

Madame **MUSCLE!** Yasogami

[Persona 4; muscular weight gain, stuffing, fatty weight gain]
(Illustration provided by Chet Rippo (@The_Tits_of_Mio on Twitter))

Part I

It's a beautiful, sunny summer day, rolling Japanese hills framed by blue sky and lazy white clouds – all in service of little Inaba, which nestles in the valley below. Three young ladies enjoy the fresh, warm breeze which blows down the narrow town streets while they sit at an old, cracked, and well-loved picnic table just off the sidewalk.

They wait there, just in front of a small food stall in the small-town shopping district, when suddenly, the fourth – a tomboyish, short-haired girl prances gaily, laden with a weighty platter to join them at their table. “Here you go guys!” Chie Satonaka slams a packed plate of variety meat skewers between her friends. “Dig in! I got us the party set!” She places her hands on her hips with pride, green tank flapping around her waist in the gentle wind.

“Chie, you really do like your meat, don't you?” Naoto Shirogane, dressed in a collared button-up shirt and wearing a blue cap over her similarly boyishly-cut hair, delicately lifts a juicy kebab from the top of the intimidating pile. Despite a slowly-shifting fashion sense, the young girl could still be reasonably mistaken for a boy nearly as badly as when she first began to hang out with her more feminine compatriots, if not for her sizable breasts. She slowly spins the stick between her fingers, observing its rich sauce dripping down the well-roasted chunks.

The third girl, Yukiko Amagi, critically eyes the monster pile of glistening meat before finally speaking up. “...Can we even eat all this?” She runs her hand down to her slim tummy, estimating her own capacity through the thin fabric of her top. Compared to the other two girls, Yukiko's pink and navy blouse and her long hair secured by her signature red hairband lend her a certain air of refined, but simple elegance befitting a young woman in a Japanese country town.

“Sure, we can!” Chie instantly replies, mouth widening into a toothy grin. “If you guys don't, I will! More meat is always good for my training!” She rolls up her right sleeve, slapping her left palm against her bicep with a resounding sound.

“Maybe for you, but if we kept eating all this with you, we'd just get fat...” Yukiko says, choosing a skewer from the platter of expansive meaty items with a dreadful look in her eyes.

“Well, that’s not necessarily true.” The last girl, Rise Kujikawa, weighs in. Her figure is thinner and more svelte than anyone in town – and clad in a fun, girly tank top, too simple for what most fans might imagine the off-duty idol would wear. She flips her well-styled hair over her shoulder with her hand, and, being an idol, her locks are beautifully-treated, shining stunningly in the bright sunlight. “It’s all about what you do with those calories.” She gestures between herself and Chie with her hand. “The only difference between our figures is her diet and exercise.”

“Exactly!” Chie throws out a hand, index finger set squarely against Yukiko’s chest. “Meat builds muscle if you work out right!” She rolls up her sleeve, revealing a little bicep set underneath her soft skin.

“Chie, that’s great and all, but I’ve not decided to gain like that yet.” Naoto dismissively waves her stick in Chie’s direction. “Y-yeah...” Yukiko says, a shadow crossing her face as her eyes are downcast. “I think it would be better to watch what I eat.”

“If you say so!” Chie beams, excited at the prospect of more meat for her own greedy stomach. “More meat for me!!!” She energetically nabs double skewers, slapping them onto her plate. With that, everyone bites into their succulently roasted kebabs.

“Actually, now that I think about it, haven’t some of the girls been talking about that at school recently?” Chie mumbles through a hunk of juicy meat. Naoto lowers her skewer. “What?” She asks quizzically. Chie swallows the chunk with a loud gulp. “Bulking.”

“Oh yeah, everyone’s been talking about Kanami’s new shoots which she did for that fashion mag!” Rise confirms with a playful waggle of her kebab.

“That’s right, in Kanami’s newest interview for *Nihon Style*...” Naoto rustles around in her bag noisily, until producing the magazine in question. “...she says ‘I can’t wait to show my sweetheart my new, huge curves, because I know he’ll love them!’” The page crinkles as she turns it. “There’s a whole spread of pictures documenting her new diet and regimen, too.”

“...Really? Boys like that kind of thing?” Yukiko perks up, one hand sneaking two more perfectly blackened, dripping skewers from the communal plate as her other reaches across the table and turns the magazine around. “Wow...” Her eyes widen and her cheeks turn rosy as her eyes glide over the glossy magazine. “She looks totally different from when we met her... She looks amazing...” She says, jaws still working through a tender mouthful of meat.

“Yeah, totally! She used to be thin like me, and then she started bulking like crazy.” Rise laughs happily. “So, are you paying attention to the fashion mags now, too, Naoto??” Rise smiles as she adjusts her focus, leaning towards the girl as she flusters.

“J-just a bit-” Naoto stutters, nervously hiding her hands in her lap while Yukiko continues to chew through the Kanami interview. “I guess I was curious and wanted to ask her

a few questions next time we meet...”

“Ohh~! You should have asked me!” Rise says, grinning even wider. “I could totally take you along for a shoot or something, you know~!” She poses for an invisible camera, gesturing for the girl to join her. “I-I dunno-” Naoto is saved from having to respond to the invitation by a gruff voice bellowing at the girls from just down the street.

“Hey you!!”

The whole group looks over their shoulders, their eyes met by the sight of Hanako and Ms. Kashiwagi jogging briskly their way. The girls immediately jump in their seats at the sight – not because of surprise at seeing the two – but because of a shocking change to their physiology.

The girls were quite familiar with the pair, Hanako being unwaveringly porky, and Kashiwagi invariably voluptuous and matured. The two had long ago formed an odd dynamic duo, Kashiwagi’s age and Hanako’s size complexes uniting the two in their unhappiness. Their nasty narcissism, too, flourishes in one another’s presence. Hanako and Kashiwagi came as a pitiable pair. That physical image – of an aged but reasonably thin woman with her pig of a compatriot – had at some point between the end of school and now been blown away.

“W-what?! Ms. Kashiwagi, you look totally different from when school went out!!” Chie shouts. Kashiwagi stands before the girls and flexes, her arms now rippling with muscle. Beside her, Hanako stretches provocatively, musculature drenched beneath her pudding-like fatty padding.

“Oh? Do I now?” Kashiwagi says, voice dripping with scorn. “What about me looks different to you?” Hanako, too, taunts the girls. “Me too!” She shouts gruffly. “Aren’t you jealous of my sexy body?”

The four friends are all at a complete loss of words.

“By the way, we heard you talking. It must be really hard, suffering the consequences of such an unhealthy lifestyle!” Hanako laughed cruelly, the consequences of *her own* unhealthy lifestyle wobbling vigorously on her body like jello.

“What are you trying to say?!” Chie shouts in righteous indignation, slamming a fist on the table.

“It’s not my fault. If they trained like me, then they could eat as much as they want, like me!” Hanako narcissistically flexes, her muscles violently rippling beneath her cushioning.

“That’s rich...” Rise mumbles, absolutely fuming.

Naoto, cool-headed as always, simply places a hand on Rise’s shoulder as she speaks up. “Is there a reason you came to talk to us, sensei?”

“Oh!” Kashiwagi exclaims, teasingly tapping herself on the noggin. “That’s right. We actually came here to give you a formal announcement about the culture fest beauty pageant this October.”

“Yeah, yeah! You better get started on that or else you won’t even stand a chance!” Hanako smirks, leaning forward with her hands on her hips.

Naoto drops her jaw incredulously. “...You mean there’s going to be another one of those...?” She groans, evidently discomforted.

Kashiwagi snickers raucously. “Oh, as I thought! You didn’t hear! Yes, there’s another pageant! This year the event is even *bigger* and *grander*!” Hanako huffs proudly. “Mhm! This year, the winners can have any boy they want!”

“...What...?” Chie, Yukiko, Rise and Naoto all say in unison, dumbfounded by the pair’s delusional claims.

Ms. Kashiwagi nods aggressively, making a heart shape on her chest with her hands. “That’s right! Because this year we have a theme: ‘Madame Muscle Yasogami!’” The announcement is met only by the excited clapping of Hanako, backing her partner like a trained dog. “Kanamin says that muscle is in with the boys, so that’s the set theme for the year!” Kashiwagi glares at each of the girls daring them to repudiate her. Of course, they knew good and well that there was nothing they could say to convince their teacher to change course.

Hanako sneers, “If you don’t want us to whup your butts this year, you better catch up! You’re way behind!” Kashiwagi waves for Hanako to join her as she begins to jog off. “You have 3 months to get your bodies ready for the competition! Ciao!”

...And the two make off down the street, leaving the gang simultaneously irritated and awestruck. The girls glance amongst themselves, blinking – mixed expressions alighting their faces. Naoto is the first to break the silence. “So... What do you think?”

“Jerks.” Chie growls, beating the table with her fist out of frustration. She angrily chomps down on another chunk of meat – wanting something to take her anger out on in some small way.

“They’re still ugly, inside and out.” Rise sighs, playing with her hair. “Mhm.” Yukiko grumbles, dropping another two empty sticks onto her plate and ferociously biting into two fresh ones. Under the table, her full tummy grumbles, too.

Naoto shakes her head. “Well, yes – but what about that pageant?”

“Oh, that!” Without so much as a thought, Chie jumps to her feet, yelling with righteous anger. “We’ll put em in their place!!”

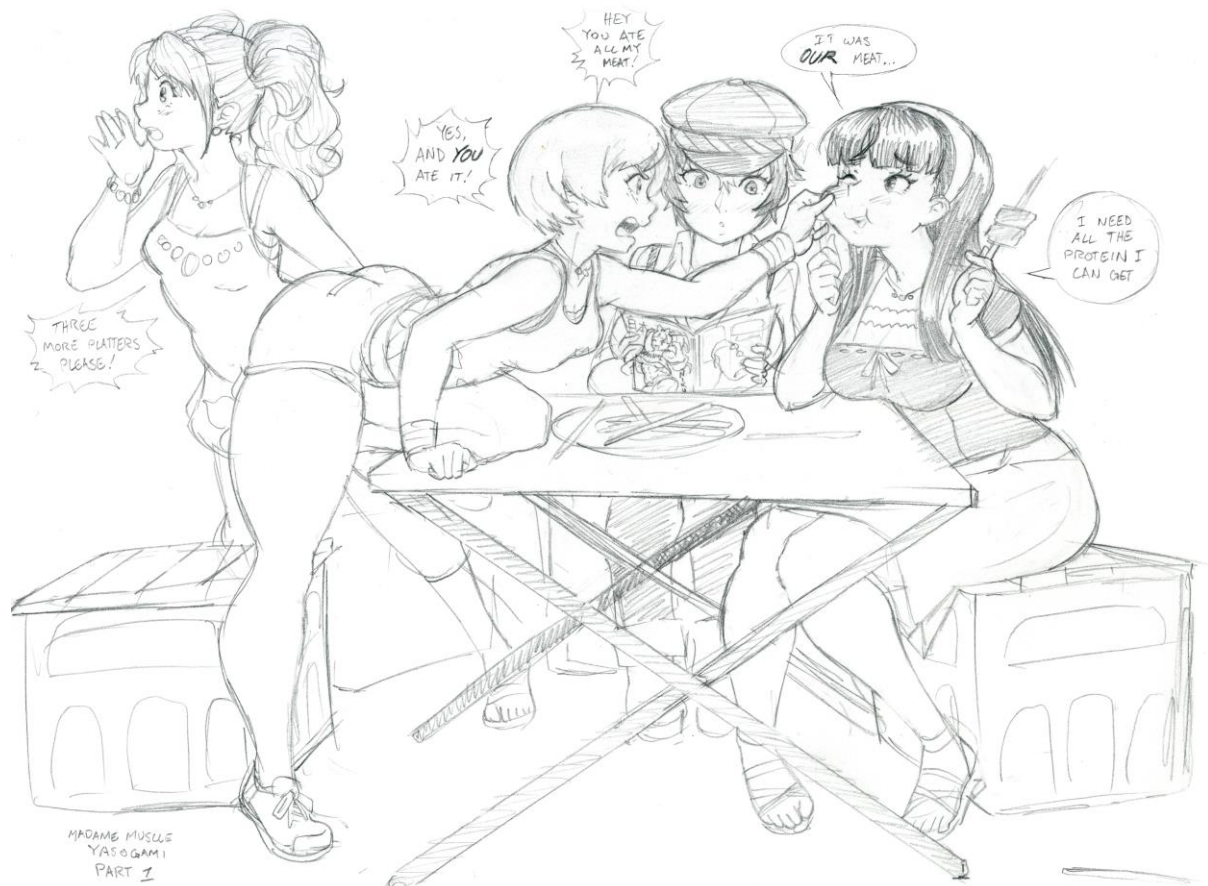
“You mean that you want to enter?” Naoto says, cocking her head.

“Why not?” Chie shrugs. “Muscle is in, isn’t it? And besides that, it could be useful if we have to go into the T.V. again!” She grins, leaning onto the table. Yukiko mulls it over, dropping an empty kebab for a fresh one from the central plate. “...I *have* always wanted to be able to help a little bit more in fights when I’m not busy healing...” Yukiko mumbles in agreement, mouth full of pork. “Mhm! Plus, there are lots of shadows who are either weak to physical attacks, or who you can’t use magic on...” Rise puts a finger on her chin as she thinks. “...and besides that, they’re right – muscle is totally in right now!”

Chie, Rise, and Yukiko are all nodding in agreement, brimming with eagerness and lust for revenge.

“I don’t know...” Naoto says, holding her arm shyly. Rise grins playfully, bumping shoulders with her. “You know Naoto, having some more muscle might have less people treating you like a kid...” Rise teases, tapping her friend on the arm. Naoto clears her throat, cheeks a little pink. “Maybe you’re right. I guess if you guys like the idea, I’m in.”

Across the table, Yukiko speaks up again while she munches on yet another skewer. “But can we even catch up at this point?” She speaks through a mouthful of meat.



“Of course! It’ll be no problem!” Chie responds. “To start... Let’s make sure we get alllll the protein our bodies need-” Chie returns her attention to the meat platter, which she discovers has nothing more than a small pool of juicy scraps remaining. Across from her, each

of Yukiko's hands are full with two kebabs, one of chicken and one of beef – and both have toothy chunks taken out of them. On her plate, there rests easily a dozen barren sticks. Additionally, the rounded bloat of her stomach is clearly visible through the thin fabric of her summer top.

“Hey!” Chie slams her fist on the weathered wooden table as she shouts across it. “You ate all my meat!” She growls unhappily at her friend. “It was *our* meat.” Yukiko mumbles through her full mouth, lips upturned in a half-smile. “Yes, and *you* ate it.” Chie jumps up, practically climbing over the table to pinch and pull Yukiko's cheeks with frustration. “I need all the protein I can get.” Yukiko quotes with stretched lips.

Rise bounds up and away towards the stall, saying, “One sec, I'll get us some more,” as she dashes over to the stall counter. “Three more platters, please!” The owner's eyes widen as he nods, throwing all the prepped meat he has directly onto the grill as he busies himself.

The girls, brimming with excitement and zeal for their new goal, wait with eager anticipation (and hungry bellies) for their food to get off the grill.

Later that afternoon, hours away in the city, a silver-haired young man named Yu Narukami sits at his desk, staring at his phone. He counts the seconds, eyes impatiently flicking to the nearby clock and back – a few dozen seconds turn to a minute, and then a minute into two, and so on...

Just as he begins to think that the call isn't coming after all, the phone vibrates raucously atop the wood. Yu lazily reaches out, flipping the device open as a catchy tune floats out of the tinny in-built speaker. Checking the number on the segmented display, Yu nods. *Sure enough, it's Chie.* Yu thinks to himself, brow furrowing.

Finally, he's received the call he had been expecting. Of course, it's hard to be surprised. Anyone would begin to catch on after receiving the third call, and with Yu as perceptive as he is, he had seen this coming right after the second one came in.

Slowly and deliberately, he presses down the button to accept the call.

“...Hello?” Yu answers tentatively. “H-hey, Yu! How are ya?!” A tomboyish voice crackles over the line. “I'm pretty alright. How are you?” He replies coolly. He spins in his chair as Chie continues. “I'm great!!!” She says. She breathes in, and her voice waivers perceptibly. “A-actually, I called to ask a question.”

“Shoot.” He responds simply.

Chie coughs. “...What do you think of... erm... *bigger* girls?” She says. “Like, with muscles?” She says, but then deflects. “Do you think boys generally like that kind of stuff?” Yu can hear her sigh through the noisy phone connection.

“Funny you say that...” Yu starts. “I was actually asked something similar just a little

while ago.” There’s a short silence as Chie absorbs this new revelation. “Y-you did?!” Chie says with amazement. The mic picks up some rustling as Chie jumps slightly in her seat.

“Mhm.” He humms affirmatively.

“Well, to answer your question, I’d definitely say I like them.” *After all, who wouldn’t be attracted to a woman with such outstanding features? Beefier arms and legs will only accentuate a woman’s curves... Plus, nothing quite beats a nice, bumpy tummy...* Yu thinks as his eyes glide over the signed copy of *Nihon Style* on the corner of his desk. On the cover page there’s a finely written note which says “I can’t wait to see you again!” plus a little heart.

“Why do you ask?” He questions, pushing for some clue as to what’s suddenly gotten into everyone. “N-no reason!!!” Chie balks. “I-I just was curious. Kanami’s recent magazine said that most boys liked that, so I was just doing a little survey!” Chie manages to spit out a half-truth, praying that it’s enough for him.

“...Oh?” Yu says, eyes widening. “A survey?!” *That’s a new one*, he thinks to himself. “...Y-yeah! A survey!” She stammers. “Anyways, gotta go!!! I’ve gotta call some more dudes! Bye!”

Suddenly the line goes dead, leaving Yu all alone with his thoughts.

What’s gotten into all of them... Yu wonders. *It’s strange that they all called me at once...* He ponders over it for a moment before shrugging it off with a shake of his head. *Whatever. I can’t worry about that right now, I have to get my homework done, or else I won’t be able to go visit them before summer closes...* Yu resolves himself, setting his phone aside as he digs into the nearby school bag.

Part II

Going forward, the girls follow a rigorous exercise and dieting routine, informed largely by Chie’s existing knowledge of the subject. Initially, Yukiko, Naoto, and Rise all struggle to keep up with Chie’s vigor – but with daily practice, in no time at all, everyone begins competing with one another to put in the most reps, distance, and calories.

Every day is a different variety of exercise, switching between running, biking, lifting, and sometimes even soccer or basketball. One day, to celebrate weeks of hard work, the girls decide to spend a day training at the beach – and so – here they are.

The noonday sun shines down on the small group, all standing in the sand with their flip-flops and a light layer over their swimwear.

“Damn, Naoto! This is awesome!” Chie excitedly patters her feet in the sand, eyes dancing from one end of the wide, empty beach to the other. “There really isn’t a single person in sight!” Yukiko nods happily beside her. “Thanks for showing us this beach!” She says,

twisting her bare feet into the warm, sun-baked sand. “It’s no problem.” Naoto replies, running her hand through her hair bashfully. “Truthfully, I’ve always wanted to bring some friends here – so thank you all for coming.” Rise grapples onto Naoto’s shoulders, smiling infectiously. “Of course! This is gonna be a blast!”

“Anyways...” Naoto says, hefting a massive picnic basket up, cradling it in the crook of her tough arm. “...how about we set up our stuff and get into the water?”

“Yeah!!” The others cry in unison.

Naoto drops the basket in a splash of pure white turf, and the girls swiftly unpack. In no time at all, they’ve made their own little spot in paradise, replete with towels, chairs, and even a huge umbrella.

“Hurry up and strip, guys. I wanna get in the water!” Rise calls, pulling her blouse over her head. As the fabric clears the crest of boobs, they bounce perkily into the open air. Tugging it even further up, the fabric of her sleeves cling to her arms, the high swells of her impressive, budding biceps catching inside the narrow openings. Her crowning abs flex subtly as she bends to throw the shirt off and into her bag. She tugs her bottoms off and they’re caught against the swelling curves of her hips and legs on the way down, grown as they were by the weeks of workouts. Finally, she’s left in nothing but her flowery bikini, which clings onto her hips and breasts, which themselves are gently propped up by her moderately increased pectoral mass.

Next to her, Chie and Yukiko both make to do the same – pulling tops and bottoms off to reveal swimwear below – with varying levels of difficulty along the way.

Chie tugs at her crop-top for a moment, but quickly resorts instead to slowly rolling the over-tight shirt over her hard, bumpy stomach and appreciable chest. Next come her shorts, which are even tougher to get off – given that they’re practically painted on due to the massive dividends from Chie’s preference for leg training combined with her considerable lead on the group. Eventually, though, she manages to kick the things off of her muscle-knotted calves with some vigor, leaving her in just her boyish trunks and a striped bikini top.

Yukiko’s black blouse conceals much of her shape very well, so as she tugs it up and off, it reveals a gently hilly topography which had been entirely hidden beneath. The rising hem of her blouse slides over the light bumps of muscle on her abdomen, each one softened together into a single curve by a thin and pliable layer of fat. Her belly curves gently outward into the open air and her boobs (which have been subtly expanded by her eating habits), supported by a white bikini top, rest on the upper surface of her tummy. Her hips, too, are showing with the beginnings of a love handle. Below all this, her soft butt hangs beneath her pure white, frilly bottom.

Naoto nervously glances around as the other three girls undress, evidently a little

hesitant to do the same. Instead, she stands there with reddened cheeks, hugging her arms against her generous chest, though eventually Rise looks over, noticing her embarrassment.

“Come on Naoto, you can’t get into the water until you get out of your clothes!” Rise says, approaching the girl with fingers stretching threateningly towards her top layer of clothes. “A-Actually, I was thinking I might want to sit here and read for a little while. I was re-reading Sherlock recently and…” Naoto stutters, but is silenced as her arms are seized from either side by Chie and Yukiko. “Nope, strip!!” The girls cheer all together, rapidly yanking her arms and her blouse towards the sun.

Naoto’s outfit is ripped clean from her body and discarded nonchalantly, leaving her standing there in nothing but a navy blue one piece – essentially a school swimsuit sans name patch.

Everyone had known that Naoto had become enthused by the regimen, but with her arms and legs uncovered fully like that, everyone can see the evidence of that fact. Naoto stands there, cheeks burning bright red as she hugs her chest again – her sizable boobs pressed up and around her bulging biceps and defined forearm muscles by the growing pectoral muscles beneath. With the dark color hiding her stomach somewhat, the sheen of the fabric is the only thing betraying her growing starter of a six pack where it bulges into the material. Further down, her legs are also swollen with new muscles.

“See, you look great, Naoto!” Rise says, rubbing a finger along Naoto’s gently bumped stomach. Naoto recoils and blushes, but nods in acknowledgement of the complement.

“Ok everyone, are you ready?!” Rise shouts, throwing a fist up in the air. “Yeah!” Chie joins her, jumping in place with a sandy splash. Naoto gently smiles and nods, straightening up again. “Woohooo!!” Yukiko cheers, her body jiggling along with the excited motions of her hands.

“Let’s go!!!!”

The whole group ditches their remaining things in the sand, running at full tilt towards the waiting water. Where the land meets the foam, the girls all jump together, splashing down into the salty water.

When they resurface the girls immediately begin splashing one another, the warm sea water making their developing biceps glisten in the strong sunlight. Water runs in rivulets from head to foot, points of light shining at the peak of every meaty lump of a muscle, and deep shadows cast in each valley. Even Naoto (who’s suit previously obscured her tummy near completely) glows where the peaks of her growing six-pack reflects the sunlight thanks to the wet cloth sticking to her skin.

With everyone is satisfactorily wet, Chie jumps up to her feet in the calf-high water.

“Ok! Let’s play a game!!!” She shouts. “How about we race to that buoy?!” She points her index finger to one which bobs a couple hundred yards out into the sea. “First one there gets first dibs at the barbeque later!” Looking to it and then back to Chie, everyone nods, pumping their fists.

“Ok! Three, two, one-” Chie starts, but is interrupted as Rise, Yukiko, and Naoto begin the race on a false start. Panicking, she dives into the surface of the water too, kicking after the plumes of spray ahead of her.

Their pace through the cool water is blistering. Their powerful legs contract and relax, pushing water rearwards with incredible force as the girls glide like torpedoes through the pure blue water. In the back, Chie is buffeted in the wake of her three friends, but eventually, muscles burning with exertion, manages to catch up.

The group enters the final twenty-five yards just about neck and neck, everyone straining to pull ahead. Biceps, triceps and glutes all burn with tiredness, bulging as they piston their arms and legs in and out of the water. Yukiko’s tummy rolls as her torso undulates in a butterfly kick – Rise’s chiseled forearms cut through the water – Chie’s muscled calves swell with each push – Naoto’s neck knots with her exertion...

...And all as one the quintet arrives, diving out of the water and slapping their hands on top of one another against the side of the large buoy with near-perfect synchronization. Surf splashes up alongside their arms, obscuring everything for a fraction of a heartbeat – everyone left blinking as they watch in united anticipation.

Each girl removes her hand one by one, until, right at the bottom of the pile, only Rise’s hand remains.

“I did it!! Yay!” Rise nearly springs entirely out of the water for joy, everyone else clapping excitedly along with her. “Nice one, Rise!” Naoto says as she adjusts the top straps of her swimsuit where they had lifted thanks to strong hydrodynamic pressure. “Ooh, you’re amazing at swimming, Rise!” Chie shakes her head, droplets of water flying out of her hair in every direction. “Yeah, you’re crazy fast! Too bad, I was looking forward to having my choice of barbeque...” Yukiko sighs and rubs her stomach.

“Thanks guys!” She beams, bobbing in the water along with everyone else. “I guess doing so many beachside photoshoots has finally come in handy somehow!” Rise throws a peace sign and grins, glowing with confidence.

“Actually, how has that been going?” Yukiko asks. “Your modelling?” Rise smiles, running a hand through her hair and then down along her physique. “Pretty well! Actually, my manager was excited about the new marketing angle I suggested, so-”

“Heeeey girls!” A familiar voice calls out across the waves, interrupting them. The

whole group looks over their shoulders back to the sandy beach in apprehension, and sure enough, standing there on the fine white sand is Kashiwagi and her favorite student, Hanako – yelling at them from over a football field’s length away.

“How goes the training? I see you still have some catching up to do~!” Ms. Kashiwagi stretches her well-defined legs in a squat, Hanako doing the same. The two have continued their impressive gains, not allowing their lead to slip in the slightest.

For Kashiwagi’s part, the muscles in her arms and legs have become even more pronounced – only exaggerated by the sports bra which she elected to wear for her little excursion to the beach. Lower body clad in nothing but mini shorts, the full extent of her new leg musculature can be appreciated even from the small distance out into the water that the gang views her from. All around her arms and legs must have expanded by a few full centimeters – and her round, bulging abs, too, were obviously larger.

Similarly, Hanako is more imposing than ever. Evidently not adjusting her diet, her body continued to put on both muscle and fat in equal measure, leaving her with an overall hefty visage. In particular, her tree-trunk legs are attention-grabbing – packed with meat and muscle, they’re as wide around as your average girl’s waist. Her stomach still looks soft and flabby, but is brimming with hidden strength.

Rise groans, tossing her head back in frustration. “How did they find us? Did they stalk us here?” Naoto leans into the group and whispers as she bobs with the waves. “I thought I saw them as we were waiting at the station platform, but I hadn’t imagined they were there because we were. I guess they trailed us so they could scout out our routine.” Naoto says, squinting to try and get a better look at the duo as she continues. “Even after watching us, maybe they’re still confident with their month lead on us.” Yukiko self-consciously squeezes her comparatively slender arms while, saying, “I suppose I would be too...”

“Hey! Stop whispering over there!” Hanako’s shout grabs their attention again. The wide-set girl is stamping the ground in frustration – impatient as always.

“Thanks for the concern, but we’re doing alright.” Naoto calls back with a polite response. “We’ll catch up with you in no time, just watch!” Chie shouts, throwing her fist up in a splash of water.

“Well, good luck, girls! You’re going to need it, since we’re gonna be busy going on a loooooong summer training camp!” The two motion crudely at the girls, Hanako sticking her tongue out. “Pea~ce!”

The four squint silently as Hanako and Kashiwagi run off, muscles visibly gleaming in the hot sun – even from so far away.

“...can we really catch up?” Yukiko says, turning to Chie with a downcast look on her

face. “M-Maybe?” Chie responds, running her fingers through the short hair on her head with apprehension. “I dunno,” Rise says, “we’re making good progress, but right now we’re looking a lot more like gymnasts than body builders...” She lifts herself out of the water with the help of the buoy, demonstrating by pressing and rubbing the budding muscles on her belly.

There’s another long moment of silence as the group drifts in the water, a passing cloud momentarily sapping the warmth from the waves.

“I have an idea!” Chie says with a silly grin on her face. “Why don’t we ask Teddie? He’s an expert at ‘body building’, isn’t he?! Haha...” Chie says, abashedly rubbing the back of her neck.

“Not a bad idea...” Rise says, mulling it over. “...Good point.” Yukiko says, rubbing her chin. “He could actually know something.”

“...What? Did I accidentally throw out a good idea?!” Chie says. “I was totally just joking about that...” She stops and thinks about it for second. “Yeah, he totally could have some good advice for us.”

Naoto, evidently not in the loop, furrows her brows as she hears the conversation.

“...What do you guys mean? Teddie doesn’t look like a body builder...?” Naoto glances around in confusion. “Ah, that’s right. You didn’t hear about that, did you?” Chie says. Rise lets go of the buoy, gently pushing off towards the coast, saying, “Ok, let’s get back out of the water and we’ll explain it to you over some barbeque!” Chie, too, pushes off with energy. “Yeah, B.B.Q!” She shouts, starting off towards the shoreline with the speed of a torpedo, everyone else trailing closely behind.