

# Life as a Night Porter

Chris Shaw

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Chris Shaw spent ten years working in London hotels, all the while using his camera to both document the hotels unexpected human spectacles and keep himself awake through the long hours of his shift. Whether capturing prostitutes waiting between Johns, weary hotel staff, the inebriated and profligate guests, or the details of the hotels faded grandeur, Shaws images transcend the physical boundaries of a place, and instead capture a state of mind in which few people would choose to stay more than a night. "The thing I like most about the pictures is the large element of what I call the chance meeting, the times I was so tired I lost the artifice and techniques of photography. I just took photographs to keep me awake. It became artless. The people I photographed, these episodes in the social fantastic would heighten and illuminate my whole night, often making a difficult job and my twelve-hour shift bearable. The sum of the book is really a hotel of my own imagination constructed from several hotels I have worked in and some Ive stayed in as a paying guest. In reality these hotels bear little or no resemblance to my actual pictures. It just depends on how you look at things. In my experience heaven and hell are places right here on earth, and you can stay in either one." -- Chris Shaw



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