

Touch Me Real

by Gabrielle Lennon

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What is it really like when someone gets schizophrenia?

What is the experience itself like?

What's it like for those who love the victim of the disease?

Carrie and Mike, college students and best friends, tell their most confidential secrets to each other, and share the same unique sense of humor. They begin to fall in love with each other, but Carrie is too afraid to let herself go with these feelings. Since the pair is so emotionally close, being physically intimate as well terrifies her. Their friendship deepens through the years, as does their gradually building sense of romantic potential.

After they graduate, Carrie moves to a spiritual meditative community for six months, then to her own apartment in a separate city from Mike. Realizing she cannot hide her feelings any longer, she invites Mike to visit her. During the visit, Mike confides that while they were apart, he attempted suicide. Doctors put him on a lot of medication – none of which he believes he really needs – and he's taken himself off it because it makes his hands shake, his music-writing impossible, and his sex drive nonexistent.

Carrie and Mike briefly enjoy reconnecting, but, as the visit progresses and the medication leaves Mike's system, he becomes psychotic. Eventually, he has a full-blown psychotic episode. Carrie discovers that Mike has been diagnosed with sudden onset paranoid schizophrenia, and that they will never be able to have the relationship they had secretly wanted all those years, but were too afraid to acknowledge.

Touch Me Real is about telling those we love that we love them – because we never know how much time we really have. It's also about friendship, love, fear, mental illness, and truly touching someone in the deepest ways.

Gabrielle Lennon has worked for more than twenty-five years as a professional actress on stage and in film, as a published writer in multiple genres, and as a teaching artist. She attended summer drama programs at Carnegie-Mellon and Yale Universities. Lennon graduated from Northwestern University with a degree in Performance Studies (Analysis, Interpretation and Performance of Prose, Poetry and Drama) and an honors program in Creative Writing for the Media, where she studied with Edgar-Award-winner, Stuart Kaminski and Tony-and-Drama-Desk Award-winning director, Frank Galati. Her work focused on analysis, interpretation, and performance of prose, poetry, and drama, and on creative writing. Lennon's books are *Touch Me Real and Other Stories* and *After Midnight: A Book of Poetry*. She also writes professionally for magazines, newspapers, newsletters, journals, and the theater. As an actress, she has performed poetry, prose and drama throughout the United States, and internationally. As a teaching artist, Gabrielle creates a safe, supportive, fun, inspiring space in which students can explore and grow.

Gabrielle Lennon has been honored with the Florida Department of State Division of Cultural Affairs individual artist grant, which makes this presentation possible.

Please feel free to visit her websites for more information, at GabrielleLennon.com and LennonBooks.com

Recent Audience Responses:

“She is a force on stage! A rare treat -- I loved it!”

– *Lisa Franklin, actor/singer*

“What a powerful, intense performance. I laughed, cried, and sat in awe as Gabrielle craftily weaved her way through the performance and her life... skillful and flawless -- amazing. I would highly recommend *Touch Me Real* to all.”

– *Allen Smuckler, retired educator, poet/writer*

“The solo format is ideal for the subject matter because it provides a sense of intimacy. Lennon allows the audience into the conflicted character dealing with progressive mental illness of her first love. Her work shows the shadows and darkness of mental illness while also shining light on how an individual's instability does not impede the love others hold for the person.”

– *Sharon Fitzpatrick, author*

“I was riveted!”

– *Libah Jane Grossman*

“Extraordinary reveal and transformation of character. Lennon leaves it all on the stage.”

– *Joan Alden, author and playwright*

“Your ability to play with tension, tragedy, comedy, tenderness, love and passion, is brilliantly inspiring. You blew me away. You just blew me away. I was in awe, so inspired. I was just floored by your performance.”

– *Hope White, educator, enrollment consultant, and creator*

“I enjoyed the performance and the moving story!”

– *Sarah Hernandez, PhD, sociologist*

“Gabrielle Lennon's passionate presentation of *Touch Me Real* pushed emotional cords and left me raw emotionally. There was hardly a dry eye in the audience at the end of this touchingly intimate tale.”

– *Jane Blanchard, award-winning author*

“Amazing actress...Her performance was riveting! Can't wait to see her on stage again.”

– *Marilyn & MaryAnn*

“I just saw Gabrielle Lennon's play, "Touch me real," written by and starring Gabrielle. It was amazing - Gabrielle was incredible. So powerful how she brings the topic of mental illness to light. So glad I got to witness her and her play. Congratulations #Gabrielle Lennon!”

– *Stephanie C Heidemann, vocalist*