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Mrs. Graning

English 11

26 August 2024

### Me Before You

Louisa Clark is the main character in the heartbreaking romantic novel, *Me Before You*, by Jojo Moyes. She is a quirky, cheerful, free-spirited character who lives in a small town with her parents, grandfather, and sister. The novel begins by introducing a man named Will Traynor, a wealthy banker, who gets hit by a motorcycle while on his way to work. We then meet Louisa Clark and her family and find that Lou, short for Louisa, has lost her job at the cafe. She finally finds a new job as a caregiver for a quadriplegic, someone who is paralyzed from the neck down. The man she is taking care of is none other than Will Traynor, but shortly after taking the job, she finds out a secret the Traynor family is withholding. The secret is Will wants to kill himself and will only give his family six more months until he goes to Dignitas. Louisa's job is to show Will the wonders of life and why it is worth living, before it is too late. Though, as they grow closer, their hearts change in ways neither of them saw coming. The main protagonist, Louisa Clark, is a 26-year-old woman with few ambitions who rarely takes risks until she meets Will Traynor, who makes her realize the possibilities of stepping out of her comfort zone.

From the beginning of the novel, we can tell that Lou has very little sense in what direction her life is going. Lou never really had a choice on what she wanted to do with her life because of her family's financial situation. In this line we can see how much Lou's family relies on her after she tells them she lost her job, "I knew the real reason for Dad's anxiety. They relied

on my wages. Trena earned next to nothing at the flower shop. Mum couldn't work, as she had to look after Granddad, and Granddad's pension amounted to almost nothing. Dad lived in a constant state of anxiety about his job at the furniture factory... and somehow this had been enough for the whole teetering edifice that was my parents' finances to finally collapse," (Moyes 10). The author shows how much potential Louisa has, but also shows how she is held back by the responsibility of taking care of her family. As a result of losing her job, Lou no longer feels secure, which causes her to realize she knows nothing about who she is. In the description, Lou is illustrated in the way she sees herself, "I was twenty-six years old and I wasn't sure what I was. Up until I lost my job I hadn't even given it any thought. I supposed I would probably marry Patrick, knock out a few kids, live a few streets away from where I had always lived. Apart from an exotic taste in clothes, and the fact that I'm a bit short, there's not a lot separating me from anyone you might pass in the street," (Moyes 17-18). Louisa's ignorance of her own personal life shows her need for change. Louisa has been protected her whole life from doing anything out of her comfort zone, and now that she has lost her solid ground at the cafe, she has no idea what to do with herself. Though her new job will reveal things about herself, not only to other people, but also to Lou.

When Louisa accepts and begins the job as caretaker, Will pushes Lou to reveal things she never thought she would tell anyone. On Lou's first day, she comes to the realization that the person she will be taking care of is not what she was expecting. This demonstrates how hostile, and rude Will is on Lou's first day, "You were just looking at my photographs. Wondering how awful it must be to live like that then turn into a cripple. No. I blushed even more furiously. The rest of my photographs are in the bottom drawer if you find yourself overcome with curiosity again," (Moyes 37). Clearly, Will has yet to recover from his accident and takes it out

on everyone around him, especially Lou. Later in the novel, after Will and Lou have grown closer, Will tries to convince Lou of her potential. In the novel Will states, "I'm trying to encourage Louisa to do something else, to widen her horizons a bit... Louisa is one of the smartest people I know, but I can't make her see her own possibilities," (Moyes 259). Will believes she should live her life before it is too late like it is for him. After Will's persistence, Lou tells the story of why she lives her small life. In chapter 17, Will convinces Lou to go into a maze, and while in the maze, Lou has a flashback to a traumatic event. After Lou finds her way out, she tells Will what happened, "I told him the whole night, and how they had laughed at me and made fun of how drunk and stoned I was, and how I had passed out... that half of not knowing had haunted me ever since," (Moyes 247). Lou revealing this to Will shows how she is beginning to trust him. Lou then adds, "I told him how I saw their faces every time I went anywhere beyond the town, and how Patrick and Mum and Dad and my small life had been just fine with me.. they had let me feel safe," (Moyes 247). This enlightens the readers on why Lou has never left her small town. Soon after Lou begins listening to Will, and changes in ways she never expected.

The more Lou lets Will in, the more she begins to evolve into a more free-spirited, carefree person. We first see this at the wedding of Alicia and Rupert. Lou starts off, "What do you say, Will? Going to give me a whirl?... I didn't give him any choice. I sat down carefully on Will's lap, draped my arms around his neck to hold myself in place... no longer self conscious," (Moyes 264). Lou no longer cares what others think of her and is just trying to live; even if it's only for one night. Furthermore, Bethany Mueller perfectly defines how Lou's feelings have changed in addition to her personality, "Lou and Will continue to act like a couple at the wedding, until it is unclear whether either of them are acting. They can no longer ignore that

they have feelings for each other,” (Mueller). As a result of this intimate moment Lou and Will can no longer deny their feelings, which causes their relationship to sprout. Additionally, Lou and Will take an even bigger step and go on a vacation to an island called Mauritius. Lou states, “this was not just a logical challenge but an adventure for me—that I, Lou Clark, was actually headed to the other side of the world... hard to believe I had even gotten us this far, (Moyes 310-311). Lou finally leaves her small town and goes on adventures. For example, she goes wind-surfing and scuba diving. Additionally, Lou decides to go to Switzerland to see Will for one last time. Lou says, “I suppose it might have seemed strange that I, Lou Clark, a girl who had rarely been more than a bus ride from her home town in twenty years, was now flying to her third country in less than a week,” (Moyes 349). Lou puts her vexation with Will aside and flies to Switzerland, despite all her fears, to see him again. This shows how much Lou has changed not only for Will but because of Will.

Jojo Moyes’s, *Me Before You*, displays the lives of two people who could not be more different, but learn to love each other in the end. Lou begins as a scared, unambitious girl and Will a grumpy, depressed man. Though as they spend more time together they influence each other to see life in a new light. This heartbreaking story shows readers that anyone can change. While also telling readers to reach for their dreams, have ambitions, and always live every day like it is the last.

Work Cited

Moyes, Jojo. *Me Before You*. Penguin Publishing Group, 2012, USA.

Mueller, Bethany. "Me Before You Chapter 18 Summary & Analysis." *LitCharts*,  
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