Takeshi mention him? We have barely had a meaningful interaction since I first saw him in high school. In fact, I always see him as a weird kid— someone who seems to get nervous every time we interact. I couldn’t deny that I have a certain dislike for him, but he always seems out of place in my world.

But seeing his name here, connected with Grandpa’s final words, feels unreal. Grandpa has always been a wise person; why would he include Kazuki in this note? My heart aches as I

try to piece together the meaning behind this. It feels strange and almost wrong to see his name here, and I can't shake the feeling that there is something I'm missing.

I feel a pang of guilt mixed with my confusion. There's no way this is real. Grandpa's words seem to speak to a deep connection that I can't quite grasp, and it left me feeling lost and uncertain.

Tetsu, sensing my distress, nuzzles my leg. His warmth is a small comfort to this storm of emotions. I wipe my tears, trying to steady my breathing. I glance at Tetsu, who's looking up at me with eyes sparkling.

"Do you know something I don't?" I whisper, feeling more lost than ever.

Tetsu barks softly, as if to reassure me, but his response did little to ease the heaviness in my heart.

As I took a deep breath, I shook off my overwhelming feelings and turned my attention to the tasks at hand. There is still so much to do before the restaurant reopens tomorrow. I focused on cleaning the tables, determined to push through the confusion and to honor Grandpa Takeshi's legacy in the best way I could.

Chapter 2: Under New Management

It is midnight in this small town, and the street is very quiet as street lamps illuminate the surroundings. I'm still in my school uniform, carrying a large sports bag to my house. I'm Kazuki Nakamura, a high school senior known by everyone at my school for being a socially distant otaku. As I usually prefer the company of my manga collection over people.

Despite my otaku lifestyle, I still find time to stay in shape. My large sports bag, filled with gear from my latest training session, hangs heavily from my shoulder. While most of my peers assume I'm just another shut-in, I make a point by exercising regularly. It's a discipline I've developed over the years, partly because of a crush I've had since my first year of high school. Though I'd never admit it, staying fit was my way of feeling more confident in myself.

But tonight, everything is about to change.

As I walk home from the evening tennis practice at my school, the cool night air feels refreshing as it hits my skin. The sound of my footsteps echoes softly on these empty streets, providing a soothing backdrop to my thoughts. Today left me very tired, but the quiet noises left a welcome contrast.

I pass by a pop-up restaurant stand, where people are laughing and enjoying their meals. Hearing the sounds of enjoyment reminds me of this restaurant where my family and I used to go to every chance we got. The way the food was always served with rich and comforting flavors—it was like a warm hug for my taste buds. The old geezer who ran the place was more than just a cook; he was family to me. His food was always a highlight, each dish prepared with care and served with a warm smile.

As I continue down the alleyway, a familiar sight of this old restaurant comes into view. I slow down my pace, looking at the long blue flag hanging outside, covering the restaurant's name. Although my expression remains calm, the sparkles in my eyes betray my true nature and reveal a child-like anticipation for this beloved restaurant from my childhood, ever since my family took me there. This place was a sanctuary for me, a place where I felt a sense of belonging for most of my time as a child.

My eyes follow the flag, which reads “Under New Management,” as the wind picks up, revealing the restaurant name: **Shokudo Furusato** . As I begin to smile, I notice a girl through the lit window, cleaning the table. She looks familiar, but I can’t quite tell if that is really her.

I wasn’t sure. It looks like she just came out from school, just like me. Could she be hired to be a part of the team for the grand reopening of the restaurant? I move closer to the window, careful not to intrude on their privacy. As I press my face to the window, I spot a puppy trotting around the restaurant.

The puppy, a fluffy bundle of energy with a coat of light brown fur, moves with an adorably wobbly gait. His ears perk up with each new sound, and his tail wags energetically, leaving a small trail of excitement. His dark, expressive eyes dart around, seemingly taking in every detail of his surroundings with curious enthusiasm. Now and then, he lets out an eager bark, his tiny paws patting playfully at the floor as he explores.

He looks towards a young woman who is almost finishing with cleaning the table. She’s focused on her task, her movements are quick and efficient. Her outfit is casual but appealing, reflecting a confident air as she works. As she bends down to wipe the table, the puppy approaches her with a cheerful bark. She looks down, her face lights up with a warm smile as she gently pats him on the head. Their interaction is endearing, and I can't help but be drawn in by the unfolding before me.

The girl’s movement is captivating; she moves with a grace that contrasts the bustling energy of the restaurant as she cleans the tables, is mesmerizing. Her casual confidence and the way she interacts with the playful puppy create a scene full of warmth and charm. I find myself unable to tear my gaze away, captivated by her, inviting an atmosphere of the restaurant.

I notice that our eyes meet. The girl’s gaze locks onto mine, and at that moment, time seems to stretch. I feel a sudden jolt of panic as the realization hits me— she caught me. My heart races, pounding loudly in my chest, each beat echoing in my ears. My face flushes with heat, and I stand there, frozen, caught between the urge to run and the desire to just stand there.

I instinctively try to appear nonchalant, but it’s too late. The girl and her puppy start moving towards the entrance, and my chances of escaping are rapidly dwindling. I’m left with no choice but to keep my gaze fixed on the restaurant sign, trying to compose myself as my mind races with thoughts on how to handle an unexpected situation like this.

I notice that she's about to open the door. My heart begins to race as I know that I am in deep trouble; my time to escape is already too late. The door opens, and the girl begins to step out, her warm smile fades into a look of mild surprise as she spots me standing there.

I take a good look at her... This girl... Is my crush from school. The same girl who's been occupying my thoughts for so long is now standing right in front of me. My mind races with confusion and disbelief. Why is she here, working for my Grandpa's restaurant? This question echoes in my mind as I try to process the sight before me.

"Isn't this Kazuki?" Her voice rings out with a mix of surprise and recognition.

"AHH!" I yelp

My voice barely squeaks as my mind is scrambling for an excuse. Panic surges through me as I realize I've been caught in a very awkward position.

"Woah, already jumping to conclusion," she says, her tone light and reassuring. "I won't do anything bad to you. Don't worry!" A gentle smile spreads across her face, though it serves to amplify my nervousness.

She pauses for a moment, her gaze lingering on me. I can feel her eyes studying me, making my heart race even faster. The way she stares at me, with a mix of curiosity and concern, only worsening my anxiety.

"So you're here for the restaurant. Right?" She asks, curiosity.

"Yeah..." I stutter, forcing a laugh in a desperate attempt to appear casual. I scratch the back of my head, trying to hide how flustered I am, but then she drops the bombshell.

"Well... Starting tomorrow! I, Koemi Watanabe, will take the place of Grandpa and become the manager of his restaurant!" She announces with a flourish.

WAIT?! Koemi—the most popular girl in our school—is Mr. Watanabe’s granddaughter?

My head begins to spin as the revelation sinks in. This news adds another weight to my already exhausted mind, a result of a long day of practice. I can feel myself tilting around me as I struggle to stay upright.

“Kazuki, are you okay?” Koemi’s voice sounds distant and concerned.

Before I can respond, my legs start to give away. My entire body collapses, and I feel a strong pair of arms catching me. Koemi holds me up with her strength and her puppy helping her alongside as his tiny paws are supporting my lower body. Together, they manage to drag me inside the restaurant.

Inside, the puppy’s enthusiastic barks fill the air, a stark contrast to my fading consciousness. I hear Mom’s voice calling out to me, her words blending together as my vision starts to blur. My eyes grow heavy, and despite her best efforts to wake me, everything around me slowly fades to black.

Koemi’s voice fades as my conscious ebbs away, but I catch glimpses of the restaurant’s charm— an inviting blend of warmth and tradition that was once a significant part of my childhood. As my consciousness slips away, my mind drifts back to those cherished moments spent here...

Chapter 3: Kazuki's Special

Chapter Summary

Kazuki dreams remembering the time he visits his childhood, we meet the owner of the restaurant and the suppose grandfather to him. Later on, he woke up in the same restaurant with Koemi offering him a job opportunity for him? Will he take it, and why is Koemi is so kind to him despite what happened?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

I remember my childhood, as I heard the chime jingling softly as my parents and I walked into Shokudo Furusto. The comforting scent of the miso soup greets us. My father, Hiroshi Nakamura, and my mother, Miyuki Nakamura, settle at their usual seats at the counter where Takeshi Watanabe, approaching his 60s, is busy preparing dishes.

“Good evening, Mr. Watanabe!” My father greeted him with a smile.

“Ah, isn’t this Hiroshi with his family again! Good evening to you too!” Takeshi replied warmly. “What will you all be having tonight?”

“Give us the usual, please,” my dad requested, “Miso soup with extra pork.”

“Coming right up!” Takeshi said, as he turned on the heat.

While Takeshi is preparing our order, he shifts his eyes to me. He noticed the unease in my mood, and he offered me a friendly smile.

“Kazuki, are you alright? Is school doing too much on you?” He asked me with genuine concern on his face.

I shake my head, refusing to give him an answer, my thoughts tangled with self-doubt and frustration. Today wasn't good at all. My mother gently nudged me, her eyes encouraging me to open up.

"Please, Kazuki. Maybe Mr. Watanabe can help you with your issue." She suggested.

I looked up at him, took a deep breath, and began to open up.

"I feel like nobody in school is like me. I think I'm a failure!" I confessed, the weight of my words becomes heavy on my shoulders.

Takeshi's smile softened as he listened. He leaned in, turning serious but gentle. "Kazuki. There's something I have to tell you. I'm not going to be around this long and when that time comes, you'll have to face things on your own. I won't be here to help you." he tells me, his words showing a different side to his usual cheerful demeanor.

My heart sank after hearing it, as a lump formed in my throat. A wave of sadness washed over me. He noticed my distress and quickly tried to change the mood.

"But... You're a strong kid, Kazuki. Ever since your parents told me about you, I have seen your courage as you go through the tough spots in life. I believe in you," he encourages me. "What about this—I'll make the 'Kazuki Special.' As long as it makes you smile, deal?"

"Hooray!" I exclaim, feeling a bit more hopeful despite the heaviness of the conversation.

Watching Takeshi cook helped lighten my mood, seeing his precise movement put me in awe.

"You know, Kazuki, for being a customer. I see a lot in you. That's why I think you'd be a great fit here! You just need to start believing in yourself."

I watch him, letting it sink in me. "Wow really! You think so?"

“Yeah,” Takeshi tells me, his eyes twinkling.

He points out to this young girl, similar age as me, has long hair, and is silent just like me. Carefully cutting the onions with a sharp knife. “I don’t think you two has met up, but that’s my granddaughter”

“She is fantastic, despite her age! I have plans for her when she grows up one day!” He tells me, with excitement.

I didn’t know that Grandpa Takeshi has a granddaughter, although I see her everyday lurking in the kitchen, hiding.

Takeshi calls her gently. “Come here for a moment.” The call made her walk up to him.

“Could you bring this to Kazuki?” he asks, handing her a small plate with a smile. “And maybe try to introduce yourself.”

She nodded and quietly walked up to me, her eyes full of curiosity. She handed me the plate, telling me in a soft voice, “This is for you...”

She began to run back to the kitchen before I could make my introduction to her. “Thank you?” I said, confused.

I didn’t realize how shy she is, but it doesn’t matter. My excitement about eating my own order quickly replaced my curiosity. Seeing the miso soup with extra pork, the grilled dish, and a small dish of pickled vegetables made my mouth water, calling on me to start digging in.

The aroma is similar to the one from my dream. Could this really be the “Kazuki Special”? My eyes are about to open up.

“Is that the ‘Kazuki Special’?” I mumble groggily, still half-asleep. “Give it to me...”

Koemi, who has been anxiously watching over me, let out a relieved laugh.

“Well, it looks like you’re finally waking up!” she said, her voice fills with warmth!

Her puppy hops on the table and nudges a steaming bowl of food towards me. The rich, savory smell fills my senses, and my stomach rumbles in response.

I began to open my eyes, I still felt more tired than I was before. I manage to lift my head and take a grasp at Koemi’s face, her cheeks slightly flushed as she chuckles. Her pet is sitting on the table beside her, his tail wagging enthusiastically.

“Did I... Did I just pass out?” I ask, my voice barely above a whisper.

“You did...” Koemi replied.

Realizing, this wave of embarrassment washes over me. I never felt ashamed of causing such a scene. Her puppy, sensing my discomfort, decides to sit on my lap, offering a small measure of comfort. I begin to sit up, taking in the surroundings. I’m currently in a cozy booth at the restaurant. This familiar, homey atmosphere brings a rush of nostalgia.

This place, with its warm lighting and comforting scents, felt like a fragment of my past, a piece of my childhood that I haven’t been realizing that I miss so much until now. The restaurant has always been a refuge to me, a place where I always go to have my worries of school fade away. And now, it felt even more significant with Koemi and this adorable pet here.

“I’m sorry for causing all of this trouble,” I shout, trembling with humiliation. “I didn’t really mean to be such a bother. Please forgive me!”

“It’s fine!” Koemi tells me, smiling. “You’ve been through a lot today. Just eat up and relax. This is the first time I’ve got to cook since I took over this restaurant today, and I want to experience it with you.”

As I took a bite of the grilled fish, the flavors brought a wave of nostalgia and comfort. It’s like Takeshi cooked this meal for me, as everything just felt right again. Despite this confusion, there is something reassuring about being here, in this place, with these two.

As I savor the soup, my mind begins to wonder. Why is Koemi going out of her way to offer me this food instead of leaving me there to rot outside? This kindness she shows me left me surprised, especially given these circumstances. Is she doing this to prepare herself, or is there something else she’s hiding from me?

“This is how Takeshi used to cook when I visit him every day.” I said, feeling a sense of calm wash over me.

“Why thank you,” Koemi replies, her cheeks pink with a mix of pride and embarrassment. “I used to work with Grandpa when I was little. So he’s been getting me ready for this day...”

“So you’re that little girl I saw in my dreams?” I exclaimed, my curiosity surged.

“Uhm...” She hesitated, her eyes dropping to the floor. “I’m not sure what you mean. But Grandpa has taught me a lot, that’s for sure!”

“I see...”

We both sat silently as I finished eating. I notice Koemi looking nervous, fidgeting with her hands, struggling to ask me something. Her puppy starts barking to encourage her, as if urging her to go ahead.

“Hey...” Koemi began, her voice hesitant.

“Hm?” I prompted, sensing that she has something important to tell me.

“I was thinking...” Koemi trails off, her eyes darting nervously.

“Can you please help me out?” She shouts, her voice is trembling.

Looking at her eyes shows lots of concern, as if she is going to be on the verge of tears. My own anxiety begins to flare up as I await her next words.

“Help with what?” I asked, my concern helping.

“Well... There’s going to be a lot of people tomorrow, and I get really nervous when there’s a crowd of people that aren’t from our school.” She explained it to me.

“Yeah sure, I’d be happy to help out.” I replied, eager to assist.

Koemi’s face lit up with a genuine smile, though I noticed a quick, sneaky glance towards her pet. The puppy seems to be into something with her, his twinkling with mischief.

“Hey?” I mumble, glancing at her pet, who’s been very focused on her.

Koemi quickly tries to divert my attention. “Oh! My bad! You want to know who this puppy is?”

“No?” I replied, puzzled by her sudden shift in topic.

Ignoring my response, she picks up her pet, who is still smiling despite everything. “Mom told me he’s very strong.” she said proudly.

“What’s his name?” I ask, intrigue.

“His name is Tetsu!” Koemi exclaims with enthusiasm.

“Woof!” Tetsu barks, confirming her statement.

After I finished my meal, I grabbed my sports bag and started to walk out of the restaurant. But as I begin to head out, Koemi approaches me with a warm smile. “Hey, thank you for agreeing to help out tomorrow! It made my job easier now!”

“No problem. I’m looking forward to it, too.” I said, feeling a little more relaxed.

“Amazing! I’ll need you to be here around fifteen o’clock. I’ll be in the back of the restaurant after school waiting for you, okay?”

“Alright, I’ll see you then.” I replied, giving her a nod.

As I gave Tetsu a pet and waved, as Koemi said goodbye before I started walking to my house. I begin to realize something...

I’m bad at talking to a crowd of people, too...

Chapter End Notes

Hey, thank you for supporting this series! I'm planning to put out this novel in other platforms since I already have artists already helping with the cover art of the novel. I

also plan to do a Q&A chapter soon. The next chapter will begin the grand reopening as we learn more about these two, I will drop this next week.

Chapter 4: Start Of Grand Reopening

Chapter by [Ayodaza](#)

I glance at my phone, my heart pounding as I sprint down the street towards Shokudo Furusato. The time moved closer to “15:00,” (3 PM) and I could almost feel the weight of my promise of Koemi pressing on my shoulders.

When I finally reach the back entrance, I halt, catching my breath. I finally saw Koemi again. Her outfit today is flawless, a perfect blend of casual clothing that somehow manages to look effortless. The way her hair is styled and the light in her eyes makes her look vibrant and relaxed. Her stance is confident, yet there is a hint of nervous anticipation in her posture. I wiped the sweat from my forehead, panting, couldn't help but think...

I couldn't believe I'm seeing her school outfit up close like this...

“You're late,” Koemi tells me, her tone a blend of frustration and playfulness. “One second late.”

Jokingly, I added, “more like, on time?”

Koemi rolls her eyes with a playful smirk. “Fine, you win. You're here now. Let's get things ready for today.”

“Everyone's here, but where is Tetsu at?” I was concerned.

I hear a distant bark similar to Tetsu inside of her backpack. She opens it and pulls him out of her backpack. The little puppy wiggled out of her backpack and was able to see me again.

I reach out to pet Tetsu, feeling his warm, soft fur under my fingers. “I'm glad he's doing well, but... How did he manage to stay hidden in your backpack all day? Wouldn't it be uncomfortable for him?”

Koemi chuckled, scratching Tetsu behind his eyes. “Didn’t I tell you last night? He’s a strong little guy. Plus, I made sure to leave the top halfway open so he could poke his head out to breathe if he wanted to.”

I can’t help but wonder at his ability to endure in the cramped space in Koemi’s backpack. Despite my concern, he seems happy and energetic, as if every day is a new adventure for him.

“So, what’s the plan?” I ask, turning my attention back to Koemi.

Her eyes lit up with determination. “We have a lot to do before the grand reopening. I’ll guide you around the restaurant and get you ready for today.”

She led me through the back door of the restaurant into a bustling kitchen, filled with the aroma of food and the clatter of preparation. The atmosphere is alive with excitement and anticipation.

As we walk through the kitchen, my eyes scan the room, taking in the organized chaos. Pots are simmering, the pans are sizzling, and I can already tell that she has already prepared a lot for the grand reopening. While she’s giving me a tour of the kitchen, a bright yellow note caught my eye, stuck to the fridge. I tried to read it, but before I could make out what I saw, Koemi ushered me forward, and the note disappeared from my view.

We left the kitchen and Koemi guided me to a small area for me. “Here’s your station,” she tells me, gesturing to a spot with an apron, a notepad, and a small stack of order tickets.

I adjust my apron, noticing how it fits snugly. “This is not too bad,” I said, and Tetsu, who’s sitting near me, wags his tail in agreement.

“So, what’s Tetsu’s role in this?” I ask Koemi, glancing down at the cheerful puppy.

Koemi grins. “He’s helping out with carrying the dishes to the customers while keeping an eye on things. I think he’ll do a good job with it.”

I nodded, trying to imagine Tetsu carrying 100 plates on top of his back. “I see...”

“So, when will we open the restaurant?”

“About an hour from now,” Koemi replies, checking the time on her phone. “We still got lots of time to do some prep work around the restaurant, it should be fine. Don’t worry!”

As Koemi left. I took a deep breath, trying to shake off my nerves. My anticipation is building, but I can feel a surge of determination. I glance at Koemi and Tetsu in the kitchen, both busy getting ready for today too.

“I’m ready, Grandpa Takeshi.” I tell myself. I adjust my apron one last time and take another deep breath, ready to tackle the evening ahead.

Both me and Koemi stand by the window, looking at the long line of people eagerly waiting for the restaurant to open again. Getting to see so many familiar faces and new ones fills me with both excitement and anxiety.

“I didn’t know so many people would come.” I told Koemi.

Koemi nods, her eyes shining with determination. “Yeah, it is about to be a busy night. Ready?”

I nod back, my nerves turning into a fierce determination. “Ready.”

After opening, the restaurant is abuzz with the lively chatter of customers, the clinking of glasses, and the mouth watering aroma of fresh cooked food. The grand reopening is in, and already half of the tables are occupied.

I plaster on a cheerful smile as I move from table to table, taking orders with a shaky pen and notepad in hand. “Welcome! What can I get for you today?” I ask, trying to keep my voice steady as I greet a group of familiar faces.

One customer, an elderly woman who’s been a regular since the restaurant first opened, looks at me with a warm smile. “Ah... You must be one of Grandpa Takeshi’s relatives, right?”

I force a smile, a fake laugh escaping my lips. “Haha, sadly not. Just friends of the family.” I replied, immediately moving to the next table to avoid any further questions.

I continue to move from table to table, maintaining my positive demeanor despite the occasional stumbles. Likewise, I couldn’t help but notice how everyone’s mood seems to lift when Tetsu appears with their food. It’s like a little piece of magic in this midst of chaos.

“Here’s your order.” I said, setting down a piece of sushi in front of a young couple. They thank me warmly, as I move to the next table.

As I approached another table, a female customer caught my eye. “You’re doing an amazing job,” she tells me, her tone encouraging me.

“Thanks,” I reply, feeling a bit more confident. “Just trying my best keeping up with all the orders.”

I glanced back towards the kitchen and saw Koemi, moving with a mix of excitement and nervous energy. She is running the restaurant by herself, and it is clear she is putting in the effort.

After seeing Koemi’s hard work. It also makes me want to push myself even harder. With this new renewed determination, I straighten myself up and move to the next table, with more confidence than I was before.

I approach a table where a middle-aged woman is waiting. I place a steaming plate of gyoza in front of her and offer a friendly smile.

“Here you go,” I said, setting down the dish. “I hope you enjoy it!”

The woman looks up at me with a twinkle in her eye but a mischievous grin. “Are you and the young lady in the kitchen... Married?”

I blink, caught off guard by the question. My cheeks flush a deep red as I stammer, “Oh, uh, no! We’re not married. We just happen to work together. I, uh, don’t think I’m quite at that stage yet...”

The lady laughed along with me, her eyes crinkling at the corners. “Well, you never know,” she tells me with a wink. “A little romance can make things even better. Trust me, if you want to win someone’s heart, just be genuine and show them how much they mean to you! A simple gesture, a heartfelt word— can make a difference.”

I blink, taking in her words. “Why thank you. I’ll keep that in mind.”

“You should,” she said, giving me a knowing look. “Now, go on and keep up the good work!”

“Thanks!” I reply with a grin, feeling even more confident.

As I finish my shift, I glance at the kitchen again, where Koemi is still working tirelessly. I admire her dedication and wonder how she would feel about me. The day has been hectic, but seeing her work so hard makes me appreciate her even more.

I take a moment to pet Tetsu, who has been a delightful presence throughout the day. “Good job, Tetsu.” I tell him, ruffling his fur. He wags his tail happily.

Watching Tetsu gives me a renewed sense of purpose. I watch him trotting back to the kitchen, ready to deliver another order.

I begin to feel a growing sense of confidence. This day has been challenging, but seeing everyone working hard, putting in the dedication reminds me the importance of every small effort. I couldn’t wait for what the rest of the evening would bring.

Chapter 5: End Of Grand Reopening

Chapter by [Ayodaza](#)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

A/N: This is in Koemi's POV, to continue the plot points of prologue

In the kitchen, I am balancing this excitement with the nervous energy I am currently having. This marks my first day running this restaurant, and seeing it nearly pack to capacity is both amazing but very overwhelming for me. My heart races as I manage this busy kitchen, as I make sure each dish meets the high standards set by Grandpa.

“Alright, Tetsu, here's another one.” I said, carefully placing a steaming bowl of Chinese noodles on a tray. Tetsu's tail starts wagging excitedly, he seems to understand his role perfectly.

As I watch Tetsu navigate through a crowd in the restaurant with ease. I couldn't help but let my mind race with thoughts. What if I mess up? Can I even keep up with the orders? Despite my anxiety, I force myself to continue moving between the stove and the prep counter.

When Tetsu returns with an empty tray, I begin to smile. “Good job, Tetsu!” I praise him, scratching behind his ears.

I quickly prepare another order, a plate of assorted oden, my hands move with efficiency. As I work, my eyes drift to the dining area where Kazuki is taking orders, trying his hardest. Seeing him there gives me a surge of determination.

Tetsu nudged my leg, with his nose, telling me to send him off with another order. I smile at my puppy's enthusiasm, as my thoughts drift back to how I'd seen Kazuki quietly working on his project after school. His dedication always impresses me, although I find it weird. It is the way to make sure his work has that quality, which makes me feel more resolved.

I shook off the distraction and tried to focus on the task at hand. There's still so much to go through, but seeing Kazuki working so hard made me feel more determined to keep going, to make today a success.

As the night begins and the activity in the restaurant starts to slow down. The dining area is now easy for me to manage, as a sense of calm creeps in. While I was cutting the chashu pork, I noticed my grandma, Hana Watanabe, waiting for me.

"Grandpa Watanabe!" I exclaimed, surprised to see her today. "What will you be having today?"

She gave me a warm smile, her eyes twinkling with affection. "Ah, I came to check up on you after I heard you reopened the restaurant."

"But since you're busy with the chashu pork... Could you cook me a bowl of miso soup?"

I nodded, setting the knife down to start preparing her miso soup. As I began working, I couldn't help but glance over at Grandpa, who seemed lost in her own thoughts.

"Sweetie," Grandpa began softly, "watching you cook reminds of what your grandfather used to tell me... Cooking is like painting— each dish is like a canvas, and every ingredient is its own stroke of the brush."

I smiled hearing her wisdom, feeling a lump in my throat as I handed her the bowl of miso soup. "I remember him telling me that when I was little. His passion for cooking made him who he was."

As she takes a sip of the soup, she sighs constantly. "Your style of cooking reminds me so much of him. He always said you have that natural talent. I see so much in you, Koemi."

I felt this mixture of pride and sadness. "Grandma, the note..."

"I read it last night, and I couldn't stop thinking about it... Why did he mention Kazuki?"

Grandma took another sip of the soup and continued. “Your grandfather happens to appreciate Kazuki’s dedication and saw him as someone with value. When his health started to decline, he wasn’t able to see Kazuki able to grow up to where he could be a part of his restaurant...”

I looked back at Kazuki, who was still taking orders. “I understand...”

Grandma smiled, nodding. “Koemi, you’re doing an amazing job. Please remember, sometimes the answers come when you least expect them to. If you have a chance, please show Kazuki the note too. He might understand it better than you do, too.”

I nodded, “I will, grandma, I will...”

Grandma’s eyes soften. “You know. I’m glad I can see him again, now helping along with you too. I just hope that you two can build a connection after today. Just like how grandpa did when he first saw him as a kid...”

Grandma then adds, “Now for you taking ownership, there are some legalities to sort out. Because you’re 17, the ownership has to be under my name until you’re officially of age.”

As I’m about to respond, Kazuki walks up to us, looking surprised. “Grandma Watanabe?” he asks, shocked to see her after many years.

My grandma smiles at him. “You have grown a lot, Kazuki. Koemi has told me a lot about you, isn’t that right, Koemi?”

I nervously laughed, feeling a bit flustered. “Yeah... I have name-dropped you a few times...”

Kazuki rubs the back of his neck, looking a bit sheepish. “It is good to see you again, Grandma Watanabe.”

Her eye’s twinkled. “It is good to see you too, Kazuki. Takeshi always spoke highly of you.”

His expression softened, touched by her words. “Thank you, it means a lot to me.”

Just as the conversation begins to settle, Kazuki’s expression changes to one of his concerns. “Koemi. The reason I’m here is that we’ve got a situation in the dining area. There’s a customer who dresses as a Michelin Man mascot, being rude and picky about the food.”

I sigh, knowing moments like these are going to happen. “So, what is going on?”

“He’s been complaining about everything and threatening to give us a one star,” Kazuki explains. “Like he did with other people’s restaurants.”

My grandma looks thoughtful, helping out Kazuki. “Kazuki. Think about what Grandpa Takeshi would have done in this situation?”

Kazuki pauses, thinking about her question. “Well... Grandpa would have treated his restaurant like his own family... He would never let anyone disrespect his staff or other customers...”

My grandma nods in approval. “Exactly. You should try to stand your ground and tell that rude customer that you’re in charge!”

Kazuki’s determination is evident. “Thank you, I’ll try my best.”

As he begins to turn to face the customer, I place my hand on his shoulder. “Why not handle this together?”

He gives me a grateful smile, and we both walk to the dining area, where the customer is causing a disturbance.

“Hello sir,” I begin, trying to keep my voice steady. “I understand there’s an issue with your meal?”

The customer turned his annoyed gaze towards us. “This food is subpar, and this waiter is even worse. I demand better!”

Kazuki steps forward, his voice calm but firm. “Well, I’m sorry you have to feel that way, but we have worked hard to provide you the best service. If there’s something you’d like to address, we’ll be more than happy to listen.”

The customer sneered. “I don’t need a lecture from a teenager.”

I notice Kazuki’s patience wearing thin, but he still manages to stay composed. “If you continue to be disrespectful, I’ll need you to leave.”

The customer’s eyes become narrow, but before he could respond, Tetsu appears by Kazuki’s side. The sight of the loyal dog seems to soften the customer’s attitude, but barely.

Kazuki takes a deep breath and then proceeds to nod at me. I step forward, my voice firm. “It’s time for you to leave.”

“You can’t be serious!” his face turning red with anger.

“Leave, or we will have to escort you out,” Kazuki said, leaving no room for argument.

As the customer grumbles and is not moving. Both me and Kazuki each grab one of his arms, while Tetsu begins to angrily barks at him.

With some effort, we begin to guide the customer towards the door. He struggles slightly, but as we both hold firm, with Tetsu walking ahead, ensuring the path is clear.

Once we reach the door, the customer gives up and allows us to push him outside. “This isn’t over!” he shouts as the door closes behind him.

“That was intense.” I begin looking at Kazuki.

He nods, a small smile forms on his lips. “We handle it well.”

As Tetsu returns, I can only smile as I give him a gentle pat. “Good job, Tetsu!”

“Yeah, you’re a lifesaver, buddy.” he nods in agreement, watching me admire Tetsu.

It is closing time, and the three of us— me, Kazuki, and Tetsu— are cleaning up the restaurant. While I’m wiping down the tables while Kazuki helps take out the trash. Tetsu is trotting around happily, proud of his hard work today.

“Good job today, Tetsu!” I cheer, scratching behind his ears as he wags his tail happily.

As I finish cleaning the table, I decide to check the kitchen to make sure all the appliances are turned off. When I enter the kitchen, I see Kazuki standing there, frozen, holding a small yellow note in his hand. Tears are streaming down his face.

As I carefully look at him, my heart begins to sink. Of all places and times, it has to be here, with him finding the note. I approach him cautiously, unsure of what to say or do.

“Kazuki...” I said softly, reaching out to touch his shoulder. He still hadn’t responded, his eyes locking on the note, overwhelmed by its contents. It is the same notes from when I first entered the restaurant, last night. The one I have the chance to explain.

“Kazuki, are you okay?” I ask him gently, though I already know his answer. The weight of the note is heavy in the air between us.

He slowly turns to me, his voice broken with emotion. “This note...”

As I hear myself breaking down from describing the note to me in detail. My eyes begin to start watering as I begin to remind myself about the note myself...

Chapter End Notes

We have beening platform lately. AO3 will slow down overtime as my growth in other platforms has said a lot. Thank you for reading!

End Notes

This is a weekly series! I'm new to using AO3. But if you are enjoying this series, then be sure to bookmark or subscribe it, as I'm planning to upload a new chapter every week! I'm planning to do a Q&A in the near future. So be sure to ask me anything, and I'll try to answer it in the future. Thank you for giving this a read.

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!