



## **True Stories from an Unreliable Eyewitness: A Feminist Coming of Age**

*Christine Lahti*

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# True Stories from an Unreliable Eyewitness: A Feminist Coming of Age

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## True Stories from an Unreliable Eyewitness: A Feminist Coming of Age Christine Lahti

A fiercely intelligent, hilarious, and deeply feminist collection of interrelated personal stories from Academy, Emmy, and Golden Globe Award–winning actress and director Christine Lahti.

For decades, actress and director Christine Lahti has captivated the hearts and minds of her audience through iconic roles in *Chicago Hope*, *Running on Empty*, *Housekeeping*, *And Justice for All*, *Swing Shift*, *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*, *God of Carnage*, and *The Blacklist*. Now, in *True Stories from an Unreliable Eyewitness*, this acclaimed performer channels her creativity inward to share her own story for the first time on the page.

In this poignant essay collection, Lahti focuses on three major periods of her life: her childhood, her early journey as an actress and activist, and the realities of her life as a middle-aged woman in Hollywood today. Lahti's comical and self-deprecating voice shines through in stories such as "Kidnapped" and "Shit Happens," and she takes a boldly honest look at the painful fissures in her family in pieces such as "Mama Mia" and "Running on Empty." Taken together, the collection illuminates watershed moments in Lahti's life, revealing her struggle to maintain integrity, fight her need for perfection, and remain true to her feminist inclinations.

Lahti's wisdom and candid insights are reminiscent of Nora Ephron's *I Feel Bad About My Neck* and Joan Rivers's *I Hate Everyone*—and yet her experiences are not exclusive to one generation. The soul of her writing can be seen as a spiritual mother to feminist actresses and comedic voices whose works are inspiring today's young women, including Amy Schumer, Lena Dunham, Amy Poehler, Caitlin Moran, and Jenny Lawson. Her stories reveal a stumbling journey toward agency and empowerment as a woman—a journey that's still very much a work in progress.

*True Stories from an Unreliable Eyewitness* is about the power of storytelling to affirm and reframe the bedrock of who we are, revealing that we're all unreliable eyewitnesses when it comes to our deeply personal memories. Told in a wildly fresh, unique voice, and with the unshakable ability to laugh at herself time and again, this is Christine Lahti's best performance yet.

## True Stories from an Unreliable Eyewitness: A Feminist Coming of Age Details

Date : Published April 3rd 2018 by Harper Wave

ISBN : 9780062663696

Author : Christine Lahti

Format : ebook 224 pages

Genre : Autobiography, Memoir, Nonfiction, Feminism, Writing, Essays



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## **From Reader Review True Stories from an Unreliable Eyewitness: A Feminist Coming of Age for online ebook**

### **Montana says**

I liked the personal stories and appreciated the truths in this book. That said the format of short stories was very light weight. With the exception of the longer stories about her brother and sister and their struggles, I wish this book had been longer and given more indepth context for her experiences. I really like Christine Lahti and especially her experiences with sexual harassment resonate as true, as do most of the stories. But I wanted more time to really feel the depth of what she was talking about. It was enjoyable, but not deep enough to really communicate her larger points.

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### **Jolissa Skow says**

I flew through this book in a morning. I loved all the stories Lahti has to share about her life, and about going into something (acting) that was so incredibly male-dominated. Overall a great, quick read that inspires.

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### **Betsy says**

Actress Christine Lahti shares her life in short stories, weaving past and present experiences into well written, thematic chapters. I was captivated by this book for many reasons: first and foremost, she writes intelligently and skillfully. Her sense of humor is wicked, her conversational tone and honesty, refreshing. Next she was born and raised in Birmingham, MI, (my hometown) and she attended the University of Michigan, my alma mater. Finally, she is a feminist “coming of age” raised in the ‘50’s and ‘60’s in a family of 6 children and overcoming so many obstacles, you will gain strength and courage no matter what your own circumstance! This one I could not put down.

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### **Fredell says**

This is a great read. Well written, refreshingly honest and heart-felt. I laughed, cried, called my friends and read them whole chapters. I felt like I was having an afternoon with a really good friend. there was nothing trite about this star's story. I hope Ms. Lahti continues to write.

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### **Lenny says**

Ms. Lahti is a wonderful storyteller and brutally honest about her own life, which makes for a highly engaging listen. I read many books but when it comes to autobiographies I prefer to listen to the author tell their own story. This is not the usual by-the-numbers autobiography but rather a series of important moments in Ms. Lahti's life that made her a feminist. From her early days in New York in which she gives up thousands of dollars for refusing to fuck two directors who would cast her in national commercials, to her

receiving severe beatings from her older brother as a child (her brother would turn out to be bi-polar), she finds that a woman must always be on her guard in a world filled with abusive men.

One common thread I found in this work and Michelle Obama's "Becoming" are what they refer to as the "thousand cuts." The daily catcalls, put-downs, assumptions they must endure that have worked themselves into our patriarchal society. The #metoo movement seems to be a breakthrough moment in time, much like the women's rights movement in the 70's, which Ms. Lahti experienced. My hope is that we are more aware of women's struggles and things can improve for women in all areas of our culture. I saw her last year in a play called, "Fucking A" and she was brilliant. I plan on heading up to NYC to see her in "Gloria: A Life," in which she plays the feminist icon. She's a great actor. Add author and narrator to her many talents.

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### **Debra says**

I have enjoyed Lahti's acting career and ironically enough I first became a fan after a 1991 TV movie, *Crazy from the Heart*. I am sure that the film was totally saccharine but I loved that (a) her character was a high school principal, and (b) that she was not afraid to shock and amaze her small community. Then, there was her long stint on *Chicago Hope* of which I was a huge fan (back in the day). Lahti boasts Emmy, Golden Globe and Academy Awards (the latter for directing a live short action film).

Let's move on to her writing.

I think as we all age, reminiscing becomes more personal and perhaps sometimes skewed. As memories are strained through our personal sieves (or as Lahti writes "sifted through personal filters"), I think these recollections may not be as true as they once were. Lahti states in the introduction that she acknowledges this phenomenon. She writes about "the fallibility of that kind of memory; how emotion and the passing of time can often cloud our recall and render us unreliable eyewitnesses to our own true stories."

Her reminiscing may be skewed but her brutal honesty is not. Each chapter is a stand-alone essay though some continuity can obviously be seen throughout the book. She delves into her family life (with all the dysfunction that comes along with that introspection), her own naivete as a young actress, and her amazement as how industry people tried to dissuade her from her passion.

I enjoyed her dry and wry and biting sense of humor which was often self-deprecating. I can just picture her smiling as she typed the description of her stumbling into the audience to accost a theater patron during a pivotal role in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. (If you know the play, think of the "throwing crutch scene" and you may be laughing yourself at this point.)

Although Lahti's subtitle is "A Feminist Coming of Age," I did not find this a preachy treatise. I did enjoy her honesty and humor.

You can see my full review here along with a cocktail inspired from this book.

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### **Salimah says**

The chapters, 'Brother' and 'Mamma Mia', came too late in this collection of essays, but they were the

croutons of this mixed salad of a memoir. They were the toughest chapters I read out of the entire thing and they were the absolute memorable ones, as well.

In all, the chapters were oddly placed, or perhaps I did not follow the meaning behind their placement? It is, however, of note that she herself is the string that ties them all together.

Nevertheless, the stories themselves were interesting to a person who has had vastly dissimilar experiences in her life.

I may have expected too much when I wanted to know more of her familial background and the relationships with her siblings and current BFFs. Or maybe this was too autobio-esque?

Although relationships are a key theme in her memoir, it seems only the strongest and most debilitating ones were given literary light. I still feel like I don't know Lahti, but maybe that's the point? And her experiences of the "second-wave of feminism" were less detailed and explored than I expected. She did give some examples of how she strengthened her feminism and how she grew into being a feminist, but it was less about the rallying and marches, and more about her inception and creation into feminism.

Again, my expectations may be unfounded as they are relating my feminist POV with hers of decades past. I felt that with her writing, I came to the conclusion that we all definitely have different meanings to the word 'feminism' and experiences to go along with that.

I would hope that she'd write a Part Two of these collections of stories that further explore her familial relationships as well as her time rallying in the streets and charitable work. I feel like I'd get to know her better that way, indeed. Or else I'll need to re-read this book when I'm in my sixties.

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### **Deb says**

I was quick to sign up for this book tour because I am a big fan of Christine Lahti, stemming from her movies the eighties; *Running on Empty* is a favorite, as are *Housekeeping*, *Gross Anatomy*, *Swing Shift* and *Just Between Friends* with Mary Tyler Moore. I like coming across her on television movies or shows like *No Place Like Home*, *Amerika*, *Chicago Hope*, *Law & Order SVU* and even as McGarrett's mother on *Hawaii Five-O*. She is a talented actress with plenty of awards for her work and she has always struck me as very real and earthy--someone who would be fun to share a bottle of wine with and listen to her stories. It turns out that is very much what her book is like--storytelling in a honest, conversational way.

*True Stories from an Unreliable Eyewitness* is made up of short essays that all relate in some way to three important parts of her life; her childhood, the beginning of her career, and her current life as an actress and feminist. Lahti speaks her truth with wit and dry humor, with sometimes poignant honesty, sharing happy and funny moments along with harsher and hurtful ones. As Lahti states in the Introduction:

"This book is a collection of my true stories. They are my emotional memories, the goo that surrounds the facts, the parasitic muck that attaches to them. These are the stories that altered me in some way, even just temporarily. They chronicle events when something inside me stirred or quaked. There was a shift in my focus. A tremor up my spine. A hot flash of injustice, of shame. A gut-punch of reckoning with my own bullshit. An acceptance. A forgiveness. A way to survive."

I went into the book thinking it would be full of Hollywood tidbits--probably given the era, there would be plenty of examples of harassment and #metoo moments, and there are those--such as casting couch propositions or the times she was told she was too tall and her nose not perfect enough to be successful as an actress. There are her memories of love scenes (both good and bad) and industry relationships--although she doesn't do a lot of name-telling. But as much as I love celebrity moments, to me the stand-out chapters of the book are when Lahti gets the most personal in her recounting of family stories, both humorous and heartbreak. I can relate to the sibling relationships in a large family, both the humor and the dysfunction, as well as the difficulties of dealing with a sibling with mental illness and depression. Lahti tells of facing the deaths of her older brother, younger sister, and both her parents and the guilt and regrets they bring. She also tells of the high and low points of her own marriage and motherhood, again with candor and wit. The book's title, *True Stories from an Unreliable Eyewitness*, acknowledges that these are Lahti's memories and her perception of what happened and I can appreciate that. It's interesting to me how with six older siblings, our take on shared moments from childhood can be alike in some cases and very different in others. Lahti states that her siblings "cried foul" on how she remembers or saw certain events and that happens to all of us based on the significance of the moment or the filters we view it through.

The book's subtitle is "A Feminist Coming of Age" and the essays certainly contain Lahti's awakening and focus as a feminist--she calls it the "lens" through which she "sees just about everything," but this book has many different layers and nuances to it. Her writing had me laughing as well as getting angry along with her, and even tearing up a few times. I think if like me, you are already a fan of Christine Lahti and you read her book, you will be even more impressed by her, and if you aren't that familiar with her, you'll start looking for her work on both the big and small screens. I hope she continues to write--it is certainly another skill she can add to her acting and directing talents.

You can see my review along with a recipe inspired by the book on my blog post here:  
[https://kahakaikitchen.blogspot.com/2...](https://kahakaikitchen.blogspot.com/2018/08/review-of-true-stories-from-unreliable.html)

Note: A review copy of "True Stories From an Unreliable Eyewitness" was provided to me by the author and the publisher, Harper Collins, via TLC Book Tours. I was not compensated for this review and as always, my thoughts and opinions are my own.

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## **Marika says**

Actress Christine Lahti is a serious actress who has won numerous awards including an Emmy and a Golden Globe. Which is what makes this essay collection such a surprise. Full of self deprecating humor and a vocabulary that rivals any sailors. Christine writes very conversationally and the essays flow naturally as she talks about her journey as a feminist in the male dominated film industry. Wise words from the woman, wife, mother, daughter and actress that combine to make Christine Lahti.

\*Christine grew up near where I live and it was a joy to read about local schools, country clubs, vacation spots etc. Total lack of pretense.

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I read a review copy and was not compensated

## **Rachel Cochran says**

A candid memoir navigating a complicated feminist identity as an actress. The book weaves lighthearted anecdotes - like one from a bathroom incident in elementary school - with painful stories - such as the death of a mentally ill sister. Lahti pulls the reader in from start to finish with a pleasantly paced emotional trajectory while examining memory vs. reality. A beautiful tale for cross-generational women to glean inspiration.

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## **Laurel-Rain says**

A fiercely intelligent, hilarious, and deeply feminist collection of interrelated personal stories from Academy, Emmy, and Golden Globe Award-winning actress and director Christine Lahti.

For decades, actress and director Christine Lahti has captivated the hearts and minds of her audience through iconic roles in Chicago Hope, Running on Empty, Housekeeping, And Justice for All, Swing Shift, Law & Order: Special Victims Unit, God of Carnage, and The Blacklist. Now, in True Stories from an Unreliable Eyewitness, this acclaimed performer channels her creativity inward to share her own story for the first time on the page.

In this poignant essay collection, Lahti focuses on three major periods of her life: her child-hood, her early journey as an actress and activist, and the realities of her life as a middle-aged woman in Hollywood today. Lahti's comical and self-deprecating voice shines through in stories such as "Kidnapped" and "Shit Happens," and she takes a boldly honest look at the painful fissures in her family in pieces such as "Mama Mia" and "Running on Empty." Taken together, the collection illuminates watershed moments in Lahti's life, revealing her struggle to maintain integrity, fight her need for perfection, and remain true to her feminist inclinations.

My Thoughts: As a fan of the actress, I've enjoyed her humor and her down-to-earth and realistic portrayals of characters I've been able to relate to.

In this memoir, she described how memory is subjective, and that events are sifted through our personal filters. Individual family members would thus have very different memories of events they shared. I had seen this occur in my own family, with siblings experiencing quite different versions of events.

As she talks about growing up in Michigan in the 1950s, I felt a kinship with that picture perfect upbringing that could hide a multitude of frustrations, anxieties, and the quest for perfection.

Topics ranged from the counter-culture to aging, and in each stage of her life, she described her struggles to achieve her goals. In all parts of her journey, she has tried to find her authentic self, and fight against the demands of the male directors who expected sexual favors from female performers, and how sometimes she had to turn down roles that would erode her self-respect.

Back and forth in time, the author takes us along on her journey, sharing heart-felt moments and traumatic family episodes that could destroy someone without her strength and determination.

An engaging book that kept me interested throughout, I am awarding 4.5 stars.

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## Michael says

Actor/Director Christine Lahti pulls no punches as she examines her life in a series of essays -- from childhood to her time as an aging actress in unforgiving Hollywood. A child of the 50's/60's she struggled with her feminism as the world changed around her. Her essays are filled with humor, with warmth, with self-deprecating cynicism, and hopeful enthusiasm. Her life has been filled with highs and lows, and those who know her from her film and TV roles will certainly enjoy her honest and powerful writing style.

Ms Lahti appeared at the Boston Public Library in support of her book, and she told us that she hopes to adapt her essays into a one-woman show in NYC. After her reading... no performance as she read one of her essays, I hope that happens, and I hope to get to see it. It would be an entertaining and moving show that many of us can relate to. Christine can most definitely add accomplished author to her list of talents.

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## Victoria Colotta says

### **My Highly Caffeinated Thought: A smart, honest, and witty look at one woman's journey through her life.**

I recently had the opportunity to read **TRUE STORIES FROM AN UNRELIABLE EYEWITNESS** by Christine Lahti. This heartfelt, frank, and at times hilarious memoir is a gift to feminists, women, and readers alike.

What can only be described as a distinct voice, the actress talks with such candor about family life and her struggles with staying true to her feminist ideals in a world that doesn't always support it. As I was reading this book, I was so captured by the fact that she showed her flaws. She put her pain out there right next to her joy. This type vulnerability in an author is refreshing as well as thought provoking.

Many times while reading, I felt as if Lahti was speaking to me. Maybe this is the point. She wanted to create a narrative and collection of stories that speaks to all of us. None of us are perfect, but it is what you do with your baggage that makes you who you are.

**TRUE STORIES FROM AN UNRELIABLE EYEWITNESS** re-invigorates me to read more about all women's stories. The more that we read about the journeys others are taking, the better we can understand the world we live in.

*Reviewer Disclaimer: I received a copy of this book from the publisher and TLC Book Tours in exchange for an honest review.*

Highly Caffeinated Rating of... ? ? ? ? ?

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## **Melissa says**

When I was a kid, I used to love checking the mail, especially since it meant that I'd get first crack at my mother's copy of Ms. Magazine. At the tender age of ten, a lot of the material was outside of my experience, but I loved the section at the back called "clicks," which was a monthly sampling of reader contributions, each describing a moment when feminism, or the need for it, "clicked" into place.

This book, *True Stories from an Unreliable Witness*, includes many essays that represent similar "clicks" in author Christine Lahti's life, filtered through her personal experience as an actress and director as well as the fact that perception and memory are incredibly subjective.

Whether she's talking about a turd incident when she was in first grade, or making a pact with her best friend to remain chaste until marriage (spoiler alert: that didn't happen), Ms. Lahti's writing voice is authentic and engaging. She tells her stories without any Hollywood artifice, and admits that her version of various events are presented the way she recalls them, even if her friends and siblings might have differing accounts (hence the "unreliable witness" qualifier in the title).

While the essays highlighted in the promotional material for this book were wonderful, my favorites were "Losing Virginity," which is mid-way through the collection, and manages to be sweet, sad, and hilarious, all at once, and "The Smile of Her" which is a textual portrait of Lahti's mother.

Ms. Lahti was born the same year as my mother, which makes her a Baby Boomer to my solid Gen-X (I was born in 1970), and the difference a single generation can make really struck me. In the afore-mentioned "Losing Virginity," Lahti mentions having just read *Our Bodies, Ourselves*. I'm guessing she had a copy of the same booklet – not much more than a pamphlet, at that time – that my mother eventually passed on to me inside the cover of the dictionary-sized revised edition she gave me for my 21st birthday.

Because these are essays, it's easy to skip around in the book, reading the titles that intrigue you most before moving on to another, but taken in order of presentation they form a memoir that is witty and wise, funny and frustrating, poignant and powerful. While these glimpses into Ms. Lahti's life are absolutely her story, at the same time, I feel like they're every woman's story, too.

Goes well with a glass of red wine, good bread, sharp cheese, and a small dish of olives.

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## **Wall-to-wall books - wendy says**

GREAT! I love reading memoirs. Especially ones by people I know and love. I have love Christine Lahti since way back (waaaay back LOL). I was a huge fan of *Chicago Hope*, watched every show and loved her on that. Now after reading this I am searching Netflix for movies that she has been in so I can watch the ones I haven't seen.

I love that this wasn't really a "story of my life" kind of thing but more of a pick and choose different "life stories". I love strong women like her that make good role models, someone to look up to. She gets very personal with us, the readers. I think Christine was very brave to share all that she did. Especially stories

about her family. That couldn't have been easy. How do you decide what to share and what to hold in your heart.

I already loved her but I will now view her in a different way, a better way! Hey soul sister you go girl! I think any woman who doesn't want to be taken advantage of, anyone who believes in equal rights for women, and any mom who wants their daughter to grow up strong - should all read this book! My own daughter is turning 30 this fall and I will definitely have her read this book - she will love it!

This book is sad, funny, and witty. I don't think you necessary have to be a fan to love it.

\* A little warning - there is quite a bit of swearing.

I voluntarily posted this review after receiving a copy of this book from TLC Book Tours and HarperCollins  
- Thank You!!

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