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Character Analysis of Will Traynor in Me Before You

In the small, dull town of Stortfold England a young woman named Louisa is desperately looking for a job. Louisa is a bubbly, fun, and outgoing young woman who loses her job as a waitress early in the story. In her vigorous search she is left with only one suitable option: working as a caretaker for Will Traynor. Will is young, quadriplegic, incredibly depressed, and eager to end his life via assisted suicide. His mother is not happy with his decision, so she asks for six months to try to change his mind. In a final desperate attempt to save her son's life: she hires Lou, hoping to cure his depression. Lou does her best to change his mind and though Lou makes Will happy temporarily, in the end his mind does not change and he goes through with the assisted suicide. In "Me Before You" Will Traynor is left paralyzed after a tragic motorcycle accident, leaving the once charming and charismatic young man critical, closed-minded, and cheerless.

Before his accident Will was a fun and adventurous person, but after his accident he became critical and joyless. Will felt that he was not living but simply existing. Will says very early in the book, "I don't do anything, Miss Clark. I can't do anything anymore. I sit. I just about exist." (Moyes 39). This tells us that Will feels like he simply exists because he can do nothing but sit. Will is a pessimist, usually pointing out the bad in situations and thinking more about what he can not do than what he can. He shows his unwillingness to see the good in things

when Lou tries to get him to go for a drive, and he responds by saying “Miss Clark, my life is not going to be significantly improved by a drive around Stortfold’s country lanes.”(Moyes 39). Will does not see the point in going for a drive so he rejects Lou’s idea. Lou frequently tries to find fun things for Will to try but he is incredibly cynical and finds the negatives in every proposal. When Lou takes Will to the horse races he ends the day by saying “If you’d bother to ask me, Clark, if you’d bothered to consult me just once about this so-called fun outing of ours, I could have told you. I hate horses, and horse racing.”(Moyes 152). Will did not try to enjoy the day; he had his opinion of the day's events decided and refused to try to see things differently. Not only had Will become critical since the accident but also closed-minded.

Will’s accident prevented him from living the way he had been, which closed his mind to the idea of choosing to continue to live at all. Throughout the book Moyes clearly depicts Will as someone who values the quality of his life over the quantity of it. An example of this is when Lou asks if she can take him to Paris and he responds with “You don’t get it Clark. I don’t want to go there in this-this thing. I want to be in Paris as me, the old me. I want to sit in a chair , leaning back, my favorite clothes on, with pretty French girls who pass by giving me the eye just as they would any other man sitting there.”(Moyes 195). This quote shows why Will values quality more: because of how great he felt his life had been. If Will could not have the same life he did before the accident he did not want to live at all. Will makes this clear when he tells Lou “I am not designed to live in this thing and yet for all intents and purposes it is now the thing that defines me. It is the only thing that defines me.”(Moyes 325). Will feels that since his accident, he is no longer himself; he is now defined by his disability. He is not just Will; He is Will, the quadriplegic. Eventually Will and Lou developed feelings for each other, but he felt that he would not be happy long term and he wanted more for Lou. Will demonstrates this by telling

Lou at the end of the book “I need it to end here. No more chair. No more pneumonia. No more burning limbs. No more tiredness and waking up every morning already wishing it was over. When we get back, I am still going to go to Switzerland. And if you do love me Clark as you say you do, the thing that would make me happier than anything is if you would come with me.”(Moyes 326). Will cares deeply for Lou and appreciates her trying to change his mind but he could no longer endure the pain. In his decision to end his life Will had also become cheerless.

Will’s cheerless attitude towards life and his condition is another reason he was miserable. Will never smiles, laughs, or has a positive attitude about anything until Lou comes along. After a night out with Lou Will says “I just want to be a man who has been to a concert with a girl in a red dress. Just a few minutes more.”(Moyes 166). This shows that Lou has made Will feel like a normal man who has just taken a girl on a date, which makes him happy. Will is never truly happy. He finds brief moments of happiness with Lou but is in pain most of the time. Will tells Lou one day “Sometimes, Clark, you are pretty much the only thing that makes me want to get up in the morning.”(Moyes 265). Lou becomes the only positive thing Will has left in his life to which he can look forward. Will has lost hope of recovering and given up on finding joy in his life. In Camilla’s chapter she talks about how Will came to the decision of assisted suicide; one of the things he says to her is “There is no prospect of my recovery, hence it is a perfectly reasonable request to ask to end it in a matter I see fit.”(Moyes 109). Will knows there is no chance at recovery so he loses all hope and gives up on life.

In JoJo Moyes’s *Me Before You* the main character Will Traynor, once a charismatic and adventurous man becomes critical, closed-minded, and cheerless after a tragic motorcycle accident. After the accident he becomes quadriplegic and wants to end his life. Given only six months, Louisa tries her hardest to change his mind, and even though she succeeds in making

him happy, his decision stays the same. This story shows how your attitude and outlook on life affects how you handle situations. Ultimately it is Will's attitude, his stubborn refusal to see past his disability and allow himself to be happy, that kills him; not his accident.