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*Paulette Mahurin*

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## **His Name Was Ben** Paulette Mahurin

Hearing the words “it’s cancer,” threw Sara Phillips’ life into chaos, until an unexpected turn of events and a chance encounter with a stranger changed everything—his name was Ben. Based on real events, Ben and Sara discover that when all else fails, healing can come in the most unexpected ways. Chilling and heart wrenching, His Name Was Ben is a triumph over the devastating circumstances and fear experienced when faced with a terminal illness. In this narrative, the power of love conquers shadows and transforms the very nature and meaning of what it is to be fully alive. From the award winning, best-selling author of, The Persecution of Mildred Dunlap, comes a story filled with soul and passion that will leave the reader thinking about it for days after the last page is closed.

“Paulette Mahurin compassionately renders an insightful tale about love and life in the moment, when a moment is all there is. Both ordinary and extraordinary, Sara and Ben kept me up at night rooting for them, as did Mahurin of course, a writer of exceptional heart, for her tender and wise depiction of love against all odds. A rare pleasure, His Name Was Ben is not to be missed.”—Lee Fullbright, author of The Angry Woman Suite

“Against the biggest of obstacles a couple can face, the positive message is that it is never too late to start living.” —Christoph Fischer author of Sebastian.

## **His Name Was Ben Details**

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# From Reader Review His Name Was Ben for online ebook

## **T R says**

Mahurin writes with heart and passion, a story not about facing death but what it is to be alive. And it's never too late. This every living, breathing moment, is here to be valued, a point driven home in this poignant read. This is a must read for anyone facing a terminal illness, anyone with a family member with a terminal illness, or anyone wanting a glimpse into revelations that bring the miraculous living moment to the present, for joy and love. A truly beautiful romance novel that I will read again and again.

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## **Ty Patterson says**

If you want to read schmaltzy love stories, this is not for you.

If you want to read about how to start living, when you are dying, then Paulette Mahurin's His Name was Ben, is just the story for you.

While death is ever present in the book, it's treated very maturely and the book is a love story of two strong people who do not fill their lives with self pity, rather they seize the moment and start loving.

And start living.

Strongly recommended. Mahurin is an author to watch out for.

Her stories are real, different and immerse you in their depth.

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## **Lauren says**

This isn't my usual genre that I read but I was gripped from the first chapter. I was rooting for Sara from the start. Such a well written and honest work! I was gripped and as the tale unfolded I couldn't stop. The romantic in me really wished and wished for what would be a happy ending and I feel the way in which the author told the story left me satisfied, yet emotionally drained. It's rare to find a story that you are so invested and that's so well and sensitively written that can make someone connect and feel such emotion. I felt like I was with Sara and Ben every step of the way, experiencing all the ups and downs that the circumstances brought. What else can I say but wow!

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## **Ellie Midwood says**

“His name was Ben” is one of those stories that will stay with you long after the last page is turned. It starts with a story of Sara, who is battling breast cancer. As her condition deteriorates, she starts losing all hope and even desire to keep struggling when two things happen: her doctor announces that she had just been

accepted into a new study which has been showing amazing results and, while sitting in Dr. Zimmerman's waiting room, she sees a man filling out a patient's form. Ben - she catches a glimpse of his name and number on his paperwork - is seemingly healthy and good-looking, and for the first time in god knows how long Sara feels a spark of interest within her. What follows is an amazing, bitter-sweet story of two people who met in the most unusual circumstances and decided that no matter what fate brings their way, they would try and make the best of what they have, let it be for a few days or years to come.

What I really loved about this story is how real every character felt. By the end, I felt like I knew them all personally, and I cried with them over their tragedies and cheered their happiness. The main message of the story - appreciate your life and cherish every day as it can be your last one - is delivered in an extremely powerful way, and I couldn't help but hope for the best for both characters. Tazzie, Sara's loyal Rottie, deserves a special mention - she made an absolutely adorable character! A brilliant novel that reads like non-fiction, which I would highly recommend to everyone!

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### **Wendy Steele says**

This is the story of Ben and Sara, two cancer patients who meet at Dr Zimmerman's surgery. With her dog Taz and best friend Ellen for support, Sara embarks on a new friendship, spending precious time with a new love in her life. The story is well paced and all the characters are well conceived, making this book a real page turner.

Beautifully crafted, this is a compelling and emotional read. As the main characters assess and analyse their own lives, I found myself looking at my own values and confronting my own mortality. Am I truly happy with my life right now? Would I be living like I am if my life expectancy were threatened?

The love in this book shines through...love of family, friends and the wonderful, amazing planet on which we live. Not my usual choice to read and there were times when tears filled my eyes but I'm glad I read this beautiful book.

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### **Bill Ward says**

I have just finished this book in very quick time as I didn't want to stop reading. It is a story about a couple who meet while suffering from terminal cancer and are taking a last throw of the dice, by volunteering for a trial of a promising but unproven treatment. Sounds like a recipe for a tear jerker. Well I did shed a few tears but actually this is in fact a very uplifting story because though their time together was limited, they found a love that we can all only hope to experience.

The story is emotional but inspiring and heart warming. It is also beautifully written and the characters seem very real. Apart from Ben and Sara we have some other colourful characters, in particular their parents. I liked that the author tackled the difficult subject of Sara having had a double mastectomy and no longer feeling like a woman until Ben shows her and all of us that we are not defined by our physical looks but our spirit.

A great book!

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## **Christoph Fischer says**

“His name was Ben” by Paulette Mahurin is a beautifully written, bitter-sweet love story between two cancer patients, Ben and Sara, and really also between them and her Rottweiler dog Tazzie.

Sara, a nurse practitioner, develops an aggressive type of breast cancer, first detected by said dog, Tazzie.

The story of her diagnosis and the initial treatment is full of raw emotion and written with great empathy and with amazing medical knowledge.

We also learn about her family background and the issues that have made Sara’s life not the happiest until now. Blessed with good insurance and access to a top oncologist she enters a special research programme that trials a new treatment for cancer. The drug works and increases her libido, which is why she eventually asks out a handsome fellow cancer patient named Ben.

Once the two of them embark on their untimely love affair they help each other heal and work through their personal issues: Ben’s alcoholic parents; Sara’s unhappy childhood with a controlling and critical mother, a schizophrenic brother and her divorce from ex-husband Henry.

Mahurin has chosen her characters very well and given them so much more than just bad things like cancer. Ben and Sara are both highly evolved and reflective people who have the ability to work through their problems, speak honestly with each other and develop at last a proper relationship in their life based on solid foundations - it was moving to read about it.

The other characters in the book are equally interesting and get enough coverage to add extra colour to the often humorous and certainly inspiring novel in front of you; be it Sara’s mother, the cancer doctor or the friends – not to forget the lovely Rottweiler Tazzie.

Against the biggest of obstacles a couple can face, the positive message is that it is never too late to start living. The hope that patients have attached to miracle cures and new treatment means nothing when time is only spent on the clock but does not translate into moments of shared love and happiness. Be there breakthrough studies or not, never give up on living. Amidst so much understandably tragic and miserable cancer stories here is a book that shows positive role models to look up to and to keep in mind when the unspeakable happens to you.

I received an ARC for an unbiased review.

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## **Dean C. Moore says**

This is one of those real life dramas that I usually try to escape from in my reading, as opposed to plunge myself into. Especially when the tale is captured with this degree of vividness and proof that the author did her homework; there was no not feeling all the heart-wrenching emotions that go along with cancer therapy and struggling to survive the attempts to cure the person as much as the disease. But paradoxically, by making me live through this as if I were battling to survive late stage cancer myself, the book exacted its own healing, strengthening me to deal with the worst life can throw at me, which, in the final analysis, is what we hope all novels we pick up will give us, but that few truly do. Most are instead a temporary reprieve, an escape. And no, this story isn’t just about finding inner strength to carry an unbearable burden, it’s about the transformative power of love and relationships and of fully inhabiting the moment at the instant you most want to flee from it.

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## **Lauren says**

Amazing story about a woman who has cancer and is trying to find the balance of life. while at the doctors

office she meets Ben he turns her world upside down. This is an emotionally gripping story about a couple that overcomes many obstacles and also has to face reality. Great read that reminds us how precious life is.

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### **Lorna Lee says**

Mahurin, who wrote the wildly successful and award-winning "The Persecution of Mildred Dunlap," has done it again! She is an adept writer who knows how to create complex characters living complicated lives, tugging the reader into the world she creates. The details and dialog ring so true that I felt I was in the story with them, often forgetting that I was reading. Paulette Mahurin's writing is that good!

This time, we're drawn into the intimate lives of two cancer patients. It's clear Paulette used her medical background and extensive research because the sections on the types of cancer, treatment options, and side effects are quite sophisticated. But this is no maudlin read. Instead, courage, hope, love, wisdom, and even levity are woven throughout the individual and collective journeys the characters take.

This book offers many gifts to the reader. To me, the best books offer more than just a memorable story, which this one certainly does.

The best books linger with you long after you've read them because they've taken you on an ethical or philosophical journey. "His Name Was Ben" took me on such a journey. If I was facing a terminal illness, would I opt for toxic treatment or let myself die naturally? Would I have the courage to start a relationship knowing that I had cancer AND that he had cancer? Does cancer matter since none of us knows what going to happen in the next moment? These questions still haunt me after reading this book.

The best books also take you places you've never been, or get you to see things in ways you've never seen them. They open up new perspectives. Again, Mahurin's book gave me this gift. I learned a great deal about cancer treatment, its side effects and the emotional toll it takes on both the patient and loved ones. I love reading fiction and learning things that apply to real life!

At its core, this book is a story about accepting oneself, being open to romance, overcoming fear, and taking chances. Basically, it's a love story about life, about living life consciously rather than on automatic pilot. Thank you Paulette for the gift of this book.

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### **Christina Hamlett says**

The good news is feeling an instant chemistry with the handsome man sitting next to you in a waiting room. The bad news is that the waiting room is in a hospital and both of you are oncology patients with uncertain futures. Such is the premise of author Paulette Mahurin's compelling and bittersweet new novel, "His Name Was Ben." The storyline strikes a particularly poignant chord with me these days as one of my dearest friends is currently going through her second bout with cancer. "I can get through all the chemo, the nausea, the fatigue, and wearing wigs," she told me the first time, "if it means I'll be done with all of it by this time next year." Unfortunately, such was not the case. "I completely trust my doctors," she said a few weeks ago, "but frankly this whole chemo thing is really getting old."

Mahurin's likable protagonist, Sara, aptly captures the angst of a beautiful and accomplished woman who is as stressed about dying as she is about living, specifically if "living" not only involves dealing with a cruelly dysfunctional family but also an understandable reluctance to actively re-enter the dating pool if it means revealing to prospective dates that her body is no longer "whole." For women who are still single or divorced, a double mastectomy is a death sentence in and of itself, especially if having breasts is equated with society's definition of sexuality and desirability. Yes, that handsome man in the waiting room was exciting enough for Sara to surreptitiously note his name and phone number but can she muster the courage to actually call him and introduce herself?

It's her best friend, Ellen, who pushes Sara to take a chance, for certainly Fate has put "Ben" in Sara's orbit for a reason. Ben, however, is as wary of romantic encounters as Sara. When their first "date" channels "An Affair To Remember" and Sara fails to show up, it's little wonder that Ben assumes he has been set up for some kind of sick joke and that his caller was never serious.

The fragile relationship that starts to unfold will have readers reaching for Kleenex on more than one occasion. Mahurin's expertise as a nurse practitioner makes every scene resonate with accuracy, as does her knowledge of Southern California and the Central Coast which serve as the backdrop for the story. And what book isn't made all the better with the presence of a dog – Taz – who teaches the bipeds a thing or two about unconditional love and the joys of living in the moment instead of apologizing for the past or fearing for the future. (Profits from Mahurin's books go to help rescue dogs.)

The story is also not without villains in the form of Sara and Ben's respective family members who are themselves among the walking wounded that can only react to life's disappointments with vitriolic anger, self-loathing, and accusations that loved ones were obviously predisposed to contract diseases because of things they did – or didn't – do.

A first-rate read from a first-rate author whose wordsmithing I admire and whose passion for storytelling comes deeply from the heart and soul.

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### **Lee Fullbright says**

An insightful , compassionate tale about love and life in the moment, when a moment is all there is. Both ordinary and extraordinary, Sara and Ben kept me up all night rooting for them, as did Mahurin of course, a writer of exceptional heart, for her tender and wise depiction of love against all odds.

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### **Arletta Dawdy says**

Inspired by real characters, Paulette Mahurin's HIS NAME WAS BEN probes in rich depth a story about living life to the fullest. Many books are out in the world that tell of patients, friends and family dealing with their own or another's journey with cancer. The exceptionally tender, fact-filled and emotionally laden difference here is the intense dissection of fear, love, hope and endurance. Sara's condition improves with experimental drug treatment after her double mastectomy. Much slower to

heal than the cancer is her negative self-image as it battles with the desire for love, sex and a caring relationship. Stealing a peek as Ben fills out a questionnaire at their oncologist's office, she is attracted to him and takes note of his telephone number. Egged on by her friend Ellen, she finally calls him and sets a date...but when an accident keeps her from him, he figures she is a flake. After all, why would she be any different than his past experiences? The tall exceptionally good-looking man, she later learns, has pancreatic cancer, one of the most hopeless of cancers.

Ben and Sara literally grope toward a fulfilling relationship as they deal with their illnesses, toxic family histories and their developing trust and love. Mahurin's writing is sharp as the surgeon's scalpel cutting into the dynamics of childhood trauma. As Sara and Ben assist each other to deal with their pasts and override or resolve them, their love intensifies and matures. Healing occurs on multiple levels, even in the face of Ben's deteriorating physical condition. Mahurin has an enormous talent for exploring character development as the reader finds in the unfolding of layer after layer of individual growth and change. Sara's dog Tazzie and her friend Ellen, a nurse as is Sara, have been her only support until Ben's entry into her life. By the story's end, their mutual support system swells and multiplies in numbers, understanding and love. Sara and Ben give the fortunate reader lessons in living.

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## **Wanda Hartzenberg says**

I almost managed to read this book in one sitting. Almost.

Ben meets a girl. Ok a woman whom is treated by the same oncologist he is seeing for the first time...

So begins an epic love story at times raw with naked truth about cancer at others lyrical about the mere act of living. Between our main two protagonists is a dog. One Ben learns to love as both he and his new love interest learn how to take a crash course with coming to terms with what formed them, driven their actions and dictated how they would live their lives.

Together the two love birds and Tazzie the mini-rotti lives through more subplots in a matter of months than the two human protagonists dealt with in their 45 + years leading up to diagnosis.

Ultimately this story does not romanticize the horror of cancer. It is never over explicit but it does portray a less than romantic view of a very painful usually fatal disease.

But in the end although it seems as if the story is about death and endings at first it is in fact about love, life and hope.

A moving story where the characters grow so much it left me breathless.

I am convinced that this story will not be everybody's cup of tea. It is simply to "real" to be universally loved. I am however convinced that for the most part this book will be a firm favourite and it will serve not to only. Entertain but also to inspire.

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## **Holly says**

I have read others' reviews of this endearing story and I have nothing by way of a useful review to add regarding the story itself or the writing. I agree with what others have said in theirs. However, . . . .

What I would like to acknowledge is the wonderful courage and amazing heart possessed by this story's author. In her inimitable down-to-Earth style, in her unique way, Paulette tells, not just her own or another's story, but generically each of our own stories too, demonstrating to us how it is possible to escape the self-generated shackles, the self-protective illusions in our minds, to ignite and stoke our true potential for love, enabling us to create our own lives, moment by precious moment, as we live them.

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