



Creative Intervention

Fake It 'Til You Make It

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Creative Interventions Editor's Note: The following is an excerpt from a theatre play written by Bryony Kimmings and Tim Grayburn. Based on intimate real-life recorded conversations, the play is an emotional and personal exploration of Tim's life-long struggle with mental health. Fake It 'Til You Make It premiered at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2015. It was written and performed to spark a public discussion and awareness around issues related to clinical depression, anxiety and social stigma. The play was first published by Oberon Books (Kimmings, B., & Grayburn, T. (2015). Fake It 'Til You Make It. Oberon Books: London.), and is excerpted with the permission of the authors. We enter into the play in Act II.



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Act II

15 – Destiny

Bryony is on the doorstep of the tent.

B: The day I found Tim's tablets was the day that the love story changed. I remember he came home from work that evening very much expecting his bags to be packed and on the front door step. But instead we sat up late into the night and talked everything through, it was hard going. For Tim it was the first time that he had said these things aloud to another living soul.

He said that he was relieved that the secret was finally out. That he had actually felt better for a really long time. That what he was having trouble with was not the depression but rather the side effects from the tablets he was taking. He said he really want to come off them.

Bryony sets up a microphone stand and moves the stools out of the way

He told me he had tried to go cold turkey in the past but it hadn't worked out well.

Pause

Me. I felt confused. Deceived and more than a little bit worried. I wondered where my true love had gone, who was this man living in my house. But when I looked into his eyes late that night I saw the shattered remains of my beast staring right back at me, so I agreed to help him.

Tim comes onstage and joins Bryony with his guitar, this time he is wearing black out glasses, they make him look like someone in a magazine who doesn't want their identity known.

B: The next day I went to my studio, buoyed up with hope and ambition for our future together. And I wrote Tim a really embarrassing love song that we are quite mortified to have to perform now...

Tim's on guitar.

This is Destiny.

Music begins, Bryony nudges Tim and Tim pretends to play the guitar and they do a dance routine as they sing.

B: Some people go for the opposite
Some people go for the eyes
Some people fail just for the fun of it
Those people aren't like you and I

Some creatures never seem miss a trick
Some creatures never get it right
Some creatures forever run away from it
Those creatures aren't like you and I

Because what we have is different
We work hard until it works
We can never be complacent
We can't ignore it if its hurts

And I'll tell you til the cows come home
And I'll tell you til I'm horse
The future is mapped out for us
I promise this of course....

I'll hold your hand
And I'll dry your eyes
And I'll never you
Never deceive you
Your destiny is mine

And I'll break your fucking legs
If you ever leave
I'll always keep you
Never mistreat you...

Your destiny, your destiny, is me.

*Tim misses the final guitar strum and it's funny. He bumbles off to his mic.
Bry moves her mic stand.*

16 – That time

Each at their mics

B: The next part of the story looked like this...

T: We stopped drinking

B: We read all the books

T: I started to look after myself better

B: I spoke to my mum on the phone a lot

T: I told all my mates

B: I didn't tell my friends

T: Turns out some of them had it too

B: Because I loved him

T: I loved her

B: We found ourselves a new GP

T: I laughed at myself

B: I secretly had the idea for this show

T: I told work and secretly wanted to leave

B: Autumn became winter

Winter became spring

And the drugs they dwindled down

And our little house became a library full of scheming and research

And for a while we took great comfort from the things we learnt about Tim's brain.

17 – SSRI's

Tim is putting his guitar away and setting a little table with objects in the black. He stands next to a little table at the mouth of the tent with a tablet in his hand. On the table is the hammer, the whisk, a string of chillies, a good luck doll, a ball of wet tissue and a strap to fit Tim's head.

Bry is pretending to be a nurse doing a demonstration about Anti-Depressants. She speaks in a Cockney presentation voice. She uses Tim as a mannequin. Building him up like a weather map of tablet side effects. Moving him around the stage. The lights are clinical.

B: SSRI's or selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors are a type of anti-depressant tablet for people with clinical depression.

She marches over to Tim. He is getting things sorted on stage.

Serotonin is a neurotransmitter in the brain associated with happiness and wellbeing.

The depressed brain reuptakes Serotonin too quickly, thus resulting in low mood.

She swirls her hand around the top of Tim's head. He spins.

These tablets balance out that re-uptake... thus making you happier.

Now they are very effective, used by millions across the world BUT they also have some pretty major side effects. Side effects Tim had been labouring under for quite some time.

For example, they can blur your vision

She points to his black out glasses

They can make your body temperature go up by a few degrees thus producing excessive and embarrassing sweating.

She places the string of chillies round his neck and mimes sweat spraying out of his armpits onto the audience.

They can give you headaches, Tim suffered with migraines for many years. They can give you insomnia (*she straps the hammer to his head*), brain zaps, little electric shocks around the temples that can be pretty painful, and in some rare cases they can give you suicidal thoughts...

She is herself again for a moment...

But depression gives you suicidal thoughts, so...

Back to Cockney nurse...

Swings and roundabouts I guess?!

Pause

They can give you indigestion, especially if you take them before you eat your breakfast and they can also make you pretty queasy if they are strong.

He whizzes the whisk in his tummy when instructed.

They can numb your feelings (*she punches him on the arm*) give you a really dry mouth.

She sticks the ball of tissue in his mouth

And they can also make your libido go down. (Not that we ever had any problems like that!) *She pops a little good luck doll down his pants.*

It takes about three months to come off them effectively. You reduce your dose slowly week by week monitored by your doctor assessing whether the side effects are going away, or if the symptoms of depression are creeping back in. So on the advice of our GP, that's what we did.

He spits the tissue out of his mouth and lowers his head. He removes the whisk and the hammer and slowly walks to the tent, going inside and hiding. Bryony looks sadly after him and then back to the audience.

B In a low measured voice.

Turns out men don't talk about their mental health that much
Turns out that's much more of a "typically female trait"
Turns out they don't present emotional symptoms to the doctor

She moves the little table aside.

That they are much more likely to present with physical pains or with addictions related to their depression. Turns out the problem wasn't the tablets.

Excuse me

She goes into the tent and closes the door.

18 – Recording 5

The machine turns on, lights up. The tent is bathed in a low blue.

R5: The doctors gave me like a really good plan, and they told me to wean myself off very gradually over a period of about three months. The usual stuff like look after yourself, don't drink too much, do a lot of exercise, eat well. There was quite a lot of hope from the doctor there wasn't actually any point where she said, don't get your hopes up too much as you might have to come

straight back on them. I'd been on them for so many years because I hadn't thought about what exactly was, I was just taking the tablets to get rid of what the doctor told me I had. I think I was waiting to feel settled and uh, have someone to do it with, yeah. In my heart of heart I thought, if we did everything right, did it by the book, came off them gradually I would never have to take them again in my life. It was about two weeks, three weeks after I took my last tablet... and I started to notice that, that happy mood that I was in that I'd finished taking the medication was slowly disappearing and I started to not sleep as well again, um but I was still really hopeful that it was just a little bad stint and it would go away but it didn't.

The machine and its light turn off.

19 – Paperbag head

Lovely pink and yellow lights come up, reminding us of better times.

The Carpenters' "Close to you" begins to play.

Bryony opens the door of the tent. She steps out of their house looking up at the sky smiling. Then Tim emerges. He has a paper bag over his head. He is not responsive to anything. His body is stiff. Empty.

She walks forward with him and looks up at him adoringly.

She tries to play badminton with the good luck dolls but he doesn't hit back.

She walks along chatting away to him. No response. In fact he stops and stares out into the audience and she has to walk back and remind him.

She points out the view and he doesn't turn his head.

She tries to slow dance with him but he doesn't respond. His arms just fall down to his sides.

She kisses the mouth of the paperbag head and he moves back, her weight pushing him away. She wipes her mouth confused.

She hurries to his side and takes his hand like she is encouraging him to remember. She performs the dance they did in an earlier scene to Perry Como but he just trails along when pulled and pushed.

She rolls into his arms and he drops her... She screams silently with her back to him, rushes to the box and holds it over her head as if she is about to smash

it. Then she changes her mind and calmly puts it down smoothing her clothes down. The pair back away from each other and sit down on their stools, much further apart than before.

The Carpenter's tune begins to warp into a slow repetitive drone, with drums building underneath. Bry brings her mic to her mouth in a slow stylistic movement. Reading out texts.

B: Hi Darling,
Just checking in.
You seemed a little blue this weekend at Granny's and I just wanted to say maybe come home straight from work tonight and we can sit down on the sofa and chat it all through? Maybe we need to go back to the doctors. Bry

Pause

Hi darling just wanted to check you are coming home straight after work... text me back xx

Pause

Tim I've tried you a couple of times can you call me back

Pause

Tim have you left work. I'm worried

The drums are building now and Tim is frantically ripping at the bag on his head, tearing it to pieces.

Tim?

Are you there?

He begins to rip his own paper bag off his head and she begins to freak out with her hands all over her hair and face. They both finish with the music, pause and run away.

20 – R6

Tim walks back onstage, he is wearing the head of a great beast with horns. He staggers. He stalks the stage and heads to the machine and lowers himself around it as if to protect it.

The machine turns on

R6: I left, I left work one day and I remember it was a relief coming out of the office, but then as soon as I was out of the office I was even more scared about how I was feeling, I didn't know how I was going to get home. I got on a bus. Realised immediately that it was the wrong bus. Erm, I started to stress out as people were looking at me,

I got a fag out, started smoking it, someone even said "put it out what are you doing" so I had to get off the bus. The confusion in my head was just something I've never had before. I went to cross the road and almost got hit by a car, people were shouting at me telling me to get off the road, get out of the way. And, I must have looked awful, I must have looked like a man who didn't know what he was going, where he was going, a man who'd lost his mind. And at that point I realised I was going to have to call you because I wasn't going to be able to get home otherwise.

Bryony appears at the back of the stage, she appears to be driving.

21 – I am driving into central London

Bryony drives across the stage. The drone is back and loud and full of doom.

B: So I'm driving into central London and it's raining. And the windscreen wipers on the car are broken so they are making the sound of howling dogs on the windscreen. And I am trying not to panic and I am trying not to speed, but you haven't sounded like yourself on the phone so I'm doing both of those things.

Tim moves backwards from the plinth to the tent with his machine, protecting it, long sweeping animal like strides. He watches her.

And you haven't been able to be very specific about where you are. Because you weren't making much sense. So I am making a bet that because of the time of day it is you are probably somewhere near your work. So I decide to park up and start walking my way around the grid system, looking out for you... or your bag... or your coat.

And I'm panicking because I've never seen you in full breakdown mode before and I am worried that I might fuck it up. Like should I take you to the hospital or just to the doctor's? Like should I take you back to your parents or just to our flat? What if you're out of control, what if I can't physically get you into the car.

Drum music begins to build over the drone.

That beast... my beast, so wild and free but what if I don't recognise him and he doesn't recognise me.

Loud music begins. Very very loud. Drums, bass, noise. And both Bryony and Tim fly into action.

22 – The Beast

Tim races around the stage in his beast head, banging it against the wall. Falling dangerously onto the floor over and over. Mimicking Bryony at her mic. Skidding and falling and being out of control, shaking the tent, going loopy. Dancing like a maniac and holding onto his head in pain. Sometimes doing some of the love dance but getting it muddled and spinning around and dropping to the floor. He is very confused.

At the same time Bryony is trying to organise the house and keep him safe. She can't work out where to put the machine. She is panicking. She packs up the furniture outside the tent, she shuts the door, she tries to get him in but for a long time he is out of control. She takes the box in and out of the tent, she throws tens of good luck dolls in the air around the perimeter of their plot.

Tim begins to bow at the audience again and again, like in the love dance. Bryony comes out of the tent with the machine and puts her hand out to calm him, tame him.

And as the music reaches a deafening crescendo Tim does a gigantic bow and they finally collide centre stage. Knocking each other off balance and rocking around.

The music slows and Tim falls to his knees at Bryony's feet. Bryony is stroking his beast's head and Tim is breathing slow and hard. She has the machine in her arms. For a moment all seems lost.

She helps him up and the music changes. It is a slow and acoustic version of their Destiny song. They stumble back inside the tent all closed up tight. Bry puts the machine on the door matt and leaves it outside the tent.

23 – Destiny slow

Once inside Bryony turns on a torch and in the circle of the torchlight the pair are projected onto the tent canvas. Bryony helps Tim take off his beast head. She wipes his brow and kisses his forehead. She puts her head down. He lifts her chin and kisses her.

The recording device turns on

R7: Like um, after I got ill again, just seeing how worried you were... made me sort of feel like a failure again I guess and er, felt like I was back at the start basically. Erm,... dunoo I just thought that I was back to being useless and couldn't hack it and I wasn't tough enough to get through it without these tablets... and then er I thought that perhaps that's it then forever um, and I just thought it might be better if I left you to it.

They put their heads together for a moment.

They embrace

He falls away from view and she is left alone

She looks from her left to her right.

B: Tim?

The music ends.

Tim?

The tent falls slowly down over her.