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Mrs. Graning

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The Reverse Effects of Trauma

The depths of England hold a small town where a young woman whose daily life has been of an orderly routine for 6 years, beginning with her job and ending asleep at her parents home. Louisa Clark is twenty-six years old, assisting her parents with their financial affairs, when she is informed of her job closing. On the hunt for a new job, Louisa has been given an offer that could well support her family. When interviewed for the caretaking of Will Traynor, Mrs. Traynor presented her with the job, almost immediately because of her uplifting personality. Mrs. Traynor was attempting to cease the mental warfare occurring inside of Will's head in an attempt for him not to give up on his life after a tragic accident. The occurrence of trauma and its effects in *Me Before You* by JoJo Moyes are explored in Louisa's character, examined in Will's personality, and symbolized through different physical and emotional traits.

Both Louisa Clark and Will Traynor have been physically and emotionally changed due to their own personal traumas. Any range of trauma can affect you, whether you change through your daily habits and routines or the way you express yourself. Louisa changed the way she spoke and dressed after being assaulted, while Will was forced to change physically and to live in constant assistance, according to the article "Depression in Jojo Moyes' *Me Before You*." Both of the main protagonists undergo different waves of trauma, shaping out and explaining why each character behaves the way they do. Although Louisa and Will were both strongly affected

by their pasts, their ways of healing were the exact opposite. Will had the courage to attempt to be physically better, but after a while of no progress, he became severely depressed and had no desire to try and heal, as Nathan, who is Will's main caretaker states, "He'd come pretty far in rehab, but after a year with no improvement, I think he found it tough to keep believing it was worth it." (70) While Will was in the process of giving up, Louisa took her trauma and transformed it into something good; she chose to express herself how she wanted to without caring what other people may think of her and attempting to use her upbeat personality to encourage Will. Resulting in Louisa and Will's opposite personalities to connect very well. Louisa would make Will want to talk and be more enthusiastic in order to match her energy, while Will would encourage Louisa to adventure out of her comfort zone and experience new things and places (Moyes 314). Louisa may not have realized at first, but it is shown that even though she was being paid to help Will, he ended up helping her just as much by pushing her limits.

Louisa was not always how she is portrayed to be in this story; she went through something that influenced her choices in changing herself physically and emotionally. Louisa is said to have dressed according to the male gaze, wearing clothes that would blend her in with a crowd of twenty-year-old party girls. She was assaulted one night, resulting in the change of her wardrobe, "someone who wore nothing that could be construed as suggestive. Clothes that would not appeal to the kind of men who went to the Red Lion, anyway." (Moyes 167). Once assaulted, Louisa reconstructed herself into a much quirkier and weirder manner, dressing to satisfy herself and no one else. In contrast, Louisa used to fit in with the people her and her boyfriend Patrick used to hang around; she would go out and drink, acting like them; later on, she changed by not going out and staying in the confined safety of her home. Louisa had figured out who she truly

wanted to be; she never went out with the girls she had drank with again, and she stopped being the giggling girl who got drunk with strangers. (Moyes 166-167). Louisa was not only traumatized in her earlier years, but in her later years too when Will carried out his plan of killing himself. Even though Louisa was devastated by losing Will, she carried out the plans and life that he had wanted for her, as stated in the letter she received from him. (Moyes 366-368) instead of shutting down. Louisa is the type of character that always looks on the positive side of things; she turns bad situations into good outcomes. This is why she was such an amazing person for Will to be around in his circumstances.

Will has encountered one of the worst things that can happen to somebody, and he has been very deeply affected by it emotionally and physically. Will was hit by a motorcycle, causing him to become a C5-6 quadriplegic; this fatality prohibited his ability to properly function physically, ending his life of adventures and crazy activities. Will noticed Louisa looking at pictures of his outgoing, adventurous past when he 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 37) Will has just experienced a drastic change of rotation in his day-to-day lifestyle, restricting him to the constant need of another person. Whereas Will had been a wealthy businessman that spent his free time doing things such as skiing, skydiving, and many other activities; due to his inability to perform these actions anymore, it has made him incredibly bitter and angry. Suddenly, Will was forced to live a completely different life than the one he had been; he expresses to Louisa how much he loved his life before and says that he was not designed for his current lifestyle. (Moyes 325). Will was physically hurt to one of the worst degrees, destroying his mental health. Ultimately, Will was unable to conquer the mental battle he was undergoing, resulting in the final decision to unalive himself. Even with Louisa’s cries of plead

for him to stay, Will told her that this life, even with her in it, was simply not enough for him to keep living. (Moyes 324). Will ended his life due to the overwhelming sadness and bitterness he was experiencing from being defined by a chair.

The characters traumas are symbolized throughout this story, giving each character their own unique backstories. Louisa expresses her trauma in a positive way by dressing how she pleases and wearing unique clothing items not typically seen on other girls her age. She had decided who she was and who she wanted to be, giving a positive outlook on the negativity in her life. (Moyes 166-167). Louisa's changing of style and habits shows a great way of turning something sad and upsetting into something positive and healing. After being hit by a motorcycle, Will was forced to live out his life in constant assistance and a big metal chair, telling everyone's eyes to go to him. He made his wheelchair out to be a very negative thing and said that is the only thing that defines him anymore. (Moyes 325). Will should have seen his life as a miracle and not a punishment, and his wheelchair as another chance and not a prison.

The occurrences of trauma explored throughout the story *Me Before You* are carried out in both positive and negative ways. Will's wheelchair and Louisa's style are just two significant symbolizations of the two protagonists' traumas. Depending on how you look at it, either of these things can depict whether it's good or bad, giving the readers a chance to find the good in horrible cases. Although Will ends his life showing significant signs of weakness, it should give others the realization that that is not the right way of handling traumatic experiences. Be like Louisa; transform the bad into something that you can positively express.

Works Cited

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