

me before you

by Jojo Moyes · Language: EN

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Overview

Jojo Moyes's "Me Before You" tells the poignant story of Louisa Clark, a quirky and directionless young woman from a working-class family, who finds herself unexpectedly employed as a caregiver for Will Traynor. Will is a wealthy, once-adventurous man who became a quadriplegic after a devastating motorcycle accident two years prior. Bitter, cynical, and deeply depressed, Will initially makes Louisa's job challenging, but her unwavering optimism and unique personality slowly begin to chip away at his hardened exterior.

Louisa soon discovers the true, heartbreaking reason for her employment: Will's parents have agreed to his plan to end his life at Dignitas, a Swiss organization for assisted suicide, in six months. Determined to show him that life is still worth living, Louisa embarks on a mission to inject joy and new experiences into Will's confined world. Their journey together, filled with unexpected adventures and profound conversations, blossoms into a deep, transformative love. However, despite their growing bond and Louisa's desperate efforts, Will remains steadfast in his decision, believing he cannot live a life without the independence and adventure he once cherished. The novel explores complex themes of love, sacrifice, personal autonomy, and the definition of a meaningful life, challenging readers to confront difficult ethical questions about the right to choose one's own end.

Key Takeaways

- Embrace new experiences and step outside your comfort zone, as they can lead to unexpected personal growth and profound connections.
- True love can mean supporting someone's difficult choices, even when those choices cause immense pain and heartbreak.
- The definition of a meaningful and fulfilling life is deeply personal and varies greatly for each individual.
- Don't let fear of the unknown or societal expectations prevent you from pursuing your own dreams and living life to the fullest.
- Sometimes, the greatest act of love is letting go and respecting another person's autonomy and their right to choose.
- Life's greatest challenges can lead to unexpected personal growth and profound connections, even in the face of tragedy.

Chapter Summaries

A New Beginning for Louisa

Louisa Clark, a vibrant but unmotivated young woman, loses her job at a local café. Desperate for work, she reluctantly accepts a position as a caregiver for Will Traynor, a wealthy, intelligent, and once-adventurous man who was paralyzed in an accident two years prior. Their initial meeting is tense, with Will being withdrawn and cynical, making Louisa question her suitability for the role.

Struggling to Connect

Louisa struggles to connect with the embittered Will, who is openly hostile and resistant to her attempts at cheerfulness. She learns about his past life as a successful and adventurous businessman, which only highlights the stark contrast with his current, confined existence. Despite the challenges, Louisa's quirky personality and genuine care slowly begin to break through Will's defenses, though he remains deeply depressed.

The Unveiling of a Secret

Louisa overhears Will's parents discussing his plan to end his life at Dignitas, a Swiss organization for assisted suicide, in six months. This revelation profoundly impacts Louisa, who realizes her true purpose is to show Will that life is still worth living. She begins to research and plan various outings and experiences, hoping to reignite his passion for life and change his mind.

A Deepening Bond

As Louisa plans more activities, from attending a classical concert to a horse race, she and Will gradually form a deep and unexpected bond. They share intimate conversations, and Will begins to open up about his frustrations and fears. Louisa's world expands through Will's intellect and experiences, while her warmth and humor bring moments of genuine joy back into his life.

Love and Lingering Hope

Their relationship blossoms into love, and Louisa takes Will on a beautiful tropical holiday. They share profound moments, and Louisa believes she has finally convinced him to choose life. However, despite their shared love and the happiness they find together, Will remains resolute in his decision to go to Dignitas, explaining that he cannot bear to live a life dependent on others.

The Unavoidable Choice

Louisa is heartbroken by Will's unwavering decision. She pleads with him, expressing her love and her belief that they can build a life together. Will, however, explains that his choice is not about her or their love, but about his inability to accept a life where he cannot be the man he once was, or the man he wants to be for her.

A Heartbreaking Farewell

Despite her profound grief and desperate hope, Louisa ultimately chooses to honor Will's wishes. She accompanies him to Switzerland, staying by his side until his final moments. It is an act of immense love and sacrifice, demonstrating her respect for his autonomy, even as it shatters her own world.

Life After Will

After Will's death, Louisa receives a posthumous letter from him, along with a significant sum of money. In the letter, Will encourages her to live her life to the fullest, to be brave, and to embrace new experiences. Louisa, profoundly changed by her time with Will, begins to follow his advice, starting with a trip to Paris, ready to embark on her own journey of self-discovery.

Themes

- Love and sacrifice
- Right to choose
- Quality of life
- Personal growth
- Embracing life

Notable Quotes

- "You only get one life. It's actually your duty to live it as fully as possible." — Will Traynor's advice to Louisa in his posthumous letter, encouraging her to embrace life.
- "Some mistakes, though, you can't undo." — Will reflecting on his accident and the irreversible changes to his life.
- "I told him a story of a girl who had no idea what she was doing, but who was going to do it anyway." — Louisa reflecting on her own journey and her determination to help Will, despite her inexperience.
- "I don't want to be the man who just sits and watches you live." — Will explaining to Louisa why he cannot continue living, despite his love for her.
- "Just live well. Just live." — Another powerful instruction from Will's final letter to Louisa, emphasizing the importance of experiencing life.
- "Don't think of me too often. I don't want to think of you in a wheelchair." — Will expressing his desire for Louisa to move on and live a full life, free from the shadow of his condition.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is me before you about?

"Me Before You" is about Louisa Clark, a young woman hired to care for Will Traynor, a wealthy quadriplegic man. Their relationship evolves as Louisa tries to convince Will that life is still worth living, while he grapples with his desire for assisted suicide and the profound impact his condition has had on his sense of self.

Is me before you worth reading?

Yes, it's a deeply emotional and thought-provoking novel that explores complex themes of love, loss, and the right to choose. It offers a poignant story of human connection and challenges readers to consider difficult ethical questions about life, death, and what truly constitutes a meaningful existence. It's a powerful and memorable read.

How does me before you end?

Spoiler: Will ultimately chooses to go through with assisted suicide at Dignitas in Switzerland, despite Louisa's love and desperate efforts to change his mind. Louisa accompanies him, honoring his final wish. He leaves her money and a heartfelt letter encouraging her to live her life to the fullest, to be brave, and to embrace new opportunities.

Who should read me before you?

Readers who enjoy emotional contemporary romance, stories about overcoming adversity, and those interested in exploring ethical dilemmas surrounding end-of-life choices. It's a good fit for fans of character-driven narratives that provoke thought and evoke strong emotions, and those who appreciate a blend of humor and tragedy.

How long does it take to read me before you?

On average, it takes approximately 6 to 7 hours to read "Me Before You." This estimate is based on an average reading speed of 250 words per minute and the book's typical length of around 368 pages, making it a manageable read for most.