Doctor Fukuda Hinamizawa, Director of the East Coast division of the American branch in the Yeng Corporation, was not unaware of the fact that she had put on weight.

If anything, she was all too aware of it. The scale’s needle and its steady climb upwards haunted her as it recorded her slow crawl outwards in size. Despite her best efforts, the doctor had been unable to curb her weight gain. Whether it was due to the residual effects of the chemicals that she had come into contact with at some point, or if there was something more sinister afoot, she did not know.

But one thing was for certain—the iron willpower that had helped her climb up the ladder of the Yeng Corporation was beginning to rust.

Of course, in comparing her plight to those unfortunate enough to have been unaware of the additives, it was easy for her struggle to seem inconsequential. Rather than becoming so addicted to the substance and growing to fit with an expanded appetite, sometimes to the point of obsession, Fukuda’s paltry thirty pounds was almost beneath notice. Anyone who hadn’t witnessed the slow expansion outwards might have just mistaken it for getting older.

But that did little to comfort her as the slight swell of her stomach jiggled and squished, conceding to her cursory pokes and prods by allowing her to go fingernail deep into a newfound meatiness that wasn’t there before. While Dr. Hinamizawa had never been particularly fit, she had always been thin. Her slender physique had never been a point of pride before, though now she missed the days when her tailored suits didn’t look cheap as they spread across her growing body.

“I suppose that I will have to upgrade my wardrobe sooner rather than later.” She said to herself aloud in her native tongue, “I don’t want to admit defeat, but it is becoming clear that concessions must be made…”

Standing in the mirror, stripped down to her bra and underwear, it was more obvious now than ever that this was getting out of hand. She needed to do something before…

“Before I become like that Piper girl that Helen is so fond of.” She pinched her little belly, reeling with disgust for her body, “I would never want to be that big…”

The mental image of herself at such a size felt like a punch in the stomach. Large, doughy hips propping up an enormous stomach apron that hung and swung low over her knees. Fat arms that jiggled with every step, and a face beset and receding into oncoming chins and cheeks. Wheeling around on one of those silly little carts that the corporation gave to its heavier employees, all while stuffing her face with more and more junk food.

She shuddered at the thought—no one would take her seriously. She wouldn’t be able to take *herself* seriously. Ballooning up into such a parody of the human physique would be unacceptable. Lumbering around the office or her apartment, gasping and wheezing like a fish out of water as she struggled to do basic tasks. Compelled by a simple chemical dependence to stuff her face with doped products day in and day out. It wasn’t something that she could allow to happen to her.

But alas, she knew better than anyone else that there was no permanent cure for her affliction. Only to wait and see what happens to her. To gauge how much of the chemical she had been dosed with, and for how long.

If it were a simple slip—say, getting a dosed entrée by accident while eating in her office—the effects would be temporary. A few months of cravings and some minor headaches to follow, but nothing that she couldn’t handle.

If her worst fears were realized, and someone had been going behind her back to slip small doses throughout the day…

“Worrying will get me nowhere.” She shook her head, long black hair swaying before she tied it back up for the night, “I will simply have to observe—and deal with—the consequences as they come.”

Fukuda slipped into her robe and tied it tight, unable to ignore the definitive squish of her little belly as the robe tie drew over her thickened waist. She frowned at the sensation, exiting her bathroom and returning to the living area of her apartment. The gentle pads of her feet against the hardwood floor as the afternoon light washed over the Daven’s Port horizon.

“If only I could stretch myself out like my shadow.” Fukuda mused aloud, “Then losing weight would be much easier.”

The silence of her ordered, simplistic décor contrasted well with the inner turmoil that she was facing. Her brain was racing, clamoring for another microdose of the chemicals that had found their way into her body. Since she had realized the cause of her weight gain, she had been doing her best to fight these new instincts crawling their way into her psyche. It was the best chance that she had at maintaining some sense of self-control.

It had helped that she hadn’t exactly made it a habit to keep junk food in the house to begin with. Whatever meals were eaten in her apartment, she cooked herself. But in these strange and unfortunate times where she found herself compelled to indulge herself in junk food, she found herself without much of an outlet.

The duck sitting in her fridge held as much sway for her as microwave noodles and boil-in-bag rice when compared to what she *knew* that she was missing out on.

“No.” she commanded herself, once again aloud, as she sat very deliberately in her seat on the hard couch, “I must be strong.”

Closing her eyes, Fukuda attempted some deep breathing exercises. Something, anything, to take her mind off of her cravings now that the hot water wasn’t crashing down on top of her in the shower…

“I… will need to speak with Dr. Schwartz about a way to relieve side effects…”