



# The Answer to the Riddle Is Me: A Memoir of Amnesia

By David Stuart MacLean

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**The Answer to the Riddle Is Me: A Memoir of Amnesia** By David Stuart MacLean

“A mesmerizing, unsettling memoir about the ever-echoing nature of identity—written in vivid, blooming detail.” —Gillian Flynn, best-selling author of *Gone Girl*

On October 17, 2002, David MacLean “woke up” on a train platform in India with no idea who he was or why he was there. No money. No passport. No identity.

Taken to a mental hospital by the police, MacLean then started to hallucinate so severely he had to be tied down. He could remember song lyrics, but not his family, his friends, or the woman he was told he loved. His illness, it turned out, was the result of the commonly prescribed antimalarial medication he had been taking. Upon his return to the United States, he struggled to piece together the fragments of his former life in a harrowing, absurd, and unforgettable journey back to himself.

“[MacLean] is an exceedingly entertaining psychotic . . . [A] raw, honest and beautiful memoir.”—*New York Times*

“A deeply moving account of amnesia that explores the quandary of the self . . . MacLean has written a memoir that combines the evocative power of William Styron’s *Darkness Visible*, the lyric subtlety of Michael Ondaatje’s *Running in the Family* and the narrative immediacy of a Hollywood action film. He reminds us how we are all always trying to find a version of ourselves that we can live with.”—*Los Angeles Times*

DAVID STUART MACLEAN is a PEN/American Award–winning writer. His work has appeared in the *New York Times*, *Ploughshares*, and on the radio program *This American Life*. He has a PhD from the University of Houston and is a cofounder of the Poison Pen Reading Series.

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### Editorial Review

From [Booklist](#)

While studying in India on a Fulbright scholarship in 2002, Ohio native MacLean abruptly lost consciousness and came to his senses in a Hyderabad train station minus any memories of his name or reasons for being there. Luckily, a kindly station attendant took pity on the presumably drug-addled foreigner and found him refuge in a well-run mental hospital where he hallucinated his way back to reality as friends and parents were contacted. So begins this riveting, sad, and funny memoir from PEN literary award-winner MacLean, expanded from an essay featured on the radio show, *This American Life*. Contrary to the station agent's assumption, however, MacLean's amnesia was triggered by an allergic reaction to Lariam, a common antimalaria agent that receives a scathing critique here. In addition to short-circuiting his memories, the drug's aftermath forced MacLean to get reacquainted with his parents, a girlfriend, and his rationale for coming to India in the first place. His work is both a sharply written autobiography and an insightful meditation on how much our memories define our identities. --Carl Hays

### Review

"If bad things are going to happen, we are lucky when they happen to someone with the wit, humanity and sweetness — to say nothing of an eye for detail and a gift for pacing — that MacLean brings to this wrenching tale . . . Readers who flip open the book will find MacLean, preserved between pages, goofy and serious, lost and found." — *Chicago Tribune*

"A deeply moving account of amnesia that explores the quandary of the self . . . MacLean has written a memoir that combines the evocative power of William Styron's *Darkness Visible*, the lyric subtlety of Michael Ondaatje's *Running in the Family*, and the narrative immediacy of a Hollywood action film. He reminds us how we are all always trying to find a version of ourselves that we can live with." — *Los Angeles Times*

"[MacLean] writes eloquently about the bizarre and disturbing experience of having his sense of self erased and then reconstructed from scratch." — *The New Yorker*

"As harrowing as this territory is, MacLean makes an affable, sure-footed guide . . . Thanks to his raw, honest, and beautiful memoir, readers will already have a clear idea what his experience was like. We can be grateful MacLean has remembered so much, and so well." — *New York Times*

"[A] vivid reflection on the ten years following the Lariam-induced break with reality and the memory problems that persisted in its wake . . . One author, a writer by trade, tells his story because it is a good one: dramatic and unique. The other tells a story, no less arresting, because she has a point to make. Both succeed impressively." — *New York Times Book Review*

"Written in terse, vivid prose spiked with blackouts and violent hallucinations reminiscent of a Ken Kesey classic, MacLean's story of the yearlong quest to regain his life reads like fiction, and reminds us that while memories may be painful, truth is all too often elusive." — *Mother Jones*

"Incandescent . . . MacLean's account is raw and unsparing, and will surely take you out of your comfort

zone — the reader is immersed in the writer’s oblivion and his vertiginous journey of recovery — but the reward for sticking with it is the privilege of reading MacLean’s profound and finely nuanced meditation on memory and identity.” — *Seattle Times*

“MacLean fearlessly explores his journey to the edge of madness and his subsequent return to sanity in an unsettling, sometimes riotous, memoir.” — *Publishers Weekly*

“Mesmerizing.” — *Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

“Riveting, sad, and funny . . . Both a sharply written autobiography and an insightful meditation on how much our memories define our identities.” — *Booklist*

“A gripping medical mystery, a heartwarming personal journey, and a chilling indictment of the commonly prescribed drug that upended MacLean’s life — but left his superb literary skills intact.” — Rebecca Skloot, author of *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*

“A mesmerizing, unsettling memoir about the ever-echoing nature of identity, written in vivid, blooming detail.” — Gillian Flynn, author of *Gone Girl*

From the Inside Flap

“Brilliant and painful and hilarious.” —Antonya Nelson

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Taken to a mental hospital by the police, MacLean then started to hallucinate so severely he had to be tied down. Soon he could remember song lyrics, but not his family, his friends, or the woman he was told he loved. All of these symptoms, it turned out, were the result of the commonly prescribed malarial medication he had been taking. Upon his return to the States, he struggled to piece together the fragments of his former life in a harrowing, absurd, and unforgettable journey back to himself.

*The Answer to the Riddle Is Me*, drawn from David MacLean’s award-winning *This American Life* essay, is a deeply felt, closely researched, and intensely personal book. It asks every reader to confront the essential questions of our age: In our geographically and chemically fluid world, what makes me who I am? And how much can be stripped away before I become someone else entirely?

## Users Review

**From reader reviews:**

**Vance Malik:**

Information is provisions for those to get better life, information today can get by anyone on everywhere. The information can be a expertise or any news even a huge concern. What people must be consider if those information which is inside the former life are challenging to be find than now could be taking seriously

which one is acceptable to believe or which one often the resource are convinced. If you get the unstable resource then you have it as your main information we will see huge disadvantage for you. All of those possibilities will not happen in you if you take The Answer to the Riddle Is Me: A Memoir of Amnesia as your daily resource information.

**Debra Jones:**

The book untitled The Answer to the Riddle Is Me: A Memoir of Amnesia contain a lot of information on it. The writer explains the woman idea with easy way. The language is very simple to implement all the people, so do certainly not worry, you can easy to read that. The book was authored by famous author. The author will take you in the new era of literary works. It is easy to read this book because you can please read on your smart phone, or product, so you can read the book in anywhere and anytime. In a situation you wish to purchase the e-book, you can open up their official web-site in addition to order it. Have a nice go through.

**Jennifer McNab:**

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**Debra McGregor:**

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