

A suicide note urges Louisa to 'live boldly' and to 'just live', but what does this mean? The movie opens to our dashing male protagonist, Will. We see him rushing off to a busy business deal when a tragic accident strikes that leaves him paralysed from the neck down. Louisa is an optimist with a quirky fashion sense. She instantly brightens the screen and hints us towards the romance which is about to develop between the two.

Unexpectedly, Louisa is unemployed from her waitressing job and finds an opportunity to become a caregiver for the self-isolating and cynical Will. With Louisa's influence, and by her side, Will learns to appreciate things in his life. It was all planned to be happily ever after. Until Louisa finds out that Will is preparing himself for physician-assisted suicide.

The viewers follow Louisa's determination to change Will's heart. She plans for once-in-a-lifetime experiences, and ticks off the bucket list in Mauritius. The cinematography of their dream holiday highlights the beauty and goodness of life. Along with a beautiful soundtrack and Will's growing affection for Louisa, we were all sure of a happy ending. But the movie was known to be a tear-jerker, and the sudden turnaround happens in the last 15 minutes, where we see Will prepare for his death at Dignitas.

Will is depicted as a young, privileged man with the best kind of private medical and social care. His decision to die is described by Louisa in the film as 'selfish', and could plant an uneasy feeling for viewers with disabilities in a worse position than Will. The film emphasises autonomy, choice and 'Will'. But I cannot help but feel the undertone of the movie is to affirm physically disabled people in their decision



to end their lives. If a physically-abled person decides to kill themselves, we try our best to prevent this from happening: we offer them psychological and emotional support, sometimes coupled with psychiatric drugs. Yet why is society so quick to welcome and support suicide among the physically disabled?

This movie had a great platform to display hope and love, yet the main effect was to romanticise euthanasia and Dignitas, an organisation with an 'atheist basis of self-determination' according to their founder Ludwig Minelli. *Me Before You* emphasises choice as the most sacred thing in life. Yet the final moment of Will's life is in a room with white curtains and bright light shining into his bed, perhaps using the imagery of heaven. This near ending is an apparent allusion to life after death for Will, and the scene raises a lot of questions for viewers.

The movie departs with a narration of Will's suicide note, where he reminds Louisa to 'just live' as he allots some of his fortune to her. We then see Louisa wearing stripy tights, a gift from Will, which represents the 'bold' life he prescribed. The audience only sees the positive effect Will's decision had on Louisa, with his fortune and the experience she will have in Paris. But what about his death? The scene after Will had the lethal dose of drug is not shown, but we are shown a bright white light and falling leaves. If Will's choice to die was a realistic one, as argued by some, is this the reality of death? Or am I just expecting a little too much from a summer rom-com? ■

Chieun Han is a medical student in Manchester