

Pieces of the Puzzle

Liz

Liz had about a minute and twenty five seconds left on her phone's timer. She tapped her foot on the bathroom floor as she waited for her pregnancy test results. She and Jack had been trying for a baby ever since their wedding two years ago, but they kept getting let down.

When her mom passed away 5 years ago, Liz went through a really tough time. It certainly didn't help that her brother had stopped talking to her.

Finally, the timer went off and rang loudly in her ears. Liz took a deep breath, preparing for the worst. She stood up, walked to the counter, and picked up the pregnancy test with shaky hands. She gasped at the plus sign she saw and dropped the test. Liz ran out of the bathroom into the bedroom, screaming for Jack.

"Jack!" she yelled. "Jack, come here!"

"What's wrong? Are you okay?" Jack asked as he jumped off the bed, looking concerned.

With the biggest smile on Liz's face, she screamed "I'm pregnant!"

His face lit up as Liz ran into his arms.

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"Liz, is something on your mind?" Jack asked as he sprawled out on the couch. Jack always knew when Liz was feeling sad, which is one of the reasons Liz loved him so much.

For the past few nights, Liz had been thinking a lot about her brother, Rob. She knew that she should tell him about the pregnancy, but she was scared to reach out to him. Things ended really badly between them last time they talked. Rob felt that Liz wasn't there for their mom

when she was sick. Liz was in denial that her mom was that sick, and Rob was probably right about her not being there. She just didn't want to accept the fact that her mom that she loved so much was dying.

Liz sighed. "Do you think I should reach out to Rob?"

Jack raised his eyebrows and thought for a second.

"If that's what you want to do, then I think you should do it," replied Jack.

Ever since the funeral, Liz had been feeling as though a piece of herself was missing. It felt like when you're almost finished with a puzzle but you can't find the last piece. That feeling is what helped her make this decision.

It was final, Liz decided. She was going to write a letter

Rob

Rob was feeling really excited for May. He couldn't wait to marry his fiancée, Amelia. As he sat on the couch watching TV, he heard something slide through the mail slot. He peered over and saw an envelope with neat handwriting.

"I wonder what that is," thought Rob as he walked up to grab the letter. He was shocked to see that it was from his sister, Liz. Rob ripped open the letter and began to read it.

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"Amelia," Rob expressed, "I don't think I'm going to respond to Liz."

"Why not?" she asked, looking confused. "I thought all you wanted was for her to reach out."

"I just can't get over everything she did, or didn't do, when our mom was sick. And she still didn't even apologize."

Rob was still pissed at Liz. He couldn't get over how she wasn't there for him and their mother when she was dying. Rob was the one who stayed at home giving their mom sponge baths while Liz was out partying with Jack. Maybe Rob was just stuck in the past, but this was all that came to mind when he thought of Liz.

“But don't you want to become close with the baby? You would make a great uncle.”

“No, I'm done with Liz and Jack, even if I am having a nephew or niece.”

Liz

It had been nine months since Liz found out she was pregnant, which meant the baby was due any day now. They had found out it was a girl, but they didn't know what to name her yet. Although, Liz did have a few ideas.

As Liz was cutting up an apple for breakfast, she was thinking about the letter she sent to Rob. In it, she told Rob about the baby and asked to make up for the sake of the baby. But since Liz hadn't heard back from Rob in 9 months, she assumed that he didn't want to do that. All Liz wanted was for Rob to be an uncle to her daughter, but that must have just been wishful thinking.

All of the sudden, Liz felt a stream of water dripping down her leg, and she froze as she realized what it was.

“Shit! Jack, I think my water broke!” she shouted urgently.

Jack came running out of the bedroom yelling “Oh my God, are you sure?”

Liz could see that Jack was clearly freaking out. She tried to calm him down, but she felt a stab of pain in her stomach, and fell to the ground.

Jack picked up Liz and carried her to the car. They got in and rushed to the hospital.

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Liz was in the most excruciating pain of her life. The contractions kept getting stronger and closer together.

“I think it’s time to start pushing, Liz,” declared one of the nurses.

“You got this,” Jack whispered in Liz’s ear.

Liz pushed and pushed. And that’s how her beautiful baby girl came into this world.

Rob

Rob kept tossing and turning. His mind just wouldn’t let him go to sleep. Ever since his mom’s funeral, whenever he would try to sleep, an odd feeling would always creep up on him. It was this feeling of being incomplete, and Rob couldn’t figure out why.

He started to think about Liz and the baby, because he knew that he or she would be coming into this world any day now. Rob was starting to regret not responding to Liz. He *did* want to be a part of the baby’s life, after all. He just still hadn’t gotten over what happened years ago.

Rob heard his phone ring on the nightstand. He glanced next to him and saw Amelia fast asleep. He picked up his phone and was shocked to see Jack’s number calling him. He contemplated picking up the phone, but realized that it must be an emergency.

Rob hit accept. “Hello?”

“Rob,” spoke Jack, “Liz just had the baby, and I really think you should get over here. You have to see your niece.”

Rob knew what he wanted, and it certainly wasn't to be estranged from his sister for the rest of his life. Family was forever. He couldn't just bail on his sister over one argument. In that moment, Rob was full of regret. He couldn't believe that he spent the last 5 years of his life sulking over something so foolish.

"Wait, it's a girl?" asked Rob excitedly.

"Yes, and she's the most beautiful girl I've ever seen."

"Wow," whispered Rob in awe as he smiled. "Okay, I'm on my way now."

Liz

Liz woke up wondering where she was. She felt groggy and tired. It smelt like antiseptic, and the air felt sterile. She opened her eyes to blaring white lights, and Liz felt numb all over her body. She vaguely heard people bustling around her.

Liz remembered only holding her baby for a few minutes before she was taken. Liz thought that she was the most beautiful baby she'd ever seen.

All of the sudden, Liz heard a voice that she recognized.

She sat up and looked around. She was still dizzy from all the drugs she was on, and she saw a man that reminded her of someone that she couldn't quite place.

"Who is that?" she asked with a shaky voice.

"Hi Liz," replied the man as he laughed awkwardly. "It's me."

Then she locked eyes with him. Her little brother. Liz tried to give him a hug, but she couldn't get up. Rob came over and bent down, embracing her tightly. Liz wrapped her hands

around him, and she could hear Rob's heartbeat. All the memories and good times they had together came flooding back, and she realized how much she missed her little brother.

Rob pulled away and said "We have a lot to talk about."

Liz shook her head. "No, Rob. Listen. I'm sorry," she blurted out as she teared up. "I'm sorry for not being there. I'm sorry for everything."

Rob's eyes were also starting to get teary. "It's okay, Liz. I'm sorry too, I really am. I can't wait to meet my niece."

"She's amazing, Rob," replied Liz. "Guess what her name is?"

"What?"

"Hannah."

Their mother's name.

"That's perfect," Rob whispered with a smile.

Rob sat next to Liz on the hospital bed and they began to talk about everything and laugh, just like they always used to do. After all, they had 5 years to catch up on.

Liz and Rob finally felt complete.

Artist's Statement

I decided to write about two estranged siblings because there is a similar situation going on in my own family, so I knew that would make it easier to write about. I have experienced the main idea, so I think that helped me write a more sincere story. I chose two perspectives so that the reader could clearly see the dichotomy between the two characters and the differences between them. Choosing only two perspectives allowed me to focus on their feelings a little more.

In my story, I wanted to show that if you love someone, then you will always go back to them. Try as hard as you want, but they will always be a part of you. A piece of your heart will always belong to them, which was shown with Liz and Rob. That's what family means to me, and that was my answer to the essential question.

The snapshot in this story was when Liz realized that the man in the room was Rob. I imagined that if I were in that situation, I would be so shocked that time would freeze. That's why I decided to choose this moment for my snapshot.

Throughout the story, I used multiple thoughtshots to show what Liz and Rob thought of each other, especially in the beginning. Liz and Rob both had reflections of their feelings toward each other in the beginning of the story.

My use of dramatic irony was when we knew that Rob was going to see Liz in the hospital, but she didn't. When Liz was wondering who the man was in her room, we knew all along, which created suspense.

My motif in this story is the feeling of being incomplete. In the story, Rob and Liz both mention that feeling. It is resolved at the end, when they are reunited. This is also related to the title, "Pieces of the Puzzle". The puzzle was completed when they made up.

Since we could only write a certain amount of words, every piece of dialogue was important. It had to move the plot forward and add meaning to the story. I kept that in mind when I wrote my dialogue, which made me have to cut down a lot of the conversation when polishing off the story.

I hope this Artist's Statement helps you understand "Pieces of the Puzzle" a little more, and I hope you enjoyed reading this story about what it means to be a family.