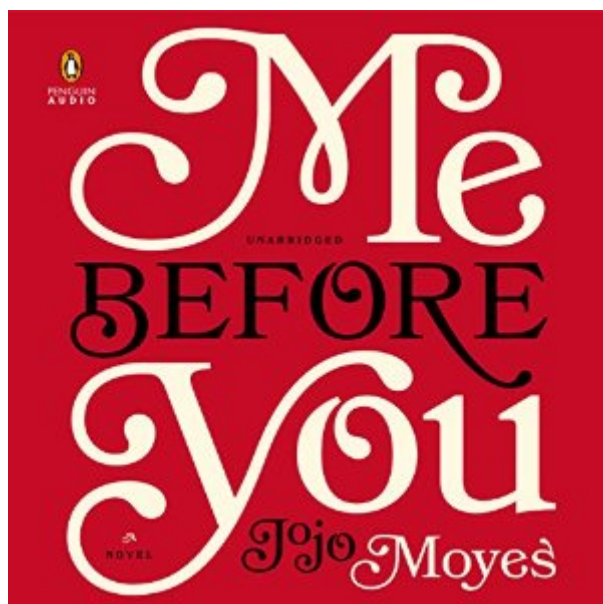


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Me Before You: A Novel



Synopsis

They had nothing in common until love gave them everything to lose. Louisa Clark is an ordinary girl living an exceedingly ordinary life - steady boyfriend, close family - who has never been farther afield than her tiny village. She takes a badly needed job working for ex-Master of the Universe Will Traynor, who is wheelchair bound after an accident. Will has always lived a huge life - big deals, extreme sports, worldwide travel - and now he's pretty sure he cannot live the way he is. Will is acerbic, moody, bossy - but Lou refuses to treat him with kid gloves, and soon his happiness means more to her than she expected. When she learns that Will has shocking plans of his own, she sets out to show him that life is still worth living. A love story for this generation, *Me Before You* brings to life two people who couldn't have less in common - a heartbreakingly romantic novel that asks, what do you do when making the person you love happy also means breaking your own heart?

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 14 hours and 40 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Penguin Audio

Audible.com Release Date: December 31, 2012

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B00ANR0Y3S

Best Sellers Rank: #6 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Romance > Contemporary #48

in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Fiction & Literature #110 in Books > Literature & Fiction >

Women's Fiction > Contemporary Women

Customer Reviews

My heart was not prepared for those kind of feels... *sigh* The thing about being catapulted into a whole new life - or at least shoved up so hard against someone else's life that you might as well have your face pressed against their window - is that it forces you to rethink your idea of who you are. Or how you might seem to other people. Louisa's life is lackluster and she's completely content with 'playing it safe' at life. Not that she's ever allowed herself to contemplate how different things could possibly be. She goes to her job at the tea shop, she goes home to her windowless room at her parents house, and she occasionally spends time with her boyfriend Patrick who is far more

concerned with his exercise regiment than he is with her. But when she loses her job at the tea shop she accepts a temporary 6 month position as a caregiver to a quadriplegic, Will Traynor. Louisa and Will are complete opposites and the first few weeks of them knowing each other they quite truly hated each other. Will was oftentimes irrationally difficult and Louisa was ready to quit, but she stuck it out and slowly they developed an extremely touching friendship. All I can say is that you make me...you make me into someone I couldn't even imagine. You make me happy, even when you're awful. I would rather be with you- even the you that you seem to think is diminished- than with anyone else in the world.' Their blossoming romance was one of the most convincing I've read in a long time and was truly uplifting. They changed each other in massive ways in such a short period of time. Louisa gave Will happiness that he hadn't experienced for a very long time and Will gave Louisa the determination to do something with her life and not let it go to waste. Calling this book chick-lit isn't doing this book any sort of justice; the subject matter is simply far too thought-provoking for that kind of label. The real meat of the story focuses on Will's decision to end his life by assisted suicide, which is the reason behind Louisa's 'temporary' position as he promised his parents he would give them another 6 months but no more. Convinced that he just needs something to live for, his parents hire Louisa who is bright, fun and talkative in hopes that she can convince him that he still has something to live for. "You only get one life. It's actually your duty to live it as fully as possible." It was certainly a tough subject matter to read but was so well written and managed to actually make me laugh out loud at several parts. I loved Louisa and Will's wittiness and constant banter, it was the perfect addition to this poignant story. It was hard not to picture what it would be like if you were put into a situation such as Louisa and Will's. What you would do, if you would actually do anything different. All I know is that they both had an incredibly difficult decision to make and either way was bound to lead to heartache. This was an incredible story that was so painful (in that crazy heart hurting kind of way) to read but I simply could not put it down. *Me Before You* is a heartbreaking story about finding what makes life worth living and making the decision whether it's truly enough. Definitely a new favorite and one that my heart won't be forgetting any time soon.

(There's some spoilerish stuff in here) I realize I am massively in the minority on this one. 99.9% of the people who have already read *Me Before You* absolutely disagree with me. Prior to reading, I read no other reviews. As I was aware of how rabidly people love this book, I wanted my initial opinion to be unadulterated. So when I finished reading, I started skimming reviews. A lot of positive reviews have valid points, especially ones that applaud Moyes' writing style (though I have issues with its tone and unoriginal bent, it does strike me as capable). Where positive reviews jive most

with my thinking is their emphasis: Will's decision, how sad this book is, and the touching lessons we can learn from it. Huh. Gave me pause. I went back and thought, while reading, did I feel changed by this book? Has this in some way altered my perspective on living? I did give it a fair thought, and no is still the answer. For the people who did feel that way, I think that's great and I wish *Me Before You* could have resonated on so personal a level for me. But it just didn't. So here I am, teetering out on a limb, amidst the blinding praise, contemplating why this was such a tepid read for me. Here's where I'm at...Reason 1: The first half was intriguing, the second half was boring. I'm not gonna lie, I gobbled up the first 135 pages or so. It seemed fresh to me and had a bit of that self-deprecating humor that makes me wish I was British. But then it got increasingly predictable and trite, and I found myself skipping whole paragraphs, and then pages, just to get to the place where the main action cuts through all the expected lead-up. Lou describing every facial movement, every little mundane activity multiple times throughout the novel started wearing on my patience. When I kind of knew the trajectory of the story, the day-to-day stuff became superfluous. I skimmed the last 100 or so pages. And not a tear was shed. What a heartless witch, right? I think the problem is I just can't feel emotionally swept up in something I see coming from a mile away. Which makes sense to me. I'm curious how it doesn't for so many others. Reason 2: Patrick. This guy had an "I'm all wrong for Lou" sign hung around his neck from the start, so all his character does is pop up in scenes to demonstrate how very wrong he is, how incompatible, self-centered, and inconsiderate he is. Pretty sure you can skip every moment he's in this book and in no way be lost or missing out. Pointless, uninteresting character. And frankly as a supposed foil to Will, I'm not sure fundamentally what makes them different. They're both domineering men, dictating Lou's choices. How "good" those choices are for her is kind of irrelevant if she's not ultimately the engineer of them. Reason 3: The Traynors' supreme wealth. How comfy and convenient. I feel like the second an author adds in a rich character, it's so money can solve certain unsavory problems an author doesn't want to deal with. I usually find stories of poverty are more genuine and heartrending, because not only would a poor quadriplegic be severely disabled, he wouldn't be able to live in a comfy house and buy himself nice things to ease the dreary circumstances of his life. But maybe that's just me. Either way, money does what money does in this story-makes life easier, dismisses typical problems and saves the day. It felt like lazy storytelling to me. And it really made for a god-awful epilogue. I don't in any way mean to undermine Will's absolutely awful situation or discriminate because he's wealthy, I just think this would have all seemed more truly sad to me if there was no limitless fund for vacations or special equipment for quads or so much fortune for a character who is determined to wallow in his misfortune. I mean, guys, I'm naturally pessimistic. I

think "the bright side" is just an area the dark side hasn't gotten to yet, but Will's level of self-entitled, pig-headed, unappreciative dick-baggery was tiresome. So naturally, Reason 4 is all about...Will. And no, this isn't about his ultimate decision. I plead Oscar Wilde on that front ("We are not sent into the world to air our moral prejudices.") This is about his spoiled, bossy, alpha male personality. For someone who doesn't care to live, he won't shut up about how other people should live their lives. He's patronizing, and I don't find that particularly winsome or attractive in my male lead. I had sympathy for the guy, I don't think I'd be human if I didn't, but his sense of entitlement warped everything he said into a directive. But of course, no one can tell Will anything! No one can help Will! Be sensitive to Will! Walk on eggshells around Will! It's almost like (god don't smite me for saying it like this but...) his handicap is a distraction for a gendered subtext: All the women in my life can drive themselves crazy trying to help, trying to change me, but in the end I'm gonna do what I wanna do; "boys will be boys"; set me free and go live your life, with the help of this pile of money I'm giving you; you couldn't help me, but I can help you, because this was always just a power play.Do you see why I call myself a pessimist? Cause that's what I got from his character: You can't control me, but I can control you. That's the epilogue in 9 words. So no, I don't think he's romantic or charming. I don't find any of that romantic or charming. Reason 5: Because I'm a woman. Lou had to be pushed to do things outside of her comfort zone by a male. After being brutally violated by males in her past, she needs another male to tell her she's worth something, that she doesn't have to play it safe. LOL OK You're kidding, Moyes, right,...right? What about the power of women? Why couldn't Treena be a comfort and a help? Or Lou's mother? Women shaming women and valuing the opinion of men over their own sex... it's a chick-lit tale as old as time. Men are saviors and women are either competitive and catty to one another or weak and unsupportive. Initially, Lou's lack of ambition didn't bother me. Probably because, career-wise, I'm in a similar situation and therefore have an inbred sympathy for all struggling 20-somethings. But once it became clear that Lou needed a man to pick out her damn career for her (literally, he actually said "why not be this?" and then she did it), my gender studies senses started tingling. Another not-so-women-friendly book. Reason 6: Did Moyes write that, or did I read that in a Hallmark card last week? It's funny, I read *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* at the beginning of the summer and came across one of the most striking statements I've read in a long time: "If we have only one life to live, we might as well not have lived at all." It's entirely contrary to that of the most popular quote on Goodreads from this book: "You only get one life. It's actually your duty to live it as fully as possible." It reminds me why reading chick-lit is often too vacuous to handle. It stumbles on its own thoughtless predictability, reduces itself to anonymous adages I've probably seen stitched on a needle-point pillow before.

Maybe it's my disgruntled cynicism talking, but I think it's the author's "duty" (to use Moyes' preachy, morally binding word) to give readers something more than a generic motto on how one should or shouldn't live their life. Especially if you paid for this book. Costs way more than a \$4 card or decorative wooden plaque. But when people write about how much they love this book, most point to that quote and others as lessons to be learned, as examples of how this book is life changing. I don't know-that word "duty" makes me skittish, and the phrase "as fully as possible" sounds pretty frickin' stressful. I see it this way: I'm going to live, and I'm going to die, and whatever happens in between is a series of choices that can't be undone, that are good and bad, "right" and "wrong," but nevertheless can't really be planned. I can't imagine being on my deathbed and having no regrets. Having no regrets means I knew what I was doing and the consequences of what I was doing as I did it, and to hell if I have that much foresight, if anybody has that much foresight. My life's not going to be lived "fully" because I only have one life and I can't perfect it. I'm not sure where "duty" comes into this. Now, here's the part where I strain against the genre, where I shake the cage in frustration and expect this book to be what it is not, what it never intended to be, what it never will be. I usually get to this point when I can't reconcile a book's popularity with its less than original insights and my own aversion to it. But you can write a smashing hit on the back of canned phrases, nothin new there. And ultimately, I suppose a book should be judged for what it is, more than what it is not. So I temper my reasons for disliking this book, and give (some) credit where (some) credit is due: Reading about a quadriplegic was a new experience for me, and I enjoy reading about things I don't know much about. The setting was cool. Who wouldn't like waking up, going out and seeing a castle every day? (well maybe people who don't like tourists, but still). I also think this book has a bit more of a practical edge than a sentimental one, which saved it from being sickly sweet and unbearable. And then I suppose the writing isn't terrible, it just needed some editing. But on the whole, *Me Before You* is predictable and not much of a love story. I think you could even make the argument it's not a love story at all. Weird book.

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