

Malinda's Experiment – Day 3

Ears ringing, disoriented and his back aching, Jake slowly rose to a cacophony of panicked calls from his sister.

“Jake! Jake... Jake?” He heard. Waving his hand, he tried to back his sister off as his held felt much like he imagined his early college mornings would after sneaking some liquor back to the dorm room.

“Sis, geeze, back off, I'm fine!” He said, still coming to. He felt as if he had woken from just the craziest dream, and the fact his sister was calling out to him did not speed up the process of him realizing exactly where he was.

Malinda kneeled down over the stool and was finally able to catch her breath as Jake appeared to have woken and was not showing signs of immediate long-term injury.

Jake rolled to his stomach to start getting up, but stopped when he realized he was not reaching off the side of a bed. Blinking a few times, the worn cracks of the well-used stool came into focus. Surprised, he turned around to see the looming face of his concerned sister. He confirmed immediately he had not been dreaming.

“Oh, no, this nightmare isn't over!” Jake shouted, as he stood up and began staggering backwards. He took a few steps towards the edge of the stool before he was enveloped in his sister's hand.

“Jake, you need to be careful! We don't know the full effects of what's happened, and if you keep going on like this, we may just find them out while having no way to fix it!” Malinda was stern, but coming from a place of worry.

She lifted him up to the desk, and placed him down, sitting on the stool. She gave him more of a lecture on the needs for being safe, all while Jake was letting the sounds wash over him as he struggled to truly grasp the situation he found himself in. Even in the presence of his sister, he felt utterly alone, exposed and afraid.

“Jake!” Malinda called out, bringing him back to attention. “Look, I will finish up here, we can get some dinner and tomorrow we will spend the time catching up. I know all of this happened so fast, but it's been a while and we should catch up. The lab won't even be open for a few more days, so there isn't much more I can do now as it is.”

Jake nodded, and spent the rest of the evening answering with quick “Yes” or “No” responses while almost entirely unable to engage. The night passed without much incident, but a stoic Jake had Malinda far more worried than a playful if not careless one.

The next day, Malinda came back into the room to find Jake still in bed.

“Wake up Jake!” It’s almost noon and I want to hang out with my little brother.

Jake rolled over and glared up. Even at his size Malinda could tell that word choice was not received well.

“Look, you are going to be my little brother no matter how big you are. And today, I want to spend it with just the two of us, catching up and talking about your big jump into college!” Malinda said, making every effort to normalize their visit.

Jake rolled back onto his side clearly uninspired by his sister’s jovial attitude. It wasn’t until a glow appeared behind him that he relented his poutiness and turned around.

“It’s your favorite movie! I just downloaded it.” Malinda beamed with excitement, showing Jake a billboard size tablet with the cover image from his favorite action film.

“Ok Sis, you win. I’ll get up. I’m starving anyway.” Jake said, getting up from the makeshift bed, and motioning to be picked up.

Wrapping him in a freshly laundered hand towel, Jake and Malinda made their way out to the sitting area where a spread of some of his favorite foods were available.

“Woah, is that what I think it is?” Jake asked.

“Chinese food. Pizza. Chicken. All the good stuff that mom almost never got. You can have as much as you want... it’s also why I made sure you had a fresh towel for your hands.” Malinda jokes, tugging on the terrycloth towel.

She sat him down, and for the first time since he was dancing around in her goggles, Jake seemed normal. They chatted back and forth about his plans for his first few days in college. She offered some advice about some of the professors to avoid while letting him know the better places around campus to get food. They went back and forth for hours as the food began to get cold but the mood had only warmed up.

The sun quickly started to dip below the horizon and the street light filled the room. Malinda headed over to get some snacks for the movie while Jake, outside of his bathroom visits, was alone for the first time with nothing to do. He wasn’t thinking about his predicament though, he just watched as his sister moved back and forth through the kitchen. The yellow light from the microwave and the sound of kernels popping really got him in the mood to watch a movie.

“Are you ready for this?” Malinda said, holding up an illuminated tablet and bowl of popcorn.

“Hell yes!” Jake replied, already excited for the action flick he’s seen dozens of times.

Malinda got everything settled in front of the tablet so that they could be comfortable and still close enough to talk.



The movie went on but neither of them really paid attention. The day really helped them both find comfort with everything that happened, and while surely some progress on the research would have been beneficial, making sure her brother could handle the coming challenges mentally was surely a better use of the time.

As the movie waned, Jake's eyes got heavier and heavier. Malinda's mind was still racing with all the work she would need to do, but she offered Jake one more assurance.

"My friend is coming over tomorrow, and she has some clothes that should fit you. With any luck it will be another step back to feeling like normal." She said, watching as he finally dozed off.



"I promise we will make this right Jake." She whispered as she tucked her little brother in.