



What We Talk About When We Talk About Birth

Elissa Schappell

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It's an elemental, almost animalistic urge—the expectant mother's hunger for birth narratives. We are inundated with how-to guides and month-by-month pregnancy manuals when what we truly crave are artful, entertaining, unvarnished accounts of labor and delivery. We want to know what *really* happens—the good, the bad, and the ugly. In anticipation of the publication of *Labor Day: True Birth Stories by Today's Best Women Writers*, celebrated author Elissa Schappell brings us "What We Talk About When We Talk About Birth." In this frank, funny, and bittersweet essay she explores the phenomenon of sharing birth stories, reveals her reluctance to tell her own, and discovers that talking about childbirth—the joy, the fear, the *pain*—is as instinctual as the act itself.

And if you love birth stories as much as we do, read thirty more essays like this one in *Labor Day: True Birth Stories By Today's Best Women Writers*, including Lan Samantha Chang, Julia Glass, Lauren Groff, Ann Hood, Danzy Senna, Dani Shapiro, and Cheryl Strayed.

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Darrin Russell:

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Janice Wilham:

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Joan Green:

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