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Mrs. Graning

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*Me Before You*

In the quaint town of Hertfordshire, England through the rainy streets and quiet nights, Louisa Clark and Will Traynor found themselves passionately connected in JoJo Moyes' novel, *Me Before You*. Louisa, a bubbly, adventurous, 26 year-old, started off working in a small bakery. Louisa found herself jobless after the bakery which she loved, closed down. Louisa searched for many days, when suddenly a new job was requested for "Care needed for quadriplegic". She found herself caring for 35 year-old Will Traynor a quadriplegic, sad, depressed, lonely, and regretful. Will has given his parents 6 months left with him before he plans to commit physician assisted suicide. Will Louisa be able to change Will's mind? Trauma plays a major role in *Me Before You* through Louisa changing her approach to life after her incident, Will feeling like a burden and worthless, and both characters make it subconsciously easier to work through their traumas.

Although Will has his obvious trauma of paralysis, Lou has less evident issues that affect her decisions and daily life. Some may think Louisa has no problems, but if you take a close look at her life you will find the flaws. In the book, Will and Louisa take a trip to the "castle" near their village, where they find themselves going through a familiar maze for Louisa. When Louisa was in her teenage years she was out drinking, a group of boys saw her; the book implies she was harassed and sexually assaulted. Will tells Louisa, "Some mistakes... just have greater

consequences than others. But you don't have to let that night be the thing that defines you” Will states, “You, Clark, have the choice not to let that happen” (Moyes 276). The castle and maze imply the paths of life that Louisa can choose from; some paths being unsafe or dangerous. She feels she has to choose the right path or she will not succeed and be a victim once again. A big hurdle Lou overcame was entering the maze once again, a symbol that she has the desire to overcome this event in her life. While moving through the maze she panics, but Will reassures her it will be okay. This shows his support not only in this time, but during the tougher moments in life. Taking a look at Louisa’s style, it is a huge factor it showcases her quirky, fun-spirited personality while blocking out unwanted male attention. A big symbolization in Lou’s style is her bumblebee tights. Lou was gifted a pair of bumblebee tights when she was younger, she eventually outgrows the beloved tights. She tells Will about her long lost tights, the tights symbolize her independence and how chooses her own paths in life. Will then gifts her a pair, at her birthday party although her family doesn’t react so well. When Will gifts Louisa the pair of tights her family doesn't react so well, almost finding it silly; “I ran out of the room and pulled on a pair in the hallway. I pointed a toe, admiring the silliness of them. I don’t think a present had ever made me so happy in my life. I walked back in. Will let out a small cheer. Grandad banged his hands on the table. Mom and Dad just burst out laughing. Patrick just stared.” (Moyes 202) This shows how her family and boyfriend don’t care for Lou’s style, they want her to dress “normal” Others may not like the “style” Lou wears but, what is important is that Lou does. Lou tends to rely on others' opinions rather than her own. After her incident she stays close to home, scared of what might happen if she doesn't get out of her comfort zone. She is fearful she could have something happen to her again, if she puts herself in a new setting or in danger. Will soon realizes Louisa isn't taking advantage of her life, he is stuck in a wheelchair and unable to live

life to the fullest. He is upset with Luisa that she is simply cruising through life without any fun, Will states "You're twenty-six years old, Clark. You should be out there, claiming the world as your own, getting in trouble in bars, showing off your strange wardrobe to dodgy men..." Louisa responds "I'm happy here," Will replies "Well, you shouldn't be." (Moyes 108). Will hopes Louisa will realize the depths of his remark.

Will has a complicated life, he had an adventurous, productive, lifestyle prior to the accident. Now he feels useless and regretful of his current state and feels the only way to solve it is ending it completely. Will is not an approachable person in this novel, often ignoring and being rude to others. When Louisa arrived for her first time meeting Will he was passive aggressive and uninterested in his new "caretaker". Lou questioned if she was right for the job because she felt he didn't like her, which he didn't at first. Will is also rude to his parents as they try to save their son, and help him realize life is a precious gift. None of these efforts seem to work. "Will didn't say a thing. He was just looking at her, his expression as unreadable as ever. I felt a fleeting gratitude that it wasn't just me he looked at like that" (Moyes 47). As you can see Will doesn't show much attention to anyone, he often ignores his family and friends. Louisa is eager to even get the smallest smile out of Will later in the book he does eventually come around to love Lou's quirky, loud personality. When Lou first arrives at the Traynor's household she finds in Will's room a large display of photographs, ranging from skiing pictures, bungee jumping from cliffs, exploring jungles, him in pictures with friends, even some with a girl. Will often refers to his previous years, saying how one must be troubled that he could be so adventurous and now a cripple. Will even states "You were just looking at my photographs. Wondering how awful it must be to live like that and then turn into a cripple." (Moyes 42-43). As you can see Will feels his life is useless and has no meaning. Louisa sees it as a challenge to show him just

because of his current state, doesn't mean he has no purpose; there is so much more to life.

Louisa continues her job for several months as usual but, on one particular day she overhears a conversation between Georgia (Will's sister) and Camilla Traynor (Will's mother) that Will plans to commit physician-assisted suicide in 6 months. Georgia is arguing with Mrs. Traynor stating "he's selfish", "can't do this", and more. Mrs. Traynor responds she has done all she can and legally this is Will's decision; "there is no stopping him". Louisa is taken back with what she has overheard, "How could Will do this?" she asks herself. Later in the story, Louisa tries many efforts at showing Will how great life is, taking him to horse races, concerts, and even back to the castle. It never seemed to work, Louisa states "Well, you don't have to let that... that chair define you." "But it does define me, Clark. You don't know me, not really. You never saw me before this thing. I loved my life, Clark. Really loved it... I led a big life." His voice had lifted now. "I am not designed to exist in this thing - and yet for all intents and purposes it is now the thing that defines me." (Moyes 361). As you see Will sees no purpose in his life if he's stuck in a wheelchair, he believes the only way out is death.

Although Will plans his death, he helps Louisa realize the great adventures of life; while Louisa gives Will one last taste of love. Despite the tragic ending both characters subconsciously change each other's lives for the better. By the end of the story both characters found themselves in love with each other, Will takes one last trip with Louisa and Nathan to Mauritius, Africa. Will seems truly at peace at the resort, Lou wonders if this might change his mind. On one of the nights, Nathan meets a woman; Karen, and Louisa offers to let her stay overnight. Will and Louisa are then obligated to share a room for the night, they find themselves cuddled up in the bed, Louisa reassures herself everything will be okay once they return. The next night, on the beach Will and Louisa kiss, Will suddenly pulls away and states that he can't be with her, it

reminds him too much of what he has lost. Lou responds, "I know this isn't a conventional love story. I know there are all sorts of reasons I shouldn't even be saying what I am. But I love you. I do. I knew it even when I left Patrick. And I think you might even love me a little bit." (Moyes 359). They both know it will never work, but with the short time they had together they are grateful for their short time together. Will has helped Louisa more than he knows, he has helped her feel comfortable once again and realize there is so much more to life than staying in her comfort zone. "Push yourself. Don't settle. Wear those striped legs with pride... you are scored on my heart, Clark. You were from the first day you walked in, with your ridiculous clothes and your bad jokes and your complete inability to ever hide a single thing you felt... Don't think of me too often. I don't want to think of you getting all maudlin. Just live well. Just live." (Moyes 409). Will changes Lou's life for the better and Lou gives Will the best last 6 months he could have asked for.

In JoJo Moyes' great tragic love story, both characters provided each other with a lasting impression. Lou gave Will a great impression of true love and a reminder he is worth so much even if he is paralyzed. Will gives Lou the opportunity to create a new life for herself, to get out of her comfort zone. Will does choose to end his life, but that doesn't change the fact he forever will have an impression on Lou and his love for her she will always remember. This story showcases true love despite the heartbreaking ending, it teaches you to never take life for granted.