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Mrs. Graning

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Me Before You

Me Before You, written by JoJo Moyes, is a novel full of twists, turns, and changes of emotion. Will Traynor and Louisa Clark are two of the main characters in the book who totally contrast each other at first sight, but later develop a love through the most unusual of circumstances. Will was involved in a motorcycle accident, resulting in permanent paralysis that left him quadriplegic. Louisa is a very happy, bright, and cheerful young woman who is in desperate need of a job and ends up accepting a job to become the caretaker of Will. Louisa and Will go through many emotional ups and downs as they explore each other's very different personalities, as well as their likes and dislikes. Will Traynor is the main character in this novel whose personality is a rather interesting one that shows the magnitude one struggles with when the human body and the human spirit is broken. This novel navigates how this complex character chooses to end a life he cannot come to terms with and why. It also explores love, sacrifice, and his path of struggle after his accident, based on his own personal character traits. Some of Will's most important character traits are his quietness in times of depression, anger at certain moments, and even love when he adjusts to life with his new friend, Louisa.

Will's quietness in times of depression are prevalent throughout the novel. Will becomes very depressed, frustrated, and introverted after his accident. For instance, his lack of openness to Louisa in the beginning and excommunicating himself from many of his prior relationships

with friends. He pushed away his girlfriend, Lissa, whom he had dated before he was paralyzed. She came to visit and deliver the news that she was now engaged to his best friend and explained to Lou, "I really tried. For months, And he just pushed me away" (Moyes 50). His recollection of memories and explaining to Louisa the beautiful places he had been left him longing for his prior life and frustrated with his current reality and led him further into depression and introversion. The National Library of Medicine study on spinal cord related injuries as related to depression shows that depression is a common psychological problem that decreases life satisfaction and quality of life (Khazaepour). These studies support the correlation between injuries such as Will's and the emotional turmoil that follows.

Anger is also a result of the new existence Will is forced to be faced with. Not being able to perform simple daily tasks without help angers him throughout the novel. He feels anger that his old life was taken away and replaced with one of helplessness. When they begin planning outings in Lou's effort to force him into learning to embrace life again, Will's father insists they stay behind and reminds them, "Will needs to be allowed to feel like a man. That is not going to be possible if his mother- or his sister, for that matter - is always on hand" (Moyes 129). But Will's decision had already been made. Although later in the novel love emerges, he had already planned and determined his fate. He explains, "I don't want to live like this, Mother. This is not the life I chose. There is no prospect of my recovery, hence it is a perfectly reasonable request to ask to end it in a manner I see fit" (Moyes 109). He had chosen this path and was not content with the quality of life he would lead from this point forward. Statistics show that suicide rates are five times greater for amongst individuals with spinal cord injuries than the general population according to The National Library of Medicine study on spinal cord related injuries (Khazaepour). His anger had overtaken all other emotions until he met Louisa.

Love was not expected to become an obstacle for Will to encounter after he had made his decision, but certainly gave his final months more joy than he could have imagined. Louisa becomes consumed with using her one hundred and seventeen days to convince Will that he has a reason to live. They do both fall very much in love, which makes for an uncanny ending. On vacation, as they lie together in a storm, Louisa says, ‘Here Will and I were safe, locked in our little paradise’ (Moyes 318). His guard was let down and he did in his final time enjoy feeling a love he thought would never emerge. Perhaps it was partially due to love that pushed him to continue with his previous arrangements. Will's sister earlier in the novel stated, “I can't put my whole life on hold just because of Will's mental state” (Moyes 128). He also feels like Louisa will be putting her life on hold to be with him and sees the amount of effort his parents give to him. Although all of these people love him, Will refuses to be a burden, continue living a life that is not of his choosing, and prefers all of them live their fullest lives as well. In his final letter to Louisa, Will leaves her his money and encourages her to travel, be bold, and live a good life. He states, “I am conscious that knowing me has caused you pain, and grief, and I hope that one day when you are less angry with me and less upset you will see not just that I could only have done the thing that I did, but also that this will help you live a really good life, a better life, than if you hadn't met me” (Moyes 367). His love for Louisa and his family helped him let go so they could live fuller lives.

One of the most controversial issues this novel explores is the decision for someone to choose their ending. Will's character traits, as explained, all lead him to make his final choice. The breaking of his human spirit as a result of breaking his human body, which once defined who and what Will was and did prior to the accident, was too much for him to endure. The constant struggle coming to terms with his depression, anger and love was the core focus of the

storyline. Finding happiness, even if temporary towards the end, gave Will the drive to continue with his plans to end his life on his terms. With love comes sacrifice. Louisa gave him her love until the end, even though if the choice was her own, she would have chosen that he lived. He left her with the motivation to pursue her ambitions and live life to the fullest. In the end, they both gave each other love and in their own ways. Their story encourages us to live life to the fullest and shows the importance of a good quality of life, the hardships of compromise, and sacrifices made for those we love.

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