

Me Before You (2016)

Rated PG-13. Running time: 1 hour 50 min.

Our content ratings: Violence 1; Language 2; Sex/Nudity 3.

Our star rating (1-5): 4

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful...

I Corinthians 13:4-5

Lou Clark (Emilia Clarke), a cheery, helpful waitress in an English café, finds herself out of a job when the owner gives out her paycheck and informs her that he is going out of business. Her loss of a job has family ramifications because she has been the family breadwinner due to the long-term unemployment of her father Bernard (Brendan Coyle). Also living in the home are her supportive mother Josie (Samantha Spiro), her college-age sister Katrina “Treena” (Jenna Coleman), and a grandfather.

Lou is a baby-faced, ever smiling girl who has a penchant for outlandish fashion—her garish blouses not quite matching her colorful short skirts and tights, and those shoes—most of them looking like something that Salvador Dali might have concocted while high on LSD. Living in a small English town notable only for its picturesque castle, she must have ordered her footwear over the Internet!

When the employment agent spots a jobs ad that seems to suit her, Lou dresses in what she thinks is appropriate attire, blouse and skirt more subdued in color, but the latter so tight that it splits down the side just before the interview. Camila Traynor (Janet McTeer) invites her into the stately mansion, and throughout the course of the interview poor Lou

is distracted by her torn skirt that reveals more of her thigh than she is comfortable with displaying. Camila obviously is bothered by his, but to Lou's surprise, offers her the job anyway, wanting her to start immediately. Her job is to provide daycare for the paraplegic son Will Traynor (Sam Claflin). A couple of years earlier we had seen the up and coming businessman struck down on a rains-wept street by a motorbike.

She meets with Nathan (Stephen Peacocke), the night nurse, who fills her in on Will's meds and moods. He warns her that the latter often depend on which meds he has just taken. Will proves to be a tough case to like, treating her over the next days so poorly that she despairs of staying. However sister Treena gives her a pep talk, and more importantly, the news she intends to leave for college soon, hence hanging onto the job, with the best pay Lou has ever had, is all the more important.

Of course, it is no spoiler to reveal that Lou's sunny and kind disposition gradually wins Will over, specially when she watches a foreign language film with him and discovers she likes it. This also serves to show that her domineering boyfriend Patrick (Matthew Lewis) is not a good match. At the local movie theater, when she suggests they see a foreign film together, he immediately quashes the idea. This is the guy who has informed her that the vacation they intend to take together will be in Norway and center around his interest as an athletic trainer, not her more romantic ideas of going to a warmer country.

Lou has been hitting it off so well with Will that she is shocked to overhear Camilla arguing with her husband Stephen (Charles Dance) about their son's intention to end his life at a Swiss euthanasia center. He has agreed to their request to wait for six months before signing the final papers and traveling to that country to end his pain-wracked life. She is so convinced that she can win him over to live out his life,

especially now that he has shown his love for her, that she and Nathan accompany him to a tropical vacation billed as a "paradise." Nathan finds romance in "paradise," but will it be that for her and Will?

Based on the bestseller by English author Jojo Moyes, who also wrote the screenplay, director Thea Sharrock's film could easily have become just another Kleenex tear jerker, or that ultimate male putdown, a "chick flick." While no *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*, this is a fine drama/romance for guys as well as gals. (Indeed, given what happens to Will, might we not wish that Lou had persuaded him to watch with her the French film?) Not only do the leads, Emilia Clarke and Sam Claflin, exhibit great chemistry together, but the entire supporting cast are fine too. I loved Brendan Coyle's stolid father to whom the heartbroken Lou says simply, when she runs away from Will because he will not change his mind about dying and asks, "What can I do?" "You love them."

Indeed, this is the heart of the story, this love taking its cue from the apostle Paul's Corinthian letter, "Love does not insist on its own way." Of course, as believers—and that the Clarkes are we see in the dinner table scene when a prayer is offered before the meal—we might not agree with Will, but still love must be expressed by "being there." A good film to see and discuss. Not only about love, but about the difficult topic of euthanasia as well!

This review with a set of discussion questions will be in the July issue of VP.