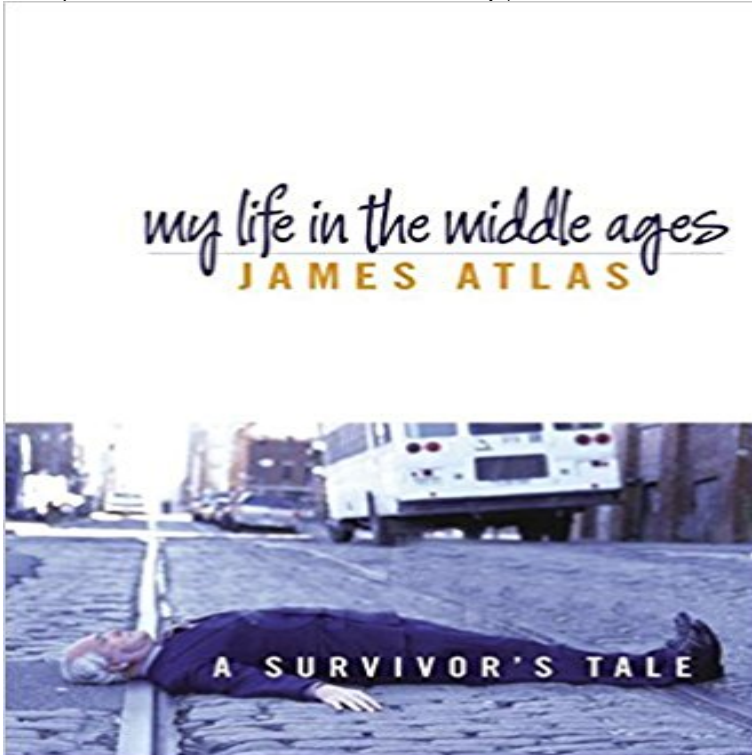


# My Life in the Middle Ages: A Survivors Tale



What is the most baffling period in our lives? Not childhood, not old age, but the decades of our forties and fifties, the period now generously known as middle age. Its both an occasion for regret and an opportunity for coming to terms, the moment when we come up against our limits and discover -- for better and worse -- who we are. MY LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES is a portrait of what that unnerving experience is like. A collection of unified essays about the pleasures and pathos that attend the threshold of old age, it charts an original course between reportage and confession. Drawn from the authors own life, from the testimony of parents, children, teachers, and friends, from the books hes read and the life that he chose -- and that chose him -- MY LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES is a comic, poignant memoir that's both personal and generational. Whether he is struggling with God (or trying to find out if he believes in one), celebrating the books hes loved and regretting those hell never read, or leafing through the snapshots in his family album and marveling at the passage of time, James Atlas is always alert to the surprises of everyday life. He parses the fine points of success and failure among New Yorks lower upper-middle class (several of the chapters began as essays in The New Yorker) and expresses the largest themes: I tried to remind myself that death was a part of life. I was here, then I wouldnt be here. Atlas writes movingly about watching his parents age and his father die. In a wry and

soul-searching piece, he recounts his perplexing quest for spiritual meaning after a secular lifetime, a quest that takes him to a private synagogue and a Buddhist meditation center. On the tennis court, he ruefully capitulates to his teenage sons blossoming athletic prowess, recalling a similar passing of the torch with his own father forty years earlier.

At once pensive and funny, lighthearted and profound, MY LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES is a tale of survival, but also a meditation on how it feels to flourish -- how to live.

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