

Me Before You



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF JOJO MOYES

Jojo Moyes grew up in London, England and attended Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, London University. After graduating, Moyes received a bursary for the postgraduate newspaper journalism course at City University, London. In 1992, Moyes began working for *The Independent* newspaper and eventually became the Assistant News Editor in 1998. In 2002, Moyes started her career as a full-time novelist with the publication of her book *Sheltering Sky*. Since then, Moyes has written 11 novels, and won the Romantic Novelist's Award twice for her books *The Last Letter from your Lover* in 2011 and *Foreign Fruit* in 2004. *Me Before You* was also nominated for the Book of the Year at the UK Galaxy Book Awards. She now lives on a farm in Essex, England with her husband and their three children.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The novel centers on Will's decision to end his own life, bringing to light the Right to Die debates about rational suicide. The Right to Die has been a controversial issue in many countries around the world, as certain religions or ethical codes recognize a person's right to have autonomy over their own life while other doctrines are morally against suicide. Euthanasia, or assisted suicide, is legal in Switzerland, as Will goes to Dignitas Institute in Zurich rather than ending his life in the UK. Dignitas is a Swiss nonprofit member's society that provides assisted or accompanied suicide to members who suffer from severe terminal, physical, or mental illnesses. Members must be of sound judgment, able to perform themselves the act of suicide, and must submit a formal report that includes a letter of intent as well as a complete medical history of their illness or condition. Dignitas has also been involved in several court cases regarding assisted suicide and has been a part of multiple documentaries about the right to die. As Dignitas is accused of being pro-death, they have met with profound opposition in the UK and elsewhere, and the issue has become a polarizing political platform in the UK in the 2000s and 2010s.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Jojo Moyes' *Me Before You* belongs to the tradition of realistic romance novels such as *One Day* by David Nicholls, *The Fault in Our Stars* by John Green, or *The Time Traveler's Wife* by Audrey Niffenegger. All of these books follow their protagonists as they search for love in tragic circumstances. *Me Before You* also plays with the traditions of realistic novels that deal with thorny

moral dilemmas, such as Jodi Picoult's *My Sister's Keeper*.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** Me Before You
- **When Written:** 2010-2012
- **Where Written:** London and Essex, England
- **When Published:** January 5, 2012
- **Literary Period:** Contemporary Fiction
- **Genre:** Novel, Romance
- **Setting:** Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire, England
- **Climax:** When Louisa finally comes to terms with Will's decision to end his own life, she joins him at Dignitas in Switzerland to say goodbye to him before his scheduled appointment.
- **Point of View:** First person limited, mostly from the protagonist Louisa but including a chapter each from the perspectives of Camilla, Nathan, Steven, and Katrina.

EXTRA CREDIT

Real Life Inspiration. Moyes was inspired to write *Me Before You* because of her experience taking care of a family member struggling with a progressive disease that greatly reduced quality of life. Moyes then read about a 23-year-old rugby player who forced his parents to take him to Dignitas after a rugby incident left him quadriplegic—and she began to write the character of Will.

Controversy. *Me Before You* has garnered both criticism and praise from the disabled community. Disabled activists online used hashtags such as #MeBeforeEuthanasia and #MeBeforeAbleism to protest the story's suggestion that disabled lives are not worth living. Yet other groups, such as the Christopher Reeves Foundation, appreciated the book (and its movie adaptation) for portraying a complex, heroic disabled character. Moyes herself has said in interviews that she has no opinion on the right to die and was simply trying to tell a specific story with realistic characters in that layered and multi-faceted situation.



PLOT SUMMARY

The book opens in 2007 as Will Traynor is leaving his girlfriend, Alicia, in bed and heading out the door for his job as a high-powered financier. Will decides not to take his motorbike, a thrill that he normally loves, because it is raining hard. When Will steps into the road to hail a cab, he is hit by another cyclist

and left unconscious.

The book then moves forward to 2009, introducing Louisa Clark, a 26-year-old woman with outlandish fashion sense living in the tiny village of Bishop's Stortford in Essex, England. Louisa is walking home dejected after hearing that the Buttered Bun café where she has worked for six years has to close. Louisa knows that her family sorely needs the money, with her mother Josie stuck at home caring for Lou's Granddad, a stroke victim, and Lou's nephew Thomas, the son of Lou's younger sister Treena. Lou goes to tell the news to her long-term boyfriend, Patrick, who is busy running laps as he trains for another triathlon. Patrick simply tells Lou to buck up and find another job.

Lou goes to the job center to find a new position, but hates most of the entry level experiences. Finally, the only job left is a six-month stint as a caretaker for a quadriplegic man. Louisa has no experience as a caretaker, but goes to meet Camilla Traynor for an interview. Camilla intimidates Lou, but somehow decides that Lou is the right person for the job of providing a friendly cheerful presence for her son. Lou then meets the man she will be caring for, Will Traynor. Will is completely dismissive at first, angry that his mother has hired yet another caretaker he does not want.

Lou does her best at work, making tea and doing small domestic chores as Will ignores her and sulks in his room. Will sometimes chats with the nurse, Nathan, who handles his physical needs, but never speaks to Lou. Lou keeps at it because her family needs the money even more now that Treena wants to go back to school. Two weeks into this job, Will's ex-girlfriend, Alicia, and former best friend, Rupert visit. They awkwardly tell Will that they are getting married after bonding in the wake of Will's accident, and Will smashes all the pictures of his old life. Lou attempts to fix the pictures for Will, but he yells at her for trying to help. Lou shouts back at him that just because he has a disability doesn't mean he gets to be an ass, and Will seems to find a new respect for Lou.

Lou and Will are now on better terms, and Will even lets Lou drive him to a doctor's appointment, where Lou sees the scars on Will's wrists left from Will's attempted suicide. Soon after, Lou gets stuck at Will's house during a snowstorm trying to care for Will as he struggles with the flu. After that night, Will and Lou become true friends. Lou shares more about her quiet life watching her family and her boyfriend pursue their hobbies and Will encourages her to stretch her horizons outside of their sleepy village. Will introduces Lou to foreign films and classical music, even letting Lou shave his beard and cut his scraggly hair. Despite these promising moments, Lou finds out that in six months is the date that Will has planned to end his life at an assisted suicide clinic in Switzerland.

The book then introduces Camilla's perspective, explaining how helpless she feels in the face of her son's depression at the prospect of such a limited life. Camilla busies herself with her

job as a magistrate and her garden, ignoring her husband's infidelity and her son's discontent. After Will's first suicide attempt, Camilla decides that she has to allow him to go to Dignitas and end his life in a less horrific manner.

Lou is profoundly uncomfortable with Will's plan to end his life, but she says nothing as she goes into work. Will actually seems to be in a good mood for once, making Lou realize that she can't be a part of his suicide. Lou leaves a letter of resignation for Camilla, but Camilla follows her home and convinces Lou to come back. Lou now has to convince Will to change his mind before the six months is up. Cracking under the pressure, Lou tells Treena about Will's plan. Treena advises Lou to help Will see all the things he can still do from his wheelchair. Lou goes to the library and frantically starts planning excursions for Will.

The first excursion is to a horse race, a day that ends horribly as Lou realizes how little she knows about the logistics of taking a wheelchair out in public places. Will stoically suffers through the day, telling Lou at the end that he has always hated horses anyway. Lou realizes that she has to take Will's desires into account and remembers a time when her own power to choose was taken away. Lou was sexually assaulted by a group of university boys in a **maze** at a castle near her village, an experience that clipped Lou's desire to leave her safe hometown and take risks in the real world. Lou decides to take a different approach with Will and plans a trip to the orchestra instead. This time, Lou fully researches the wheelchair accommodations and Will thoroughly enjoys himself. He is transported both by the beautiful music and the illusion of being out on a date with a girl in a pretty red dress (Lou).

Though Lou feels more secure than ever in her job, her home life is quickly changing. Patrick has started to notice the distance between him and Lou, while Treena has moved back to university with Thomas. As Will and Lou grow even closer, Lou invites Will to her parents' house for her birthday dinner. Will fits easily into Lou's family, charming Lou's parents but putting Patrick on edge. The situation only worsens when Lou is indifferent to Patrick's gift of a necklace but absolutely adores Will's gift of **striped bumblebee tights**. Patrick starts to act more possessive towards Lou, but Lou remains focused on helping Will as much as possible.

As the weeks go by, the news is full of debates over the right to die while Lou's family deals with their own bad news that Lou's father has lost his job. In all the shuffle over beds when Treena comes home from university on weekends, Lou's parents end up sleeping on the couch. Lou starts to consider other places to stay so that everyone can get a good night's sleep. Will offers to let Lou stay in his spare room, and continues to tell Lou that she needs to search for more out of her life. Lou joins quadriplegia support chatrooms looking for excursions for Will and plans events for every day that Will feels well enough to leave the house. On one of these outings, Will convinces Lou to get a tattoo. She gets a small bumblebee, while he tattoos the date of

his accident on his foot.

With only eight weeks to go before Will's appointment at Dignitas, Lou is starting to despair over all the things that Will can't do because of his wheelchair. She gets no rest at home either, as the sleeping arrangements in the cramped Clark household get no better. Patrick half-heartedly offers to let Lou move in with him and Lou reluctantly agrees. She tells Will how uncomfortable she is, and shares that her father is now unemployed. Will replies distantly that his offer of the spare room is still available, if Lou ever needs it. Will then gets Lou's dad a job as the head of maintenance at his family's castle. Lou's dad is ecstatic, but Lou feels uncomfortable. She calls Will, wondering why he did something so nice when he seems angry with her over Patrick. He simply replies that now she can pursue her own interests without worrying about her family.

With seven weeks to go before Will's deadline, Will meets with a will attorney. Camilla and Lou had started to believe that Will would change his mind, but it is clear that he is still working towards his plan to go to Dignitas. Camilla tells Lou to plan a big last trip for Will as a last attempt to change his mind. Lou continues to avoid Will as much as possible during the day, until he finally forces her to go for a walk with him to the castle maze. At Will's prodding, Lou attempts to make it through the maze, but has a panic attack at the memory of the assault there six years ago. Will comes to lead Lou out and she comes clean about her secret, finally letting go of the guilt she has carried for years.

Unexpectedly, Will asks Lou to accompany him to Alicia and Rupert's wedding. Will is on his best behavior while Lou accidentally gets drunk. Lou then asks Will to take her for a spin on a wheelchair on the reception dance floor and the two enjoy a beautiful night together before staying over in a hotel, where Lou convinces Will to go on one last trip with her. Camilla is furious that Will stayed out without telling her, but Will is adamant that he is still an adult and can make his own choices. Lou gets to work planning the trip of a lifetime for Will.

The book moves to the perspective of Nathan (Will's nurse), as he explains that everyone could tell that Will and Lou had crossed some boundary at the wedding. Nathan is skeptical of the trip idea, but willing to do anything to help Will and Lou. He agrees to go along.

Lou tells Patrick that she can't go along with him to a big triathlon in Norway because she has to go on the trip with Will. Patrick is angry and upset, so Lou goes to talk to her sister while he cools off. Treena helps Lou realize that she is much more interested in Will than she has been in Patrick for years. When Lou goes home to Patrick's house, Patrick tries to apologize until he sees the plans that Lou has made for Will. Unable to accept that Lou is essentially going on a honeymoon with another man, Patrick asks Lou to move out.

Steven, Will's father, takes over the narrative to tell how Lou

moved into Will's house. Steven is highly in favor of the trip that Lou has planned, even if having a quadriplegic son is making it hard for him to leave his dysfunctional marriage with Camilla for his mistress Della. Still, Steven is optimistic that this trip will change Will's mind—until Will gets pneumonia and everything has to be cancelled.

Lou is shattered by the sight of Will weak in the hospital, and incredibly disappointed that Will's health has made their last trip impossible. At the advice of Nathan, Lou quickly puts together a calmer resort trip to Mauritius. Lou is deeply worried during the flight and the first two days of the trip over Will's fragile state, but Will soon begins to come back to life in the beautiful beach sun. Will, Lou, and Nathan swim and eat and generally make merry for nine days. Lou even tries scuba diving, unable to believe that she was once too scared to do any of these marvelous things. The last day, Lou spends the night in Will's hotel room and Will confesses that he is planning to commit suicide. Lou tells him that she has known for months and that she has been attempting to change his mind. Furthermore, Lou tells Will that she loves him. Will tells Lou that he loves her too, but it is not enough to change his mind. He then asks Lou to come to Switzerland with him to say goodbye. Crushed and enraged, Lou refuses and doesn't talk to Will for the rest of the trip home.

The novel switches to Katrina (Treena's) perspective, telling how Lou returned to their parent's house looking ill. Katrina lets Lou mope, but tells her to wake back up when Lou is accepted to a university to study fashion. At dinner, Lou finally tells their parents about Will's plan to end his life. Lou's mother is aghast and forbids Lou to have anything to do with it, but Lou realizes that she has to go be with Will one last time. Katrina helps Lou get to the airport for the last plane to Switzerland before Will's appointment.

As Lou steps into Will's room at Dignitas in Switzerland, she feels oddly relieved. The two share one last kiss before Will drinks the lethal solution that will end his life. Legal council is unable to find any wrong doing on the part of Will's family or Lou in this matter, even though the newspapers spin the story as another atrocious episode in the right to die debate. Lou decides that she has to keep living—she takes the money that Will left her and travels to Paris, as Will had asked her to do. With Will's support and financial help, Lou is on course to finally live her life to the fullest for the sake of both her and Will.



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Louisa (Lou) Clark – The main protagonist of the novel, Lou is a resourceful, cheerful girl who has been wasting her potential in her small hometown because she feels responsible for taking care of her mother (Josie), her father (Bernard), and her sister,

Treena. She is also stuck in a long-term relationship with her fitness-obsessed boyfriend Patrick. Lou becomes the caregiver for Will Traynor and tries to show him that life is still worth living, even though Will suffers from quadriplegia. Lou is endlessly optimistic, eventually falling in love with Will and the spark of adventure he adds to her life. With Will's encouragement, Lou fulfills her dreams of going to university to study fashion.

Will Traynor – Will is the second main character of the novel. In the midst of his high-stakes, thrill-seeking life as a financier, Will suffers a traffic accident that leaves him paralyzed in a wheelchair. Will has given up on ever living a fulfilling life again and wants his parents, Camilla and Steven Traynor, to allow him to go through with assisted suicide. Camilla hires Louisa Clark to try and convince Will that there are still good experiences available for him. Will keeps up a sarcastic and difficult demeanor, but it's later revealed that this hides a heart of gold. Though Will and Louisa fall in love, Will can't change his mind about the life he wants to lead. He leaves Lou with the funds to live up to her potential.

Katrina (Treena) Clark – Lou's younger sister, Treena is considered the clever one of the family. Lou has always felt stuck in Treena's shadow, a feeling which persists even after Treena gets pregnant with her son, Thomas, and has to leave university to live with their parents again. Though the relationship between the sisters is strained, they truly care for one another. Treena supports Lou's plan to show Will the best in life, and continues to be a source of comfort for Lou throughout the novel.

Nathan – Will's primary physical caregiver, Nathan cares for all of the health issues that Will's paralysis has caused. Nathan is from New Zealand and has a no-nonsense demeanor and a sarcastic sense of humor that matches up with Will's own personality. Nathan helps Lou with all of her plans to show Will the best that life still has to offer.

Camilla Traynor – Will's mother, Camilla has a cold exterior that hides the immense pain she has felt ever since her son had his accident. Her job as a magistrate also gives her a bleak outlook on life. Camilla's greatest fear is losing her son, especially to suicide, and she hires Lou to make sure that doesn't happen. Though Lou is intimidated by Camilla's high class life and career as a court magistrate, the two women share an understanding because of their pact to keep Will alive.

Josie Clark (Lou's Mom) – Lou's mother, a woman who takes great pride in keeping her house spotless and in caring for her two daughters, Lou and Treena, and her grandson, Thomas. Josie is also the primary caretaker of Lou's Granddad, who has suffered a stroke. She endlessly supports Lou, though she cannot condone Lou's involvement with Will's plan to commit suicide.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Steven Traynor – Will's father, the picture of an English gentleman who nonetheless cheats on his wife, Camilla, and has little contact with his son. Lou and Steven get along, but Lou has little respect for him.

Bernard Clark (Lou's Dad) – Lou's father, a man in his fifties who is struggling with the recession and the prospect of unemployment. He loves Lou fiercely, though he shows it by teasing her. He is intensely loyal to his wife, Josie Clark.

Patrick – Lou's boyfriend of six years. Patrick is a physical trainer who is obsessed with training for triathlons and keeping his body in peak physical fitness. He and Lou eventually drift apart due to their disparate perspectives on life and Patrick's jealousy over Lou's close relationship with Will.

Granddad – Lou's grandfather, who is still of sound body but is rarely lucid after suffering a stroke. He is a kind and patient man, though he rarely speaks.

Thomas Clark – Treena's young son, who is the joy of Josie and Treena's lives even though he was the reason that Treena had to drop out of college. He is the typical energetic toddler who delights in making mischief yet can be very sweet.

Georgina Traynor – Will's younger sister, who vehemently disagrees with Will's plan to commit suicide. Lou sees Georgina as a spoiled rich girl, but has sympathy for Georgina's tricky family situation.

Alicia Dewar (Lissa) – Will's girlfriend before the accident. She is unable to reach Will through his post-paralysis depression and leaves him. She eventually marries Will's former best friend Rupert.

Rupert Freshwell – Will's former best friend and a co-worker at the firm that Will used to work for. After Will's accident, Rupert begins to date Will's ex-girlfriend Alicia and eventually marries her.

Mary Rawlinson – An old friend of Will's who Lou meets at the unfortunate wedding of Alicia and Rupert. Mary is one of few people who treats Will exactly the same after his accident.

Dandelion Lady – A regular customer at the café where Lou worked before she became Will's caretaker. Lou misses her and hopes that the Dandelion Lady has found someone else to keep her company in the mornings.

Frank – Lou's manager and the owner of the Buttered Bun where Lou worked before she became Will's caretaker.

Syed – Lou's personal advisor at the Job Centre who eventually helps Lou get an interview as Will's caretaker.

Michael Lawler – A lawyer who specializes in wills and personal estates. Will calls him when he is ready to make his formal application for assisted suicide at Dignitas Institute in Switzerland.

Ritchie – A paraplegic man who becomes Lou's friend through

internet chat rooms for people living with quadriplegia. He gives Lou advice on the logistics of all the trips she plans for Will.

Della – Steven’s mistress. She wants Steven to leave his wife, Camilla, but Steven won’t leave out of guilt for Will’s condition.

Nadil – An employee at the resort in Mauritius who decides to take extra special care of Will.

Karen – the girl that Nathan dates on the island trip to Mauritius.



THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don’t have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.



AMBITION AND ACHIEVEMENT

Me Before You celebrates ambition, encouraging the characters to try for their dreams even if they seem unattainable. Yet at the beginning of the novel, both

Lou and Will are watching life pass by instead of participating in it. Lou seems content in a dead-end job still living with her parents, unable to understand or sympathize with her far more ambitious sister – though Lou’s safe, boring life is later shown to be a coping mechanism after the sexual assault that Lou suffered years earlier. Meanwhile, Will’s high-ambition, high-stakes life as a London financier is brought to a screeching halt by the accident that leaves him wheelchair-bound. As Lou tries to convince Will to create new ambitions for the life he has now, Lou has to identify her own ambitions and eventually goes back to school for fashion design the way that she always dreamed.

Will’s life never completes the ambitions he had for himself, but he is able to push Lou towards achieving more than she ever thought possible. Moyes argues that this support is a necessary part of Lou’s success, as some people need the encouragement of another person in order to set their sights higher. It is not easy for Lou to emerge from her comfort zone, but Will forces her to travel the world and advocate for herself instead of selling herself short. By the end of the novel, these choices are the most rewarding things that Lou has ever done and they are all the more satisfying because they were not easy. Ambitions may prove difficult, but Moyes asserts that the effort to achieve these ambitions is well worth it in the end.



LOVE AND SACRIFICE

At its heart, *Me Before You* is a love story, though it is somewhat unconventional in that the main

characters do not end up together at the end. Despite the lack of a traditional “happily ever after,” Moyes still argues that love is an essential part of life – a complicated approach to love that addresses both romantic and familial bonds as the characters try to balance what’s best for the people they love with what is best for themselves. The plot follows Will and Lou as they overcome their many differences and gradually fall in love, all while trying to avoid the extra challenge of codependency that might haunt a relationship between a caregiver and his or her charge. Lou experiences the joy of caring for Will’s needs, but also the danger of believing that Will’s needs are more important than her own. In the end, Moyes celebrates the love that Will and Lou share, but cautions against the romantic tendency of making a loved one or a relationship one’s entire world. Moyes points out that Will and Lou’s love enriches their lives, but it cannot solve all of their problems, as it might in the stereotypical romance novel.

Yet the novel also asks how much should you sacrifice for the people you love, using the title “Me Before You” to refer to both Will’s death before Lou’s and the idea of prioritizing one’s self above other people. This lesson is hard for Lou to learn, as she has so often put her family’s happiness above her own and then resented them for it. Lou’s experiences with Will give her the strength to both support Will as he makes the painful decision to end his own life as well as recognize her own needs to plan a fulfilling life outside of her family after Will is gone. Will, for his part, gives his family and Lou the time that they need to come around to his decision on their own so that his choice does not destroy his family or Lou’s life completely. Throughout the novel, Moyes suggests that the healthiest balance allows people to be aware of their loved one’s desires but ultimately remain loyal to their own wishes.



QUALITY OF LIFE

Moyes considers many answers to the question, “What makes life worth living?” One possible answer is money and status, as the well-to-do and

high-society Traynor family seems to have everything that the Clark family, stuck living pay-check to pay-check, desires. Yet though Will owns a castle and can pay for anything he wants, his wealth does not console him after his accident and it does not bring the Traynor family closer together, as Moyes argues that money cannot make people happy or be the only end goal of a fulfilling life. Another possible answer is adventure, given the thrilling life that Will led before his accident and Will’s many attempts to force Lou into having those type of adventures as well. Lou learns that some amount of adventure is a satisfying addition to her otherwise ordinary life, but that the true meaning of life cannot be something that is so easily taken away by a loss of health or finances. The ordinary moments of life are just as, if not more, meaningful to Lou in the end.

The final answer Moyes considers is love. With Will stuck in a depression that no amount of money or wheelchair-friendly adventures can shake, his love for Lou and Lou's love for him is the only thing that gives Will true happiness in his final months. This love is also reflected in Will and Lou's families, as each of Will and Lou's family members find ways to support and care for each other through the difficult situations of Will's condition. Yet even love cannot be the only reason for life, as Will decides when he continues with his plan to end his life on his own terms. Lou also confronts the edges of romantic and familial love as she has to accept and support Will's dignified suicide even though it strains her relationship with her mother and means that her love story with Will has an end.

Though Moyes presents Will's choice to end his life sympathetically, Moyes doesn't suggest (or claims that she doesn't intend to, at least) that some lives are not worth living. Moyes ultimately argues that each person must find their own individual, specific reason to live each day to the fullest. These choices and decisions are what gives life purpose, and Will unfortunately loses sight of all the choices he can still make after some of his choices are taken away by his accident. Moyes' main message is that life is meant to be lived well however a person can manage it, because life itself, in all its various, beautiful forms, is the only worthwhile reason for living. While Lou manages to find her own reasons to keep living after she survives sexual assault and the loss of the man she loves, she has to respect the choices that Will makes to live and die on his own terms, no matter how flawed his choice might be.



FITNESS

In centering the novel around a quadriplegic man, Moyes explores what it means to be healthy and fit. Moyes draws a distinction between mental health and physical health and argues against subconsciously equating mental and physical fitness. Moyes contrasts the mental and physical states of Lou's Granddad, who has suffered a stroke and is no longer fully lucid, and Will, who can no longer use much of his body after a traffic accident but has no trouble with his mind. While it might seem that Will is better off because of his mental fitness, Will's mental health actually suffers horribly because he is aware of how much he has lost. Granddad, meanwhile, seems blissfully unaware of his loss and is still able to enjoy the simple things in life.

Will and Patrick, Lou's long-term boyfriend, are also contrasted in terms of physical fitness. According to conventional romance stories, the more physically fit person is often the better romantic partner. Patrick is seemingly more attractive because of his peak physical shape—yet Will is a better emotional and mental match for Lou regardless of his physical disability. Furthermore, Patrick is so focused on fine-tuning his body that he ignores building an emotional connection with Lou. Will is

able to prove that he is a better emotional and mental match for Lou because he meets her on those levels and appreciates her for who she is on the inside.

In both of these examples, Moyes shows that fitness and health are complex. Mental and physical health are different, but they are also interrelated and hard to untangle, as each has a profound influence on the other. Lou, as Will's caregiver, is supposed to care for his physical needs, yet this requires her to care for his mental and emotional needs as well. Moyes asserts that true health and fitness means finding a balance between mental and physical fitness, as well as the emotional needs that all humans share.



SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



LOU'S BUMBLEBEE TIGHTS

Lou's clothing is carefully chosen in general to display her quirky, cheerful personality, as well as keep her safe from unwanted male attention. When Lou was three, she had a pair of **bumblebee tights** that she loved more than any other item of clothing, yet she regrettably outgrew them and cannot find another pair like them. These tights become a symbol of Lou choosing to do things for herself. Though no one else liked the tights, Lou wore them because they made her happy. Similarly, Lou cannot continue to make choices about her future based on what other people think is best for her. Will gives her a new pair of bumblebee tights for her 27th birthday, showing that he understands that Lou has to make decisions herself and herself alone. No matter what Lou's mom, Josie, or boyfriend, Patrick, think of Lou's choices, Will gives Lou license to make the choices that she truly wants. In Will's last letter, he tells Lou to wear her stripy legs with pride, symbolically continuing to be true to herself in her future life and career.



THE MAZE

Lou's mental state for much of the novel is represented by **the maze** in the castle above her small hometown. Lou is not often sure of what she should do, or which path to take, and is hesitant to take risks for fear of what might happen to her. Later, the maze becomes a site of trauma for Lou, the location where she was sexually assaulted as a young adult. The maze then represents all of life's dangers, a place where Lou never goes so that she never has to move outside of her safe zone again. When Will takes Lou back to the maze, Lou's decision to go into the maze once more shows her desire to finally move past this earlier event and find a new way

through life and all of the difficulties that she must face. Lou panics in the middle of the maze, but Will comes to help her out. His assistance shows that how Will gives Lou support, especially in life's trickier situations. With Will's help, even after he is gone, Lou can finally get out of the maze of her own fears and move forward into a more fulfilled life.



QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Penguin edition of *Me Before You* published in 2016.

Chapter 1 Quotes

☝ I had never considered that you might miss a job the way you miss a limb – a constant, reflexive thing. I hadn't thought that as well as the obvious fears about money, and your future, losing your job would make you feel inadequate, and a bit useless.

Related Characters: Louisa (Lou) Clark (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 18

Explanation and Analysis

Louisa loses the job she has had for six years at a café, because her boss worries that the café will be forced out of business by the opening of a bigger café at the village castle. Lou never expected to actually miss her job, but did not realize that her job had provided much of the purpose in Lou's life. Throughout the novel, Moyes examines many things that give meaning to people's lives. At this point, Lou's job is what makes her life worth living. Lou may not have had big ambitions for her life, but she did enjoy the small tasks that she was able to do in the café. Lou explains the loss of this job in terms of losing a limb, foreshadowing the much bigger questions of the purpose of life that Lou must face once she begins working for a quadriplegic man who literally has no use of any limbs. Lou has lost a certain amount of financial freedom and comfort, but she still has the potential to get things back in the future. Lou's feelings of uselessness and inadequacy are multiplied a hundredfold by Will Traynor, who feels that his life has no point or meaning at all due to the loss of his freedom.

Chapter 2 Quotes

☝ I am 26 years old and I wasn't really sure what I was. Up until I lost my job I hadn't even given it any thought...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. You probably wouldn't look at me twice. An ordinary girl, leading an ordinary life.

Related Characters: Louisa (Lou) Clark (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 21

Explanation and Analysis

At the beginning of the novel, Lou very much considers herself to be a normal girl with nothing special coming in her future. Lou has no ambitions for her life, even confessing that she never thought about doing anything other than work at a small café in her hometown. Moyes has sympathy for Lou's situation, but makes it clear that Lou can't stay ambitionless forever. Lou's exotic taste in clothes is the first hint that Lou is actually meant for life beyond the norm. The very fact that Lou says she is "an ordinary girl, leading an ordinary life" makes it clear that the events of this book will push Lou far beyond her idea of ordinary. Lou's journey in the book will help her find out who she really is, and what ambitions she has for her life.

Chapter 3 Quotes

☝ "You were just looking at my photographs. Wondering how awful it must be to live like that and then turn into a cripple."

Related Characters: Will Traynor (speaker), Louisa (Lou) Clark

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 42-43

Explanation and Analysis

The first day that Lou starts to work for Will, she finds the many photographs in Will's room that display the amazing life he once had. Will, looking handsome and well-off surrounded by his upper class friends, has pictures of himself skiing, bungee-jumping, and generally living the life that most people only dream of. Will catches Lou looking at these photos and displays his bitterness at everything he lost after the accident that left him in a wheelchair. Will expects everyone to pity him, an attitude about his physical

situation that damages his mental health. Will struggles with the physical limitations of his new life, but the constant awareness of everything he can no longer do is far more painful. Aside from the constant threat of sickness that might limit Will's life even more, Will's depression over the loss the life he used to have is what actually convinces Will that this life is not worth living.

Chapter 4 Quotes

☝ “I know what you're thinking,” she said, after a pause. “But I did try. I really tried. For months. And he just pushed me away... You know, you can only actually help someone who wants to be helped,” she said.

Related Characters: Alicia Dewar (Lissa) (speaker), Will Traynor, Louisa (Lou) Clark

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 57

Explanation and Analysis

Alicia Dewar, Will's girlfriend when he suffered his accident, comes to visit Will with the news that she is getting married to Will's former best friend. As Alicia leaves this tense meeting, she runs into Louisa in the hall and admits that she knows that Lou is judging her for choosing to leave Will behind. Though Lou is somewhat justified in her anger at the way that Alicia handled her break up with Will, Alicia is also correct that there is only so much anyone could have done for Will at that time in his life. Will was completely shattered by the accident, both mentally and physically, in ways that love alone would never have been able to fix. Ultimately, it is up to Will to decide if he wants to live and if he wants to be happy. Moyes consistently asserts that Will himself is in control of his life, and Will has the right to choose for himself what he wants his life to be. All of Alicia's, and later Lou's, efforts to convince Will that life is still worth living will only help Will as much as he wants to be helped. Alicia recognizes this, and chooses not to sacrifice her own happiness in the pursuit of forcing Will to be happy.

☝ I could well imagine Will pushing her away. But surely if you loved someone it was your job to stick with him? To help him through the depression? In sickness and in health, and all that?

Related Characters: Louisa (Lou) Clark (speaker), Will

Traynor, Alicia Dewar (Lissa)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 61

Explanation and Analysis

After Alicia, Will's ex-girlfriend, visits Will with the news that she is going to marry Will's former best friend, Lou reflects on what it means to love someone else. Lou sees the failed relationship between Alicia and Will as a sad sign that Alicia did not try hard enough to help Will in the wake of his accident. Moyes considers how much someone should sacrifice for the people they love. Will, given his sarcastic demeanor and dark sense of humor, was most likely horrible to Alicia because of his pain. Alicia deserves to be happy just as much as Will does, and should not necessarily have sacrificed her own happiness in order to be Will's punching bag. Lou believes that true love also requires true sacrifice, but she will have to consider these questions again when she falls in love with Will and has to decide if that love means that she should force Will to live or if she has to respect Will's own decisions for his life.

Chapter 6 Quotes

☝ Treena was the reader. It was almost as if by picking up a book I felt like I was invading her patch. I thought about her and Thomas disappearing to the university and realized I still didn't know whether it made me feel happy or sad – or something a bit complicated in between.

Related Characters: Louisa (Lou) Clark (speaker), Thomas Clark, Katrina (Treena) Clark

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 90-91

Explanation and Analysis

At Will's bedside, Lou passes the time by reading a book of short stories. Lou reflects on the last time that she really read a book, realizing that she gave up on reading because she felt that academics was her sister's territory. The relationship between Lou and Treena is fraught with tension because Lou has always felt that she has to sacrifice some of her ambitions so that Treena can succeed. Lou loves her sister enough to want Treena to be happy, but she also resents that Treena's happiness seems to mean that Lou can't explore a path that might make her happy. Moyes

points out that Lou cannot constantly sacrifice for her sister. Instead, there needs to be a balance of success for both Lou and Treena for the health of their relationship as sisters.

“I have never found a pair of tights I loved like that again. They don’t do them anymore. Or if they do, they don’t make them for grown women.”
 “Strange, that.”
 “Oh, you can mock. Didn’t you ever love anything that much?”

Related Characters: Will Traynor, Louisa (Lou) Clark (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 96

Explanation and Analysis

In one of Will and Lou’s quiet days together, Lou confesses that her favorite thing was a pair of bumblebee striped tights that she had as a three-year-old. Lou outgrew these tights, metaphorically having to give up this thing that she loved in order to grow up. As a grown woman, Lou laments that she can no longer have a pair of tights that she loves as much, because Lou believes that part of being an adult is letting go of things that made her happy. Will gently teases the tights, but he very much agrees with the sentiment behind them. Lou needs to find the things that she is passionate about, even if they are as silly as bright clothing, in order to live a satisfied life. No matter the difficulty in finding or achieving these ambitions, Lou’s life is incomplete without them, and without a pair of bumblebee tights.

Chapter 7 Quotes

Patrick had never minded the fact that I dressed “inventively,” as he put it. But what if he hadn’t been entirely truthful? Patrick’s job, his whole social life, now revolved around the control of flesh – taming it, reducing it, honing it. What if, faced with those tight little track-suited bottoms, my own suddenly seems wanting? What if my curves, which I had always thought of as pleasantly voluptuous, now seemed doughy to his exacting eyes?

Related Characters: Louisa (Lou) Clark (speaker), Patrick

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 102

Explanation and Analysis

Lou has been dating Patrick for six years, since before Patrick became obsessed with physical fitness. Now that Patrick’s job as a physical trainer and his dreams of completing triathlons take up all his time, Lou begins to doubt the relationship that they share. Patrick’s focus on physical fitness blinds him to the emotional aspects of a relationship, and while physical fitness is upheld as the epitome of health, Patrick actually has a very unhealthy perspective on his own body. Patrick’s hatred of his own flesh causes Lou to be insecure about her own body, making their relationship emotionally unhealthy for them both. Patrick doesn’t recognize the importance of mental and emotional health even as he reaches the peak of physical health. Patrick may not mind Lou’s inventive style, but Lou needs someone who actively loves those quirks in order to have a truly fulfilling relationship.

“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...”
 “I’m happy here,” I said.
 “Well, you shouldn’t be.”

Related Characters: Louisa (Lou) Clark, Will Traynor (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 108

Explanation and Analysis

As Will gets to know Lou more, he starts to encourage Lou to do more with her life than stay in their small hometown. While Will calls Lou’s wardrobe strange, he still wants Lou to show it off rather than hiding her quirks. Will wants Lou to think of more ambitions for her life rather than staying “happy” and safe. Lou may be content, but Will sees that Lou is not truly happy here. Yet Will does not yet know the whole story. Lou was actually sexually assaulted, which caused her to retreat from anything adventurous in order to protect herself from getting hurt again. Will’s reference to dodgy men may seem like a joke to him, but the threat of strange men is actually the reason that Louisa is not out in the world. Yet Will may be exactly the push that Lou needs in order to see that she is not actually happy here, and that

she needs to explore more in order to find a fulfilling life.

Chapter 11 Quotes

☞☞ “If you’d bothered to ask me, Clark, if you’d bothered to consult me just once about this so-called fun outing of ours, I could have told you. I hate horses, and horse racing. Always have. But you didn’t bother to ask me. You decided what you thought you’d like me to do, and you went ahead and did it. You did what everyone else does. You decided for me.”

Related Characters: Will Traynor (speaker), Louisa (Lou) Clark

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 171

Explanation and Analysis

Lou decides that she is going to show Will all the amazing experiences he can still have living in a wheelchair, and she pushes Will to go to a horse race as the first step in this new life of adventure. Will suffers through the day, suffering many indignities at being a disabled man in a world that is not built to accommodate him, then finally explodes at Lou when they get home. Aside from Lou’s mistakes about wheelchair logistics and Will’s discomfort in public, Will actually hates horses and horse races. Lou’s zest for showing Will how wonderful his life can be ignored the fact that this is still Will’s life. Will has to have a hand in the choices and decisions that face him every day. The biggest struggle of Will’s life post-accident is that everyone assumes that his physical handicaps make him incapable of making any decisions for himself. Making decisions for himself is what makes life worth living for Will. If Lou truly wants to convince Will to keep living, she has to start giving Will back some control over his life.

Chapter 12 Quotes

☞☞ “I just... want to be a man who has been to a concert with a girl in a red dress. Just a few minutes more.” ... I closed my eyes and lay my head against the headrest, and we sat there together for a while longer, two people lost in remembered music, half hidden in the shadow of a castle on a moonlit hill.

Related Characters: Will Traynor, Louisa (Lou) Clark (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 185

Explanation and Analysis

In another one of Lou’s attempts to get Will out of the house and enjoying life, Lou and Will go to a classical music concert where one of Will’s friends is playing Mozart’s violin concerto. After the concert, Will asks Lou to delay the moment where they have to go back inside the house and end this magical moment. Will and Lou are not dating, but the scene plays like a classic romance novel. Down to the castle and the moonlight, everything about the moment echoes the conventional love story that Will and Lou are specifically not living. Will wants to live the illusion of the perfect love story because he knows his life is very far from the traditional romance. Moyes seems to point out that this dream love story is beautiful, but that Will and Lou’s connection is actually more meaningful because it does not strip away the complicated history and circumstances of the two love interests. Will is more than just a normal man, and Lou is more than just a normal girl in a red dress. Though that “more” includes pain, it also gives significance to the love that Will and Lou share that might not fit into the conventional romance novel.

Chapter 13 Quotes

☞☞ ...Granddad was picking at his plate with greedy delight, letting out what we called his “food noises” – little grunts and murmurs of pleasure. “Delicious salmon,” Will said to my mother. “Really lovely flavor.”

Related Characters: Will Traynor, Louisa (Lou) Clark (speaker), Granddad

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 197

Explanation and Analysis

Will comes to dinner at Lou’s house for her birthday and meets her family, including Lou’s grandfather who has suffered a stroke and no longer speaks. Still, Granddad clearly enjoys his life, expressing his pleasure at the small things, like good food. Will also enjoys the food, but limits his expression of that pleasure to a far more polite form. Will’s mental fitness is untouched by his accident, where Granddad no longer has the mental ability that he once had. Yet Granddad’s compromised mental acuity actually keeps

him from realizing the new boundaries of his life, while Will struggles with depression at the thought of everything that he can no longer do after his injury. Granddad can enjoy the small delights of life without worrying about how much better things might have been before his stroke. Though Will is potentially better equipped to handle life, Granddad is actually happier because he focuses on each present moment instead of thinking about his previous mental health. Moyes defines mental health as a matter of happiness rather than a matter of intelligence, unfortunately for Will and Will's mental fitness.

☝ 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. Granddad banged his hands on the table. Mum and Dad burst out laughing. Patrick just stared.

Related Characters: Louisa (Lou) Clark (speaker), Granddad, Patrick, Will Traynor

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 202

Explanation and Analysis

At Lou's 27th birthday party, Will gives Lou a pair of bumblebee striped tights. Lou had previously told Will about a pair of yellow and black striped tights that she absolutely loved as a child, wearing them every day even though no one else understood why Lou found them so wonderful. Will goes to great lengths to give Lou a new pair of these tights, understanding that the tights are really a way for Lou to express what she actually wants out of life. Will constantly pushes Lou to achieve more in her life, but these tights affirm that Will wants Lou to do things that truly make her happy. Lou's parents and Patrick do not fully support Lou's ambitions, thinking that the tights are strange rather than a way for Lou to express her personality. Lou can no longer ignore what she wants in favor of doing things that make sense to her family and her boyfriend Patrick. Will loves Lou so much that he wants her to have the things that make her happy. With Will's help, Lou will fill her future with the things she has a passion for – even if those things are as odd as bumblebee striped tights.

☝ Now he was just Will – maddening, mercurial, clever, funny Will – who patronized me and liked to play Professor Higgins to my Eliza Doolittle. His body was just a part of the whole package, a thing to be dealt with, at intervals, before we got back to the talking. It had become, I supposed, the least interesting part of him.

Related Characters: Louisa (Lou) Clark (speaker), Will Traynor

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 204

Explanation and Analysis

As Lou becomes comfortable with Will and spends long hours in his company, Lou slowly begins to see the real Will beyond a man in a wheelchair. Will's wit, intelligence, and darkly funny personality match with Lou's own. Together, Will acts out Professor Henry Higgins, a character from the movie *My Fair Lady*, who tries to teach the lower class Eliza Doolittle to be a high society lady and falls in love with her in the process. Though Lou and Will do not yet recognize their romantic feelings for each other, Lou very much identifies with the way that Will broadens her horizons and introduces her to cultured experiences that she never would have had on her own. Will is often on the more powerful side of their relationship, though the common assumption about handicapped people would make Will unable to take care of himself or teach anyone else. Will's mental fitness far outweighs any physical disabilities that he may have. Lou realizes that Will as a person is far more interesting than Will's disability.

Chapter 16 Quotes

☝ It had become a kind of specter for me, the airless little room with no windows. The thought of sleeping in there again made my chest feel tight. I was twenty-seven years old. I was the main earner of the family. I could not sleep in what was essentially a cupboard.

Related Characters: Louisa (Lou) Clark (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 241-242

Explanation and Analysis

Now that Louisa is broadening her horizons and moving out of her comfort zone in her professional life, the tiny bedroom that she has always had is no longer enough for

her. Lou moves into her sister's larger room when her sister goes away to college, causing problems when Treena comes back for the weekends and has no place to sleep. Yet Lou cannot go back into the smaller room for her sister's sake. Lou's ambitions have metaphorically outgrown the space she once inhabited. Lou is very used to sacrificing her own happiness and growth for her sister, but she now has to recognize that her own needs are valid as well. No matter how much Lou loves her family, there has to be a balance between what Lou does for her family and what Lou does for herself. Refusing to go back to sleeping in the tiny box room is Lou's first step on the journey of understanding her own desires in life while remaining close to her family.

Chapter 17 Quotes

“I thought of my parents, my sister with her big new life. Mine was to be the small life, my ambitions the petty ones. I glanced over at the maze, at its dark, dense box hedging. I was being ridiculous. Perhaps I had been behaving ridiculously for years. It was all over, after all. And I was moving on.”

Related Characters: Louisa (Lou) Clark (speaker), Katrina (Treena) Clark, Will Traynor

Related Themes: 

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 269

Explanation and Analysis

Before meeting Will, Louisa had assumed that she was not meant to do great things, the way that her sister Katrina seemed destined to achieve an amazing life. This feeling was cemented by the sexual assault that Lou suffered in the maze at the castle above the village where Lou lives. This trauma, which occurred in a location that symbolizes the many choices and paths that Lou might have taken in her life, convinces Lou that making adventurous decisions invites pain and struggle. Lou's fear keeps her stuck living with her parents in the tiny town where she was born, metaphorically never entering the “maze” and never making choices that carry both potential risk and potential happiness. Will brings Lou back to the maze, suggesting that she go in, and Lou finally takes the opportunity to confront her fears. With Will's support, Lou can enter the dark maze and move forward into a better future. Lou takes back agency in her own life and goes into the maze ready to make the necessary choices to make it through and emerge on the

other side with new ambitions.

“Ultimately, they want to look on the bright side. They need me to look on the bright side... You, Clark,” he looked down at his hands, “are the only person I have felt able to talk to since I ended up in this bloody thing.”

Related Characters: Louisa (Lou) Clark, Will Traynor (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 275

Explanation and Analysis

After Will's accident leaves him wheelchair-bound, the bonds and sacrifices of a family come into sharp focus. While Will's family sacrifices for Will in order to give him the best care available, Will also makes sacrifices for his family in order to keep their spirits up. Will has to repress some of his natural feelings of anger and hopelessness for the good of his family, remaining outwardly optimistic even when he desperately wants to share his fears and receive support. Will's wheelchair physically isolates him from many of his old friends and loved ones because of the logistics of handicap-accessible movement, but he is also emotionally isolated from his family because he can't share the deep lows of his injury as well as the hope for a better future. Lou, free from the complex push and pull of familial love, is able to offer Will a place to be honest about his feelings, no matter how painful they are. That vulnerability and honesty is a big part of the relationship that Will and Lou build. Their love comes from their ability to share the darkest parts of their experiences with each other.

“Some mistakes... just have greater consequences than others. But you don't have to let that night be the thing that defines you.”

I felt his head still pressed against mine.

“You, Clark, have the choice not to let that happen.”

Related Characters: Will Traynor (speaker), Louisa (Lou) Clark

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 276

Explanation and Analysis

After Will learns about the sexual assault that Lou has kept secret for six years, Will offers Lou the chance to move past this traumatic event. Lou has chosen safe, boring paths for her life for fear that anything more adventurous will open her up to the danger and pain that she experienced that night. Will recognizes the real consequences of that trauma on Lou's emotional and mental health, but also tells her that she has the ability to make more out of her life than staying stuck in the past. Will sees Lou as so much more than a victim or a survivor, instead focusing on Lou's tremendous potential to overcome hurt and tragedy. Will also emphasizes Lou's choice in her own life, a central tenant of Moyes' outlook in the novel. Moyes celebrates the ambition and achievement that her characters are capable of. Each of Moyes' characters has the choice and agency to overcome their difficulties as long as they are able to have the mental strength and willpower to continually fight the circumstances of their lives. This may somewhat simplify the obstacles that these characters face (as well as the lasting trauma of sexual assault), but it is also a powerful message of hope in the face of adversity.

Chapter 18 Quotes

“I wanted to tell him that he was too good for that silly caramel woman, no matter what appearances might suggest, and that... I didn't know what else I wanted to say. I just wanted to make it better. “You okay?” I said, as I caught up. The bottom line was, it should have been him.”

Related Characters: Louisa (Lou) Clark (speaker), Alicia Dewar (Lissa), Will Traynor

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 284

Explanation and Analysis

At Alicia's wedding, Lou comes to terms with the fact that Alicia is the type of woman that Will probably would have married if he had never had his accident. Will dated Alicia before the injury that landed him in a wheelchair, and is shaken when Alicia marries Will's former best friend. Lou recognizes that it's sad that Will lost out on this opportunity, but also remembers that Will is actually worth much more than the traditional marriage to a well-bred, beautiful woman. This safe, conventional love story may be the epitome of a perfect life for most people, but Lou wants bigger things for Will. Will's ambition, drive, and charm should get him more than the “appearance” of a perfect life.

Lou loves Will on a more genuine level, seeing all the things that Will could be rather than the expected happy ending for a man of his wealth and social class. True fulfillment and happiness for Will would come from more than the life that should have been his, or the things that he once thought would make him happy. While Lou is sad that she can't make him realize this, there is also a hope that Will can discover on his own a better purpose for his life than money, adventure, and marriage.

“Louisa is one of the smartest people I know, but I can't make her see her own possibilities.”

Mary Rawlinson gave him a sharp look. “Don't patronize her, dear. She's quite capable of answering for herself.” I blinked. “I rather think that you of all people should know that,” she added.

Related Characters: Louisa (Lou) Clark, Mary Rawlinson, Will Traynor (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 289

Explanation and Analysis

At the wedding of Will's ex-girlfriend, Will introduces Lou to an old friend of his, Mary Rawlinson. Mary now runs an organization that helps people retrain for new careers, and offers to help Lou find a new ambition in life. Will is adamant that Lou should find something bigger to do with her life than stay in the small town she has always lived in, but Mary wants to hear from Lou herself what Lou wants to do. Though Will hates when people speak for him or take away his choices because of his wheelchair, he here makes the mistake of trying to talk for Lou. Mary calls him out on this hypocrisy, reminding Will that one of his biggest struggles is that people assume that his physical limitations make him incapable of making his own decisions. If Will truly wants Lou to live up to her potential, he has to let her make those choices and goals for herself. Though Lou may have incredible potential, Will has to let her set her own ambitions, or those achievements will mean nothing.

Chapter 20 Quotes

“Well, this is actual life or death, after all, and you're locked into this man's life every day, locked into his weird secret. That's got to create a kind of false intimacy. Either that or you're getting some weird Florence Nightingale complex.”

Related Characters: Katrina (Treena) Clark (speaker), Will Traynor, Louisa (Lou) Clark

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 315

Explanation and Analysis

Lou finally admits to Treena that she has feelings for Will, her quadriplegic employer, that are far more powerful than her feelings for Patrick, her boyfriend of six years. Treena supports her sister, but also brings up important questions for a relationship between Will and Lou. As Treena points out, Lou's job as Will's caretaker has caused Lou to be much closer to Will, both physically and emotionally, than she would normally be with someone she just met. Lou also has to be careful that her responsibilities as Will's caretaker, acting as Will's "Florence Nightingale" (a famous nurse), do not get in the way of Lou's emotional needs. Lou's feelings for Will are naturally more powerful because there is the potential that she could lose Will, something that Lou has never been afraid of in her relationship with Patrick. Moyes explores the codependency that might arise in such a close working relationship. Lou does spend eight hours a day, five days a week with Will, but Lou is also more honest with Will than she has been with anyone in her life. Treena interprets this closeness as a false intimacy, but Treena's skepticism forces Lou to confront the real emotions behind her connection with Will.

☝ "It feels like I might be running, but I feel like I'm permanently just a little bit behind the rest of the field. I feel like..." He took a deep breath, as if he were trying to compose himself. "I feel like there's something bad around the bend, and everyone else seems to know what it is except me."

Related Characters: Patrick (speaker), Louisa (Lou) Clark

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 320

Explanation and Analysis

Lou finally admits to Patrick that she will not be going to Norway to watch Patrick's next race. Patrick can't quite understand why Lou no longer wants to blindly support Patrick's triathlon goals, unable to see the emotional distance that has grown between him and Lou. Patrick's character is defined by his commitment to physical fitness, to the detriment of all the other aspects of his emotional

and mental health. Even though Patrick is physically almost perfect, training relentlessly for triathlons and spending all of his energy on his job as a physical trainer, he is not happy or satisfied because he spends no time on his mental or emotional health. Patrick even understands his emotional life in terms of physical fitness, comparing his emotional confusion to yet another race. Patrick may see that something is missing from his life, but his flaw is that he will never come to terms with the emotional effort that he has to put into his relationship, instead of assuming that his physical fitness will be enough for Lou. Moyes makes it clear that physical fitness alone is not enough, but that emotional and mental fitness are also necessary components for a healthy life.

Chapter 21 Quotes

☝ I knew it, and Camilla knew it. Even if neither of us would admit it to ourselves. Only on my son's death would I be free to live the life of my choosing.

Related Characters: Steven Traynor (speaker), Will Traynor, Camilla Traynor

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 327

Explanation and Analysis

Steven and Camilla, Will's parents, have had to sacrifice many of their dreams and ambitions in the wake of Will's accident. Though Camilla and Steven love their son dearly, and willingly put their lives on hold in order to care for Will, Steven still recognizes the things that he has had to give up due to Will's current situation. Steven and Camilla are bonded in a loveless marriage in order to provide a support system for Will, even though Camilla is well aware of Steven's affairs and Steven's mistress Della wishes that Steven would leave his family in order to be with her. Though it is too monstrous for Steven to say out loud, he cannot ignore the fact that his life would be less limited if he did not have his son to worry about. Steven even admits that a stronger man would not remain with Camilla out of obligation.

Moyes examines the bonds of family, and questions what family should sacrifice for each other. Many of the other characters, such as Lou and Lou's mother Josie, sacrifice just as much for their families without even seeing the things that they themselves are giving up. Moyes suggests both that Steven should be free to live as he wants but that it is also wrong of him to resent the sacrifices that he is making

for Will. There is no easy answer for Steven, as he wants his son to live a fulfilling life just as much as he wants to remove some of the obstacles keeping him from his own happiness.

Chapter 23 Quotes

☝☝ 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.

Related Characters: Louisa (Lou) Clark (speaker), Patrick, Will Traynor

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 359

Explanation and Analysis

While on the beach in Mauritius, Lou finally gathers the courage to tell Will how she feels about him. Moyes uses this moment to emphasize the fact that this book as a whole is not the traditional romance novel. Will is not the idealized romantic hero and Lou is not the perfect romantic heroine. Furthermore, their love will not be the ultimate solution to all of their problems. Love is a powerful force in the novel, but it is not able to immediately fix all the things that Lou and Will are struggling with – including Will's paralysis, Lou's recent breakup, the class differences between Will and Lou, and Lou's job as Will's caretaker. Moyes recognizes this fact without diminishing the significance of what Lou feels and the gravity of Lou's confession. Even if love cannot cover up all the difficulties of their relationship, Lou still needs to be honest with Will. Theirs is not a conventional love story, where the happy ending comes as soon as the characters realize how they feel about each other. It is a realistic love story, where love can help the characters do wonderful things without becoming the only thing that matters in life.

☝☝ “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.”

Related Characters: Will Traynor, Louisa (Lou) Clark (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 361

Explanation and Analysis

Lou confesses her love to Will as a final effort to convince Will that he still has reasons to live despite his physical limitations. Will returns Lou's love, but asserts that it is not enough to overcome his wheelchair-bound life. Will defines himself through his paralysis, reducing his health and well-being to just the physical aspects. Will's physical limitations, keeping him from the bold, ambitious life that Will always thought he would have, damage his mental health. Will's depression over all the things he can no longer do prevent him from seeing the possibilities that are still open to him. Lou is open to improving Will's mental and emotional health to balance out the physical disabilities that Will struggles with, but Will can only focus on the physical fitness that he will never achieve (in a way, echoing Patrick's single-minded obsession with physical fitness). While Lou tries desperately to give Will a chance to make a new life in his wheelchair that is just as fulfilling as his able-bodied life, Will prioritizes his lack of “normal” physical health above any other definition of a healthy, satisfying life.

Chapter 25 Quotes

☝☝ I couldn't imagine crying over anyone I'd been with. The only equivalent was if I thought about Thomas waiting to die in some strange country, and as soon as that thought came to mind it made something inside me actually flip over, it was so hideous. So I stuck that in the back of my mental filing cabinet too, under the drawer labeled: unthinkable.

Related Characters: Katrina (Treena) Clark (speaker), Thomas Clark, Will Traynor, Louisa (Lou) Clark

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 383

Explanation and Analysis

When Lou comes back heartbroken from the trip to Mauritius, Katrina doesn't fully understand how deeply Lou feels for Will because she has never had a romantic attachment that significant. Katrina compares Lou's feelings for Will to her own feelings for her son, Thomas. Moyes equates familial love and romantic love, holding up each as extremely powerful. Katrina's comparison here, then, adds more weight to Lou's feelings for Will. Lou's love for Will is as strong as the bond between a mother and her child, one

of the most incredible bonds between people. Lou and Will have more than a passing attraction—they have a true, deep love that changes each of them for the better.

Chapter 26 Quotes

☝☝ Mum? I owe Will. I owe it to him to go. Who do you think got me to apply to college? Who do you think encouraged me to make something of myself, to travel places, to have ambitions? Who changed the way I think about everything? About myself even? Will did. I've done more, lived more, in the last six months than in the last twenty-seven years of my life.

Related Characters: Louisa (Lou) Clark (speaker), Will Traynor, Josie Clark (Lou's Mom)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 330

Explanation and Analysis

When Lou finds out that Will has asked her to come to Switzerland to see him one last time before he ends his life, Lou finally admits to her parents why she has to drop everything and rush to see Will. Josie doesn't understand how Lou could possibly support this choice for Will, comparing it to murder. Lou sees it differently, feeling as though she owes Will support for his choices in exchange for all the things that Will has pushed Lou to do.

Before Will, Lou had no ambitions for her life, choosing instead to remain safe in her hometown after a traumatic experience convinces her that she will be hurt if she follows her dreams. Will helps Lou come to terms with her past and move forward with her life. Will even allows Lou to see herself as someone extraordinary instead of the average failure that Lou previously considered herself. Will also gives Lou a new goal. In trying to convince Will to see the best in life, Lou also finds new motivation to improve her own life.

☝☝ It's not my choice. It's not the choice of most of us on this board. I love my life, even if I wish it was different...If he is determined, if he really can't see a way of things being better for him, then I guess the best thing you can do is just be there. You don't have to think he's right. But you do have to be there.

Related Characters: Ritchie (speaker), Will Traynor, Louisa (Lou) Clark

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 395

Explanation and Analysis

Lou goes on the online forums for quadriplegics one last time before she visits Will in the Dignitas Clinic where he is planning to end his life. Ritchie gives her advice about supporting Will through this decision. Through Ritchie and the other contributors to the board, Moyes points out that Will's choice to end his life is not the normal course of action for most people living their lives disabled in some way. Will's choice to end his life is related more to the loss of choice and ambition he feels now that he is in a wheelchair, rather than the conditions of living in a wheelchair alone.

Ritchie also observes that part of loving someone is supporting their choices, even when they are not the choices that Lou necessarily agrees with. If Lou truly loves Will, she has to sacrifice her efforts to change Will's mind and be at peace with Will's choice for his own life. Lou cannot live for Will or force Will to live for her. What she can do is be with Will and support him through one of the most difficult moments of his life.

Epilogue Quotes

☝☝ Push yourself. Don't settle. Wear those stripey 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.

Related Characters: Will Traynor (speaker), Louisa (Lou) Clark

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 409

Explanation and Analysis

After Will's death, he leaves a letter for Lou to read once she has gone to Paris like she promised Will she would. In the letter, Will tells Lou how much he loves her, but also asks her to live well to honor his memory. It may seem odd to have a character who chose to end his life offer such life-affirming advice, but Will's message "Just live" gets at the heart of the novel. Moyes explores what makes Will's life

worth living. Will's purpose in life was to live as boldly and ambitiously as he could, something that he found impossible once he was in a wheelchair. Though Will loved Lou dearly, and appreciated all her efforts to give him back a life of adventure, these exterior motivations were not enough to restore Will's intrinsic love of life.

Will's mission is then to help Lou see all the potential that she has to live grandly. Will recalls the striped tights that Lou loved so much as a child as a way of telling her to follow her heart in all her choices going forward, no matter what anyone else says.



SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

PROLOGUE

2007. Will Traynor comes out of the shower to find his girlfriend, Lissa (Alicia), still in bed. She tries to convince him to plan a more relaxing holiday (vacation) rather than the thrill-filled adventures he usually plans. Will just laughs, kisses Lissa goodbye, and leaves the house checking his messages on his blackberry. Lissa calls after him that he needs to turn his blackberry off at dinner tonight.

With little difficulty, Will manages to stop thinking about how sexy Lissa looked in bed and focuses on the legal problems that happened over night at his office. The security guard of his building tells Will that it is raining, and Will decides not to take his motorcycle today. Will waves off the security guard's offer to call him a cab and walks out into the rain.

As Will leaves his apartment building, his best friend and co-worker, Rupert, calls about a deal from New York that has to go through immediately. Will promises to be into the office in ten minutes and distractedly walks out into traffic to hail a cab. At that moment, another motorcyclist comes screaming down the street. The cyclist hits Will and Will drops his blackberry, which shatters. Will hears an explosion and shouts before falling unconscious.

Will's dominant character trait is his ambition, seen in his desire for adventure and his attachment to work. Even with Lissa's prodding, Will has trouble putting aside work for other things. His blackberry is never far from his hand, showing his commitment to his job.



At this point, it seems that Will's preoccupation with work damages his personal relationships. Yet though Will may be a thrill-seeker, he is not needlessly reckless. He agrees to leave his motorcycle home in the rain.



Aside from letting work obligations get in the way of his relationship with Lissa, Will also lets work distract him from his personal health and safety. The accident is not Will's fault, but it might not have happened if Will had paid attention to his immediate surroundings rather than his work. As Will's blackberry shatters, Will's high-powered job and active life metaphorically shatter as well.



CHAPTER 1

2009. Louisa Clark walks home from work as slowly as possible. She arrives at her house to the usual whirlwind of activities, while her mother, Josie Clark, rushes about cleaning the house and her father (Bernard) plays with Thomas, the toddler son of Louisa's younger sister Treena. Lou (Louisa) says hi to her mom and then sets about getting a glass of water for her Granddad, who has suffered a stroke and can no longer care for himself.

Lou's mother, Josie, quickly makes Granddad a cup of tea, chattering to Lou about Lou's boyfriend Patrick. Patrick has called to make further plans for the holiday that he and Lou have planned. Lou reluctantly tells her mother that the holiday probably won't happen because she has just been fired from her job—the café she works at is closing.

It is not yet clear why Louisa still lives with her parents as an adult, but Moyes shows that Louisa's life centers around her family. Lou quickly shows her tendency to take care of other people by helping her grandfather.



Josie acts as Granddad's caretaker, but she also ignores Granddad's wishes, as when she gets him tea instead of water. Josie also seems more invested in the relationship between Patrick and Lou than Lou is, suggesting that Lou is not very excited about her long-term boyfriend.



Lou loved working at the café, chatting with the regular customers who came in daily. She especially liked talking to Dandelion Lady, an older woman who spent every morning in the café. She also enjoyed working for her boss, a sweet man named Frank. Yet Frank knows that his small café won't be able to compete with the larger café coming in at the castle up the road from their small town. He closes the café and gives Lou three months severance pay.

Lou's mom tries to be optimistic about Lou's prospects, but Lou's dad is angry that Lou has been fired after working so hard for Frank for 6 years. Lou knows that her family desperately needs the wages that she brings home, given the precarious state of her dad's job in the current economic recession. She promises to go down to the job center and get a new job tomorrow.

Lou goes to tell Patrick the bad news while he runs laps at the athletics club. Patrick won't stop to talk to Lou, so she runs alongside him and tries to tell Patrick how lost she feels now that she is unemployed. Patrick tells her to stop moping around and retrain for a new career, the way entrepreneurs like Jeffrey Archer and Richard Branson did. Yet Lou can't think of anything she wants to retrain to do.

At the job center, Lou tries out every entry level job she is qualified for. She wears what she calls "civilian clothes" so that she will make a good impression. After the chicken processing factory, the home energy consultant, and the fast food cashier positions do not work out, Lou's personal advisor, Syed, suggests that Lou try the entertainment industry. Lou likes to wear "theatrical clothing" but she draws the line at becoming an exotic dancer.

Finally, Syed tells Lou that she needs to accept something or she will no longer be eligible for job seekers' allowance money. Lou desperately wants a job, sick of moping around the house and missing the comforting atmosphere of the café. She daydreams about seeing Dandelion Lady again until Syed interrupts to tell Lou about one more opportunity: care and companionship for a disabled man.

Lou has no experience with caregiver, as Lou's mom does all the work for Granddad at home, but she knows that she has to try this job because it's good money. Lou's dad, Bernard, laughs when Lou tells them, thinking that this poor man had the bad luck to end up in a wheelchair and the worse luck to get Lou as a caregiver.

Though Lou did not have a prestigious job at the café, she did enjoy the work. This happiness is also complacency, as Lou has no ambitions to go elsewhere. Lou wants to help people, like the Dandelion Lady, who are on the fringes of society, another sign of Lou's big heart.



As the wage earner of her family, Lou feels a responsibility to ignore her own wishes in order to do what is best for her family. Though Lou says she is not ambitious, she may just be sacrificing her own dreams for her family because she loves them.



Patrick's obsession with fitness defines his character from the beginning, as he can't even stop running in order to comfort his girlfriend. Patrick's advice, while practical, likewise does not recognize how Lou must be feeling. Lou's complete lack of ambition seems to bother Patrick.



While Lou may not have big ambitions, she does have standards for what she wants from her life. Syed, like many people, does not understand why Lou dresses in such an adventurous fashion. Lou's style of dress catches attention and suggests that she really wants more than her small town can offer.



Lou craves a sense of purpose, so much so that Lou's quality of life suffers once she feels useless, unemployed and seemingly unemployable. Lou does not seem to realize her own potential as a caretaker, evidenced by how much she continues to care for people like the Dandelion Lady.



Lou may not have practical experience with caregiving, but she does seem to have a latent talent for it. Lou's family has a teasing way of showing affection, as Bernard pokes fun at Lou's lack of skills instead of supporting her in this new job.



CHAPTER 2

Lou knows that she is not dumb, but she has always felt inferior to her sister Katrina, who everyone calls Treena. Lou dresses in crazy colors and outlandish outfits, thinking that it's because it is the one way she can stand out from Treena's cleverness. Lou also enjoys looking the way she wants instead of trying to look like all the other girls at school. Yet Lou has no idea what she wants to do with her future, outside of having the ordinary life that awaits an ordinary girl.

Lou's mom insists that Lou wear her old suit from the 80s to her care interview. Lou hates the boring cut of the suit, but is even more ashamed that the suit is a bit too small for her. On the bus, Lou realizes that she has no idea how to interview or negotiate a job contract, as her job at the café had been a rather informal affair. Lou worries that she is not qualified to be a caregiver for a quadriplegic man. She had enough trouble dealing with her Granddad right after his stroke.

Lou has no time to consider her possible short-comings because the bus is already at Granta House, the home of the well-off Traynor family, who owns and operates the nearby Stortford Castle. Lou is intimidated by the grandness of the house, and further disheartened by the coolly polished look of the woman who steps out of the front door before Lou even rings the bell.

Lou sticks out her hand to shake politely and the woman shakes her hand disdainfully before introducing herself as Camilla Traynor. Camilla leads Lou into a luxurious sitting room and begins to ask Lou about her qualifications while Lou struggles to answer coherently. Lou's too-tight suit then splits at the seam and Lou rushes to cover it with her suit jacket.

Camilla sharply asks Lou what she plans to do with her life, and Lou has no answer. Camilla finally sighs, asking Lou to give her one reason to hire her instead of someone else. Lou hesitates, slightly too long, then says that she is a hard worker who would be happy to help Camilla's husband. Camilla corrects Lou, explaining that it is her son who is quadriplegic.

Lou and Treena have a complicated relationship. Though Lou obviously loves her sister, there is also an undercurrent of jealousy at all the things that Lou has had to give up to support her sister's success. Meanwhile, Lou's fashion sense marks her as someone who longs for something outside the norm, even though Lou professes no desire to do anything other than have an ordinary life.



Lou seems to be playacting at being conventionally respectable for this interview by wearing her mother's clothes. But these clothes do not fit right, a sign that Lou cannot hide her real personality for long. Lou does not have experience with normal job considerations, but she may have experience with the things that matter most for this job.



Moyes folds class differences into the story, as the outward wealth of the Traynor family at first seems like a sign that the Traynors are happier than the poorer Clark family. Lou feels inferior to their elegance.



Lou's lack of experience in the real world shows through in this interview. Clothing is again an important indicator of Lou's inner thoughts. As she becomes more flustered, her suit falls apart too.



Again, Lou is unable to show any ambitions for her own life. Camilla seems to care more for her son than she does for her husband when she corrects Lou. Lou is taken aback at this news, as she had assumed that a handicapped man would be older, rather than someone her age.



Lou is flustered at her mistake and finally settles on telling Camilla that she can make a mean cup of tea. Lou stutters to correct herself again, realizing that she just suggested that quadriplegia can be solved by tea, but Camilla just tells Lou that the job has a six-month contract that would start as soon as possible. Camilla goes on to explain that they expect no medical expertise, but want someone to care for her son's mental health. To Lou's surprise, Camilla offers her the job, with the caveat that she wear something less revealing than the skirt that is rapidly splitting up Lou's leg. Lou gratefully accepts.

At home that night, Treena and Bernard speculate about how disabled this man will be. Josie is excited that Lou will be working for a "posh" family. Treena and Bernard continue to joke about the new job, telling Patrick that he won't have to worry about sexual harassment and wondering if the man will speak with a machine like Stephen Hawking. Lou shakes her head that her sister is so smart and yet can be so thick, like when she dropped out of university in her final year because she got pregnant with Thomas.

Lou tries to hide her discomfort from her family, but she is unsure about her ability to care for a disabled person's needs, especially a man from a high-class family. Meanwhile Patrick just comments that this job is better than Lou's stint at the chicken factory. Bernard then laughs, saying that Lou should use this time to get fit with Patrick's personal training business. Lou is hurt at this latest jab, so Bernard apologizes and reminds Lou that they are all proud of her taking this next step.

CHAPTER 3

Camilla starts to show Lou around the annex, the wing of Granta House that has been adapted for wheelchair access. As Camilla gives Lou the tour, she tells Lou to feel free to make tea in the kitchen or help with small chores, but emphasizes that her son, Will, can only be left alone for 15 minutes at a time. Camilla gives a despairing glance at Lou's furry jacket and tells Lou that the most important part of Lou's job is that Will can think of Lou as a friend. Lou brightens at the thought of watching movies or listening to music with Will.

Camilla takes Lou in to meet Will and Will's personal nurse, Nathan. Will is a solidly built man with shaggy unkempt hair. Will starts to groan as Lou timidly tries to introduce herself. Will then stops groaning suddenly and introduces himself as Will Traynor. Nathan scolds Will for using his "Christy Brown" impression as Camilla looks on nervously. Camilla then tells Lou that Nathan will show her Will's medicine, and she briskly leaves the room.

Lou's offer of tea suggests that she would treat a quadriplegic person like a normal able-bodied person, which is what Camilla wants. Camilla's advice that Lou wear something less revealing effectively gives Lou permission to display her quirky style, as Lou has already said that she does not like to wear suggestive clothing.



Josie's fascination with "posh" families suggests again that Josie believes that money reflects a higher quality of life. Stephen Hawking is a physicist and one of the most brilliant men of the 20th century who is also confined to a wheelchair, making him a prime example of the difference between mental and physical health. Treena gave up her own ambitions for her son Thomas, a sacrifice that also requires Lou to work so that Treena can keep living at home with him.



The members of the Clark family continue to show their love by teasing. Lou disagrees with Patrick's obsession with physical fitness. While Patrick is always focused on the physical condition of people, Lou is worried about her new employer's mental and emotional needs.



Camilla seems to take Lou's unconventional style as a sign that she will not be a professional presence in the house. This is both a blessing and an annoyance for Camilla. So far, Lou's job seems to be mostly a matter of making sure that Will isn't lonely, but at the same time, Camilla's insistence that Will can't be left alone at all might seem somewhat sinister, as we later learn when it's revealed that Will is suicidal.



Will tests Lou's courage by trying to scare her with an act of low mental ability—a stereotype that people might expect from a man in a wheelchair. Christy Brown was an Irish writer and painter who suffered from cerebral palsy and could only move his left foot. Brown, though an accomplished writer, could not speak for much of his life. Will is able to speak quite well, but pushes people away.



Nathan turns the radio on for Will and takes Lou back to the kitchen to the medicine cabinet. Lou is overwhelmed by all the pills that Will has to take but Nathan reassures her that it's all written down and that he will be in every day at morning, lunch, and evening to take care of most of Will's physical needs. Nathan then leaves for the morning and Lou goes back to check on Will.

Lou offers to make Will a cup of tea, but Will snottily refuses, and then ignores her. Lou goes to busy herself with some chores, angry that Will so easily made her feel stupid. She starts to vacuum, and notices a row of photographs in Will's bedroom. The photos show a handsome young man bungee-jumping, out with friends, and in a jungle. Lou picks up a photo of Will skiing, then jumps when Will appears in the doorway. He tells Lou to feel free to pity him for the life he lost whenever she wants to, and then rolls away.

Lou occupies herself all morning with any task she can find and hurries out of the house when Nathan appears to take care of Will's after-lunch medical needs. Lou sits at the castle bus stop and calls her sister to complain how much Will hates her. Treena just reminds Lou that Will can't be that bad once they get to know each other, and that the family can't afford for Lou to quit. Lou goes back in to Will's room, offering to take him for a drive or bring him his computer. Will just scoffs, jeering that nothing Lou can do will improve his life. Will asks Lou not to be chatty with him, and Lou agrees.

At home that night, Lou hides in her tiny room, though she usually can't stand to spend time in the small space. Treena comes in and begs Lou not to quit. Treena needs Lou's wages to care of their parents so that Treena can quit her job and go back to university. Treena feels dead without the mental stimulus that school once gave her, and asks Lou to stay in this miserable job so that Treena can have her dream. Lou can't believe that her sister is asking her something so selfish, but she swallows her feelings and assures Treena that she will tough out Will's moods for the paycheck.

CHAPTER 4

For the first two weeks, Lou goes in to work at Granta House and stays out of Will's way as much as possible. She feels awkward when forced into close proximity with Will, like when feeding him his lunch, and rushes out of the house for her break as soon as Nathan arrives each day. Will's mother, Camilla, and father, Steven, don't seem to know how to reach Will either, saying little but "hello" to him each day.

Lou gets a crash course in caring for another person's physical needs, something that makes her very nervous. Nathan has made a career out of caring for people's physical needs, but also seems to compartmentalize the emotional side of his work.



Lou treats Will kindly, recognizing that Will deserves respect as a person, but Will does not repay Lou the same favor. Lou is attracted to the person that Will used to be, but Will is sure that his life is meaningless now that he can no longer experience the kind of active thrills and adventure that once sustained him.



Lou occupies herself by doing small "useful" tasks to give meaning to her days. Will and Lou do not get along at first, as Will resents Lou's attempts to brighten up the bleak circumstances that he sees in his own life. Trapped in the artificial closeness of caregiver and employer, Lou thinks that she and Will have nothing in common, but Treena suggests that the two may be more similar once Lou gets to know Will.



Lou's small room is another sacrifice she has made for her family, as her sister Treena needs the larger room. Treena also needs Lou to sacrifice her temporary happiness and continue working for Will so that Treena can focus on her own ambitions. Treena doesn't seem to notice the sacrifices that Lou makes for her, but Moyes mostly celebrates Treena's ambition instead of focusing on Treena's selfishness.



Lou's position as Will's caregiver forces them into a false intimacy. Lou does things for Will that she would normally never do for a mere acquaintance. Will's family seems to treat each other as strangers, and they do not openly express any affection at all for each other.



Lou wants to have sympathy for Will, knowing that he is in constant pain and that he has a very isolated, limited life now. Yet Will's sour demeanor and endless complaints make it impossible for Lou to feel anything but exasperation. Camilla too makes Lou uncomfortable, watching her every move so that she can correct any possible mistake. Lou misses her job at the café more than ever.

Camilla comes in one morning to let Lou know that Will has friends over, Rupert and Alicia. Lou offers to make them coffee and brings a tray in to Will and his guests. Lou recognizes Alicia from one of Will's old photographs, and realizes that Alicia and Will used to date. Rupert, Alicia, and Will's conversation is incredibly stilted, even though Rupert was Will's best friend before the accident, and Lou leaves the awkward room to get more logs for the fire.

As Lou comes back into the house, Lou overhears Rupert and Alicia tell Will that they are planning to get married. Will silently looks at them with contempt as they make excuses about their romance after Will's accident. Will congratulates them coldly and politely, and Rupert tells "Lissa" that it is time to leave. As Alicia gets her coat, she tells Lou that she did as much as she could in the months after Will's accident, but "you can only help someone who wants to be helped."

Lou goes back to check on Will only to find that Will has smashed all of his old pictures in their frames. Lou just tells Will to stay still while she cleans up the glass so he doesn't puncture a tire, and Will mumbles an apology.

That night, Lou goes to the pub with Patrick and his triathlon training friends. Lou does not enjoy these nights, though she does get slight pleasure in rubbing her unhealthy desserts in Patrick's fit friends' faces. Lou tells Patrick about the events at Granta House today, and Patrick laments the awful life that Will must have. Patrick can't imagine life without the active pleasures he enjoys, and he changes the subject to the Xtreme Viking, his dream triathlon in Norway that he wants to complete this year.

Lou tries to have sympathy for Will's physical illnesses, but she does not know how to handle Will's mental pain. Will's horrible attitude and Camilla's general coldness actually make Lou much more uncomfortable than any of the physical requirements of her job.



Will's personal relationships have completely deteriorated, even with the people who were once supposedly his closest friends. The physical isolation caused by Will's wheelchair has led Will to isolate himself mentally and emotionally as well.



Rupert uses Will's old pet name for Alicia, another injury in Will's realization that his old girlfriend has moved on. Yet Alicia maintains that she did everything she could for Will, and was unable to convince him to change his mind about his new life. Love is not enough to save someone who does not want to be saved.



Will takes some physical control over his life by smashing the pictures. Lou's response is practical—rather than getting upset at what Will has done, Lou simply deals with the mess. Will seems to respect this response, as seen in his apology.



Lou shows that she doesn't understand why Patrick is so wrapped up in the physical world. Patrick can't imagine a life where his body is no longer under his control, as Patrick finds meaning in life only through physical pursuits. Moyes hints at the unhealthiness of this perspective.



The next morning, Lou comes in to the house to find Will in a worse mood than ever. She gets the broken picture frames out and tries to start salvaging some of them until Will interrupts her. Will tells Lou that he smashed the photos for a reason and Lou isn't "helping" by ignoring his wishes. Lou feels bad for taking away one of the few choices Will has left, but still can't stand the way Will treats her. Lou stands up for herself, telling Will that his disability does not give him permission to make other people miserable when they just want to help him. Will seems surprised by Lou's sudden outburst and tells her to put the photos in the bottom drawer of his dresser.

Will points out that his physical disabilities do not make him incapable of controlling his own life. Lou respects this, but she also stands up for herself with Will in a way that she does not do with anyone else in her life. Will may have suffered, but that does not give him the right to make other people suffer as well. This moment is an important shift in their relationship, now that Will begins to respect Lou as her own person.



CHAPTER 5

Lou has been caring for Will for a month, and her parents love the inside peek she provides to the Traynor's upper class life. Josie is happy to find out that the Clark house is just as clean as the Traynor house. Bernard finally respects Lou as a wage-earner in the family, while Patrick and Trenea treat Lou exactly the same. Lou can't get a read on how the Traynors think of her. Will, Mr. Traynor and Nathan are polite but distant, while Camilla is now convinced that Lou is worse than useless at any domestic task.

Josie seemingly cleans her house as a way to prove to herself that the Clark life is just as good as the Traynors' life, in spite of their class differences. Yet Camilla still clearly thinks of Lou as inferior because she is poor. Lou has learned to receive love through teasing even though her family is starting to appreciate her as an adult with her own ambitions.



Lou tries her best to stay cheerful and upbeat, like Camilla hired her to be, but can't stand the way that Camilla micromanages her every move. Yet finally, Lou has a breakthrough. Will catches Lou trying to sneak vegetables into his meal, but he jokes about it instead of getting mad. Nathan tells Lou that he has never seen Will in a better mood. Lou realizes that Will likes it when Lou is rude to him, because everyone has treated him too delicately since his accident.

Lou can't handle Camilla's micromanaging, as she wants to make decisions for herself. Moyes suggests that the ability to make one's own decisions is very important, underscored by Will's distaste for being treated like a child who needs veggies sneakily fed to him. Lou and Will start to get along better because Lou treats him as an adult who is capable of fighting with someone.



Will asks Lou to keep him company while he watches a DVD in the afternoon. Lou declines, as she says she doesn't like foreign films with subtitles. Will insists that Lou broaden her horizons and watch a French movie. Lou is skeptical, but is brought to tears by the end of the movie. Will sarcastically comments that she must not have liked it at all, then asks Lou what she does in her spare time. Lou responds that she likes clothes, but that she doesn't really have any hobbies. Will is appalled, and even moreso when Lou mentions that she has only ever traveled to Spain. Will finally asks point blank what Lou wants to do with her life, but Lou only says she doesn't know.

Lou's world has gotten a little larger through just watching a film. Lou sees foreign films as a cultured pastime that is not for people of her class and upbringing. Will wants Lou to experience more from life than Lou has ever considered for herself. Lou still cannot think of any ambitions for herself, but she is starting to realize that she does want more from her life.



On Friday, Lou drives Will to a doctor's appointment. She is happy to get out of the house, but quickly becomes terrified at all the logistics necessary to get Will out safely. Will jokes about his wheelchair to put Lou at ease, and Lou gets them all to the hospital despite all her fears about the car. Nathan gets Will out of the car and into the hospital as Lou marvels about the accessibility problems she never considered before.

Will's world is very small now, and not entirely by his choice. The physical limitations of Will's wheelchair make it hard for him to even consider leaving his house, much less living out the kind of adventures he had before the accident. Something as simple as a doctor's appointment is a large ordeal.



While Will meets with the doctors, Lou and Nathan wait outside. Lou asks if the doctors are checking whether Will is getting better, but Nathan tells her that Will's spinal injury made him a C5-6 quadriplegic with no hope for recovery. Lou goes to get coffee to pass the time and then knocks on the door when she returns. The doctor calls for her to come in as Nathan hurriedly pulls at Will's sleeves. He is not fast enough to hide the livid red scars on Will's wrists.

Lou finds out that Will is not only severely limited at the moment, but he also has no hope of his physical health ever improving. This lack of hope actually caused Will to attempt suicide, as Lou guesses from the scars on Will's wrists—and now, perhaps, it becomes more clear why Lou is supposed to never let Will be by himself for too long.



CHAPTER 6

A huge snowstorm hits and Lou arrives at Will's house only to find that Nathan has been unable to get there. Steven asks Lou to check in on Will, who is still in bed asleep. Lou leaves him sleeping and begins to clean the annex, reveling in the calm of cleaning the house while the snow falls outside. Finally, Lou gets anxious and wakes Will. She helps him change position and notices that his skin is hot. Will just asks for some painkillers and thanks Lou, something he never does.

Lou finally understands a little of what her mother finds so satisfying in cleaning, and a little of why her mother is able to dedicate her life to taking care of others. Will's polite thanks is a big sign that he is not well today, as Will normally chooses sarcasm and banter when he is with Lou.



The snow continues and Lou continues to worry about Will's labored sleep until Nathan appears at the door. Nathan is aghast at Will's state, admonishing Lou for not reading the folder of how to care for Will when he is sick. After an hour of fever medications, Nathan finally has Will back to a safe temperature. He tells Lou to repeat the process at 5 pm, but to let Will sleep until then.

Lou still has not learned how to take care of Will physically, even though she is now better at caring for Will's mental and emotional needs. Luckily, Nathan can care for Will's physical side, but Will's present state underscores how little control he has over his own life.



Nathan leaves and Lou grabs a book from Will's bookshelf so she can read at Will's bedside. She relishes the rare moment of silence. Shortly before 5, Lou's phone buzzes with a message from Camilla asking if Lou can stay the night, as Nathan can't come back due to the snow. She agrees immediately and sends a quick text to her parents and Patrick. Patrick has decided to go cross-country snow running to take advantage of the weather. Lou settles back into her book of short stories, enjoying her foray back into reading after feeling as though Treena had taken over the academic world.

Lou is willing to put her life on hold at a moment's notice, staying over at Will's house with no warning. Patrick runs in the snow despite the potential for injury or getting sick, putting the pursuit of physical perfection above his actually physical health. Meanwhile, Lou confesses yet another sacrifice she has made for her sister, giving up reading even though she used to like it. It is time that Lou does something for herself.



Will finally wakes up at 8:15, looking much better and sounding more lucid. Lou takes advantage of this rare, vulnerable Will to ask him what caused his paralysis. Will responds that it was a motorbike accident in which he was the pedestrian, and Lou is surprised it wasn't something more adventurous. Will goes on to explain how his whole life in London became impossible due to his disability. He asks Lou to tell him something good. Lou sings him a ridiculous song called the Molahonkey Song that Lou's dad used to sing when she had a nightmare.

Will's ambitious life was cut short by a completely random, ordinary accident, even though his thrilling, high-stakes lifestyle would seem like the likelier cause. Will describes this accident as ironic, using black humor to deal with his pain. Lou matches Will's strange sense of humor, and even manages to cheer him up a little – something no one else has been able to do.



Will laughs at Lou's singing, then asks her to tell him something else. Lou tells Will about a pair of black and yellow **bumblebee striped tights** that she loved dearly when she was three, but could never find again once she outgrew them. Will laughs again and Lou asks if he ever loved anything that much. Will sadly answers yes. Finally, Will falls back to sleep and Lou falls asleep at the foot of his bed after tending to his fever once more.

Lou's bumblebee tights are a symbol of making choices for herself. Now that Lou can no longer wear her tights, she no longer makes choices based on what she wants. Will, too, used to be able to do anything that he wanted, but the accident made that impossible. Both Will and Lou have to learn to be confident expressing themselves and making their own choices once more.



Camilla wakes Lou the next morning, annoyed that Lou stayed in Will's room instead of the spare room. She is further disturbed to find out that Will was sick and no one informed her. Lou stammers that Nathan told her not to bother Mrs. Traynor at court, but is saved by Steven's appearance. Steven is wearing the same clothes he wore yesterday and seems surprised when Camilla asks him if he knew about Will's state during the night. He mutters something about the intercom being broken, and Camilla just tells Lou to contact her directly if this ever happens again.

Steven was out all night with his mistress, something that all the members of the Traynor family know, but refuse to admit out loud. The lack of honesty causes distance in the Traynor family, though they do love each other. Lou, though she has known Will for much less time, is already much closer to Will than his family is—another example of how more money doesn't always mean more happiness.



CHAPTER 7

One night in spring, Lou sleeps over at Patrick's even though he is too tired from training to even talk to her. As she walks to Will's house, she thinks of how she and Patrick first met: Lou was working at a hairdresser's, and gave Patrick the worst haircut of his life. At first, Patrick felt average and safe to Lou, but he quickly turned into Marathon Man. Lou no longer feels like she can keep up with Patrick, or that Patrick even wants her to. She worries that her curves now just look like fat to Patrick, over-accented by her whimsical clothing.

Lou reveals that the defining aspect of her relationship with Patrick was safety, rather than passion. Lou herself seems unsure if she ever actually loved Patrick. Especially when Patrick becomes focused solely on his physical training, all the emotional parts of their relationship fall apart.



Lou gets to work and Camilla orders her to take Will outside so she can do some spring cleaning. In the garden, Will asks Lou what is troubling her. Lou responds that it's just boyfriend trouble, and Will asks more about Patrick, who he calls Running Man. Lou simply tells him that she has been with Patrick six years and that Patrick is very loyal. She then changes the subject to Will's ex, Alicia.

Will reduces Patrick to "Running Man," ignoring every other part of Patrick's identity much like Patrick himself does. Lou is able to be honest with Will about her lack of passion for Patrick, though part of that might be a reluctance to talk about her boyfriend in front of Will, who she is also starting to have feelings for.



Will seems a tad melancholy about Alicia, but quickly tells Lou that he is happy for Rupert and Alicia. Lou goes on a tirade about the typical, upper-class, married life that Alicia will have, a life that will never fulfill her. Will asks if this is why she has never gotten married to Patrick, and Lou neglects to tell Will that Patrick never asked.

Will has good days and bad days, considering that his paralyzed limbs still put him in such discomfort that some days he can only listen to the radio. But the good days are much better than Lou's first weeks, as she and Will stroll the gardens and Will teases Lou for her fashion choices. Will tells Lou that a person with her adventurous taste should travel and actually have adventures.

Lou interrupts Will's advice to say that Will shouldn't be giving such high and mighty advice when he can't even keep his hair and beard trim. Will laughingly agrees to let Lou give him a haircut and shave. The pair go back to the castle and Lou nervously prepares Will's shaving kit, as she hadn't actually expected Will to agree. Lou slowly and carefully begins to shave Will's beard, deeply feeling the intimacy of this moment. Will breaks the tension with a joke about Lou shaving his eyebrows, but clearly enjoys the caring human contact.

Lou puts on a DVD while she cuts Will's hair. As she finishes, a young woman bursts into the annex and shrieks at Will that he is more selfish than ever. Camilla follows the woman, asking her to be quiet. Lou thinks that the girl has the same moneyed look as Alicia, and Will introduces the girl as Georgina, his sister. Georgina has come to visit from her home in Australia, and Camilla asks Lou to take her lunch break as Camilla, Georgina, and Will talk about a private family matter.

When Lou returns from lunch, Nathan is in the kitchen. Lou explains about the uproar with Will's sister, but Nathan seems more interested in complimenting Will's haircut. Lou goes back to Will in the living room to turn on Will's DVD and sadly notes that Will seems distant once more. Lou takes the laundry down the hall and overhears Camilla and Georgina talking in the doorway.

Georgina is sobbing as Camilla tells her that Will truly has no hope that he will ever get better. Lou gets uncomfortable listening in, but can't pull away when she hears Camilla mention that Will previously attempted suicide last January. Lou realizes that she is employed to make sure that Will never tries again. She is about to leave once more when Georgina starts to beg her mother not to take Will to Dignitas in Switzerland. Camilla comforts her crying daughter, telling Georgina that she bargained with Will to get six months to change his mind.

Lou outlines the "normal" life she expects for people who do not marry for love. Though Lou has never professed any ambitions, she clearly disdains this version of an ordinary life.



Will's physical pain gets in the way of his mental stability. Yet Lou's presence has also improved Will's mental and emotional health so much that he is able to be more physically active than he has been in months. Will again reinforces the idea that Lou should have more ambitions for herself.



Part of improving Will's mental health means caring for his physical appearance. Will and Lou bond through their sense of humor, even during a moment that might otherwise feel across the line of proper caregiver behavior. Will and Lou's friendship is starting to develop into a more significant relationship.



Lou sees Alicia and Georgina as women who are unable to reach Will even though they loved him. Familial and romantic love is very similar in the novel. Still, Camilla considers the family to be sacred, keeping some things for family alone.



Nathan sees how important Will and Lou have become to each other, also marking out the haircut as an important shift in their relationship. Nathan sees the haircut as a sign of Will's renewed desire for life.



Georgina believes that Will should live for his family because they love him. She focuses on the selfish consequences of Will's actions, rather than the fact that Will's life should be Will's choice. Though Moyes presents Georgina somewhat unsympathetically, Moyes also seems to agree with Georgina about Will's life, portraying the time period to change Will's mind as a good thing.



CHAPTER 8

Now in Camilla's perspective, Camilla confesses that she never wanted to help her son kill himself. She has had an ordinary life, even if her career as a magistrate means that she has seen the bleaker side of human life more often than not. Yet Camilla still believes in bringing order from the chaos. She retreats to her garden, finding comfort in the Latin names for plants.

Camilla enjoys her garden because it reminds her of the circle of life. It is there for her in good times and bad, always growing. Yet after Will's accident, Camilla didn't touch her garden for a year. It was only once they brought Will back to the annex that she started to work at it again, needing to show Will that there was still potential for life somewhere.

Back in the present day, Camilla and Steven sit together in front of a fire in the living room. Georgina has retreated to her room, and Steven blames her bad mood on jet-lag. Steven then optimistically brings up Will's haircut, but Camilla tells him not to get his hopes up, because she knows her son. Steven is upset at Camilla's resignation, but Camilla can't help but resent Steven for judging her now when he has never put in the effort that she did for their kids.

Camilla remembers when Will first told her how he wanted to end his life. She pretended not to understand and walked out, but Will persisted with all the negotiating power he once used in his business endeavors. Camilla still sees Will as her child, unable to let him go no matter what he wants. But in January, Will gruesomely tried to take his own life by slashing his wrists, and Camilla gave in. She raged in her garden that her son will not grow old, but she, unlike Steven, knew that Will would simply try again until he got what he wants. Two weeks later, she told Will that they will take him to Dignitas.

Camilla's purpose in life seems to be finding order from chaos, but she is stuck in a situation that has no order. There is no acceptable reason in Camilla's eyes why her son should want to take his own life.



Camilla's care of the garden went through a period of dormancy, but the plants themselves continue to grow again after each winter. Camilla seems to hope that Will will do the same, growing stronger after this setback.



Camilla and Steven no longer trust each other, and their family is dysfunctional enough not to connect on any of these important issues. Steven also wants to take Will's haircut as a sign that he is embracing life, but Camilla more cautiously sees it as nothing more than a brief change of appearance.



The ambition that Will once felt in his job is now focused completely on his new goal of ending his life in a way of his choosing. Will wants to take back control of his life in the only way he knows how. Camilla, meanwhile, loves Will enough that she is willing to sacrifice her own pain in order to give Will what he wants.



CHAPTER 9

Lou doesn't sleep the night after she finds out Will's plan. She is angry at Camilla for being so cold, now understanding that Camilla's distance from her son is more than an upper-class habit. She is angry at Will as well, but mostly horrified that Will might just be gone someday soon. She keeps this secret from her family, refusing dinner and sitting with Granddad so she won't have to talk.

The Traynor family shows love and affection very differently than the Clark family, something that Lou blames on the Traynors' money and social status. This money is a curse in Lou's eyes rather than a blessing. Lou also sees Granddad's inability to talk as a comfort rather than a disability.



Yet the next day, Will is in amazingly high spirits. He asks Lou to finish his haircut, but Lou can't maintain a conversation, her head too full of wondering how exactly Will will manage to kill himself without the use of his limbs. Will finally apologizes for Georgina's blunt interruption, but Lou says she appreciated her honesty. Finally, Lou decides to leave a letter of resignation for Camilla. As Lou leaves for the day, she hears Will laughing as he watches football (soccer) with his father, and she does not say goodbye.

Will is much more at peace with his decision than anyone else is, perhaps because it gives him the control over his life that he craves. Lou doesn't understand how Will could have agency over even this last choice—yet Lou also expresses her love for Will very differently than Will's family does. While Steven can watch soccer with Will and pretend everything is fine, Lou would rather have everything in the open than continue to politely skirt around an issue this big.



On the bus home, Lou considers what she will tell her family about leaving her job. She regrets that her family will think this is a selfish choice even though Treena was the one who selfishly added financial strain to the family by choosing to raise Thomas. Still, Lou is adamant that she cannot tell her family the truth about Will.

Lou still has trouble with the idea of sacrificing her own happiness for her family, but she is starting to realize that she has to make some choices for herself. Lou also protects Will by keeping his choice private. If the media were to find out about Will's plan, he and his (relatively well-known) family would be scrutinized in the "right to die" debate.



When Lou gets home, the neighbors are having another loud, public fight about the husband's infidelity on their front lawn. The whole neighborhood watches, but Lou is distracted when Camilla Traynor pulls up in a private car. Camilla seems embarrassed by the whole thing, but Lou shrugs this fight off as "marriage counseling." Camilla gets to her point, asking why Lou wants to leave. Lou is horrified that Camilla wants her to remain on suicide watch, but Camilla assures her that she thinks that Will is going to change his mind. Lou walks into her house, leaving Camilla on the lawn.

The loud argument in Lou's neighborhood contrasts with the Traynors' large and silent home and policy of silence about all their problems. This is another place where the Traynors' money and place in polite society actually limits their choices rather than allowing them to be more free. Lou seems to already understand that Will has to make his own choices, yet also recognizes that she is becoming attached to Will and it will hurt her too much if he ends up actually dying.



When Lou walks in, Treena confronts her about selfishly leaving her job when the family needs money so badly. Lou accuses her sister of only caring about her own university dreams and slams the door to her tiny room. Lou starts to cry on her bed, thinking of Will, and Treena comes in to apologize. Cracking under the pressure, Lou tells Treena the real reason she had to quit.

Lou feels as though Treena has always made decisions based on her own happiness, rather than taking the family into account like Lou does. Yet Treena sees this as living up to her ambitions and doesn't understand why Lou seems to be sabotaging her own career aspirations at every turn.



Lou lists all the reasons she is jealous of her sister, from looks to brains, but realizes that she will always love Treena for her calm acceptance of Will's end of life plan. Treena tells Lou to finally put the Traynors' money to good use and take these last months before Will's appointment to show him every good, adventurous thing he can still do. Treena believes that Lou can make Will happy.

The love between Lou and Treena is fraught with years of competition and jealousy, but Lou still realizes that her sister is one person who will always be there for her. Treena seems to believe that giving Will back his life of adventure will provide a purpose for Will that can convince him to continue living.



CHAPTER 10

Lou presents her grand “cheer up Will with adventures” plan to the Traynor family. They are surprised, but supportive, Steven more than Camilla and Georgina. Camilla agrees, as long as she or Georgina goes on holiday with them, but Georgina insists she has to get back to her own life in Australia. Steven puts his foot down and says that Will should be allowed to go independently with Lou and Nathan, able to make his own choices again. Reluctantly, Camilla agrees.

That afternoon, Treena and Lou stand in a cold field, waiting for Patrick to reach the end of his latest triathlon. They discuss Lou’s potential plans for Will. Lou brings up horse racing, but Treena encourages her to try more “cultural” events. Treena then jokes about racier activities like strippers while Lou tries to catch Patrick’s eye as he finishes. Patrick doesn’t see Lou.

Lou’s family is more grateful for Lou’s wages than ever as Treena packs to leave for university. Lou starts to get annoyed with her sister for trying to take some of her things, then realizes that her sister’s move means that she can finally take the bigger room. Treena feels betrayed when she finds out, asking Lou why she hasn’t moved in with Patrick yet if she wants more space so badly. Lou calls her sister a freeloader as Bernard yells at them to stop fighting.

On Lou’s next Saturday off, she goes to the library to research trips for Will. She is nervous to be at the library again and using a computer for the first time in years, but happily discovers that using the internet is not hard. Lou makes a list of possible adventures and buys a calendar to record their progress as the date of Will’s Dignitas appointment approaches. Lou now has four months to convince Will that he still has reasons to live.

CHAPTER 11

Spring brings tourists to the sleepy town of Stortfold’s castle and Lou enjoys the exotic breath they bring to her quiet life. She cheerfully greets Will, excited for their outing to the horse race at a close by arena. Nathan is pretending that he’s never been, trying to give Will a reason why they have to go. Will tries to refuse, but Lou, wearing a horse-patterned dress, insists that she needs to bet on Man Oh Man and claim her winnings.

Georgina, like Treena, feels that she shouldn’t have to sacrifice her own life and ambitions for her family. Though Will certainly needs support in this struggle, Georgina cannot give up her own life for Will. Steven, though often clueless about the kids, sees to the heart of Will’s depression: Will wants to be able to be independent and have agency in his life.



Lou gives Patrick support that Patrick does not return for Lou. Patrick is so focused on running that he doesn’t even see Lou, just like he doesn’t see Lou’s emotions in their relationship. Treena makes it clear that giving Will more adventures will also require Lou to broaden her horizons.



In Lou’s eyes, Treena takes whatever she wants, regardless of the consequences. Lou begins to take on some of that mindset by taking a larger space in the home that she now pays for. Yet Lou is still not fully able to grow into her own space, and is unable to move to the next step in her relationship with Patrick.



Lou’s discovery of the internet is another way that she is making her world bigger, step by step. Like reading and academics, the library is another area that Lou avoided because of Treena, but she is now ready to take some of that space for herself. Lou is still making her world bigger for Will’s sake, though, needing that exterior reason to push her out of safe complacency.



Lou again has a natural affinity for adventure outside of her small town, even if she herself has never left. Lou shows real initiative for the first time in the novel, planning the trip for Will despite his misgivings. Lou also gives Will a reason outside of his own enjoyment to go along with this outing, assuming (correctly) that Will will refuse to go for his own sake.



Lou thought she had planned everything perfectly, but trouble starts as soon as they reach the parking lot of the racing grounds. The wet grass is too soft for Will's wheelchair and Nathan has to essentially carry Will and his chair to the entrance, only to find that the disabled entrance is on the other side of the grounds. Still, Lou remains cheerful until Will tells her that she is being exhausting.

Lou goes quiet, busying herself with watching the crowd of people from all different classes at the racing grounds. The first race starts and Lou excitedly cheers her horse on, but Man Oh Man comes in sixth. Will looks pained so they decide to go have lunch. Will blanches at the thought of being spoon-fed in front of strangers, but Lou presses on until the hostess tells her that their blue badges won't allow them to enter the Premiere restaurant.

Despite Will's protests, Lou tries to buy the right badges for the Premiere restaurant, but the hostess snottily tells Lou that tickets like that are only sold across the racing grounds. Nathan breaks in to tell Lou that Will really just wants to go home. They leave the restaurant, buying pork buns from one of the food stalls on their way out. Will remains quiet and Nathan tells Lou again that they should get home.

As Lou and Nathan try to wheel Will across the parking lot, his chair gets stuck in the mud. Despite her reluctance to talk to strange men, Lou corrals some drunk men at a bachelor party to help carry Will and his chair to the car. She tells the men that Will was a former soldier who was injured fighting in Iraq and the men leap to assist. Only after they get Will into the car does Nathan notice the disabled parking section on smooth pavement.

Back home, Will stays in a stony mood. When Lou asks him if anything is wrong, he responds that she should decide the answer to *that*, the way that she has made all the decisions today. Lou bristles, saying that she only wanted Will to have a fun day. Will scoffs, saying that if Lou had bothered to include him in her plans for his life, she would have found out that Will has always hated horses and horse racing. Will dismisses Lou for the day, criticizing her for deciding for him just like everyone else has since his accident.

Lou has the best intentions, but she is not yet fully aware of all the struggles that Will is facing. Out in public, Will has to face again that he has almost no agency over his own life, down to the inability to make it out of a parking lot under his own power. This helplessness is extremely disappointing to the once powerful Will.



Man Oh Man's loss is another example of how Lou's expectations for the day will not come true. This book as a whole is not a miracle underdog story, and Man Oh Man's loss foreshadows that Lou may not be able to "win" in the end. The blue badges are another sign of how money appears to Lou to make life easier, but does not actually satisfy Will.



Thanks to the Traynors, Lou might have enough money for the right badges, but the attitude of the snobby hostess shows that money still will not solve Will's struggles. At the same time, it's important to keep in mind that his life is certainly easier than it would be if he had the same accident but wasn't extremely wealthy.



Lou's shyness around the bachelor party seems odd, given that she is usually so chatty—which suggests that she has a reason to be nervous around large groups of drunk men. Lou lies about Will's injury in order to valorize Will for the boys, who otherwise might ignore a person in a wheelchair.



Will's greatest struggle is the lack of agency his accident has caused, and the way that people assume his paralysis prevents him from making decisions for himself. Lou may have Will's best interests at heart, but she needs to take Will's desires into account if she truly wants to help Will choose to keep living.



CHAPTER 12

Lou remembers the day she first became fearful. Seven years ago, Lou's grandmother died in June. That July, 20-year-old Lou took advantage of her parent's grief and distraction to stay out late partying with Treena, who was home from her first year at university. Lou dressed like a normal young woman in those days and was planning a trip to Australia.

One Friday night, Lou celebrated a lucrative day convincing tourists to go to a craft show by going out drinking with her friends and some university boys. Lou blows off Treena to go with the boys to **the maze** in the castle and ends up alone with the boys. Treena finds her half an hour later in the middle of the maze, alone and crying. Treena leads Lou out.

Back in the present, Lou tells Will that she's joined the library, and Will encourages her to read more Flannery O'Connor instead of chick-lit. Will then realizes that Lou has never seen a real classical concert and offers her tickets from an old friend of his who plays the violin. Lou fires back that she's not Will's *My Fair Lady* project (which Will corrects to *Pygmalion*), and argues that she would feel uncomfortable in that world. Will tells her that he feels uncomfortable in society every day since his accident, and Lou agrees to go as long as Will will go with her.

The night of the concert, Lou triple checks the accommodations for Will's chair and agrees to take over Will's bedtime care, as Nathan will be busy by the time they get home from the concert. Lou also worries about her dress, knowing that everything she owns is wrong for a classical concert. Lou gives Will a fashion show of three options and Will advises her to wear a red dress. Lou does, but puts on a scarf to cover her cleavage. Will tells her that she looks better without the scarf, and Lou takes it back off. The pair leave, both dressed in style.

At the concert hall, Lou notes the different ways that upper class people react to Will. Rather than staring, the high class concertgoers pointedly ignore Will and his chair. Will pretends he doesn't notice and settles into the handicap accessible spot. Will tells Lou that a tag in his collar is bothering him and, in the absence of scissors, Lou rips it out with her teeth. Will is quietly shocked that Lou just appeared to be kissing his neck, but Lou just jokes that it was better his collar than his trousers.

Lou finally admits that she wasn't always so cautious. As a younger woman, Lou had plans and ambitions like a "normal" young woman. This attitude is reflected in young Lou's more conventional style of dress.



The maze at the castle symbolizes Lou's confusion about which path her life should take. While it is not explicitly stated, it seems that Lou suffered some kind of sexual assault in the maze that made her feel as if some paths were unsafe for her as a young woman. Treena's ability to lead Lou out of the maze shows how Treena has concrete goals that she is working towards.



*Will continually pushes Lou towards achieving more for herself than the average life symbolized by the books she reads. Moyes also seems to be making a subtle complaint towards people who might assume that her book, because it's in the romance genre, is nothing more than "chick-lit." Yet Lou also asserts that she is not just Will's project, as Eliza Doolittle is for Henry Higgins, the protagonist of *My Fair Lady*. Will elevates even that analogy, going back to the George Bernard Shaw play *Pygmalion* that *My Fair Lady* was based on. Again, Lou has to stretch her own level of comfort in high society so that Will can also stretch himself.*



Lou gives Will a choice about how the night is going to go, even giving him final approval over her dress. The red dress is also a big step for Lou, who has avoided dressing suggestively in any way since the night of the maze. This night is about both Lou and Will taking back parts of who they were before they each suffered traumatic experiences.



While the upper-class people do not stare at Will like an animal in a zoo, they still negate Will's humanity by pretending he doesn't exist. This emotional blow is almost worse for Will to handle than his physical limitations. Lou and Will share their sense of humor and Lou treats Will as a normal man by making risqué jokes that no one else has dared to since Will's accident.



The concert begins and both Will and Lou are transported by the beauty of the Mozart. Lou's mind ranges across all the deep emotions the music sparks within her, and she wonders how much more Will must be feeling. When the music ends, Will declines to go backstage to greet his violinist friend. Lou drives them home, but Will stops her as she pulls up to the annex. They talk about the music, stretching out the time when Will can just be a normal man who went to a concert with a normal girl.

Lou and Treena never talked about the night that Treena led Lou out of **the maze**. Treena led Lou safely home and Lou changed immediately. She cut off her hair, cancelled her Australia trip, and stopped going out with her friends. She changed her style of dress to something that could never be seen as attractive to men like the ones she drank with the night of the maze. Lou put the past behind her and started going out with Patrick, but never returned to the maze.

CHAPTER 13

Patrick finally notices that Lou has been staying late with Will's evening care much more often and tries to plan a special night for Lou's upcoming birthday. Lou declines, saying that her mom and dad are already planning a dinner. With Treena and Thomas at university, Josie needs the distraction to keep her busy. Patrick backs down, understanding that his busy training schedule and Lou's desperate need for wages are a good explanation for all of Lou's overtime.

Lou is earning more than she ever has in her life, but has no time or desire to spend it. Her free time is spent at the library, looking for new opportunities for Will. Lou finds a computer program that will allow Will to type by speaking, after Will makes a fuss about Lou writing a thank you card for him to his violinist friend. Even Camilla is impressed with this breakthrough. Will even sends Lou a thank you card for all of her efforts.

Meanwhile, Lou begins to move her things to Treena's bigger room. She redecorates and puts her Will calendar prominently on the wall. At work, she continues to broaden Will's radius every day he is well enough to go out. Out on a picnic one day, Lou convinces Will to come to her birthday dinner by claiming that she already told her parents that Will wouldn't want to go. Lou's parents and Patrick are interested to meet Will.

Music is one thing that Will can enjoy just as purely as he could before the accident. Lou begins to realize how complex Will's emotional life must be, despite the apparent lack of activity on the surface. Part of the reason that Will is so comfortable with Lou is that Lou did not know him before the accident. She has no ideal Will in mind that the current Will can no longer live up to.



After Treena led Lou out of the maze, Lou rejected making any decisions for fear of making another dangerous choice. While Lou previously said that she dresses whimsically because she enjoys it, there is also a part of her that dresses strangely as a reaction to her sexual assault. Even her relationship with Patrick is a reaction to that trauma. By never returning to the maze, Lou symbolically refuses to take any initiative or ambition in her life.



Patrick ignores the emotional distance that has grown between him and Lou in favor of looking at the practical reasons why they might not spend as much time together. Meanwhile, Josie has to face the fact that she made caring for other people her life's purpose. It seems like a cautionary tale for Lou, in that she can't dedicate her whole life to caring for Will because Will might not always be there.



Lou now has a taste of the financial stability that she envied in the Traynors' life, but it is increasingly clear that money alone will not bring happiness. Lou also gives Will back some deciding power in his life. Now that Will can write letters and type, he can communicate for himself and rejoin some parts of society on his own terms.



Lou takes control of a new space, showing how she has gradually started making more decisions for herself rather than letting other people decide for her. Lou also understands Will better than anyone has since his accident. Will still wants to rise to a challenge, and so Lou is able to dare him into coming to a dinner that he would have refused if Lou had asked him in a more conventional way.



Josie immediately starts cleaning the whole house once she hears that Will is coming to dinner. Lou assures Josie that everything will be fine, and Nathan drops Will off promptly at 7:30 that night. Will looks wonderful and affably smooths over Lou's parents' fears about how to treat a disabled man. Josie busies herself with cooking a fancy roast chicken and Lou and Bernard settle Will with a beer at the table.

Lou is suddenly self-conscious of her family's cramped, cluttered house as Will sits at the table. Josie fusses over the roast in the kitchen, worried that it will be spoiled if they have to wait for Patrick much longer. Patrick arrives half an hour late, beaming about a new personal running record, and Lou tells him to go straight to the table so that her mother can start serving dinner. Patrick and Will size each other up at the table, and Will catches Lou's eye to tell her that he brought her champagne to go with her birthday dinner. Will then coaches Patrick on opening the champagne properly.

With the champagne poured, Lou's family toast all the changes that have occurred in Lou's life since she began to work for Will's family. The dinner gets off to a beautiful start, and Lou even misses Treena and Thomas for once. Granddad enjoys his food sloppily while Lou feeds Will with her fingers, comfortable after long hours in Will's company. Yet Patrick is embarrassed by the closeness between his girlfriend and her employer, and he begins to advise Will on a physical fitness regime that he should start to improve his condition. Will stays polite but Lou cuts Patrick off sharply, telling Patrick that his job as a physical trainer does not qualify him to comment on Will's situation.

The rest of the dinner passes without incident, as Will tells Bernard about his old job buying and selling companies and Josie coos at having such a handsome young man at the table. Granddad even has a lucid moment, asking for birthday cake. The time for presents arrives. Lou opens a homemade scrapbook from her parents that moves her to tears. Patrick gives her a small star necklace that is decidedly not to Lou's taste, though she thanks him profusely anyway. Will tells Lou that he has a present for her too, and Lou finds a package in his chair that encloses **bumblebee tights**. Patrick and her family are confused, but Lou is absolutely ecstatic, bubbling thanks to Will and going to put them on immediately. There's also a card, which Will instructs Lou to open later.

Josie still wants to prove that the Clarks are just as good as the Traynors by keeping her house spotless. Will also surprises the Clark family with his charm, as they had expected someone who was as handicapped mentally as he is physically.



Patrick again shows no concern for the things that are important to Lou, arriving late to her dinner so that he could go on one more training run. Patrick, who had previously not considered a man in a wheelchair to be capable of providing a romantic threat, now has to confront the fact that Will is still handsome and smart. Will also shows himself to be a charming upper-class gentleman, teaching Patrick how to open champagne.



Now that Lou is starting to achieve some things of her own, she can love her sister more genuinely without feeling jealous of Treena's ambitions. Patrick, uncomfortable with the emotional bond between Lou and Will, seemingly suggests that Will's physical injuries are simply a matter of willpower. Lou stands up for Will, reminding Patrick that Will's handicap is not a result of laziness or any fault on Will's part.



Will's money and charm overcome his physical disability in the Clarks' eyes. While the Clarks' presents, including Granddad's celebratory moment, show how much they care for Lou as a person, Patrick's present seems like an obligatory gift for some nebulous girlfriend. Will's gift is far more specific to Lou. These tights, recreating the tights that Lou loved as a child, remind Lou to do things that she truly loves. Will gives Lou both the permission and encouragement to follow her passions regardless of what any one else thinks.



Will leaves as Bernard thanks him for employing Lou and Josie sends him off with leftover chocolate mousse. Patrick half-heartedly apologizes for the physical advice, saying that he was only trying to help his girlfriend. Will responds that Patrick is lucky to have a girlfriend that gives such good bed baths, a task Lou has taken over as part of Will's evening care. Lou shuts the door before Patrick can respond.

Will mischievously blurs the line between caregiver behavior and romantic behavior by using one of the tasks that Lou does as part of her job to make Patrick jealous. Yet Lou stays on Will's side, suggesting that Lou already feels more for Will than she does for Patrick.



Patrick and Lou go to Patrick's apartment where Patrick asks about the bed baths. Lou responds that it is perfectly proper, as Will keeps his pants on, but Patrick is still unnerved. Lou doesn't even see it as odd anymore, just something nice she can do for someone she cares for. Patrick complains more about how Lou was so hesitant to get physical in the beginning of their relationship, and then he makes love to Lou as if he is trying to prove his superior fitness. Lou stays detached. After Patrick falls asleep, Lou gets up and opens Will's card. Inside is a 500 pound bonus.

Lou's hesitancy about physical intimacy seems to be a result of her sexual assault, but Patrick does not know about this history. Lou is unable to forget Will even in what should be an intimate moment for her and Patrick. Patrick too is not engaged in the emotional aspect of their relationship, distracted by his own physical ability and the implied competition he feels over Will's connection to Lou.



CHAPTER 14

In May, Lou suddenly notices a wealth of news about assisted suicide cases. Will makes no mention of this, happily going on more excursions with Lou, but Lou knows he sees the headlines too. Lou finds him one morning reading an article about a former football player who committed assisted suicide. The story affects Lou so much that she goes to the library after her shift to look it up for herself.

The entire world seems to have an opinion on choices like Will's, even though it should ostensibly be one person's choice. Lou's emotional struggle shows how the decision to commit assisted suicide (as with any death) affects so many more people than just the person who has decided to end their life.



Lou finds out that the young football player's parents were vilified in the press for helping their son commit assisted suicide. The 24-year-old player had suffered an accident on the field that left him unable to move or breathe without help, much less play football. Cut off from his passion, the player begged for death and tried to starve himself until his parents agreed. Lou starts crying so hard she has to stop reading.

While ending his life may have been the right choice for the football player, unable to do any of the things he dreamed of doing and cut off from the one thing that gave his life meaning, it also ruined the life of his family. Will's choice too will have consequences beyond Will's own happiness.



The next day, Lou finds out that Bernard lost his job, something that they all saw coming but hoped would not happen. He tries to get another job, but the economy is even harder on a middle-aged man than it was on Lou. Lou tries to give her parents her birthday bonus, but they refuse.

Bernard struggles with the same sense of hopelessness that Lou felt when she lost her job. Bernard found purpose for his life in his work, and wants to be able to provide for his family.



The next Friday, Will receives an invitation to Rupert and Alicia's wedding. He acts indifferent, but Lou decides to keep the invitation just in case. Will then gives Lou some books he ordered for her, including *The Red Queen*. Lou finds it surprisingly readable, though she disagrees with the subject matter. The book argues that women can't help but choose the best biological match as their lover for the health of their children. Lou knows that Will sees himself as biologically worthless, but she asks what happens when the best biological match is also a jerk.

In mid-May, Treena and Thomas come home from university, both looking more mature. Treena decides that they will come back every weekend so that Josie can help with Thomas. Lou fills her in on how well the dinner with Will went, once their parents realized that Will was really just a normal guy. At dinner, Treena gracefully ducks any attempts that Josie makes to give her money to help out during the week at school. That night, Lou wakes up to hear Thomas crying in the tiny room that used to be hers. At four in the morning, Thomas creeps into Lou's room, where he used to sleep with Treena, and falls asleep curled up against Lou.

At lunch the next day, Lou asks Will what was the best place he ever visited. He names many exotic locales, both natural and urban, until Lou asks where he *hasn't* been instead. Lou then shares that she once planned to go to Australia, but never went. Will makes her promise to travel, and Lou asks where she should go. Will answers Paris, detailing how she should sit at a café and enjoy coffee and a croissant. Lou excitedly tells Will they can go now, but Will refuses. He wants to remember traveling Paris as a delight, rather than a logistics nightmare with his wheelchair. Trying to lighten the mood, Will suggests that they go to **the maze**, but Lou refuses.

The next weekend, Lou comes downstairs at night worrying about how she can get through to Will. She finds her parents sleeping on the couch so that Treena and Thomas can have their bigger bed. They insist that they are fine, and that Lou needs her sleep most now that she is the only wage-earning member of the family.

*Will's vision of love is tied to physical health, as he refers to Matt Ridley's *The Red Queen*. This book outlines the ways that physical ability and sexual prowess provide an explanation for the biological and evolutionary aspects of human relationships. Yet Lou continues to advocate for the emotional and mental sides of human compatibility. Lou subtly suggests that Patrick, though physically perfect, may be the wrong match for her emotionally.*



Treena's life on her own has helped her mature quickly. Treena balances caring for herself financially while still accepting the help and support of her family via Thomas's childcare. When Thomas comes into Lou's new room, Lou has to deal with the fact that asserting her own happiness by taking the larger room means asking her family to sacrifice for her—something she's always tried to avoid.



Will's life before his accident does not even seem real to Lou, stuck as she is in their small town by both her financial concerns and her own fears. Will wants to pass a small part of that life on to Lou, now that he can only look back on his experiences. Will has incredibly high standards for his life, and is unwilling to compromise for a lesser experience when he knows how amazing his life once was. Lou is still unwilling to confront her fears in the maze, even with Will's help.



Lou's parents sacrifice their comfort for their daughter and grandson. Lou is uncomfortable with this, but understands that she cannot fix this problem for her family by giving up the space and privacy that she needs.



Lou now has 79 days to change Will's mind, and Camilla calls Lou in to talk about Will's current state. She carefully probes Lou on Will's recent activities without ever asking a direct question. She does comment that Will seems much happier in Lou's company than he has in anyone's since the accident. In a rare moment of honesty, Camilla admits that she has always felt that Will was judging her fitness as a mother. Lou answers that she gets along well with her own mother, only fighting with her sister. Lou leaves Camilla with the assurance that she is doing her best.

The football player who committed suicide did so in Switzerland, where assisted suicide is legal. His parents were cross-examined vigorously after the incident to check for any sign of wrong-doing. The parents maintain that this was the best choice for their son's well-being. In an interview where the mother looks 20 years older than her actual age, the mother admits that her son finally looked like himself again once he was at peace.

CHAPTER 15

Will asks what Lou plans to do tonight once she gets home from work. Lou makes up an adventure, then admits that she will probably just finish her book. Will then asks Nathan for a ten-pound note, as he had bet Nathan earlier that Lou would be reading a book tonight instead of watching TV. Lou gets angry that they expect so little of her, and plucks the ten-pound note away from Will with a plan to go see a movie instead. She is smiling at the joke, but also oddly close to tears.

Lou still works on Will's adventure calendar every chance she gets. She is rapidly running out of feasible ideas and is starting to feel as boring as Will and Nathan seem to think she is. After Nathan leaves, Lou tells Will how much the bet hurt her. Will responds that he wanted Lou to take a fresh look at her life. If he were in her position, he would be doing as much as humanly possible, just like he did after work before his accident. Will reminds Lou that she has just as much potential as he did and that it's now her job to live the life that he no longer can.

Two days later, Will gets an infection that lands him in the hospital. Lou gets some days off while Will recovers, and she spends her time in the library. She finds internet support groups for quadriplegics and their caregivers and feels endlessly comforted by the range of emotions that others talk through. Lou writes a message under the username "Busy Bee," asking for advice on how to change Will's mind about life as a C5-6 quadriplegic.

As Will's decision comes closer and closer, Lou and Camilla are drawn together by their desire to change Will's mind and give him a reason to live. Though Camilla appears to have everything—money, the perfect family, the perfect job—in her desperation Camilla allows Lou to see some of the insecurities under the surface.



The football player's story parallels Will's choice. While Moyes addresses the tragedy of assisted suicide, she also acknowledges why some people might feel that this is the only option they have left. Lou's preoccupation with this story suggests that she is scared that Will too will only become himself again by choosing to end his life on his own terms.



Lou does not want to face the fact that her life is safe and boring. Lou's anger that Will is making her life even more trivial by betting on it is the perfect catalyst for Lou to start taking more risks and being more adventurous.



Lou is scared that she really will amount to nothing if she continues on in the way that her life is going so far. Though Will's bet was insensitive, Lou needs a push to start having some real ambitions. On her own, Lou might never have forced herself to do more, but Will can help her gain the motivation necessary to live an extraordinary life.



Will's infection is a reminder that all of Lou's plans and Will's hopes will always be subject to Will's physical health. Lou starts to reach out to other people to build a support group for Will. Lou's user name "Busy Bee" recalls the bumblebee striped tights, and shows that this effort is also a way for Lou to build a support group for herself as a caregiver.



The next morning, Lou scrolls through the responses to her message. Some are not helpful, while others are not. One even questions why Lou feels the need to change Will's mind for him at all. The suggestions continue, but the one that sticks in Lou's mind says that Will can change his mind if he has a partner who loves him.

On Thursday, Lou picks Will up from the hospital. He is exhausted from the lack of sleep, and Lou's planned adventures for the next week all go varying shades of poorly. Finally, Lou takes Will to a wine tasting where Will manages to get himself a little tipsy. On the way home, Will manages to convince Lou to stop at a tattoo parlor, despite all of Lou's protests about Patrick's dislike of tattoos and the chance of hepatitis from dirty needles.

After two hours at the tattoo parlor, Lou leaves happily with a tattoo of a little **bee** on her hip. Will had seemed relaxed and happy in the shop, as the tattoo artists were used to working with quadriplegic people. Lou complains about the fit that both their parents would have if they found out, and insists that Will show her the tattoo he got. On his chest is a small rectangle that reads, "Best before: 19 March 2007," the date of Will's accident. Will thinks it's funny, while Lou can't decide if the dark humor is truly amusing. Nonetheless, Will gives Lou a ten-pound note as repayment for his bet that she wouldn't actually get a tattoo.

CHAPTER 16

The shortage of beds at Lou's house finally becomes a bigger problem than it's worth, even with Lou offering to sleep at Patrick's house. Lou and Patrick drift further apart as he focuses solely on the upcoming triathlon. Lou doesn't sleep well, distracted by her discomfort in Patrick's apartment and the knowledge that she won't actually be going to Norway with Patrick. Will starts to notice how tired Lou is at work and offers to let her sleep in his spare room during the weekends. Lou declines, and Will asks why she doesn't just sleep at Patrick's. Lou says she does, and Will drops the subject.

Will mentions that Lou saw his dad, Steven, in town with another woman and probes to see if Lou will say anything to Camilla. Lou focuses on hanging out the laundry and says that it's none of her business. Lou concentrates on her mission to make Will happy, leaning on the internet support groups more than ever. One user, named Ritchie, is especially kind to Lou, but Lou still realizes that the list of things Will can't do is much longer than the list of things he can. Many forum users suggest that Lou arrange for Will to have sex, but Lou can't even consider that.

The support groups online offer another place to explore what makes life worth living, and who gets to decide what makes life worth living. Lou's focus on love suggests that Lou is starting to fall in love with Will.



Will consistently pushes Lou past her comfort zone, though Lou still worries about what other people think instead of what she truly wants. Lou is also too afraid of the possible consequences of getting a tattoo to enjoy the thought of it—another example of fear getting in the way of Lou truly experiencing all life has to offer.



Lou's bee tattoo is another choice that she makes for herself instead of letting other people's opinions dictate her life. Will also had a good experience at the tattoo shop because he was able to make his own choice, and the tattoo artists were able to look past his wheelchair to see him as a person. Yet Will's tattoo shows that he still considers himself to be a lesser person now than he was before the accident.



Lou's house is getting literally too small for her, yet she does not feel ready for the next step in her relationship with Patrick. The better Patrick performs physically, the more he and Lou drift apart emotionally. Will is the one who actually notices Lou's discomfort, even though she is sleeping in Patrick's bed, showing the emotional connection that Will and Lou share.



As Lou hangs laundry, Moyes points out how Lou could air the Traynor family's "dirty laundry" by speaking openly about the many problems in Camilla and Steven's marriage. Yet Lou is more focused on helping Will, now that she sees more of the limitations that Will has to deal with. Part of Lou's reluctance about sex comes from her trauma in the maze, but it also seems like Lou does not want to share such intimate moments with Will even with her online community.



A few days later, Lou comes home to find her father celebrating a new job. Steven Traynor called Bernard to make him the new head of maintenance at the castle the Traynors care for. Lou's parents are very happy, but Lou feels uncomfortable about Will doing her family this favor. She calls Will to voice her concerns, but Will tells her not to worry. The job will benefit both sets of parents and it will free Lou up to follow her own dreams without supporting her parents. Lou thanks Will but fights back tears.

Lou goes to the pub with Patrick to distract herself. Patrick too finds Bernard's job for the Traynors suspicious and is even more annoyed when he finds out that Will offered Lou his spare room. Patrick tells Lou to officially move in with him, though he seems more resigned than excited. Lou focuses on the practical benefits of this arrangement and accepts. Both Patrick and Lou try to convince themselves that this will be a good step for their relationship.

CHAPTER 17

Lou reflects on the emotional struggle of being a caregiver, unable to escape Will's bad moods or her own. After Lou tells Will that she is moving in with Patrick, Will becomes suddenly distant and cool with her, making Lou angry in turn. That afternoon, a man named Michael Lawler comes to see Will. Will sends Lou away to meet with Mr. Lawler privately. Will pointedly calls Lou "Louisa" instead of his usual habit of calling Lou solely by her last name, "Clark."

That night, Lou googles Michael Lawler and finds out that he is a lawyer who specializes in wills and power of attorney. Lou shakes off this bad news and busies herself moving in to Patrick's flat. Her bright clothes leave the closet half empty. Patrick comments on the Will activities calendar that Lou hangs on the wall, but Lou just tells him that she needs it to remind her of when her contract with the Traynor family ends.

Lou knows she is bad at keeping secrets and her anxiety over Will's end of life plan worsens as the deadline draws closer. With seven weeks to go, Will and Lou's relationship has disintegrated into a polite friendship, such that even Nathan notices the difference. Lou finally decides to tell Camilla about Will's meeting with the lawyer and arranges to meet her at the very café in the castle that closed down Lou's previous job.

Lou is grateful to Will, but also uncomfortable at the thought that her family no longer needs her. Though Lou has felt stifled by her life with her family, she also feels safe in that role. Now that Will has arranged an alternate path for her family, Lou actually has to face up to what she wants to do outside of taking care of her family.



Patrick jealously dislikes any signs of closeness between Lou and Will. Patrick's offer to move in is a reaction to keep Lou away from Will, rather than a true desire to be closer to Lou. Lou is also uncomfortable, and Moyes foreshadows that this rushed step will not bring good things for Patrick and Lou.



Again, the emotional tolls of Will's situation are much harder for Lou to handle than the physical limitations. For Lou and Will, calling each other by their given first names actually shows much more distance than the affectionate use of last names (calling a friend by their last name is common in British boarding schools), and a sure sign that something about Michael Lawler's visit will create problems between them.



Will is making a will, showing that he is still set on ending his life and wants to arrange his affairs in preparation for his death. Meanwhile, Lou is uncomfortable at Patrick's apartment, as signaled by her wardrobe's sad state in Patrick's closet. Lou also does not trust Patrick enough to tell him the real responsibilities and stress of her job.



Part of Lou's stress comes from her lack of a support system. She needs to be able to tell her family and depend on them in this difficult time, but her obligation to the Traynor family prevents her from doing what is best for her.



Lou is uncomfortable at the new café, wondering if old patrons like the Dandelion Lady will be happy here. When Camilla arrives, Lou shares the news about Will drawing up a will. Camilla tells Lou to arrange any trip she can think of for Will, no matter the cost. Lou agrees and lets it slip that she now lives with her boyfriend Patrick. Camilla gets angry at Lou for rubbing her happiness in Will's face during such a fragile time for Will, but Lou can't see how her romantic life makes any difference to Will. Camilla storms out of the café, leaving Lou shaking.

Lou can't stop thinking about Camilla's anger over her new living situation and voices her doubts to Patrick about rushing into this next step. Patrick refuses to talk about it, telling Lou not to make things complicated. Lou finds solace in cleaning Will's annex from top to bottom instead of engaging with any of her problems. Will draws the line when Lou starts descaling his bathroom tub and forces her to walk with him to the castle.

As Lou and Will walk around the castle grounds, Will reminisces about his childhood playing knight on the wall and his first kiss on the grounds, though he can't do those things now because of his wheelchair. For a distraction, Will suggests they try to walk **the maze**, but Lou refuses. Will baits her further and Lou rises to the challenge to prove she is not boring.

In **the maze** for the first time in six years, Lou quickly starts to panic. She feels hopelessly lost and claustrophobic, then is thrown back into the memory of the last time she was in the maze. She thinks of the boys from the bar touching and kissing her and starts to scream for Will. Will comes to find Lou and comforts her until she can breathe again. Will then leads Lou out of the maze, a route he has known since he was a boy.

Once safely out of **the maze**, Will asks Lou why she panicked. When Lou can't answer, Will shares his own secret fear about the many health risks that could make his quality of life even worse than it is now. Yet Will can't talk about these things because his family needs him to stay optimistic. Will tells Lou that she is the only person he can be honest with. Lou finally opens up and tells Will about the sexual assault she has been hiding for years. Though she cannot remember all of the details because of alcohol-induced memory gaps, she finally admits that the night in the maze is the reason why she has made such safe, boring choices in her life.

The café is not a neutral location—it is far outside Lou's comfort zone and a sign of the outside world creeping into Lou's small town. It is a place for Camilla, not people like the Dandelion Lady. Lou feels much closer to the Dandelion Lady than to Camilla, as the two women approach the world from different viewpoints. Camilla also sees Lou's responsibility to Will differently than Lou does, expecting Lou to put her life on hold until Will is "better." Lou understands that she can't sacrifice events in her own life for Will's comfort.



Patrick refuses to even engage with Lou's emotional discomfort, showing another way in which he focuses only on the physical aspects of their relationship. Will, on the other hand, notices that Lou's actions are out of the ordinary and forces her to bring her feelings out into the open.



Will's memories give insight into the ambitions he once had for himself. These stories are moments where Will saw himself as a hero, a sharp contrast to the way he sees himself now. Even though Will has given up on his life, he still encourages Lou to confront all the life decisions (symbolized by going into the maze) that she has avoided for years.



Lou's previous trauma has kept her from making choices for her future, staying in one place instead of trying to navigate through the maze of life. But with Will's support, it seems, Lou can come to terms with her fears of the past and make it safely out of the maze instead of remaining stuck in her previous trauma.



Will and Lou are honest and vulnerable with each other in a way that they are not with any other character. Will speaks of how he is making sacrifices for his family even though they do not always see it, suppressing his true feelings so that his family can be more comfortable. On the other hand, Lou reveals that what looks like sacrificing her freedom in order to take care of her family is actually a choice she made in order to make herself feel safe.



Will takes in Lou's story and tells her that no part of that night was her fault. Lou is taken aback, as even Treena had made her feel as if she was partly to blame for being so drunk at the time of the incident. Lou takes Will's hand and Will tells Lou to live life to the fullest and not let that night define her future. Will and Lou leave the castle grounds and Lou thanks Will one final time for leading her out of **the maze**.

Will helps Lou let go of the guilt she always carried over her sexual assault, easing (but not totally erasing, of course) her trauma. Will pushes Lou to make the choices that she wants instead of always choosing paths in reaction to what was done to her in the past. With Will as a guide, Lou can make it out of the maze of possible life choices into an actual goal for herself.



CHAPTER 18

As Lou hangs up on yet another travel agent who suggests that she take Will to Disney World, Will comes in and tells Lou that he is taking her to Alicia and Rupert's wedding. Lou arranges all the logistics, proud of Will for facing his past. The day of, Lou wears the red dress she wore to the violin concert, hopeful that it will give Will some extra confidence. She is slightly worried that the experience will only depress Will further, and even more concerned that Will will try to do something to ruin the night for Alicia, but she puts on a brave face.

Taking Will to Disney World would be another step towards making him a child who cannot make his own choices, something Lou desperately wants to avoid. Will also makes a choice for himself by going to Alicia's wedding. Though it may not be an entirely enjoyable night, it is at least a way for Will to express some initiative and move on rather than continue to pine over Alicia.



Will's parents see them off, warning Lou not to let Will get too drunk. Lou and Will arrive at Alicia's family's gorgeous Georgian mansion. Will tells Lou to stop worrying and she warns him not to do his Christy Brown impression as Lou and Will settle into their seats. The wedding is beautiful, and Alicia looks radiant, but Lou feels out of place in this high society. As the ceremony ends, all Lou can think is that this wedding should have been Will's.

Will truly belongs in this beautiful, rich place, and Lou seems worried that Will's only chance of happiness was belonging to this polite upper-class society. Lou mentions Christy Brown (Will's impression of a mentally handicapped person) because she wants him to show off his charm and wit rather than hide behind his wheelchair.



The reception begins and Lou goes to get refreshments for Will. The bartender offers Pimm's (what she thinks is just a lemonade drink), and Lou accepts, though she silently judges Alicia for not splurging to provide alcoholic beverages. Will has been cornered by a former co-worker, who awkwardly tries to chat with Will and then mistakes Lou for Will's date and wanders off to give them privacy. Several other old friends then approach Will, but Lou is secretly glad that Alicia keeps a wide distance.

Lou's annoyance over the Pimm's is specifically marked out, a detail that will become important later in the chapter. Lou and Will appear to be a couple at the wedding, and neither does anything to convince people otherwise. Will seems happy to have someone by his side who offers some hope for his current life while surrounded by people who pity him for the life he lost.



The afternoon wears on as lunch is served and Lou is surprised to find out that the Pimm's actually had wine in it. Lou is horrified that she is drunk, but Will seems pleased to relax and enjoy the day tipsy. Will is more charming than Lou has ever seen him, and brightens especially as he talks to an older woman named Mary Rawlinson. Mary is a former MP who campaigned on a platform of rights for the disabled and used to travel with Will before his accident.

Lou feels as though she must be in control of this day so that nothing goes wrong, while Will uncharacteristically welcomes this chance to simply enjoy life without worrying about what comes next. Mary Rawlinson helps with this, as one of the few people who sees Will's humanity and respects him just as much post-injury.



Will introduces Lou to Mary Rawlinson and the older woman is far nicer than Lou expects anyone of the upper class to be. Mary gives Lou her business card for an organization that helps people retrain, just in case Lou ever wants to switch career paths. Mary then encourages Will to embrace a new life as well, but the wedding toasts begin before Will can answer.

Mary offers Lou the opportunity to rethink the ambitions that she thought were already behind her, as well as offering a place in a world that Lou never thought she could belong in. Mary cuts off the conversation before Will shows if Mary has had any affect on his end-of-life plans, keeping up the suspense.



Lou tries desperately to sober up so that she can drive Will home, but chocolate and coffee only make her feel jittery as well as drunk. Will tells Lou that they can just stay at a hotel so that Lou can fully enjoy the night. Lou lets go of her worries and begins to have a truly good time, laughing at the guests looking ridiculous on the dance floor. Alicia stops by their table and Will is perfectly civil, though he can't resist teasing Alicia by telling her that he got her a mirror instead of a picture frame.

Lou wants to cut short her own enjoyment of the night so that she can take care of Will, but Will offers an alternative that allows Lou to enjoy herself while keeping them both safe. Will lies to Alicia about his wedding gift, showing that she doesn't actually know who gave her each of the numerous expensive presents. Alicia has a stereotypically perfect life with her marriage to a wealthy man, but she doesn't seem to truly appreciate it.



After Alicia moves on, Lou convinces Will to take her on the floor for a slow dance. She sits on his lap as Will slowly wheels his chair in circles around the dance floor. Many of the other guests appear scandalized, but Will and Lou simply enjoy the moment. Will tells Lou that she is the only reason he gets up each morning. Lou gathers her courage and asks Will to take one last big trip with her. After a lengthy pause, Will agrees.

Lou and Will continue to act like a couple at the wedding, until it is unclear whether either of them are just acting. They can no longer ignore that they have feelings for each other, even if they treat the dance as just a way to laugh at the other guests' reactions. Will's connection to Lou might be the thing that changes his mind about ending his life.



CHAPTER 19

Nathan, now narrating, recounts the day after the wedding. When Louisa and Will arrive home, Camilla is furious that they didn't inform her that they would be staying in a hotel. Will simply brushes off her concerns, saying that he is more than old enough not to tell his mother of his whereabouts – wheelchair or not. Louisa goes home to get some sleep and Nathan can tell that the dynamic between Will and Louisa has changed again.

Nathan may be Will's physical caretaker, but he is also an astute observer of Will's mental and emotional state. Camilla's hovering is another blow against Will's agency in his own life. As long as Camilla treats Will like a child because of his physical state, Will cannot consider a new kind of independence within the limitations of his health.



Nathan shakes off thoughts of Will and Louisa's relationship to care for Will's physical needs. Will's catheter desperately needs to be emptied and the night of drinking was hard on his already compromised body. Will laughs at his and Lou's drunken adventures the night before, but Nathan is annoyed that Louisa was not responsible enough to pay more attention to Will's health. Still, Nathan can't deny that Will finally looks like he has something to think about other than ending his life.

Nathan may be aware of Will's emotional progress, but he also makes a clear division between the emotional and physical aspects of Will's health. While Nathan appreciates the good that Lou has done for Will's mental health, he recognizes that Will cannot forget his physical health because of this newfound happiness.



Louisa returns at lunchtime and Nathan mischievously refuses to let Will and Lou watch a Miyasaki film alone. After the movie is over, Louisa asks Nathan if he would consider helping her and Will go on a ten-day trip. Nathan immediately agrees. Nathan is pleased at this apparent change in Will's mindset, but his enthusiasm is slightly dampened when he overhears a tense conversation between Camilla and Louisa. Camilla warns Louisa that she better know what she is dragging them all into.

The Miyasaki film is Spirited Away, a film about a young girl who must go to incredible lengths to save her family. This journey echoes the efforts that Lou has been making for Will and her own family. Nathan shares Lou's hope for Will, but he has a more realistic view of the true challenges that Will and Lou are facing.



CHAPTER 20

As Lou (who is narrating again) cycles after Patrick on a practice run, Lou finally tells Patrick that she won't be going to Norway to watch the Xtreme Viking Triathlon because Will needs company on a trip. Patrick is angry that Lou won't support him and accuses Lou of putting Will above everything else in her life. Lou asks Patrick to stop running so they can discuss this, but Patrick refuses to waste this training time and runs off even faster. Lou finally blurts out that the reason she is so focused on Will is that Will is planning to take his own life. Patrick absorbs this news, then asks to run by himself, looking crushed.

Patrick accuses Lou of prioritizing Will without realizing how he himself has continually asked Lou to sacrifice her happiness for his sake. Patrick can't even compromise on his physical fitness regime during this conversation, though Lou is obviously in emotional distress. Patrick's reaction to the stress that Lou has been carrying for months is also selfish, running away instead of staying with Lou to comfort and support her.



The day after the wedding, Lou asked on the online forums for advice on where to take Will for a holiday. She gets 89 responses, including some from Ritchie, and is bolstered by their support and encouragement. Lou finally settles on a ranch in California that offers a luxury hotel experience along with wheelchair friendly athletic adventures – even skydiving. Lou is hopeful that this might finally change Will's mind. Nathan and Camilla are skeptical, but ultimately approve.

Though Lou's family and boyfriend may not understand her desire to help Will, Lou finds a supportive family in the online community of quadriplegics and caregivers. These online forums are a real source of comfort to many quadriplegics, allowing them to engage with a wider world in ways that able-bodied people often take for granted.



Lou does not go back to Patrick's flat after work, instead stopping by her parent's house. Lou asks Treena's advice about the possibility of retraining for a new career, but Treena is confused that Lou wants to give up working with Will. Lou admits that she cares for Will as more than a caregiver, and wants to stop working for Will so that she can actually be with Will. Treena warns Lou against throwing away her relationship with Patrick for a potentially ill-fated fling with Will, but ultimately agrees that it is a good idea for Lou to consider college.

Will and Lou's relationship has finally officially crossed the line from the natural care of a caregiver to a more romantic nature. Lou's thoughts of a new job are a sign of both her newfound ambition and her desire to stop blurring the lines between caregiver and potential lover.



Treena and Lou get a drink at the pub, and Treena approves Lou's holiday for Will. Lou then finally goes back to Patrick's flat to find that Patrick has attempted to make a special dinner for the two of them. Patrick apologizes for getting angry over Lou's job, then tries to have a romantic evening with Lou. Lou has second thoughts about her feelings for Will, wondering if the safer bet with Patrick isn't ultimately better.

Treena and Lou are able to interact as friends and equals now that Lou has accomplishments and goals of her own. Patrick finally makes an effort on behalf of their relationship, but the romantic feeling of the dinner is forced. Lou backslides from the bravery she has with Will into the safe, boring, passionless life that Patrick offers.



Patrick and Lou's romantic night comes to a screeching halt when Patrick notices Lou's folder of holiday plans for Will. Patrick calls the trip a honeymoon, and asks if there is something that Lou hasn't told him about her relationship with Will. Lou denies any romance, but Patrick still doesn't want her to take this trip. Patrick asks Lou point blank not to go with Will, but all Lou can say is, "He needs me." At those words, Patrick walks out of the apartment.

Will inspires Lou to do great things, such as plan an international trip. Patrick is jealous of how close Lou has gotten to Will, but his concerns about possible romance are actually less important than the motivation that Will gives Lou. Will may need Lou, but Lou also needs the initiative and drive that Will gives her. Patrick may have been in Lou's life longer, but he has had far less impact on her.



CHAPTER 21

Steven, now narrating, tells how Louisa moved in to Will's spare room that weekend. Steven runs in to Louisa one Saturday morning and is pleasantly surprised, but Camilla only sees the potential downfalls to this situation. Steven wants to cheer up Camilla, but doesn't know how to talk to her anymore.

Steven still seems to have hope for Will, though Camilla only sees the danger of Lou and Will getting too close. Steven and Camilla's marriage has deteriorated past any point of real communication, as they are rarely honest with each other about anything.



The next Monday, Louisa shows Will, Camilla, and Steven the plans she has made for Will's grand adventure in California. Steven is impressed with how organized it all is, and the daring of asking Will to take on this travel after he so recently refused to even leave the house. Louisa presents the trip as if all of the activities are for *her* benefit, because she knows that Will will only agree if he thinks that the trip will broaden her own horizons. Will agrees to everything and Camilla is notably relieved. Steven is profoundly grateful that Lou came into their lives when she did.

Lou's plan is the height of ambition for a quadriplegic man. Yet Lou frames it as a trip for her benefit, blurring the line between her desires and her desires for Will. At this point, it is impossible to tell what Lou is doing for herself and what Lou is doing for Will, as well as what Will is doing for himself and what Will is doing for Lou.



Steven goes for a drink with his mistress, Della, and tells her all about Will's holiday. Steven knows that Della would rather he leave Will behind and divorce Camilla, but he is glad that Della chooses not to bring that up. The only way that Steven could ever leave his family behind is if Will died, but Steven remains hopeful that it won't come to that. Della simply focuses on the possibility that Will might be more independent now. But then, at the worst possible time, Will gets pneumonia.

Steven has also sacrificed his own happiness for Will. In a perfect world, Steven would be able to leave his loveless marriage to Camilla in favor of giving both of them the chance to find real love. Yet Steven's choices are limited by his responsibility to Will. Della sees a future where Steven can one day leave Will's life, but Will's illness reminds them all that there is very little chance of Will ever being truly independent.



CHAPTER 22

Lou (narrating again) runs into the emergency ward and finds Nathan. Nathan tells her that this isn't the first time that Will has had pneumonia, and it probably won't be his last. Lou goes in to see Will, as Camilla sits next to his bed. Lou offers to sit with Will and give Camilla a break, but Camilla declines. Lou thinks about how she had seen Will last Friday in fine health, if a bit tired. After a weekend spent in a whirlwind of last-minute travel details, Lou was shocked to find that Will was in the hospital when she tried to come in to work on Monday.

Moyes starts this chapter suddenly in the hospital, mimicking Lou's own confusion at the very quick onset of Will's illness. One of the most depressing aspects of Will's condition is that he will never know when a flare-up like pneumonia will completely take away his choices for the foreseeable future.



Nathan leaves the hospital ward and Lou waits for another hour outside Will's room. Camilla finally comes out of Will's room and asks Lou to stay with Will while she goes to get a change of clothes. Lou sits at Will's bedside, thinking about how frighteningly fast Will got sick and how she feels no guilt about breaking things off with Patrick. Lou reaches under Will's blanket and holds Will's hand, hoping that some part of his subconscious can feel it.

Camilla returns and Lou goes back to waiting outside Will's room. Camilla comes out around 4 pm to tell Louisa that Will is awake. Lou goes in to talk to Will, trying to keep up their normal sarcastic banter, but Will is too tired. Will admits that their trip can't happen now. Lou reminds him that they can go later, but Will seems unsure.

Lou goes back to Will's house to get Will more clothing, and she runs into Steven, who tells Lou that this is actually Will's third bout of pneumonia in two years. After Steven leaves, Lou can't stand the silence of Will's house, imagining the emptiness if Will were dead. She dreads cancelling all of their travel arrangements. Nathan comes in to drop off some extra medicine for Will when he gets home.

Nathan notices how upset Lou is, and Lou admits that she knows that the Traynors hired her to convince Will not to commit suicide. Nathan also knows about Will's end of life plan, but has more sympathy for Will's choice. Nathan knows exactly how bleak Will's medical future is and has been with Will through all the most painful moments of his recovery. Lou asks Nathan if he thinks that Will's outlook has changed at all since she came to work for him, but Nathan isn't sure. Finally, Lou asks if Nathan would still go with them if she could arrange another trip that the doctors would agree to in Will's compromised state. Nathan, with some reservations, agrees.

CHAPTER 23

Ten days after Will is released from the hospital, Steven drops Will, Lou, and Nathan off at Gatwick airport. Lou nervously goes over all the special travel arrangements she has made for Will's wheelchair, while Will simply looks exhausted already. Lou tries to believe that the trip will be good, insisting "we'll manage" at every new wrinkle. She had spent hours on the online forums asking for recommendations of places to take Will that would be kind to his health. Ritchie finally connects Lou with a travel agent who helps her find the perfect place. As their flight number is called, Lou prays that this trip is a good decision.

Lou is one of the few people that Camilla trusts to stay with Will, recognizing that Lou loves Will as much as his family does. At Will's bedside, Lou makes it clear that her feelings for Will are much stronger than her feelings for Patrick ever were. Lou subtly compares love to an illness, commenting that both can strike with no warning, and that humans cannot control either.



Will's physical health affects his mental state, such that his personality seems to change when he is in such physical distress. Lou stays hopeful for the future, but Will seems unable to see a future in which he is ever healthy enough to truly enjoy life.



Lou finally has to come to terms with the harsh reality of Will's situation. His life is now marked by bouts of severe illness, as well as the everyday discomfort of his paralysis. Lou also gets a taste of what would happen if Will were gone. Both a life of constant illness and an end to that life are equally painful for Lou to consider at this point.



Nathan is able to put aside his emotional feelings for Will to consider the physical perspective of what Will is going through. Nathan puts less importance on Will's mental state than Lou does—Lou seems to believe that Will's happiness will solve everything, but Nathan can see the medical issues that Will will always have regardless of his life choices. Still, both Lou and Nathan show that they still have hope for Will by taking this trip.



Lou finally has something that she desperately wants to accomplish instead of remaining content in her small town. Her willpower is the only thing that makes this trip possible, as Will does not seem physically able to give this trip a sincere chance.



On the twelve-hour flight, Lou realizes that Will is no different from anyone else stuck in an airline seat. The three friends watch movies and Lou actually starts to realize that this flight is a big step for her as well as Will. Lou thinks about Treena's unwavering support while she pulled this together. It is not until the plane actually lands in Mauritius that Lou allows herself to relax in the beautiful island paradise.

After three days, Will begins to look really better. The sun tans his hospital-pale skin and his appetite returns. The resort in Mauritius is very wheelchair friendly and the hotel staff are unfailingly kind to Nathan and Lou, but especially attentive to Will. One young man, Nadil, makes it his personal mission to ensure that Will has everything he needs. As Lou watches Will sunbathe on the beach, she feels that she is actually in heaven.

Lou, Will and Nathan's days at the resort take on a pattern of good food, sunbathing, watching Nathan take on water sports, and talking about everything under the sun. Will seems to be truly at peace for the first time since Lou has met him, but Lou can't quite forget about the reason she planned this trip. On the 4th night, Nathan leaves Will and Lou alone to go on a date with Karen, another girl on holiday, and Lou relishes the chance to spend time with Will without distractions.

On the last night of the trip, Lou offers to let Nathan bring Karen to their hotel overnight. This means that Will and Lou have to share a room. Lou plans to sleep on the sofa, but Will invites her over to the bed. Together, Will and Lou watch a tropical storm lash the ocean outside the window. Lou curls up against Will and takes his hand, dreading the return to England. Finally, Will falls asleep and Lou watches his face as she tells herself that everything will be okay.

The last day in Mauritius, Lou agrees to go scuba diving. Though she has trouble in the training pool, the instructor takes her out to the ocean, saying that some people do better when they dive straight into the deep. Lou is absolutely enchanted by the bright colors of the fish and coral, staying under as long as she can until her oxygen tank runs out. That night, Lou relaxes enough to get drunk, then goes on a walk along the beach with Will. Lou gets Will to admit that he is glad they came on this holiday, then kicks off her shoes and dances to music drifting over from the resort bar. When the song ends, Will calls Lou over. She sits in his lap and kisses Will. After a moment's hesitation, Will kisses Lou back.

As the group travels to a new place, Will has the chance to let go of his old life and enjoy new experiences despite the things he has lost. Lou, too, has the chance to start anew by taking a big step away from the place she has always lived. Will needs Lou's support to get this far, just as Lou has depended on her sister.



Sun-drenched Mauritius offers a paradise to Will after the darkness he has been living in England. The enclosed world of the resort, and the efforts of Nadil behind the scenes, allow Will to have control over what he does each day. The resort staff do not ignore Will, but give him extra attention and reaffirm his humanity.



Will is at peace in Mauritius, an escape from his everyday struggles to continue living in England. Calling back to the peace of the football player who committed suicide, it seems as though Will might be able to keep living in Mauritius rather than giving up. At the same time, Lou doesn't seem to consider it "real" life - this beautiful time with Will can't last.



Will and Lou watch the storm together, safe in bed despite the violence outside. Again, their blissful time in Mauritius is just a brief respite from the rain and troubles of life. Lou constantly thinks of the deadlines looming over their heads, knowing that this time has to come to an end.



By going scuba diving, Lou opens up another world that she never expected to be a part of. Lou has to dive straight into life, unable to appreciate all the good experiences she will have until she is in the midst of them. One of these great experiences is loving Will. Though Lou is scared, she finally commits to her feelings for Will instead of playing it safe.



After a minute, Will pulls away from Lou. He can't be with her, he says, because it reminds him of all he has lost after the accident. Lou argues, saying that his situation does not make things impossible and that she loves him. Will starts to tell Lou about his plan in Switzerland, but Lou cuts him off. She tells him that this whole trip was meant to change his mind. Lou confesses all of her feelings to Will, telling him how much braver she is now because of him. She even has a plan to go back to college so that they can be together rather than employee and employer. Will smiles and Lou's heart lifts.

Will and Lou continue to be honest with each other. Will admits his hopelessness, while Lou admits that she is able to see past that to the potential that Will still has. Lou also gets to the heart of what Will has done for her, giving her ambition and support in pursuing dreams that she never considered before. At first, it seems that Lou's passionate speech has made a significant impact on Will.



Lou asks Will if he has changed his mind about Switzerland. After a painful pause, Will answers no. Though he has loved the time he got with Lou, it is still not the life he wanted. When Lou tells him to just give it a chance, Will argues that he does not want Lou to resent him years later for taking away the amazing life she could have with someone else. Will tells Lou that, if she truly loves him, she will let him end his pain now before his health gets worse. Lou is horrified that Will is asking her to let him die, but Will pushes further and asks her to go to Dignitas with him. Enraged and destroyed by Will's rejection of all she did for him and all she feels for him, Lou tells Will no. She bursts into tears and runs back to the hotel, leaving Will alone on the beach.

Will recognizes the beauty that could be possible in a life with Lou, but he still asserts that he wants the life that he chose. Will finds meaning and purpose in life by being able to choose what he wants and working towards those goals. Will asks Lou to respect that decision, but Lou can only see the pain of that final outcome.



CHAPTER 24

Lou adamantly refuses to speak to or help Will on the flight back to England, much to the shock of the other passengers. Nathan tries to keep the peace but soon just takes care of Will's needs and lets Lou sit alone with her thoughts. More than just the loss of pride that Will refused her, Lou also can't cope with the fact that Will will soon be gone from the world completely. When Will and Nathan fall asleep on the plane, Lou can't resist adjusting Will's blanket so he won't get cold.

Now that Lou has fully crossed the boundary of caregiver with Will, she cannot go back to the professional relationship that they once had. Nathan is able to separate his responsibility for Will's physical well-being from their friendship, but Lou cannot disengage from her emotional attachment to Will. Yet Lou still clearly cares for Will, making sure that he won't get chilled on the plane.



Camilla and Steven are waiting at the arrivals gate for Will, Nathan, and Lou, ready to take them to a fancy dinner and hear all about the trip. Camilla's eyes light up at Will's tan and the glow of health in his eyes, so Lou puts on her sunglasses so that the haunted expression in her own eyes won't show. Lou refuses to go to dinner with them and tries to escape to go back to her parents' house.

Will's appearance, as with the haircut previously in the book, is at odds with his mental state. Though he looks perfectly healthy, Will is more determined than ever to end his life. Lou also hides the physical signs of her emotional distress.



Camilla follows Lou as she leaves the airport and Lou can no longer hide the news that Will did not change his mind about going to Dignitas. Camilla faints and Steven rushes over to catch her before she falls to the floor. Lou can't stay a moment longer and rushes out of the airport.

Steven comes to Camilla's aid in this time of crisis, supporting her at the most important moment. The Traynor family still loves each other when it matters.



CHAPTER 25

Katrina takes over the story to describe Lou's comatose state during the first three days after Lou returns from the holiday. Lou's parents wonder if Lou is finally mourning her breakup with Patrick, or has caught some tropical disease, but Treena assures them that Lou is just jet-lagged. Treena then goes in to Lou's room to talk to Lou, and finds out that Will did not reconsider his end of life plan. Treena crawls in bed with her sister, unable to think of how to help Lou deal with this pain.

The next day, Lou manages to come out of her room. Treena takes Lou and Thomas to go feed ducks at the castle pond, and Lou can't keep her eyes off the Traynor's house down the street. Treena tells Lou to go talk to Will, but Lou says there is no point. Treena then tells Lou that Lou received a letter from the college program she applied to and has an interview tomorrow. Lou mournfully sniffs that she can't go, but Treena insists that now is the time that Lou should finally get her life together. The argument is cut short when Thomas runs out of duck food, but it looks like Treena has won.

Treena gets Lou ready for her college interview and sends her off on the bus. At dinner that night, Lou is despondent, even though the interview actually went really well. As her family congratulates her on the college news, Lou burst into tears and tells her family the whole story of what she has been through with Will. Bernard assures Lou that she did everything she possibly could for Will, while Josie criticizes Camilla for letting her son even think of this plan. Lou tries to defend the impossible position that Camilla is in, and the complicated situation that Will's life has become, but Josie will hear none of it.

The thirteenth of August arrives, the day of Will's Dignitas appointment. Treena tries to convince Lou to come out of the house, but Lou only sits and worries whether she made the right choice not accompanying Will to Switzerland. Treena realizes that she has never loved a man the way that Lou seems to love Will. The only comparison Treena can make is how she would feel if Thomas were about to die.

Lou's parents give both an emotional reason and a physical reason for Lou's current distress, but they are unaware of the real reason she is so upset. Treena is aware, but has no idea how to help Lou with this emotional pain. Moyes points out that emotional pain is often much harder to soothe than physical pain.



Lou wants to give up on her new ambitions to go to school now that Will has officially given up, but Treena won't let her. Lou needs the help and support of those who love her in order to succeed. With or without Will, Lou now has to live her best life for herself. Yet these concerns have to take a back seat to Thomas – Lou and Treena can never escape their obligations to their family.



Lou cannot fully enjoy the success in her professional life due to the trouble in her personal life, another nod to the interconnected nature of physical and emotional health. Lou's family acts out a mini debate of all the perspectives in the right-to-die debate, with Josie advocating for the sanctity of all life no matter the circumstances while Bernard and Lou are more willing to look at the specific situation.



Moyes points out the similarities between the depth of emotion that Lou feels for Will and that Treena feels for her son. The bond between mother and child is perhaps the most sacred bond, and adds major emotional weight to Lou and Will's relationship.



The doorbell rings, and Lou jumps up to answer it on the off-chance that it is Will. However, it is a reporter from the Globe who wants Louisa's side of the very sensitive William Traynor story. Lou slams the door in the reporter's face and Treena tells everyone not to answer the door for anyone. The phone starts to ring too, and reporters congregate on the Clarks' lawn. Treena realizes that Patrick must have tipped off the media about Louisa and Will. Treena calls Patrick to tell him off and fits in an insult over his sad 157th place in the Xtreme Viking Triathlon.

Around 7 pm, the reporters finally leave and Treena asks Lou to go give Thomas a bath so that Lou won't be able to check all the messages from the telephone. Treena starts to delete all of the reporter's messages, but stops when she hears a message from Camilla Traynor. Treena rushes up to the bathroom and forces Lou to call Camilla back. Lou has a short, tense conversation with Camilla. It turns out, Will is still alive and Camilla has booked Lou the last flight out that day to Switzerland.

CHAPTER 26

Lou narrates again and starts to throw her things in a bag for Switzerland. Treena offers to drive her to the airport but their parents are waiting in front of the door. Josie refuses to let Lou have anything to do with Will's choice at Dignitas, arguing that caring for Granddad has taught her that all life is precious. Lou tells Josie that this is her choice, and Will's choice, and that she is going to Switzerland no matter what anyone says. Josie tells her to go to Switzerland and not to bother coming back after committing murder. Josie then leaves the room. Bernard hesitates, then tosses Treena the keys to the van and tells Lou to hurry.

Treena careens through the streets, babbling that Josie will come around just like she did when Treena came home with the news that she was pregnant. Lou just double checks her passport and prays that she will get to the airport in time. After breaking numerous traffic laws, Treena gets Lou to the gate and Lou takes off with Swiss Air. Lou arrives in Zurich at midnight and stays at a hotel, preparing to see the Traynors the next morning. She wonders why Camilla even called her here. Finally, morning comes and Lou gets up to go to the clinic.

Lou waits in the hotel lobby for the car that Camilla sent to take her to the clinic. She notices an open computer and logs on to the online chat room where she talks to Ritchie. Ritchie has nothing but sympathy for Lou, though he himself would never make the choice that Will is making, and reminds Lou that their friendship will continue even after Lou no longer needs advice for Will. The car arrives and Lou says goodbye to Ritchie.

Lou is still willing to believe the best for Will, despite all indication that she should give up hope. Yet Lou's support of Will has caused problems for her life in the media attention that now plagues the Clarks. Patrick has seemingly lashed out due to his jealousy over Lou – he gave up their relationship because of his obsession with physical fitness, but he was not even successful at those pursuits.



Lou is able to put aside her emotional pain in order to care for her family, and she finds meaning in these acts of love. Camilla's call gives Lou one last chance to be with the man she loves.



Treena supports her sister unconditionally, but Lou's parents are less able to put aside their own beliefs in order to be there for their daughter. Lou has to finally let go of her family in order to be true to herself and what she needs to do. Lou very carefully asserts that the right choice for Will is not the right choice for everyone in compromised health—a defense that, in speaking of her story's outcome, Moyes has had to make as well.



Lou has to sacrifice her mother's good opinion in order to go meet Will, while Treena potentially "sacrifices" her good driving record in order to support her sister. This trip is the ultimate show of love for Lou. Though she questions why the Traynors invited her here, Lou knows that coming to Switzerland means accepting Will's decision and loving him unconditionally.



Ritchie again presents the view that the right to die is a very specific choice to Will, rather than the natural desire of everyone in Will's situation. Ritchie also reminds Lou that she has support outside of Will, so that she can continue to follow her dreams after Will is gone.



The Dignitas clinic looks like an ordinary house, and Will looks like he is staying at a bed and breakfast when Lou makes it into his room. Lou sees Will and, despite all the anger and hurt of the last couple days, is glad and relieved that she came. Will asks his family to give him and Lou a private moment. Camilla and Steven step out, dragging Georgina reluctantly with them.

Will thanks Lou for finally accepting the only thing he has control over in his life. Lou fights back her tears and just says that she missed him. Lou goes to sit on the bed next to Will at Will's invitation and rests her head on Will's chest. Will asks Lou to tell him something good, and Lou spins a love story of two people who found each other despite impossible odds – the story of their life together and all the things that Will taught her. Lou admits that this has been the best six months of her life, and Will agrees. Lou starts to sob.

Will asks Lou to look up at him and she struggles to regain her composure. When she finally looks up, Will's eyes look clear and relaxed. He seems to be committing Lou's face to memory, and Lou kisses him with all the emotion she has left. Lou holds Will, wondering how she will find the strength to live all of the adventures he wants for her after Will is gone. After some time, Will smiles an apology to Lou and asks her to call his parents back in.

CHAPTER 27

A legal briefing regarding William John Traynor details Will's medical condition as a C5-6 quadriplegic, and Will's painstaking documentation of his legal affair before he went to Switzerland. Public prosecution interviewed all parties involved with William's case and found that Will's family and friends all expressed opposition to Will's desire to end his own life and arranged a six-month period expressly meant to change Will's, mind but were unsuccessful. The legal document identifies Louisa Clark as one of Will's beneficiaries. She was interviewed at length about her connection to Will and was found to have done everything in her power to deter Will from his course of action.

Camilla and Steven split up after Will's death, and Camilla resigns from her job as a magistrate. Though the Public Prosecution does not condone Will's choice to end his life at a foreign clinic, all the evidence gathered shows that this was Will's choice alone, and that none of his family or friends should be prosecuted for their role in assisting his suicide. Finally, the prosecution suggests dropping the case while making it clear that the Traynor case sets no precedent for future incidents of assisted suicide in the UK.

Lou assigned so much importance to this clinic, but the actual appearance is not that of an inhumane hospital. The clinic recognizes the humanity of the people who make this choice.



Lou is able to give Will this choice even though it hurts her. Everything about this last visit is at Will's decision, up to where Lou sits and what Lou talks about. He is finally able to control his life and his surroundings by choosing to end his life. Yet even though Will has had an amazing, adventurous life, his experiences with Lou were still the most meaningful because of their emotional connection.



Will and Lou are able to share a genuine moment after they are honest about what they each want. Lou's love for Will both causes her immense pain in this moment and gives her the strength to be there for Will in these last moments.



The novel includes many different perspectives, even including an impersonal legal document, but it never speaks from Will's point of view. This choice mimics the lack of agency that Will feels in his own life. The legal document in particular points out how the debates over the right to die often look at facts alone rather than considering the human circumstances. Lou also looks different from this perspective, as the short-term caretaker of a wealthy man who could have been taking advantage of his money before his death.



In Will's case, suicide was not necessarily tragic or wrong, given all the efforts his family and loved ones made for him before respecting Will's choice for himself. Will's choice still has irreparable consequences for his family, yet his preparations ensure that the Traynors and Lou will not be punished for their role in his decision. The ultimate conclusion is that this was Will's choice, and that his family supported him even though they didn't agree with him.



EPILOGUE

September 29. Lou follows instructions that Will left for her in his will. This leads her to a small café in Paris, drinking a dark coffee and eating a croissant. Lou finishes reading a letter from Treena, which assures her that their mother will calm down soon. Lou then thinks of a letter she received from Camilla where Camilla finally thanked Lou for the comfort Lou gave Will in his last months and admitted that Lou must miss Will as much as she herself does.

Lou then opens the last letter from Will. It tells her exactly how to spend her afternoon in Paris, and then outlines the arrangements that Will made for Lou before he died. There is a small account for Lou waiting in London to cover her college courses. Will explains that Lou changed his life irrevocably and brought him more happiness than he thought possible. He now wants to repay the favor and enable Lou to live the life she has always had the potential to enjoy. Will ends the letter telling Lou, "Just live."

Lou puts down the letter and wipes her tears as the handsome Parisian waiter offers her another coffee, or a cognac, to help with her emotional news. Lou declines, pays her bill, and sets off to enjoy Paris as Will meant her to.

Even after Will is gone, he is able to push Lou to pursue new experiences and broaden her horizons. Will's death also brought Camilla and Lou together – they are the ones who loved Will most of all. Camilla finally recognizes that Lou's love for Will is just as important as her love for her son.



Will's last letter gives Lou both the emotional and the practical support to fully follow her dreams. The letter also affirms the love that Will and Lou shared, while telling Lou to live her life fully instead of mourning his loss forever. The main message of the novel is that each person has to live their life to the fullest of their ability, no matter what tragedies or hardships they may face.



Lou ends the novel in a sea of possibilities in Paris. There is now nothing holding her back from realizing her true potential and living up to her dreams.





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