

Dressing up for Christmas by Paul Vousden (adult category)

She smiled at him. Her best smile. She had been practicing it all week in front of the mirror in her bedsit. He was so handsome and would do her confidence the world of good.

She smiled at him. He had been hoping for something like this, and he had been practicing his rugged look in the mirror in his bedsit all week. She was so beautiful and would do his confidence the world of good.

Initial contact had been made but did she have the courage and trust in herself to move on? What was a man supposed to do in these circumstances, should he speak first or just let it go and see what happens? He wasn't ready for this despite the practice in the mirror and the one liners he had learnt.

She hadn't worn this much make up before and the little black dress was probably too revealing, and how did women manage with this type of shoe? Her legs were still sore from the wax, and her shoulders ached.

He hadn't worn hair this short for ages and it made him feel exposed, but there was security from the jacket and trousers, although his calves ached from wearing flat shoes. He would see it through, the first time is the hardest, he'd been told by others.

She told herself she wanted company, companionship and possibly love. He thought he wanted support and a warm bed. Most of all they wanted compassion and understanding and not to be alone in a bedsit over Christmas.

She was fifty four next year and had left home last year as her wife did not understand her needs anymore. He was fifty two and had recently left his marriage as his husband showed no tolerance at all. A new relationship was craved and it was a lonely life in a bedsit at Christmas.

She sat on the stool sipping her wine and glanced into the bar mirror behind the bottles, baubles and mistletoe. In this light she didn't look too bad and the new hair style suited her bone structure. The hairdresser had been really helpful, sorting a suitable style and a few tips on the make up too. The beauty advisor had given some care to the foundation and eyeliner. It was not brash, Yes, in this light it really worked.

He found that as he moved to sit his posture was defined by the wrapped tightness around his chest which made him swing his shoulders. Perching on the stool edge was better as it also stopped his hips from flaring out.

Well here goes, it's up to the man to go first. She lent over to speak and, despite the hairdresser craft, his hair fell across his face. He tossed it back, he thought quite artfully, and started to ask would he like a festive drink? That wasn't right, his voice was at least an octave too low, she coughed and pitched again.