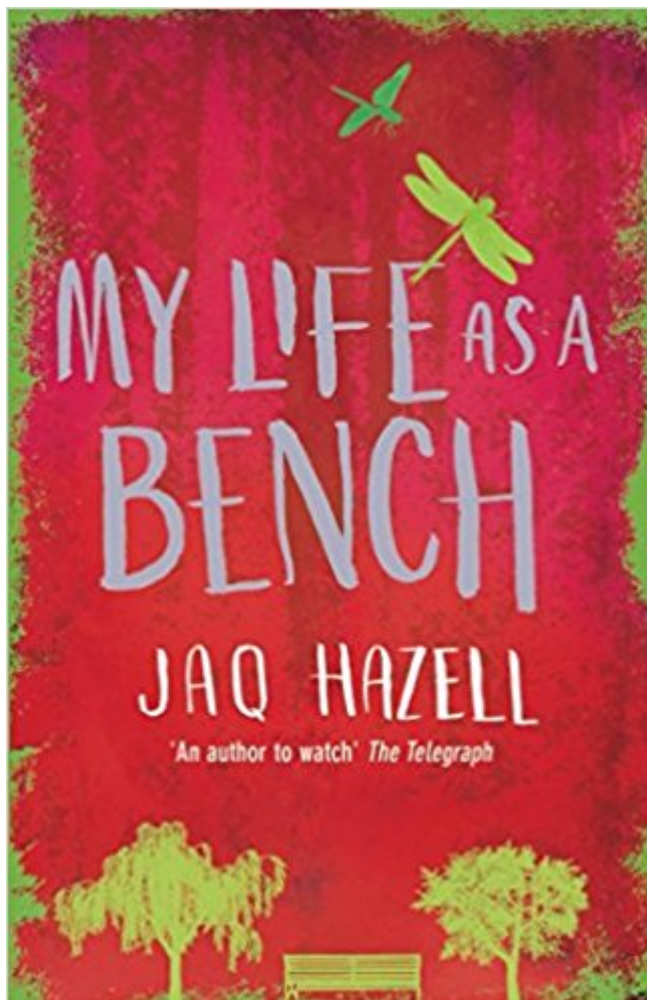


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# My Life As A Bench



## Synopsis

**\*\*WINNER OF THE INTERNATIONAL RUBERY BOOK AWARD 2017\*\*** 'Moving and unforgettable' Rubery Book Award 'The heroine's voice is delightful, honest and humorous' School Library Journal 'An author to watch' The Telegraph There are so many benches lining the riverside, each and every one tragic in its own way. Ren Miller has died aged seventeen and yet her consciousness lives on, inhabiting her memorial bench by the River Thames in London. Ren longs to be reunited with her boyfriend Gabe, but soon discovers why he has failed to visit. Devastated, she must learn to break through and talk to the living so she can reveal the truth about her untimely end. Unique and compelling – this is a contemporary story about love, friendship, a passion for music and what, if anything, remains after we've gone. 'The author, beginning with this unusual premise, turns it into a moving story of a young life ending all too soon ... It is engaging, funny and also quite heartbreaking. Highly recommended!' The Militant Recommender 'This book may easily fit into the Young Adult fiction genre ... but the fascinating relationship with Lionel and the understanding of violent death and subsequent grief carry across the generations. This would be a good discussion aid to issues raised in schools and colleges, but equally book clubs would find it fascinating' Nudge 'This book is a stunner ... definitely one that will always remain in my top ten' Being Unique Books 'One of the most unique books I have read in a long long time' Open Book Post 'A little gem with love, loss and life within its pages' Netgalley Review 'Highly imaginative and captivating. I was entranced by My Life as a Bench ... Hazell has strung together a melody that is both sweet and sorrowful' Lauren Walsburg 'The writing is perfect, the story is fast-paced, and everything flows smoothly to tie up with a beautiful finish. I would recommend this book to anyone who likes their YA contemporary with a touch of suspense' This is Lit 'This was a beautifully written book ... one of those stories that took you in and the rest of the world was only background noise' Netgalley 'So much fun to read ... What I really loved about this book is that although it is supernatural in a sense, it doesn't feel like it. This book feels firmly like a YA coming of age story, even though the protagonist is dead, and she isn't going anywhere. Hazell captures the voice of an English teenager today so well that Ren jumps right off the page' Ink Drops Books 'This book was so heart-warming and heart-breaking at the same time. This will definitely be recommended for our library bookshelves and hopefully the students will enjoy it as much as I did' Librarian, Netgalley 'A unique take on life after death' Read Rest Relax 'It's a combination of a love story and a mystery as a plot ... a wonderful read!' Laurie Picillo, Netgalley 'It kept me engrossed. A totally unique concept and a murder mystery to be solved' Eclectic Ellen 'I really, really enjoyed this book. If you're looking for a unique, but bittersweet read – this book is for you!' Alissa in Wonderland Reviews

Perfect for fans of *The Lovely Bones*, *13 Reasons Why*, and *Before I Fall*.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Gr 10 up *Ren* is a boyfriend's betrayal causes Ren to flee rural Devon for London and the father she has never met. She lands in a posh mansion with a hypervigilant stepmother, doting half-sister, and still mostly absent father. Ren quickly makes friends with the capricious Maddy and crushes hard on hazel-eyed Gabriel. Gabe takes over Ren's heart and mind until he is all she can think of, even when she realizes that her physical life is over and her spirit now inhabits a bench erected in her memory. Trapped in limbo, Ren relives her time with Gabriel, slowly moving forward until the fateful night. While she has no memory of what happened, she is sure that despite appearances, Gabe did not cause her death. Neighboring bench Lionel, a gentleman from another generation, wisely counsels Ren on her new status and on how best to "break through" to prove Gabe's innocence. The author conveys how quickly and intensely relationships can develop, and supporting characters are uniquely fleshed out.

Ren's recounting of each night has a Groundhog Day-esque quality that some may find tedious, but the heroine's voice is delightful, honest and humorous. British slang adds to the rich setting. Issues of class, financial inequity and racial discrimination are incorporated realistically. Though portraying a character as an inanimate object seems an unlikely premise, Hazell successfully pulls it off, and the artful writing will entice even those typically drawn to more realistic titles. Verdict *Ren* is recommended where Gayle Forman's *If I Stay* and Lauren Oliver's *Before I Fall* are popular *Ren* is Lee De Groft, Jamestown High School,

"The title makes it sound insane but it's insanely unique and beautiful, questioning what actually happens to us when we die. I cannot recommend this book enough, I'd say it's a Young Adult read but all ages will enjoy it" [Â Purple Bookstand](#)"An innovative idea ... book clubs would find it fascinating" [Â New Books Magazine](#)"This book is a stunner ... definitely one that will always remain in my top ten" [Â Being Unique Books](#) [Â "One of the most unique books I have read in a long long time"Â Â Open Book Post](#) [Â "A little gem with love, loss and life within its pages"Â Â Netgalley](#)"I would recommend this book to anyone who likes their YA contemporary with a touch of suspense" [Â This is Lit](#) [Â "A fun book that provides a lot of food for thought"Â Â Netgalley](#) [Â "Touching and suspenseful"Â Â Goodreads](#)"Hazell captures the voice of an English teenager today so well that Ren jumps right off the page" [Â Ink Drop Books](#)"This book was so heart-warming and heart-breaking at the same time" [Â Librarian, Netgalley](#)"If you're looking for a unique, but bittersweet read - this book is for you!" [Â Alissa in Wonderland Reviews](#) [Â "Engaging, funny and also quite heart-breaking. Highly recommended!"Â Â The Militant Recommender](#)"It's such an interesting take on the afterlife, bringing the idea of ghosts and memorials together ... such an interesting premise and it was so well executed" [Â The Whispering of the Pages](#) [Â "The story is written so well, the pacing so smooth and timed out perfectly that it sucks you along and takes you away throughout ... entertaining, well constructed and completely worth the read"Â Â Looking for a Life](#) [Â "I recommend this book to hopeless romantics, to people who have felt love and grief, and to the rest of us who have forgotten what it felt like and what it means to live, to love, and to die"Â Â A Lifetime of Rhymes](#)"This book is a stunner ... definitely one that will always remain in my top ten!" [Being Unique Books](#)"A little gem with love, loss and life within its pages" [Netgalley Review](#)"The writing is perfect, the story is fast-paced, and everything flows smoothly to tie up with a beautiful finish" [This is Lit](#)"If you're looking for a unique, but bittersweet read - this book is for you!" [Alissa in Wonderland Reviews](#)"The author conveys how quickly and intensely relationships can develop, and supporting characters are uniquely fleshed out ... the heroine's voice is delightful, honest and humorous. British slang adds to the rich setting. Issues of class, financial inequity and racial discrimination are incorporated realistically. Though portraying a character as an inanimate object seems an unlikely premise, Hazell successfully pulls it off, and the artful writing will entice even those typically drawn to more realistic titles. Recommended where Gayle Forman's *If I Stay* and Lauren Oliver's *Before I fall* are popular" [Lee De Groft, Jamestown High School, Williamsburg](#)

VA (School Library Journal)'It is an innovative idea, especially when Ren realises certain people can hear her voice through the bench ... This book may easily fit into the Young Adult fiction genre - the language/slang and Ren's interest in exploring love, drinking, parties and music even through her own singing voice and new cultures would appeal to younger readers. But the fascinating relationship with Lionel and the understanding of violent death and subsequent grief carry across all generations. This would be a good discussion aid to issues raised in schools and colleges, but equally book clubs would find it fascinating' Philipa Coughlan, Nudge'A moving story of a young life ending all too soon ... It is engaging, funny and also quite heartbreaking. Highly recommended!' The Militant Recommender'This book is a stunner ... definitely one that will always remain in my top ten!' Being Unique Books'A little gem with love, loss and life within its pages' Netgalley Review'The writing is perfect, the story is fast-paced, and everything flows smoothly to tie up with a beautiful finish' This is Lit'If you're looking for a unique, but bittersweet read - this book is for you!' Alissa in Wonderland Reviews

My Life As A BenchI loved Jaq's last novel, I Came To Find A Girl and so was expecting big things from My Life As A Bench...I wasn't disappointed, it's amazing!Lauren, or 'Ren' as she likes to be known, has died at seventeen, and yet her consciousness lives on in her memorial bench by the River Thames. She longs for her boyfriend to visit her bench until she learns why he hasn't, and must learn to 'break through' and explain how she met her death. I really liked the relationship between Ren and Lionel, the 'bench' next door.This is a stunning book and I absolutely loved it. The title makes it sound insane but it's insanely unique and beautiful, questioning what actually happens to us when we die. Ren's narration jumps between present day and her teenage life when she was alive. I think this is a brilliant idea for a book and it really captures your imagination. I loved this book so much I feel like I'm stumbling over what to write and that I'm not doing the book justice!I cannot recommend this book enough, I'd say it's a Young Adult read but all ages will enjoy it. With many thanks to Netgalley and the publisher, 5\* ++++.

This book was one of the most unique books I have read in a long long time.Ren (Lauren) Miller has died tragically at the age of Seventeen. Her soul/consciousness lives on in a memorial park bench, by the river Thames, that her father bought in her Memory. Ren thinks mainly of her boyfriend Gabe who she misses. She spends her days wondering why he does not visit her as her family does. She also soon learns that the park bench next to her is inhabited by an older man named Lionel.Her conversations with Lionel really shine for me. I loved how they talked about her life and he helped

her cope with her situation and slowly begins to share more about his life with her. These conversations were my favorite parts of the book. I like how he helps her accept her situation and gently encourages her to remember what happened the night she died. Through Lionel's encouragement, Ren attempts to make contact with people stopping by or visiting her bench. She speaks to everyone and there are some that do hear her. Naturally they are freaked out by this. Hearing a voice speaking to you and not seeing anyone can be spooky and make one question their mental state. Eventually Ren learns why Gabe has not visited and this motivates her more than anything to reach out and get a message about what really happened the night she died. There have been many YA books where the female protagonist has died and she is trying to figure out what happened to her: how she died, who killed her, etc. This book is similar in that Ren cannot remember right away everything that happened leading up to her death. She remembers slowly over time, until the final "reveal" occurs. What worked for me was that, while reading this book, it never seemed absurd that she would inhabit/inhibit the bench. The idea was so unique but it worked!!!! Since the beginning of time, there has been talk about what really happens after we die. In this book, Ren and Lionel live on in memorial park benches. I really enjoyed the Author's unique approach of the after life or what happens to us after we die. Her relationship with Gabe could have been flushed out more. She seemed to be much more into him than he was into her. He seemed unavailable and distant for most of their relationship. I realize this is YA and teens do tend to fall head over heels very fast. I've said it before and I will say it again - this book is unique and that is a good thing (OMG did I just channel Martha Stewart in my review?) But seriously the uniqueness of this book worked for me. I received a copy of this book from the Publisher and NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

A memorial bench to seventeen year old Ren still contains her spirit. An aching sense of loss is wonderfully conveyed in this contemporary novel, as Ren tries to come to terms with her new situation, her own untimely death and the loss of her first real love, Gabe, who is blamed for her murder. Ren is visited in succession by her friends and family and touchingly struggles to communicate with them. She relives the events of her short life. There are no stereotypes here. Ren finds herself next to the crusty Lionel (another, much older bench-presence) yet their relationship becomes powerful and moving; the step mother, Susannah, is supportive, her half-sister is sensitive to Ren's voice. The teenage language and humour, the rivalries, obsession with boys, music (Amy Winehouse) and parties are completely persuasive. Moving and unforgettable. [RuberyBookAward.com](http://RuberyBookAward.com)

I absolutely loved this book. It was definitely unique and it was told from a memorial bench (Ren) POV. Ren is 17 year old and deceased. After death, her conscience lives on through a memorial bench . My heart broke for her as she tells her story and how she yearns to reach out to the one she loves. I With each chapter, I was rooting her on to be able to break her silence and come through to speak with her loved ones and it happens and it's amazing. I loved how this book captured her youth and her rebellious teenage ways. I love how the author weaved her world together by telling her story (reliving her past and up to the moment of her death) and by capturing her conversations with Lionel. Overall, this book was well written, thought and emotion provoking and I would definitely recommend !

A refreshing and interesting take on the 'after life', I liked the author's style and the seamless way the tale of Ren's untimely death unfolds. The idea that Ren's troubled soul was trapped in a memorial bench as she tries to figure out what happened to her, was so plausible and gently written, it appeared effortless, which is surely a sign of a good writer. I really liked the character of Lionel, the next 'bench', and would have liked a little more depth to both Ren and Gabe's characters, with a little less of the teenage angst which made me think Ren was a lot younger than seventeen. Other reviewers say the end was predictable, but I found this uplifting and satisfying. Overall, it was a good read, the story flowed and I read it within a few days, wanting to keep reading to the end. Nice work Jaq Hazell.

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