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Opening extract from

True Face

Written by

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Don't show me your tweet-face
Or ur txt spk
Show me your True Face
And let your heart speak.



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INTRODUCTION

'All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players,' wrote William Shakespeare, way back in 1600. It only takes a quick scroll through our Twitter or Facebook feeds to tell us that, despite being centuries old, this quote has never been more relevant.

Today, it can all too often feel as if we are performing our lives in front of a huge audience, and we are inundated with conflicting directions about how we should act. The internet, magazines and media bombard us with images of how thin, sexy and downright perfect we should be (conveniently ignoring the fact that these images are mainly air-brushed illusions). Celebrities endlessly tell us how to live, what to eat and how to love – right before checking into rehab/'fessing up to an eating disorder/being cheated on by a two-timing love rat. At school and college our teachers demand we make decisions that will affect the rest of our lives, without ever

bothering to ask us what we want that life to be. And even though our friends and family have our best interests at heart, they can only ever offer advice based on their own personal viewpoint of the world, not ours.

There is a massive problem at the heart of this way of living: *it isn't real*. When you start letting other people and events dictate how you live your life, you stop being true to yourself. Just as Shakespeare said, you end up becoming a 'mere player' and can end up in situations that leave you feeling empty, unhappy and afraid. But when you take the time to discover who you really are and what you really want, your life story becomes way more exciting than any play or film. And the really great news is, once you are no longer acting a part, you get to become truly authentic.

A truly authentic woman is never afraid to be herself, never apologises for being herself and never settles for second best. She is in full control of her life and never a mere player. She is fascinating, complex, vulnerable, strong, sassy, smart and unique. She is perfectly imperfect. She is *you*.

This book is part mystery, part adventure. The mystery is working out who you truly are, and the adventure comes in planning the kind of life you

really want to lead. In the coming chapters, I will help you peel away the ways in which you've been 'performing' and guide you back to your true self. I will share my own personal experiences and those of others who have made the journey back to truth. I was barely able to type some of my personal recollections I was cringing so much! But I wrote them because I've come to realise that you don't get anywhere until you get real. And for you to get the most from this book, you're going to need to get real too.

At the end of each chapter you'll find exercises designed to help you on your personal journey of self-discovery. A lot of these exercises involve writing or jotting down random thoughts, so you might want to get a notebook as a companion to this book – your True Face journal. You can do these exercises as you go along, or you might want to read the book through first, then come back and use the interactive sections as a workshop. Whatever you feel is right for you. Closing each chapter is a power tweet with the TrueFace hashtag. Please feel free to share these if you feel moved to do so. And why not highlight any parts of this book that resonate with you so that you can find them again quickly if you need to. Together we are going to embark upon a wonderful journey of self-discovery. From now on there will be

no more, 'Keep Calm and Carry On'. Instead, 'Forget the Fake and Keep it Real' will become our mantra. Ready . . . ?



You don't get anywhere until you get real
#TrueFace

PART ONE

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

True Face

1
WHO ARE YOU?

---------- ★ ----------

I stopped pretending to myself that I was anything other than what I was, and began to direct all my energy into finishing the only work that mattered to me.

J. K. Rowling

Who are you?

Who are you, *really*?

If you're like most people, you never really give this question very much thought. The chances are, you're too busy trying to do well, please others and fit in. Sure, you'll be able to answer this question at a surface level – *I'm a daughter/sister/student/friend/girlfriend/employee at Rat Race Incorporated* – but these answers are all 'official' rather than authentic. They're all about your roles and not about *you*.

There's an ancient Zen Buddhist saying that I love: 'Show me your original face, the face you had before your parents were born.'

Basically, the Zen Buddhists believed that before we're physically born, we're all one hundred per cent, genuinely us. There's no falseness, no pretence, we are just our own organic, additive-free selves. But as soon as we grow up, we start faking. We don't mean to, it's just that life can be tough – it can throw things at us that leave us feeling anxious and hurt. Maybe a friend laughs at us, or a parent or teacher criticises something we do. We become scared to show our

'original' face in case we'll be hurt or made to feel stupid again.

So we put on other faces, like masks. This can be an *'I'm so happy'* face, or an *'I don't give a damn'* face, or an *'I'm really tough'* face. But none of them are genuine. And, when we cover our true selves up, we start acting inauthentically too and this can cause major problems. A perfect example of this process in action often takes place, rather aptly, on *Face*book.

The trouble with *Fake*booking

Picture the scene: Amelie is a twenty-something writer. She shares an apartment with her best friend. Recently, Amelie and her boyfriend Jack broke up. They'd been together for several years. He was her first date, her first kiss, her first teenage love, but over the years they have drifted apart and their love drifted into companionship. Although she was really sad at the time of their split, Amelie is proud of how well she has dealt with it since. She has thrown herself into writing her first novel and is spending lots of quality time with her friends.

So, when she wakes up one Monday morning a couple of months after the break-up, she is feeling warm and sleepy and calm. Then she turns on her phone and she logs on to Facebook. As she scrolls through her news feed, she sees a sight that makes her blood freeze. Last night, Jack uploaded a new photo. It is of him sitting in a bar with his arm draped round a girl. As Amelie wipes the sleep from her eyes, she becomes convinced that the girl is gazing at Jack with an expression that can only be described as 'adoring'. Amelie's heart starts racing and she feels sick but, rather than putting the phone down, she looks at the comments below the picture. *Great night*, Jack has written, followed by a smiley face. Never has an emoticon looked so sinister.

Amelie feels tears burning her eyes. She scrolls down to try and distract herself from what she's seen but negative thoughts start clogging her mind.

I can't believe he's met someone already!

I can't believe he would post a picture of them together!

She looks so into him.

She looks so cheap!

Why would he go for someone like her?

I thought he loved me.

He can't have loved me if he's with someone else already.

Maybe he never loved me!

Maybe our whole relationship was a lie?

Then, as Amelie carries on scrolling, she sees a status update from a writer friend. *Can't believe I've got another book deal*, it reads. If Amelie hadn't been reeling from Jack's post she would have felt happy for her friend – she would have posted a comment congratulating her. But because Amelie is now on the down escalator to doom, all she can think are negative thoughts. She's got *another* book deal. Amelie hasn't even had one book deal yet! Maybe she never will. Once again, she becomes consumed with self-doubt.

What if my novel is rubbish?

What if I end up unpublished and single and unloved my entire life?

Amelie feels as if her world is over before her day has even begun. And yet this whole scenario – and the way it has made Amelie feel – is based on an untruth.

What Amelie doesn't know is that Jack actually had a horrendous time last night. Ever since their break-up, he has been moping about, comfort-eating cereal from the pack and playing an endless soundtrack of 'their song', interspersed with angry rap. Last night, his friends staged an intervention and dragged him out to a bar. While he was there he met his friend Joe's cousin Anna from Sweden – the girl in the picture. Anna was bubbly and fun and she had photos taken with everyone in the group. It was her last night in Manchester and Jack will never see her again. He posted the photo because he wants the world to know that he is over Amelie. He wants *Amelie* to know that he is over Amelie. But the truth is, he isn't – and he won't be for a long time. Amelie will now spend the rest of the day, and probably longer, knocked off-kilter and hating the world, and all because Jack was *Fake*booking. That night Amelie will post a *Fake*book update of her own – informing the world – and Jack – that she is *so happy right now.*

But she isn't. And she won't be for a long time. And Jack won't be when he sees it either.

Is any of this ringing any bells for you?

Okay, it's confession time. In the past, I've lied on my Facebook status updates too. Shocking, I know, but I have a feeling that I'm not the only one. You see, there have been times when I've been really hurting about something, but I haven't wanted the rest of the world to know about it, because I don't want the rest of the world to think that I'm weak, or depressing, or an out-and-out loser. So, instead of writing an honest update from my 'True Face', I've written something witty and zany about how my life is just one big FUN-O-RAMA – which, of course, is completely FAKE-O-RAMA. Let me give you a couple of examples:



***Fake*book update:**
Having such a fun time in Edinburgh! ☺

True Face update:
Having such a sad time in Edinburgh. Keep thinking about the one person I'd come away to try and forget ☹

***Fake*book update:**
Really loving my new life in the country! ☺ ☺ ☺

True Face update:
Really missing my London friends and terrified I've made a massive mistake by moving to a place where the buses only come twice an hour ☹ ☹ ☹

Faking in the real world

But it's not just when we're online that we lie about who or how we are – it can be all too tempting to fake it in the 'real' world too.

IT consultant Rachel had a really tough time during her school years. Her shyness meant that she found it hard to make friends and so she drifted along, hanging out with the other quiet kids but never properly connecting with any of them. 'I used to really envy the popular kids,' she says, 'life seemed to be so easy for them and making friends seemed so effortless.'

When Rachel got a place at a university a long way from her home in London, she jumped at the chance to reinvent herself.

'One of the first nights we were there, a group of us were having a drink in the Student Union bar. I thought that this was my big chance, that if I didn't make a good first impression, I'd fade away into the background like I always did. So I told them that my dad owned a pub in London. This couldn't be further from the truth as, in reality, my dad was a librarian. But one of the cool girls in my school had lived in a pub and it had always seemed such an exciting life to me. My new friends did seem impressed when I told them and at first it felt lovely thinking that they actually saw me as this cool, publican's daughter. But it wasn't long before it became a nightmare.

That first Christmas holiday, one of my uni friends was coming down to London and she asked if she could come and visit me at my parents' pub. I had to make up something to get out of it and I hated lying to her again. In the end, I told everyone that my dad had sold the pub. But I still wasn't able to invite any of my uni friends to come and stay with me during holidays, in case they found out. The whole thing was really stressful and when I look back now I can see that it was totally pointless. My friends from uni never liked me because of what they thought my parents did – they liked me for me. I didn't need to lie. The massive irony is that by lying to try and make friends, I was

never able to get as close to those friends as I would have wanted. It was a huge relief to leave uni and start over again. I've been completely honest about my background with the friends I've made through work and it's been *so* much easier!'

As Rachel's example shows, life can sometimes put us under extreme pressure to fake it. And we can put ourselves under extreme pressure to fake it. Put simply:

self-doubt + pressure to be accepted = temptation to fake

But what if we were to eliminate self-doubt and accept ourselves fully? Then we would find that:

self-belief + self-acceptance = True Face

In the first part of this book, I'm going to help you to bring this second equation into life. Into *your* life. Step by step, we're going to peel away the layers, until we get back to who you truly are. Then we're going to work together to make you truly proud of that person. And when you feel truly proud of who you are, you'll stop being so concerned about what the rest of the world thinks or expects of you and your True Face will become your default setting.

One of the best ways in which you can start this process is by focusing on your feelings.

How are you?

How are you *really*?

In your journal, write the title, **TrueFace Update** – or **#TrueFace** if you're a tweeter not a Facebooker. Then write an update about yourself and how you're feeling with total True Face sincerity. Don't worry if it goes on for more than 140 characters. Don't worry if it goes on for pages and pages. It's really important not to hold anything back. Let every horrible thought and fear on to the page. Think of this exercise as tipping up a bin and giving it a really good shake; you want every last piece of rubbish to come tumbling out. I know that getting honest like this can feel uncomfortable at first but it also brings a great sense of release. It can be hard work pretending to be something that you're not. Whenever I own up to myself about how I'm really feeling, I always feel a whole lot freer.

Now, I'm not suggesting you actually *do* this on your social networks. Opening up in this way is about getting really honest with yourself. If you know that

hundreds of people will be reading what you write it could leave you feewling vulnerable and exposed and this in turn may cause you to hold back. Get into the habit of writing a True Face update every day in your journal and pretty soon you won't feel the need for any phoney online updates. By releasing your negative thoughts and emotions in this safe and private way, you'll start clearing space in yourself and your life for true happiness to appear.

There have been many times in my own life when I haven't been completely honest with myself and/or the world, and I'll be spilling the excruciating details throughout this book. Every time I've faked it, it's been because I thought it would make me feel better but, instead, every time I've lived to regret it, just like Rachel. If the same is true for you, don't feel bad. It's completely understandable to want to protect yourself from hurt, it's just that pretending to be something or someone you're not isn't the answer. In order to live a happy, authentic life, you need to rediscover who you truly are. So let's make a start right now, by finding out who you *were* . . .



The truth sets me free **#TrueFace**