

THE EDUCATION OF **Amanda Knox** / X-TREME PAMPERING **Spa Guide**

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X-TREME PAMPERING

Adventures in Spa Treatments

By **LAURA DANNEN** and **CHRISTOPHER WERNER**

Photographs by **PAUL KOOIMAN** Illustrations by **MARK MATCHO**



SPAVENTURES

FOR HER



I've only been to a spa once—it's fair to say I'm a spa wimp. I used to blame my fear of being touched, but that's a lie, since I hug strangers. Maybe I'm just a giant wuss who's afraid of pain—you know, when a tiny lady contorts your limbs during a Thai massage, or a matron with a massive bust kneads your back tissue like a piece of dough. (Are we talking about getting a massage or making pizza?) It could have something to do with the...goo. Lotions, serums, masks, mud—slathered all over your body, so you, too, can be gooey. Like a melted caramel. Mmm, caramel. Maybe that's why I decided to start with a hot cocoa massage: Because the way to a girl's back is through her stomach. —LAURA DANNEN



Sugar High

Hot Cocoa Massage

"Take threeee deeeep breaths," said Steve the masseur in his Colorado ski-bum drawl. He stuck his hands under my face and I proceeded to get high on cocoa oil before he slathered it all over my back. The not-too-sweet stimulant was full of antioxidants and endorphin boosters and calming properties. I smelled like Easter, and I liked it.

Steve slowly rocked me back and forth, like a dinghy caught in a motorboat's wake, then used long, broad strokes up and down my back. "That's

Swedish," he said softly. "Now a little shiatsu." Yowww. Pressure points located. He pushed gently but firmly with his fingertips—first the trapezius (That muscle beneath my shoulder blade? It has a name, and it hurts), then my lower back and glutes. Who knew how tense glutes could get? Apparently all my stress heads south—it's literally a pain in my ass.

But the knots were gone in 15 minutes, and after that it was hot cocoa time. I turned onto my back and he draped a small towel with a hint of cocoa oil on my face. It might as well have been ether, because I was out of it—lost in a haze beneath a pile of

warm white blankets. I vaguely remember talking to Steve about his rock band (Goose Vulture? Gob Noblin?) as he slid hot basalt stones up and down my legs. When he performed a little reflexology magic on my feet, massaging my meridian points, my head twitched and my stomach growled. My liver probably rotated 90 degrees, too.

It all ended too soon. Looking through bleary eyes at the cocoa-brown walls, I couldn't help thinking that I had just gotten a massage on top of a marshmallow.

"How do you feel?" Steve cooed.

"I feel...great. Relaxed. Like I need someone to drive me home."

MAXIMUM STRENGTH Hot cocoa massage, \$100 for 60 minutes

EASY WAY OUT Spa Scolla customized massage, \$100
Spa Scolla, 4915 25th Ave NE, University District, 206-522-5800; spascolla.com

Wrinkle Blast

Oxyjet Facial

I shouldn't have watched that YouTube video of Oxyjet before my treatment. I just couldn't shake the image of someone vacuuming and spraying my face—like I was going to go through a car wash.

Though it's technically a "medical-grade" procedure, Oxyjet makes for a gentle first facial—

noninvasive, nonacidic. Just a pressurized oxygen spray, like someone's blowing on your cheeks with her antioxidant- and collagen-rich breath. It felt great, but I kept thinking about little collagen drones being injected into my pores and couldn't unclench my fists.

Heather, in her lab coat and purple rubber gloves, pulled the high-beam dentist's light over my face and rubbed gently with cleansing milk. Next came the enzyme gommage peel—*Peel? Did she say peel?*—which effectively "erases your face," she said, ridding the skin of dead cells and drawing out proteins from below the surface. All

the while, the Oxyjet machine wheezed like a respirator. Heather rubbed something wet and cool on my face. "What's that?" I cracked. "Water," she replied patiently. Oh.

Oxyjet, Heather says, is popular with the Hollywood set ("they have lots of procedures," and this helps the healing process). So...what would Heidi Montag do? She'd breathe normally as the nice lady sprayed a cool, light mist of oxygen over her face, and not wince with every puff of O₂ into her target areas (in my case, the worry lines in my forehead).

"Don't worry—I've worked with a lot of virgins," said Heather, as I apologized for the third (fourth?) time for twitching.

The Oxyjet treatment itself was brief and followed by an Egyptian mud clay mask with a tingly hint of citrus and a round of moisturizer. When all was said and done, the lines around my eyes and mouth had receded noticeably. But those worry lines? As long as my imagination is intact, they may never go away.

MAXIMUM STRENGTH

Oxyjet facial, \$145 for 45 minutes

EASY WAY OUT Organic green facial with stone crop mask, \$100

Northwest Face Spa at the Woodmark, 1200 Carillon Pt, Kirkland, 425-803-9000; thewoodmark.com/spa

Double Shot, No Whip

Northwest Coffee Exfoliation

I'm an ad for Seattle: driving along I-90,

admiring the changing leaves as I listened to KEXP and sipped a Starbucks latte. But it takes true dedication to the Northwest aesthetic to allow

someone to scrub your body with ground coffee. Thankfully, my caffeine cleanse took place in the idyllic setting of Salish Spa, perched above

Snoqualmie Falls, with complimentary soaking pools begging for honeymooners.

But I was here on business. It was dead-skin-cell-eradication

time. According to my body therapist, Kammin, I'd chosen a treatment popular with men (coffee, apparently, sounds more manly than green tea or rosemary with mint). But do men cringe like frightened puppies when a mixture of Dead Sea salt and ground coffee extract is rubbed all over their legs? I asked Kammin to dilute the combination a bit (reminder: I'm a wuss), and then settled into my first exfoliation—which started to feel less and less like being dragged across the beach, and more and more rejuvenating.

"Your skin is pretty dehydrated," Kammin said, working on my back. I was embarrassed to tell her about the three glasses of wine I had the night before and the latte I chugged right before my appointment. The mixture is ever-so-slightly caffeinated; regular coffee drinkers wouldn't even notice. ("It's not Starbucks," she says, "just coffea arabica.") Plus, it smelled like mint. After a quick belly scrub, Kammin sent me to the showers to rinse off, then finished with a soothing lotion of jasmine and shea butter.

My skin was glowing and smooth afterward—I kept offering my arm to people at work to pet. And to top it off, Salish offered...a complimentary Starbucks latte.

MAXIMUM STRENGTH

Northwest coffee exfoliation, \$125 for 50 minutes

EASY WAY OUT Salish signature rosemary and mint body scrub, \$115

Salish Lodge and Spa, 6501 Railroad Ave SE, Snoqualmie, 425-888-2556; salishlodge.com



WALK ALL OVER ME

Ashiatsu Therapy



early naked, I lay face down on a bed as a tiny woman named Faith dug her size-seven foot into my back. "This might be intense," she had warned. Which part—having a full-grown person step on me? Or the series of back-crackle-and-pops I just heard?

"That's a good thing...right?" I asked, giggling nervously.

It's actually a very good thing. One of the highlights of ashiatsu—colloquially called "barefoot massage"—is that it turns back cracking into an art, and the foot into a tool for a therapeutic deep-tissue massage. Faith studied the ancient Chinese technique in Las Vegas (naturally), so she could stand out among the legion of resort-town massage therapists. "There's definitely more pressure with ashiatsu," Faith said. "And it's more unique." Indeed—it involves playground equipment. Still on my stomach, I opened my eyes quickly and saw her toes an inch from my face, poised like a gymnast about to start a routine. She stepped onto the bed lightly and I heard the creak of the parallel wooden bars above as she grabbed hold. My body reeked of Bali flower oil, a coating that allowed Faith to slide her feet up and down my arms, back, and legs, digging in when knots presented themselves. Which included my rear. *Hilarious.*

After a while, I couldn't tell if Faith was using her hands or her feet; the pressure felt the same, consistently firm but gentle, and I sank back into one of those contented trances where I forgot where I was. Faith is good at this. Really good. How long has she been practicing ashiatsu? "I've been certified since 2004. I don't know about you, but my parents always asked me to walk on their backs." I might have to do the same with my kids.

MAXIMUM STRENGTH Ashiatsu therapy, \$95 for 60 minutes

EASY WAY OUT Royal hand, foot, and scalp massage, \$95. Truce Spa, The Westin, 600 Bellevue Way NE, Ste 400, Bellevue, 425-454-0622; trucespa.com