

# Beauty Tips from Moose Jaw

In this excerpt from his new book,  
bestselling humorist **Will Ferguson**  
visits a spa for the first time.

**For the record, I am a health spa neophyte.** I have never had my cuticles buffed or my eyebrows plucked. I have never been wrapped in seaweed or dunked in herbal tea, and the last time I had mousse in my hair was when I passed out in the Denny's dessert tray at two in the morning. I always thought toner was something you put into a Xerox machine.

Normally, this wouldn't matter. There are many things I still haven't done: skydive, learn to whistle a recognizable tune, snorkel, my 1989 taxes. But I have made the mistake of mentioning my lack of beauty spa experience, my virginability, if you will, to Kim Izzo, an editor at *Flare* magazine. And Kim, in her gleeful way, has decided it would be an absolute riot to send someone as clued out as me to a spa.

I've told [my wife] Terumi about this on the faint hope that she may veto the idea. Instead, she all but pushes me through the spa's doors the next morning (assuming, I suppose, that I will emerge from the other end squeaky clean and looking not unlike, say, a young Pierce Brosnan. Talk about yer faint hopes).

"But I've never been to a spa before," I protest. "I don't know what to do—I don't know the etiquette involved."

"Nothing to worry about," she says. "Just relax and you'll be fine." I've heard that before—usually prior to a bungee jump or a dentist's drill.

So I slink into the Temple Gardens spa, bathrobe pulled tight, eyes darting, and am taken to a small room where a reclining chair awaits. They are going to start at my feet and presumably work their way up. My reflexologist, I am told, will be with me shortly. A few minutes later the door opens and in walks . . . a guy.

This is not exactly what I'd expected. If anyone is going to fondle my feet, I'd prefer it wasn't someone with a moustache.

"Brad Moffatt," he says. I shake his hand in a gruff but friendly fashion. My voice has mysteriously dropped a few octaves.

"How about them Leafs?" I say.

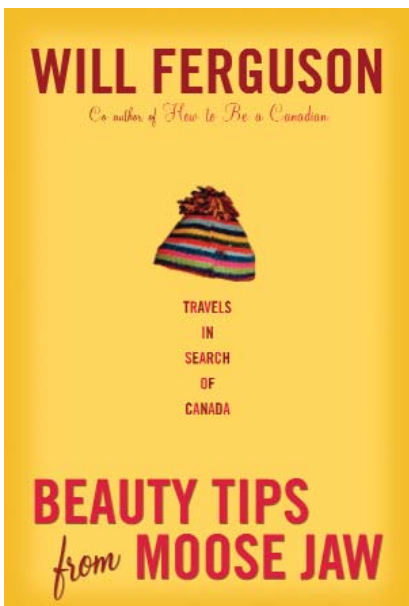
Brad dims the lights and puts on soft music. It's like being on a date. He begins rubbing mint lavender oil onto my feet, at which point I start dropping subtle hints that I am married. To a woman.

"I'm married," I say. "To a woman."

He nods and continues to rub. "You seem tense," he says.

You don't know the half of it.

As he works on my feet, Brad speaks in a calm, scientific manner about "energy meridians" and "ancient Chinese techniques" and the importance of



“removing toxins from your system.” I have always been dubious about reflex-ology, and the notion that your liver and pancreas can be “cleansed” by tweaking your big toe. What if your problem is not your pancreas? What if you have a sore foot? How does reflexology deal with *that*? Do they have to massage your liver?

Still, there’s no denying that Mr. Moffatt has worked magic on my toes, and the soles of my feet are still tingling as I’m taken to another room to receive my first-ever facial. The aesthetician who’s been asked to take care of me (I’m assuming she drew the short straw) is a young woman named Jackie Hill, who examines my skin like an Amsterdam diamond dealer. Having trained a magnifying glass on me at close range, she begins to speak, not coincidentally perhaps, about clogged pores and damaged capillaries. And what would cause such things? “Oh,” she says. “Too much alcohol or caffeine, or too much sun and not enough sunscreen.”

Guilty on all counts.

Who knew that beauty was so complicated? When I heard the word “facial” I imagined some sort of mud pack, maybe, with cucumbers over the eyes, like you see in the movies. It turns out to be far more complex than that. Ms. Hill goes through a dozen steps at least: cleanser, toner, moisturizer, “enzyme peel” (who knew I had enzymes, let alone that they needed peeling?), more cleanser, more goop, more moisturizer, lots of gel under the eyes and finally a Zorro-style eye mask to help “reduce wrinkles.”



Photo: Douglas Coupland

The focus on wrinkles around the eyes—at least three of the steps seem to deal with these—is revealing. Temple Gardens, like spas everywhere, is aimed primarily at women. When it comes to aging, wrinkles aren’t something men worry about. Baldness, love handles, rampant and inexplicable ear hair: yes. But wrinkles? It’s one of the few remaining advantages of being a man that the creases around your eyes make you look distinguished, not old.

Jackie massages my scalp and temples, and even my earlobes (which is nice, but honestly, my earlobes hardly ever get fatigued). She then works on my arms and fingers until they become jellied boneless limbs.

It’s not over yet. I am passed on next to a soft-spoken but determined young masseuse named Damara Brown, who has powerfully strong hands for someone so small. A couple of times I glance over my shoulder to make sure it isn’t a trick, half-expecting to discover that Damara has tiptoed away and I am now being kneaded by a burly lumberjack named Carl.

The only memories I have of sore-muscle treatments prior to visiting Moose Jaw involve no-neck coaches knuckling out charley horses and telling us to “Walk it off. It’s just a bruise.” *But there’s a bone protruding from the—*“It’s just a bruise, walk it off!” As a result, I suppose, I have always associated massages with twisted ankles and cruel sporting events. This, however, is different.

The full-body massage Damara gives me is almost hypnotic. At one point, as she unravels knots I didn’t even know I had, I nod off and end up snoring in that “strangled seagull” fashion of mine that women find so appealing. I wake with a start—tongue lolling, eyes unfocused, a large pool of saliva spreading across the table—and immediately ask Damara to marry me.

Well, not quite. But I want to. I want to ask Jackie to marry me, as well. Hell, after the way he worked on my feet, I wanted to ask Brad to marry me.

My session ends with a rosehip body wrap. Oiled down and bound in layers of plastic, I soon discover how much heat the human body generates. It is prickly and itchy under there, and a tad claustrophobic, but the wrap does make my skin supple and soft. Why, I am positively glowing afterwards! Not Pierce Brosnan, exactly, but still, the difference is remarkable, and Terumi is pleased. Indeed, I will now be able to speak knowledgeably, and at great length if you let me, about the state of my pores and the maintenance said pores require.

I am pleased, also, to think I pulled it off. I didn’t do anything too stupid or gauche, and even though it was my first time at a spa, I managed to bluff my way through in a suitably suave, urbane fashion without any embarrassing social gaffes.

“So,” Terumi asks. “How much did you tip?”

“Tip?” I say. “You’re supposed to *tip*?” **R**

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