



WHEN [Lee Mead](#) landed his new role on medical drama *Casualty*, no one was more proud than his three-year-old daughter Betsy.

Nurse Ben “Lofty” Chiltern marks the first major TV part for the actor, who is from [Rayleigh](#) and is a big supporter of the Rayleigh Mushroom

Theatre Company.

Lee has carved out a successful career on the West End stage after winning BBC One talent show *Any Dream Will Do* in 2007.

And Betsy, Lee’s daughter with estranged wife [Denise van Outen](#), who is from [Basildon](#), has given his character a leg up on the career ladder.

“She’s at pre-school now and she’s told her teacher and her friends that I’m Doctor Lofty,”he says, chuckling.

“I keep telling her that I’m Nurse Lofty, but she’s upgraded me to Doctor.”

It was while competing on *Any Dream Will Do* that Mead, 32, met former *Big Breakfast* presenter van Outen, a judge on the show.

The pair wed in the Seychelles in 2009, but announced their split last July.

“We are still good friends and the most important thing is Betsy.

We’re both great parents as well,”

says the star, who films *Casualty* in Cardiff and travels back to his North London flat every weekend to see his daughter.

“Betsy’s our number one really.

We both absolutely adore her and love her so much.”

With plum roles in West End shows like *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat*, *Wicked* and *Legally Blonde*, Mead is no stranger to big audiences. He also made a guest appearance on *Casualty* back in2011, but he does admit to some first day nerves as Lofty.

“When you do a theatre production, you rehearse for four or five weeks in a small studio with the actors and director, and you find that character,” he says.

“But with TV, you do the scene for the first time in front of the whole crew, literally 30-odd people in this tiny space with the director,

When viewers first meet Lofty, he’s fallen out with his parents after one too many squandered opportunities.

“Essentially, he’s a nice guy and a good bloke, but he’s a bit lazy,”

Mead explains.

“He’s using his parents asabit of a bank and going on lots of nights out. They’re complaining that he’s not getting his own job and his own place, so eventually he gets a job in A&E and starts paying his rent.”

The actor seems more serious than his fun-loving character.

“I’m quite shy and a bit nervous, and that can come across as being quite boring,” Mead admits. “I’m actually the first person to pull a prank or get the drinks in. I’m a lot of fun really.

“I kind of step back initiallywith people. I’m very in the background and I’m not one to throw myself in,” he adds. “But once you get to know people, you form relationships, and the cast have been great on *Casualty*. We have so much fun and there’s a bit of naughtiness on set.”

He credits show stalwart Derek Thompson, who has played nurse Charlie Fairhead since 1986, with creating much of the mirth between takes.

“He’s like the Mafia of *Casualty*.

He’s a cheeky chap! But it’s clever because he’s doing it to make you feel relaxed,” says Mead. “You’re doing 10-hour days and scenes that require that burst of energy.”

He plans to watch Lofty’s debut with family and friends.

“It’ll be a big night for me. I think it’s important to watch your work, to learn from it. Because it’s you, you’re always going to be hypercritical, more critical than the director or even the audience. You think, ‘I could have played that differently’.”

The actor is signed up on *Casualty* until October, and is keen to do more TV work.

“It’s a different way of working completely, and I’ve loved it. It’s a whole new chapter of my career.

I’ve been doing this for 10 years, but mainly theatre; I’ve done guest appearances on TV but this is my first regular TV role,” he says.

“I would have been happy doing a daytime drama, but to get a Saturday night, Bafta-winning drama and get my own part is just mind-blowing. I feel so honoured and lucky to be involved.”

After his very public break-up with van Outen _ who tweeted her congratulations when he joined the *Casualty* cast – Mead insists meeting someone new is “not on my radar” at the moment.

For now, his downtime is devoted to Betsy. “Any free time I get I’m pretty much with her really, watching *Tangled* and Disney films. It’s the best part of my life actually, being a dad.