

Patient Advocacy

Emilia's headaches had been getting worse. She'd done all the usual things - making sure she was hydrated, making sure she wasn't congested or vitamin-deficient, and so on. It hadn't done any good, and the effects of headache medicine were limited. On top of that, she'd started feeling fatigued and was occasionally having difficulties coordinating her movements. This seemed serious, so she insisted on her boyfriend Clem driving her to the hospital. He grumbled, opining that she was making a big fuss over nothing and maybe she should "try drinking less and sleeping more," but agreed.

They arrived at the hospital relatively early in the day, with only one other person in the waiting room. "Good, we should get seen quickly," Clem said. "Maybe when a doctor tells you you're making too big a deal out of this, you'll stop being so goddamn silly." He then flopped irritably into a chair.

Indeed, it wasn't too long before a nurse poked her head out calling "Emilia Dunn? Dr. Thalia will see you now." Emilia and Clem got up and followed the nurse to the examination room where Dr. Thalia was waiting.

Dr. Thalia was a Mewtwo with red as her primary fur color and pink as her secondary. She frowned at Clem before looking kindly at Emilia. "Good morning, Miss Dunn. You mentioned persistent headaches and coordination issues?"

"Yes, I-" Emilia began, before being interrupted by Clem.

"We're here so you can straighten this dumb hypochondriac out," he said. "It's just frigging headaches and she's making way too big a deal out of it. Maybe if she slept instead of drinking, she wouldn't be acting out like this."

"I don't dri-" Emilia tried to say, but Clem cut her off again. Oblivious to the glower Dr. Thalia was giving him, or the glow building in her eyes.

"Bullshit! You're stumbling around like an idiot and complaining of headaches, there's no way you're not drinking! I haven't found where you're stashing the-"

There was a pulse of light from Dr. Thalia's eyes, and whatever Clem was going to say next died on his lips. He mouthed as if trying to speak, but no sounds came out; as he looked around in confusion, Dr. Thalia turned to Emilia.

"W-what did you do?" Emilia asked, somewhat nervous.

"I temporarily erased his knowledge of how to speak. I have no patience for people who talk over my patients and dismiss their symptoms. You may speak freely."

Emilia gulped, then continued. "I've been having worsening headaches for the past few months. I've tried decongestants and mucus relief, I've been making sure to hydrate, I've been keeping up on my vitamins... but it hasn't been cutting it. I've tried headache relief and various pain relievers, but they haven't done much either. And lately it's been starting to affect my coordination, I think."

Dr. Thalia nodded. "Have you been urinating and defecating normally?"

"Yes, that's been fine at least."

"Alright. So, that pretty much rules out water getting wrongly trapped in your cells and system and causing hyponatremia. Hmm. We could do an MRI, or if you're comfortable with it I could perform a psionic medical scan. I believe this will provide a more comprehensive analysis all at once, and allow me to provide immediate treatment, but I understand if you're not comfortable with power-dependent methods. Or with psionic abilities, given what I've shown I can do."

Emilia paced a bit, stumbling once or twice as she mulled it over. "I admit, I'm a little scared. But I'm a lot more scared of not fixing this. If you think this will help me, do it."

"Alright, I'll just need your signature here and then for you to get on the table," Dr. Thalia said as she held out a consent form for psionic scan and treatment, along with a pen. Emilia gave the form a quick read and signed it with a shaking hand before lying down on the exam table, and the Mewtwo wasted no further time. She held her tri-fingered hands at either side of Emilia's head, her bulbous fingertips glowing with power along with her eyes. She had trained rigorously to use her psychic abilities to see inside others' bodies and even magnify the image, allowing an in-depth analysis that would otherwise require multiple machines and more time, especially in the case of detecting or identifying pathogens. And pathogens there were: she could detect foreign cells that had lodged themselves in the fat of Emilia's brain, causing it to gradually swell and start to press against her skull. Immune response, while limited, had made this worse.

"You have a brain infection," Thalia told Emilia. "This would conventionally require carefully-managed antibiotic or antiviral treatment, and subsequent care to mitigate the damage. But as you have consented to psionic treatment, I am able to take a more direct approach."

Dr. Thalia's eyes glowed brighter as she carefully concentrated on the foreign cells, psychically locking on to every last one. And then she teleported them out, transferring them to a Petri dish for analysis. But she wasn't done yet: removing the cells would prevent further harm but not reverse the swelling of the brain or any other damage, so the Mewtwo would have to take care of that herself. She began shrinking swollen cells back to a normal size and carefully drawing them back closer together from gaps caused by the foreign cell growth, while applying Heal Pulse to mend the impacted nerve connections and conductive layers while burning out any lingering toxins.

Due to her brain being worked on directly, Emilia began to feel fuzzy-headed temporarily. But as the minutes passed by, she could also feel the persistent pain dwindle more and more before finally dying off altogether. As Dr. Thalia finished up and conducted a followup scan to make sure everything was back as it should be, her head began to clear.

"How are you feeling?" Dr. Thalia asked.

"Much better," Emilia said, taking a deep breath. "Thank you."

"You're welcome. The infection had caused your brain to swell to the point that it was being squeezed against your skull. The fatigue was due to it starting to interfere with blood flow and thus oxygen reception, and the coordination issues were due to it interfering with nerve connections. It's good that you came in when you did – you were starting to approach the point where it would have herniated and then started squeezing out of your skull seams. I was able to remove the foreign cells, shrink the swollen areas, and reverse the damage to your nerves and the conductive layers. I'll want you

to come in for a followup to make sure your recovery is sticking, and also to see if we can identify how you were exposed, but you should be good to go."

"Thank you again," Emilia said as she climbed off the exam table, more sure-footed than she'd been in at least a week. "So, I was definitely right to be worried."

"Yes, you were," Dr. Thalia replied as she gave Emilia's hand a reassuring squeeze. After completing the write-up for the appointment and giving Emilia a copy, she asked "Did you drive yourself here despite your condition, or did your boyfriend drive you."

"He drove me here. Not sure I want to ride home with him now, but.."

"I can spot you taxi fare if you want, or even provide a more direct method. I want to make sure you get home safely."

"I appreciate it. I.. I think I'll take that latter option. I've always been curious."

"Alright. I'll see you out in the waiting room."

As Emilia left the exam room, Dr. Thalia turned back to Clem; he had been lurking in the corner looking furtively at her. "I could do so much worse to you than temporarily erasing your ability to talk. I could blank your whole mind. I could make you feel every bit of the agony your girlfriend felt, the agony that you were so callously dismissive of. I could scramble your motor coordination to make you endure what she was going through. And it would be easy."

She glared, watching him attempt to shrink in on himself. "But I'm not going to. I think you have learned your lesson, at least for now, and besides that I don't want to put a damper on Emilia's recovery by unnerving her with further displays of psychic wrath." Her eyes pulsed one more time. "Your speech is restored. Now, run along before I change my mind."

Clem shuffled out, waving sheepishly to Emilia as he passed her in the meeting room. "S-sorry for doubting you," he said. "And, um, see you later I guess."

Dr. Thalia then emerged, approaching Emilia. "Alright. Are you okay with me reading your mind to get a fix on your address? I promise I won't read anything else."

Emilia nodded. "I am. I trust you."

"Alright. If you can focus on it, that would be helpful." The red Mewtwo peeked into her mind – very briefly, just long enough to get a clear image of where Emilia lived. She then concentrated, and in a flash they were standing on Emilia's porch. "Ta da."

Emilia shook her head a bit, disoriented momentarily from the teleport. But sure enough, she was right back home. She hugged Dr. Thalia in gratitude, then stepped back blushing. "Sorry if that was out of line."

"It's alright," Dr. Thalia assured her. "I totally understand. Call me if any of your symptoms recur, or if anything else crops up. And do try to take it easy for the time being." After seeing Emilia safely inside, she teleported back to the hospital. Another job well done.