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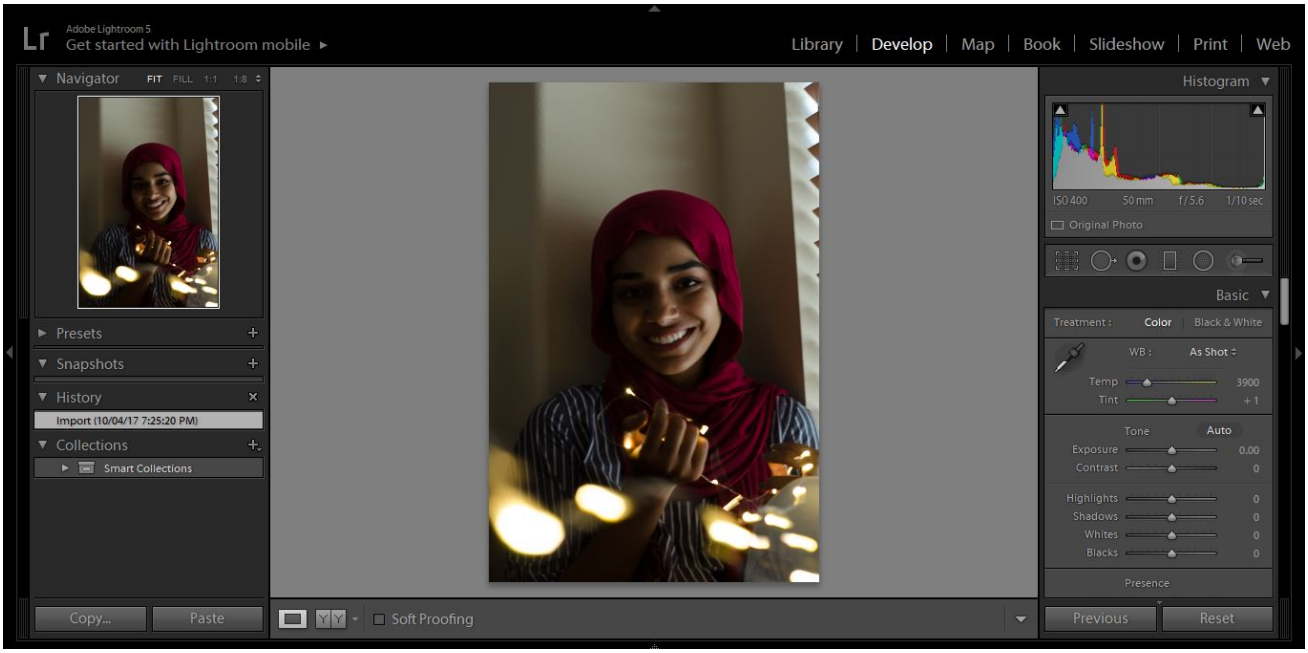
How to edit pictures with fairy lights. (inspired by Brandon Woelfel)

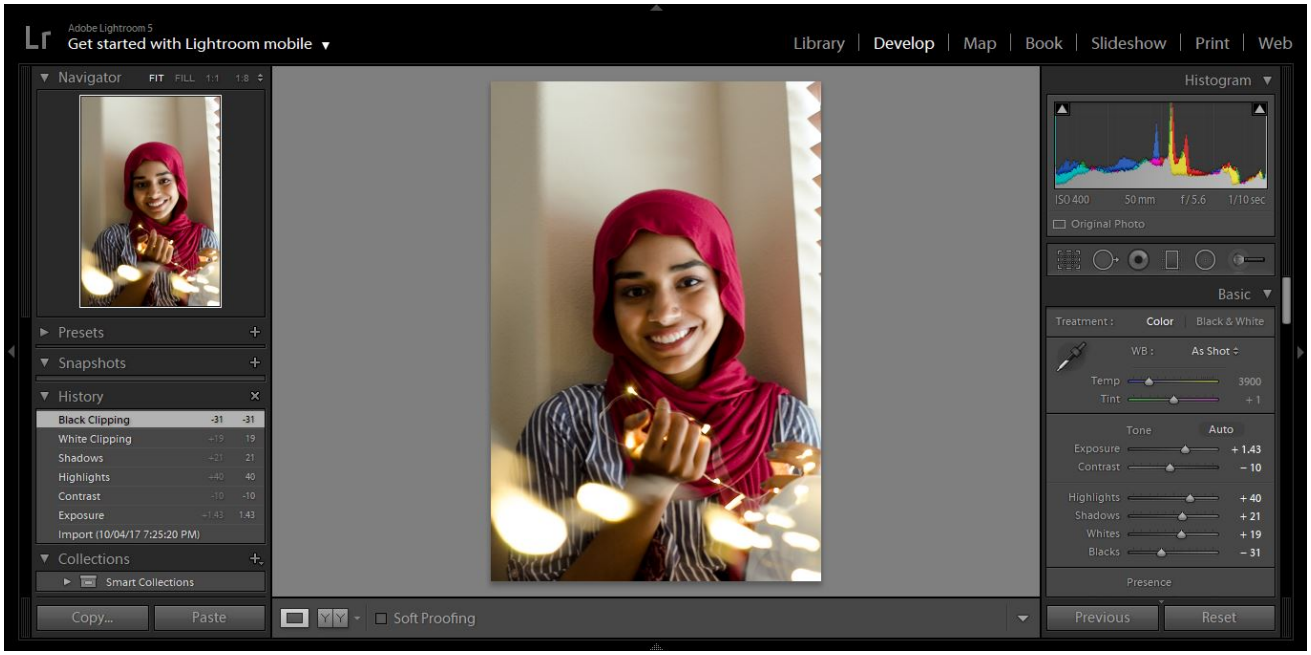
Capturing pictures with fairy lights is one problem but another problem is editing them. All the pictures that consist of fairy lights or any type of small lights are very dark or as photographers like to call it, low-light. People think that with editing low-light pictures, all you have to do is increase the brightness and exposure. That's correct but that shouldn't be the only thing you do when editing. I will be showing you step-by-step on how I edit pictures with fairy lights. My inspiration for it is by one of my favorite photographers, Brandon Woelfel.

STEP 1:

Once you've opened your image in Adobe Lightroom, you need to go to "develop" to start editing your picture. Since the picture is dark, you need to increase the exposure and adjust all the other basic settings. You should increase the exposure as high as you can but not too high to the point it's completely white. I usually set my exposure to 1.43, my contrast to -10, highlights to 40, shadows to 21, whites to 19, and blacks to -31. The reason I increased my shadows and lower my blacks a little bit is because I don't want the picture to be dark. I need my picture to be lighter than the original without ruining the purpose of the lights.



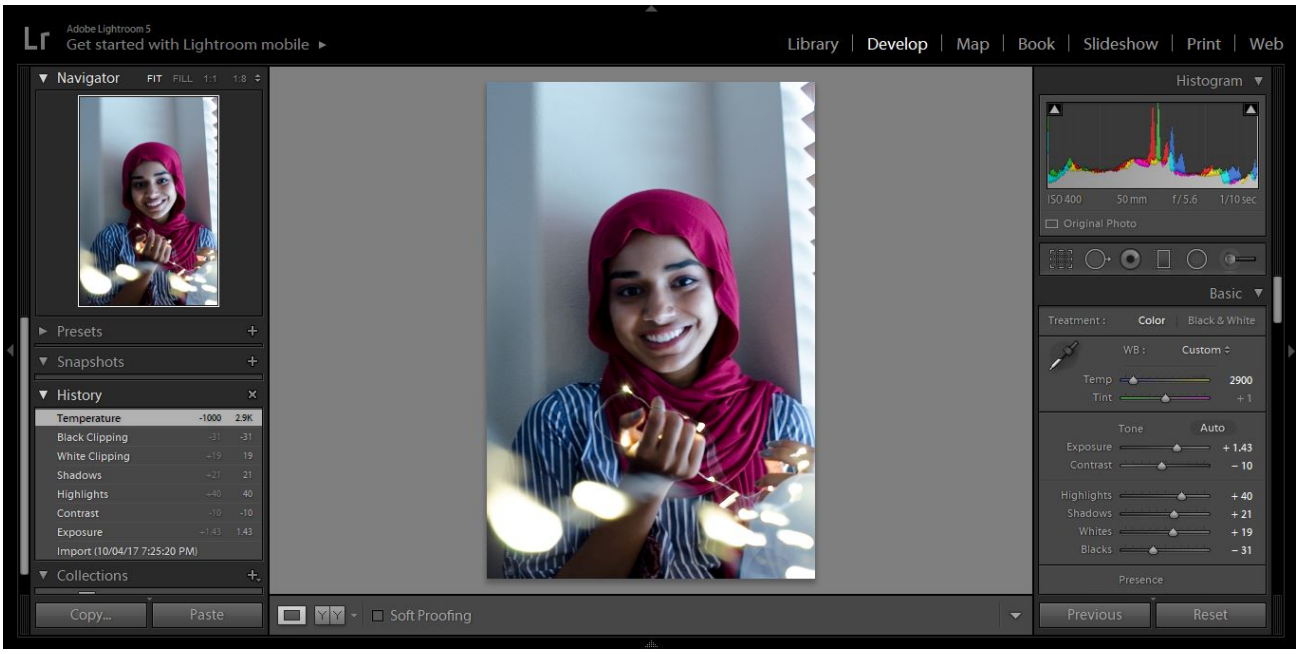
BEFORE



AFTER

STEP 2:

Once I had adjusted everything, I set my temperature to 2900, which will make my picture a cool tone and a blue color. If setting your temperature to 2900 makes the picture turn out extremely blue, then try lowering it until you're satisfied. Don't be afraid if the picture turns out too blue because we're going to fix it soon.

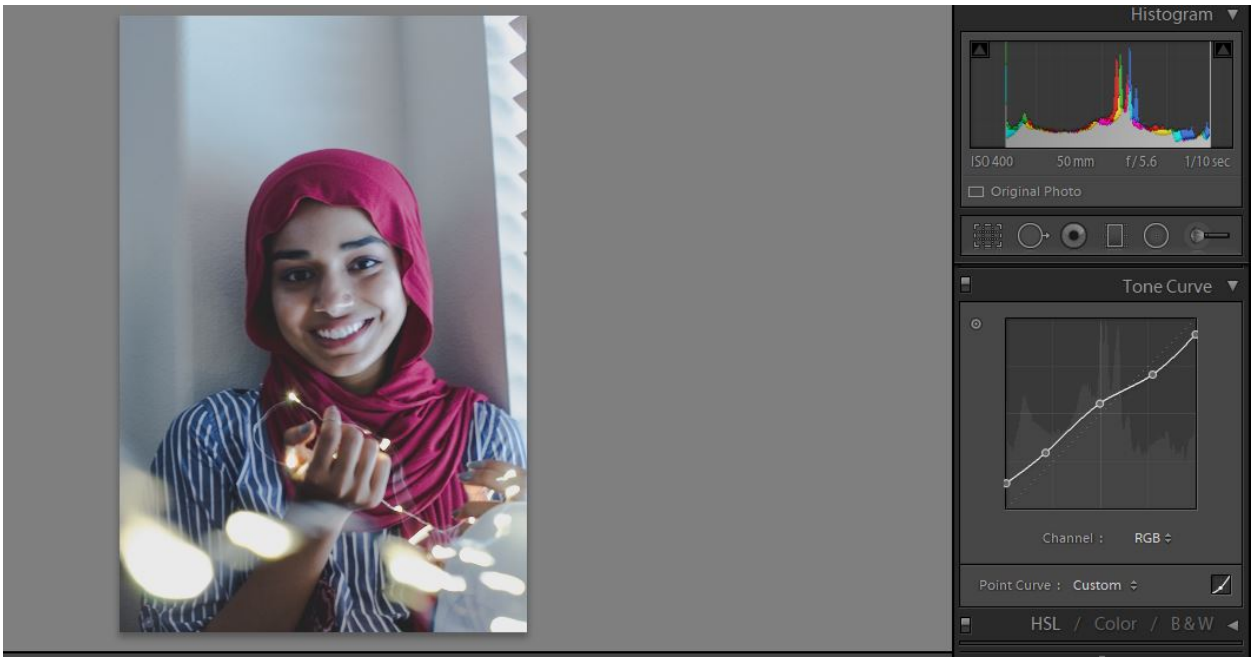


STEP 3:

This step is optional but I like to include it anyways. Under “reset presence”, you’ll find “clarity”, “vibrance”, and “saturation”. I don’t mess with vibrance and saturation but I do add a little bit of clarity. Clarity will help your picture come out sharp.

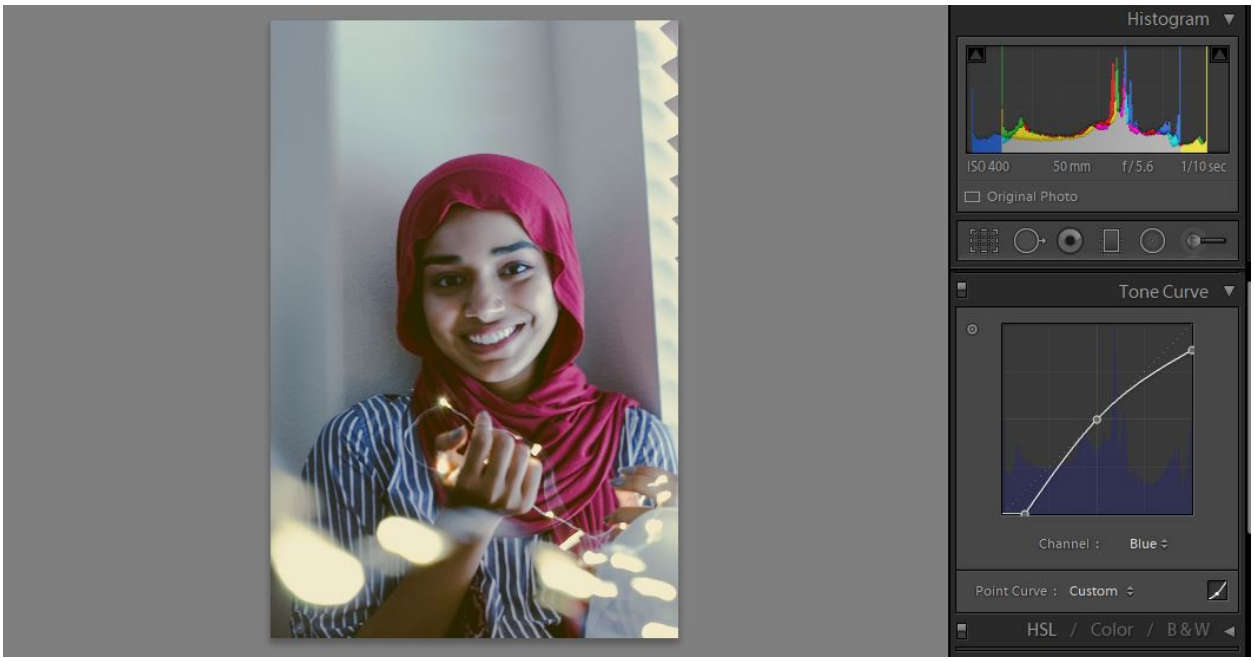
STEP 4:

After messing with the basic settings, we now move to “tone curve”. Tone curving is a complicated thing. It’s a tool that allows you to modify the various light levels in the image in a way that will give you greater control over the tonal range and contrast of your picture. You can mess with the curve however you want to. To start editing using the tone curve, make sure the curve is on RGB, which stands for “red green blue”. There are two points on the line that’s already given, one point on the top and one on the bottom. Adding to those points, I made three more, one in the middle, one between the bottom point and the middle point and another between the top point and the middle point. I took the bottom point and moved it above the dotted line to give it a faded affect. I took the top two points and moved them under the dotted line and the rest above the dotted line.



STEP 5:

Once you're satisfied with the RGB curve, change the channel to "blue". The blue curve is very similar to the RGB curve. The blue curve focuses on all the blues in the picture. I added a point in the middle of the line so when I move the top and bottom point, the point in the middle won't move. I moved both the bottom and top point below the dotted line. By doing that, it decreases the blue in the picture so it won't make it extremely blue.

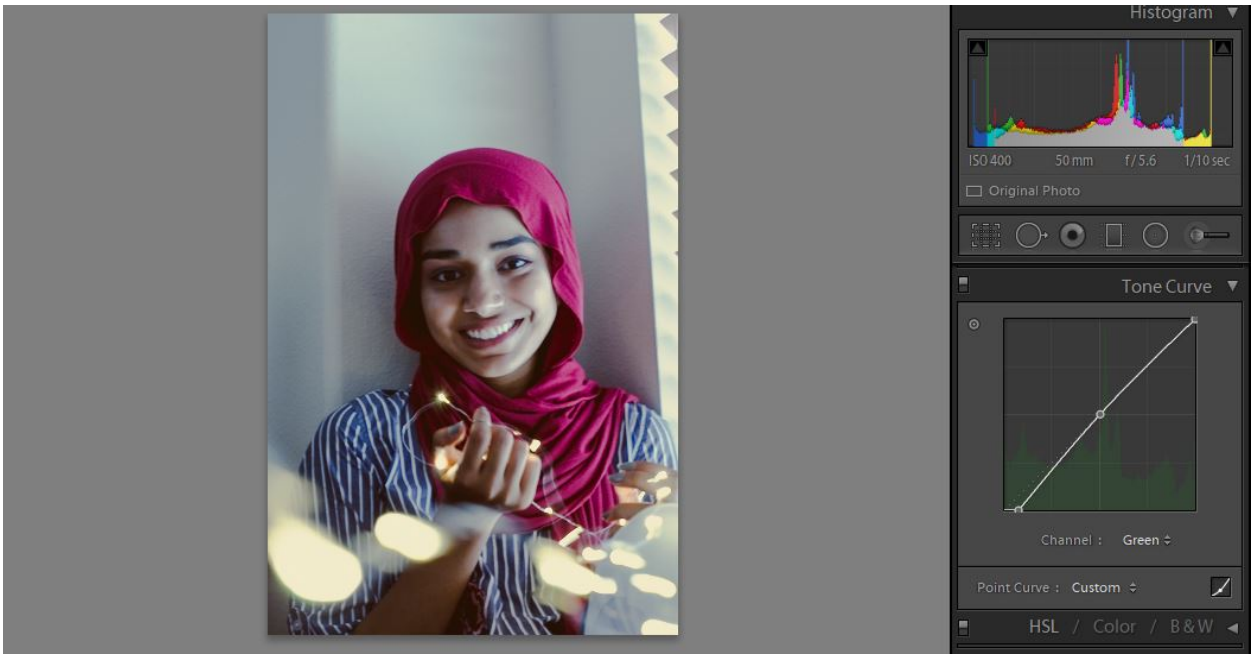


STEP 6:

Once you're done with the blue curve, we move on to the red curve. Just like the blue curve, I added a point in the middle of the line and I moved the bottom curve slightly under the curve. The picture might turn out green but it's okay because the next curve we'll be adjusting is the green one.

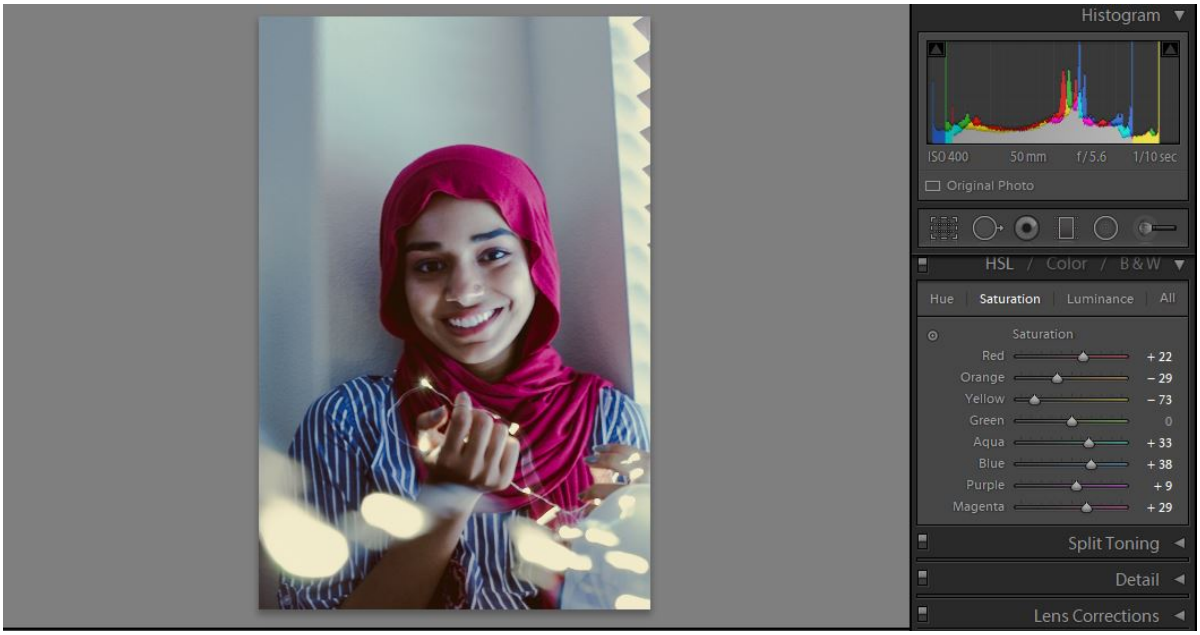
STEP 7:

On the green curve, you do exactly the same as the red curve. Just move the bottom point of the curve to the point where the picture isn't green anymore.



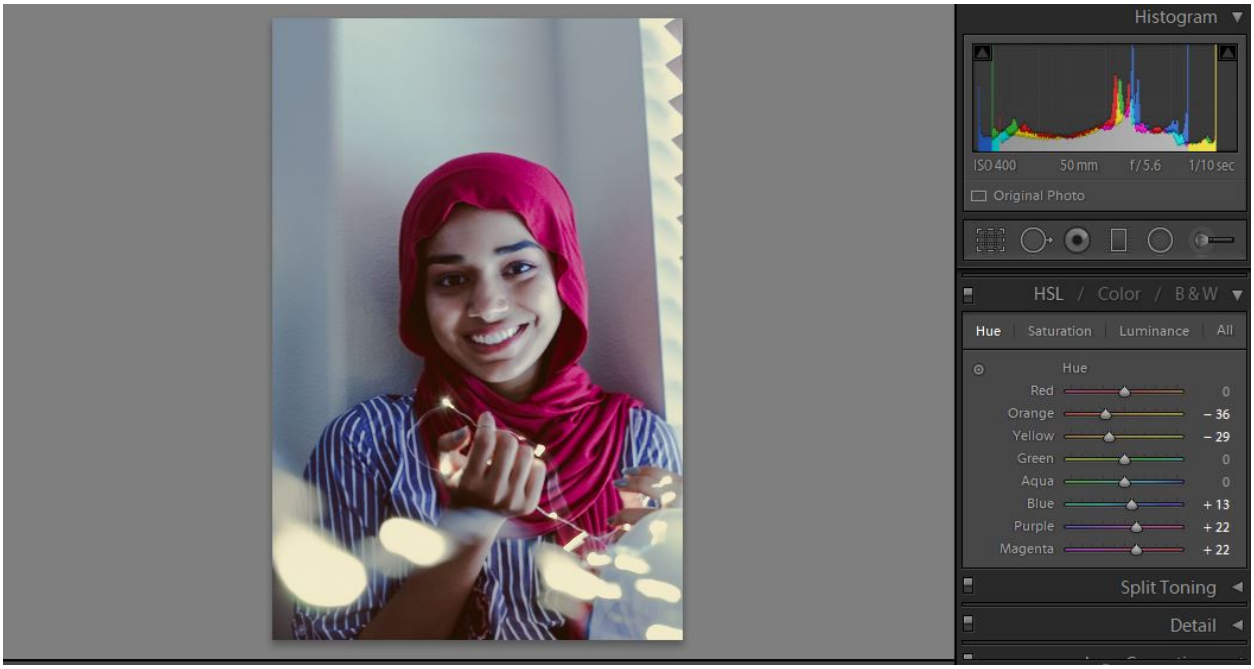
STEP 8:

We are now done messing with the tone curve. Next, we're going to mess with the HSL/ Color/ B & W. We're going to start with the saturation. At this point, you can adjust the colors to however you want the picture to turn out. My focus in the saturation is the orange and yellow. I don't want the lights to be orange, instead I want them to turn into a white light. I lowered the orange and yellow and I increased the other colors a little bit.



STEP 9:

Next, we move onto the hue. For this, we don't mess with the red, green, and aqua since it doesn't do anything to the picture. I decreased the orange and yellow and I increased the blue, purple, and magenta so the model's shirt and scarf can have a better color.

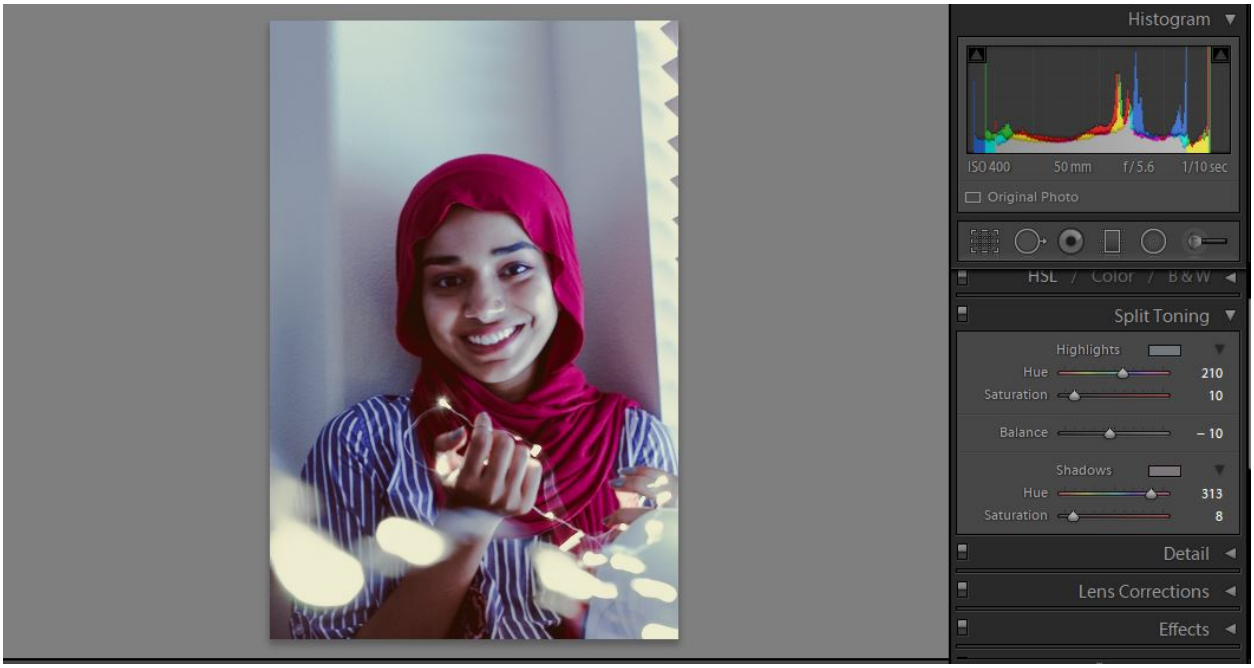


STEP 10:

The last setting we're going to mess under HSL/Color/B&W, is the luminance. For the luminance, I just left the green and aqua alone just like the hue and I adjusted the others. I increased the orange and yellow so it'll make the lights look a bit bigger than the original. I also increased the blue to make the blue seem lighter. Then I decreased the red, purple, and magenta to make it a bit bolder.

STEP 11:

This step is also optional but I do recommend you use it if you're trying to achieve a colorful look. This step requires split toning. Under highlights, I made the hue 210 and saturation 10. That'll make the highlights in the photograph a slight blue tone. Under shadows, I made the hue 313 and the saturation 8. That'll make the shadows a very faded pink. I made the balance a -10 to make the pink a bit more prominent.



STEP 12:

This is the last and final step. We'll be using "camera calibration". The camera calibration panel provides controls that are supposed to be used to micro-adjust and tune Camera Raw's color interpretation for a particular image. I decreased the red primary hue and saturation to both -12. I then increased the green primary hue to 14 and the saturation 17. Lastly, I decreased the blue primary hue to -36 and increased the saturation to 31. By doing all those, it made the picture a little more vibrant.

Now we have reached our final product. It takes lots of practice and messing around to get the perfect picture you desire. Honestly, all you have to do is mess around with the controls and panels until you're satisfied with the outcome.