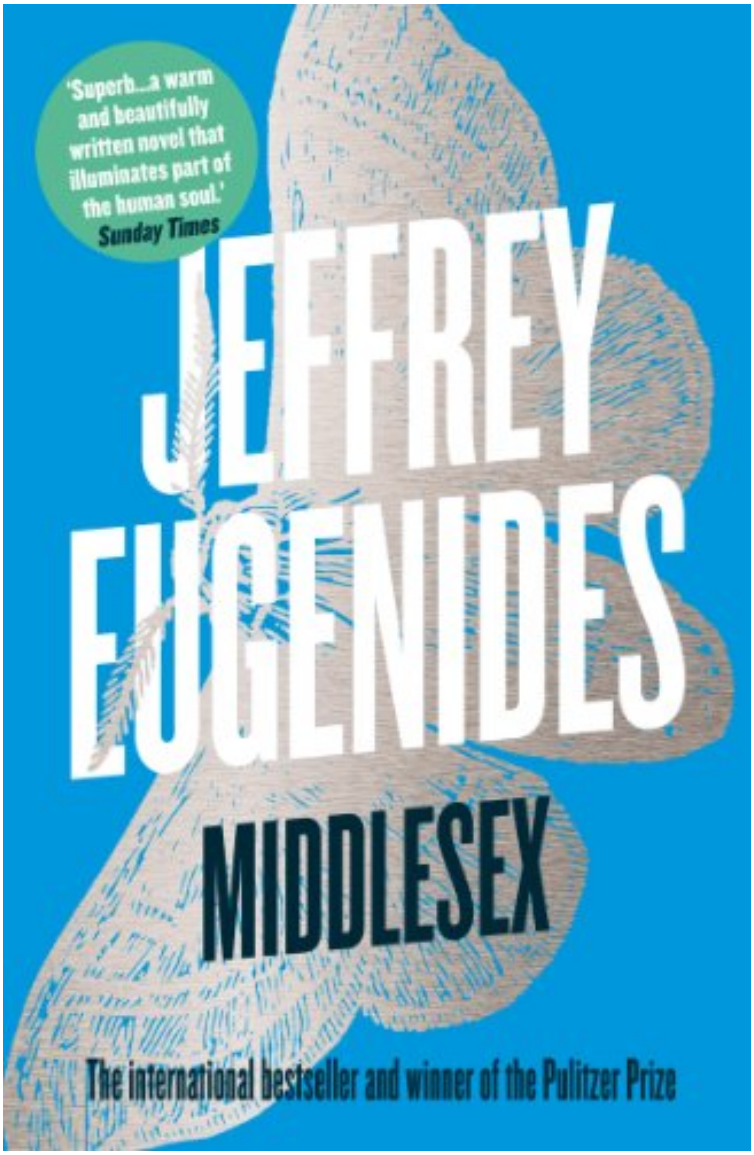
Middlesex



Par Jeffrey Eugenides
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[Free and download] Middlesex

Par Jeffrey Eugenides : Middlesex before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Middlesex:

Description :

Prsentation de l'diteur"I was born twice: first, as a baby girl, on a remarkably smogless Detroit day of January 1960; and then again, as a teenage boy, in an emergency room near Petoskey, Michigan, in August of l974."So begins the breathtaking story of Calliope Stephanides and her truly unique family secret, born on the slopes of Mount Olympus and passed on through three generations.Growing up in 70s Michigan, Calliopes special inheritance will turn her into Cal, the narrator of this intersex, inter-generational epic of immigrant life in 20th century America.Middlesex won the 2003 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction..com"I was born twice: first, as a baby girl, on a remarkably smogless Detroit day in January of 1960; and then again, as a teenage boy, in an emergency room near Petoskey, Michigan, in August of 1974." And so begins Middlesex,

the mesmerizing saga of a near-mythic Greek American family and the "roller-coaster ride of a single gene through time." The odd but utterly believable story of Cal Stephanides, and how this 41-year-old hermaphrodite was raised as Calliope, is at the tender heart of this long-awaited second novel from Jeffrey Eugenides, whose elegant and haunting 1993 debut, The Virgin Suicides, remains one of the finest first novels of recent memory. Eugenides weaves together a kaleidoscopic narrative spanning 80 years of a stained family history, from a fateful incestuous union in a small town in early 1920s Asia Minor to Prohibition-era Detroit; from the early days of Ford Motors to the heated 1967 race riots; from the tony suburbs of Grosse Pointe and a confusing, aching adolescent love story to modern-day Berlin. Eugenides's command of the narrative is astonishing. He balances Cal/Callie's shifting voices convincingly, spinning this strange and often unsettling story with intelligence, insight, and generous amounts of humor: Emotions, in my experience aren't covered by single words. I don't believe in "sadness," "joy," or "regret." I'd like to have at my disposal complicated hybrid emotions, Germanic traincar constructions like, say, "the happiness that attends disaster." Or: "the disappointment of sleeping with one's fantasy." ... I'd like to have a word for "the sadness inspired by failing restaurants" as well as for "the excitement of getting a room with a minibar." I've never had the right words to describe my life, and now that I've entered my story, I need them more than ever. When you get to the end of this splendorous book, when you suddenly realize that after hundreds of pages you have only a few more left to turn over, you'll experience a quick pang of regret knowing that your time with Cal is coming to a close, and you may even resist finishing it--putting it aside for an hour or two, or maybe overnight--just so that this wondrous, magical novel might never end. --Brad Thomas ParsonsExtraitThe Silver SpoonI was born twice: first, as a baby girl, on a remarkably smogless Detroit day in January of 1960; and then again, as a teenage boy, in an emergency room near Petoskey, Michigan, in August of 1974. Specialized readers may have come across me in Dr. Peter Luce's study, "Gender Identity in 5-Alpha-Reductase Pseudohermaphrodites," published in the Journal of Pediatric Endocrinology in 1975. Or maybe you've seen my photograph in chapter sixteen of the now sadly outdated Genetics and Heredity. That's me on page 578, standing naked beside a height chart with a black box covering my eyes.My birth certificate lists my name as Calliope Helen Stephanides. My most recent driver's license (from the Federal Republic of Germany) records my first name simply as Cal. I'm a former field hockey goalie, longstanding member of the Save-the-Manatee Foundation, rare attendant at the Greek Orthodox liturgy, and, for most of my adult life, an employee of the U.S. State Department. Like Tiresias, I was first one thing and then the other. I've been ridiculed by classmates, guinea-pigged by doctors, palpated by specialists, and researched by the March of Dimes. A redheaded girl from Grosse Pointe fell in love with me, not knowing what I was. (Her brother liked me, too.) An army tank led me into urban battle once; a swimming pool turned me into myth; I've left my body in order to occupy others -- and all this happened before I turned sixteen. But now, at the age of forty-one, I feel another birth coming on. After, decades of neglect, I find myself thinking about departed great-aunts and -uncles, long-lost grandfathers, unknown fifth cousins, or, in the case of an inbred family like mine, all those things in one. And so before it's too late I want to get it down for good: this roller-coaster ride of a single gene through time. Sing now, O Muse, of the recessive mutation on my fifth chromosome! Sing how it bloomed two and a half centuries ago on the slopes of Mount Olympus, while the goats bleated and the olives dropped. Sing how it passed down through nine generations, gathering invisibly within the polluted pool of the Stephanides family. And sing how Providence, in the guise of a massacre, sent the gene flying again; how it blew like a seed across the sea to America, where it drifted through our industrial rains until it fell to earth in the fertile soil of my mother's own mid-western womb.Sorry if I get a little Homeric at times. That's genetic, too.* * * * *Three months before I was born, in the aftermath of one of our elaborate Sunday dinners, my grandmother Desdemona Stephanides ordered my brother to get her silkworm box. Chapter Eleven had been heading toward the kitchen for a second helping of rice pudding when she blocked his way. At fifty-seven, with her short, squat figure and intimidating hairnet, my grandmother was perfectly designed for blocking people's paths. Behind her in the kitchen, the day's large female contingent had congregated, laughing and whispering. Intrigued, Chapter Eleven leaned sideways to see what was going on, but Desdemona reached out and firmly pinched his cheek. Having regained his attention, she sketched a rectangle in the air and pointed at the ceiling. Then, through her ill-fitting dentures, she said, "Go for yia yia, dolly mou."Chapter Eleven knew what to do. He ran across the hall into the living room. On all fours he scrambled up the formal staircase to the second floor. He raced past the bedrooms along the upstairs corridor. At the far end was a nearly invisible door, wallpapered over like the entrance to a secret passageway. Chapter Eleven located the tiny doorknob level with his head and, using all his strength,

pulled it open. Another set of stairs lay behind it. For a long moment my brother stared hesitantly into the darkness above, before climbing, very slowly now, up to the attic where my grandparents lived.In sneakers he passed beneath the twelve damply newspapered birdcages suspended from the rafters. With a brave face he immersed himself in the sour odor of the parakeets, and in my grandparents' own particular aroma, a mixture of mothballs and hashish. He negotiated his way past my grandfather's book-piled desk and his collection of rebetika records. Finally, bumping into the leather ottoman and the circular coffee table made of brass, he found my grandparents' bed and, under it, the silkworm box.Carved from olivewood, a little bigger than a shoe box, it had a tin lid perforated by tiny airholes and inset with the icon of an unrecognizable saint. The saint's face had been rubbed off, but the fingers of his right hand were raised to bless a short, purple, terrifically self-confident-looking mulberry tree. After gazing awhile at this vivid botanical presence, Chapter Eleven pulled the box from under the bed and opened it. Inside were the two wedding crowns made from rope and, coiled like snakes, the two long braids of hair, each tied with a crumbling black ribbon. He poked one of the braids with his index finger. Just then a parakeet squawked, making my brother jump, and he closed the box, tucked it under his arm, and carried it downstairs to Desdemona.She was still waiting in the doorway. Taking the silkworm box out of his hands, she turned back into the kitchen. At this point Chapter Eleven was granted a view of the room, where all the women now fell silent. They moved aside to let Desdemona pass and there, in the middle of the linoleum, was my mother. Tessie Stephanides was leaning back in a kitchen chair, pinned beneath the immense, drum-tight globe of her pregnant belly. She had a happy, helpless expression on her face, which was flushed and hot. Desdemona set the silkworm box on the kitchen table and, opened the lid. She reached under the wedding crowns and the hair braids to come up with something Chapter Eleven hadn't seen: a silver spoon. She tied a piece of string to the spoon's handle. Then, stooping forward, she dangled the spoon over my mother's swollen belly. And, by extension, over me.Up until now Desdemona had had a perfect record: twenty-three correct guesses. Shed known that Tessie was going to be Tessie. She'd predicted the sex of my brother and of all the babies of her friends at church. The only children whose genders she hadn't divined were her own, because it was bad luck for a mother to plumb the mysteries of her own womb. Fearlessly, however, she plumbed my mother's. After some initial hesitation, the spoon swung north to south, which meant that I was going to be a boy.Splay-legged in the chair, my mother tried to smile. She didn't want a boy. She had one already. In fact, she was so certain I was going to be a girl that she'd picked out only one name for me: Calliope. But when my grandmother shouted in Greek, "A boy!" the cry went around the room, and out into the hall, and across the hall into the living room where the men were arguing politics. And my mother, hearing it repeated so many times, began to believe it might be true.As soon as the cry reached my father, however, he marched into the kitchen to tell his mother that, this time at least, her spoon was wrong. "And how you know so much?" Desdemona asked him. To which he replied what many Americans of his generation would have:"It's science, Ma."* * * * *Ever since they had decided to have another child -- the diner was doing well and Chapter Eleven was long out of diapers -- Milton and Tessie had been in agreement that they wanted a daughter. Chapter Eleven had just turned five years old. He'd recently found a dead bird in the yard, bringing it into the house to show his mother. He liked shooting things, hammering things, smashing things, and wrestling with his father. In such a masculine household, Tessie had begun to feel like the odd woman out and saw herself in ten years' time imprisoned in a world of hubcaps and hernias. My mother pictured a daughter as a counterinsurgent: a fellow lover of lapdogs, a seconder of proposals to attend the Ice Capades. In the spring of 1959, when discussions of my fertilization got under way, my mother couldn't foresee that women would soon be burning their brassieres by the thousand. Hers were padded, stiff, fire-retardant. As much as Tessie loved her son, she knew there were certain things she'd be able to share only with a daughter.On his morning drive to work, my father had been seeing visions of an irresistibly sweet, dark-eyed little girl. She sat on the seat beside him -- mostly during stoplights -- directing questions at his patient, all-knowing ear. "What do you call that thing, Daddy?" 'That? That's the Cadillac seal." "What's the Cadillac seal?" "Well, a long time ago, there was a French explorer named Cadillac, and he was the one who discovered Detroit. And that seal was his family seal, from France." "What's France?" "France is a country in Europe." "What's Europe?" "It's a continent, which is like a great big piece of land, way, way bigger than a country. But Cadillacs don't come from Europe anymore, kukla. They come from right here in the good old U.S.A." The light turned green and he drove on. But my prototype lingered. She was there at the next light and the next. So pleasant was her company that my father, a man loaded with initiative, decided to see what he could do to turn his vision into reality.Thus: for some time now, in the living room where the men

discussed politics, they had also been discussing the velocity of sperm. Peter Tatakis, "Uncle Pete" as we called him, was a leading member of the debating society that formed every week on our black love seats. A lifelong bachelor, he had no family in America and so had become attached to ours. Every Sunday he arrived in his wine-dark Buick, a tall, prune-faced, sad-seeming man with an incongruously vital head of wavy hair. He was not interested in children. A proponent of the Great Books series -- which he...