

## Chapter 4 – Malinda's Experiment

Alone time in a safe space with those you care about is enough to make any situation seem less dire. Jake and Malinda both felt a feeling of closeness that they had never felt before. There comes a bond that forges during strife. Being shrunk to mere inches due to your own mischief and left in the care of your sister surely counts as such.

Jake rolled over, and as his eyes began to focus, he could hear the faint sounds of something cooking on the stove. Malinda was up making breakfast. Being in the middle of the couch, there wasn't much he could get into, or rather, he learned his lesson that it's best to wait and have his sister aware of anything he would get into.

From outside of his view, he heard footsteps approaching.

"Good night's sleep?" Malinda asked, looking down at her brother.

Jake smiled up as his sister still prepared two plates. Their day of bonding reminded them that this situation is temporary. At least, that was the hope. For now, focusing on the time together and what they could control was important.

As she lowered the plate, he saw something tucked in her hand.

Malinda, putting the plates down, handed over what appeared to be a small outfit.

"Claire left these outside the door this morning! I had asked her the other day and she ran home to see if her little brother still had some of his action figures. And well, this may just work." Malinda said, happily showing off the super hero costume from a popular hero.

Jake lifted the fabric. It felt stiff, clearly not meant for a person to wear, but like someone who missed lunch, the longer you go without, the more open to options you become.

Breakfast passed with the usual banter. The outfit was snug at first, but some stretching and pulling, the outfit provided enough give to not feel tight. Malinda cleared the dishes as Jake made comfortable in the outfit as a knock came on the door.

"Hey, it's Claire! Are you guys up yet?" she could be heard on the other side of the door.

Malinda made her way over and as the door broke open, Claire burst in, excited.

Jake stared up in awe. Claire and Malinda had been friends for years, well before college. They regularly hung out and Claire even joined on family trips. While Jake had never admitted it out loud, Claire was his first crush. From summers at the pool and sleep overs, anytime he was near her the fluttering in his stomach would take over for a moment before he could calm down. She had only gotten prettier as she matured.

Waving from the table, he saw the two girls approach mid conversation. She looked amazing. Her hair catching the morning sunlight as she came in. Jake was incredibly thankful that he had recently donned this outfit. As silly as it was, it wouldn't allow his body to betray his 'secret.'

Controlling his own breathing, the realization these two were still talking to one another, looming over the table reminded him instantly about his predicament.

“... I'll be right back, why don't you and Jake catch up?” Jake heard the trailing of Malinda's comment as she turned to walk away.

“Wow, it fits amazing!” Claire boomed. She was looking directly at Jake with a wonderment one would expect when seeing fireworks. She lowered herself quickly to get level with Jake, only to send him backwards onto his rear.

“Sorry!” Claire said, her face turning to concern. “Mal told me to be careful, and yet here you are, fitting in that little costume. It's adorable!” She continued.

Jake stood up. Before him was the prettiest girl from his childhood, and him finally a 'man.' Standing up, and mock dusting himself off, Jake took on the confident approach of someone wearing a superhero costume.



“It fits great!” Jake projected up to the curious blonde. “Look!” Jake said, showing how he filled out the costume.

“Well look at you! Cute as you've ever been, and now so strong!” Claire teased.

Malinda returned with a drink for Claire, seeing her crouched at the table. “Hey now, he's my brother, not a toy.”

Claire wasn't involved with the project, but being close to Malinda had heard and listened to her updates on the project. It has seemed a bit 'sci-fi' to her, and while encouraging over the years never thought she would see the actual fruits of the labor. Jake standing there in a super hero costume was simply astounding.

Malinda continued around the room and motioned to the couch. Claire, looking down at Jake, was frozen in place.

“He won’t break.” Malinda said. Jake offered encouragement as well, and Claire cautiously picked up Jake, unsure how such a small person would feel.

“Wow, he doesn’t feel like the small action figures.” Claire thought out loud as she carried him over to the sofa. Jake didn’t hear her comment, but quickly lost focus in the pleasant scent of her hands wrapping around him. A bit tighter than he had expected.

“Easy! She said I won’t break, not that I cannot!” Jake joked.

Claire loosened her grasp on him and sat him down between the two girls on the couch. Jake was offered another imposing view of the sitting ladies as he heard their conversation begin above.

As a kid, whenever they would watch movies or spend time in the car together, Jake would love chances to sit next to Claire. Not that he ever had the courage to act on his affection, but he would relish that closeness that comes from being next to someone you desire. His heart rate increasing as the conversation continued overhead. He watched as her lips moved, forming words he paid no attention to. Her graceful form impossibly big before him only accentuated everything he had loved about her growing up. Holding himself in this moment was intoxicating.

He wasn’t sure how long the conversation had gone on above him when he heard, “... There should be a way to reverse everything...” Snapping Jake out of his stupor.

“Wai...” Jake barely got started on his question as he was thrown back into the couch.





Claire was adjusting on the couch as the conversation was clearly progressing to something she was also interested in, and in the moment, forgot about the very subject of the conversation sitting next to them.

Being small has unseen consequences that can be minor or dire. Jake was offered a face full of reminder as his crush nearly became too literal to stand.

The conversation halted immediately and Claire looked down at the stunned Jake, apologies spilling out of his mouth.

Jake shook it off as best he could, keeping the 'cool' he hoped had not been shattered by the mishap.

"Come here, you should hear this somewhere safe from my careless feet!" Claire said, slightly giggling and pulling Jake into her lap. More comfortable holding him now, Jake smiled up at her as she inspected his position in her lap. Both seem pleased with the current arrangement and, for the remainder of the morning Jake looked at what happened to him as a blessing. Without it, he may never have had the chance to be so close to Claire and he resolved to make good on his childhood wishes when he was restored to his current height. That affirmation had him realize he had not listened to a word that came out of Malinda's mouth and again he was side tracked on inner monologue.

"Mal, sorry! Can you repeat that?" Jake asked.

"Oh Jake... don't worry. Tomorrow it will all make sense." Malinda said.

Jake, not worried too much about the details, continued to enjoy the predicament as best he could. Sitting in the lap of his long-held crush while his sister sounded enthusiastic about a fix for all of this really couldn't be topped, and for now, the day dreams of being with Claire filled his mind.

