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## BEAUTY AND THE BOUTIQUE HOTEL

When Sean first suggested a photoshoot at a cosy boutique hotel in Brighton my first thought was how exciting it would be. Having met and spoken with Sean and having read the lovely comments from others who have had photo-sessions, I was very confident that it would be a great idea. As it turned out, it was. Knowing that the time would fly by I decided on a dress rehearsal beforehand including shoes and accessories - just think of me doing high speed quick changes in a phone box, as per DC Comics.

It's strange that when I'm dressed, with my makeup on, hair done and about to go out, I still feel a little anxious after all these years. Then I think, go on, it's show time'. I love a wide range of styles, glam to sexy. I love looking at the styles other ladies wear. All the outfits bar one (you can guess which one), I have worn out and about in Brighton & Hove, in venues such as Legends, Black Dove and Regency Tavern. I've generally found people to be warm-hearted, friendly and some have said some amazingly kind and confidence-building things to me. It's incredible the random and unexpected opportunities that happen. I've been invited to join hen parties, engagement parties or to sit and join others simply to chat.

The saying, 'Mirror, mirror on the wall' often lies when we look at ourselves. We get a one-dimensional view of what we look like. Photos are a good way to see if something works. The number of times I've discovered I still have outfits with labels on erm, should have taken it back. I now use my 10 second rule. If I'm still deciding by at the end of it, I return it. Selfies are a good idea or a friend's critical eye if you are undecided on the night. Feedback and guidance from a professional photographer of course the perfect answer. At the end of the day if you are happy with a look and it makes you happy go with that.

When Sean uploaded the photos and gave me access to my personal gallery, I found it hard to pick my favourite one as they were all of such an amazing standard. On balance, I think probably the black and sequined long-sleeved dress is my favourite. Even Dominic Skinner from BBC2 Glow Up remarked on it in one of the Brighton clubs

Things I've learnt:

Be kind to others - it kind of goes around; be kind to yourself, don't get downhearted; I love dancing - weirdly and wildly sometimes - even by myself. Watch YouTube videos for makeup tips and where to get good products; when you've agreed to meet socially don't let people down. I know how that feels!; greeting people with a friendly smile beats wearing the best of outfits; humour beats wearing the best of outfits; lastly, hold a friend's hand when you see they need it. Hold it anyway.

As is often said, the first step is the hardest. After that you're on your way. One step at a time becomes a life journey.

So, these are my ramblings from the South. Do write. You can find me on tvChix as 'LouiseWood'

Jouise

Sean's Ten Pence Worth

What do you get when you mix a boutique-hotel, beautiful evening dresses and a bubbly personality? The answer is a photoshoot with the fabulously fashionable Louise. She has a grace and poise well-suited to long shimmering evening dresses, plus an innate ability of bringing out the best in every dress she chooses to wear. Each time Louise changed I thought she'd reached the 'ultimate' dress, but she continued to raise the threshold with each design.

The hotel itself was a beautiful place with a lot of character. Each room had a unique style and the staff were incredibly helpful.

Because Louise decided to wear some sparkly dresses, we agreed that I would include a star filter in my lens kit. When used sparingly, it can produce some pleasant star like effects. Throughout the

photoshoot we made the most of different backgrounds and lighting-effects in the hotel. Sadly, due to heavy rain we were not able to venture outside on this occasion, but hopefully we will in the future.

With many thanks to Blanch House Boutique Hotel in Kemptown, Brighton, and their amazing staff being SO helpful on the day.

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