



## The Body Riddle

**Sam K MacKinnon**

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In Sam K MacKinnon's tender novel *The Body Riddle*, a transmasculine illustrator struggles with discrimination and self-doubt as they grow into a better version of themselves.

Lex is stuck. Their freelance work has dried up, their relationship has turned sexless, and, most troubling of all, their upcoming chest surgery fills them with uncertainty. Three years spent on waiting lists for gender-affirming care curdled their initial excitement into doubt. Now, they wonder if they are making a mistake. Lex's identity as an autistic person further complicates their ability to move through the world. Combinations of ableism and transphobia from others narrow their options for traditional work, pushing them toward social isolation.

The root of Lex's struggles is what their friend terms the body riddle: "In what form should my body exist so I can feel at peace in this world? So I can be my fullest self?" It is through relationships with other trans people that Lex starts to unravel the riddle, but not without conflict. Even as a support group and a new job start to bolster Lex's confidence, an unexpected attraction to their nonbinary coworker threatens to implode the precarious balance of nonmonogamy with their long-term partner.

Lex's narration is conversational, meandering between the present moment and the memories that inform it. They eschew the confines of respectability often placed on marginalized people. Lex makes mistakes that hurt them and other people, and they grow from it. It is through accepting agency over their life that they start owning up to their selfishness, and this makes them all the more human.

The powerful novel *The Body Riddle* puts the trans community at its center, rendering a portrait of self-actualization made possible only through relationships with others.

LUKE SUTHERLAND (May / June 2026)

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