



little indulgences

'I was in love when I was given the opportunity to tick a box requesting silence'



Author AMANDA COETZEE reveals her guilty but heavenly pleasure.

"I have a hideaway. I speak of it in hushed,

reverential whispers with a yearning that friends and family have come to recognise. It began as a birthday present and, to my husband's wry amusement, it's developed into the gift that keeps on giving. His relief at no longer having to think of romantic or imaginative presents ensures that my obsession suits us both.

I am talking about The View Spa. I remember the first time I went for a full-day package, self-conscious about my body, ungainly as I managed to entangle myself in the Moroccan-inspired, draped

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changing room and narrowly missing a fatal injury. Still, the moment I knew I had fallen irrevocably in love was when I was given the opportunity to tick a box requesting silence from the therapist.

What? No droning on about the products I should be using? No guilt about my cheap facial care products cleverly disguised as professional concern? I had come to assume the loathsome sales pitch was a necessary part of any facial and the restful silence that I experienced was heavenly. It is true that on my first visit I was still a little embarrassed about the

drool that gathered in the corner of my mouth during my vigorous massage; but those days are long gone. Now I strip off with glee, fall asleep, snore obliviously and, when asked if I mind oil in my hair during my massage, answer with gay abandon, 'Do it, do it all...'

I am friendly, garrulous even, on arrival at the spa, but as I shed my clothes, all pretence of social niceties disappears into the locker. This is my time. As the deputy principal of a busy school I spend all day with children and teachers so a chance to disengage from the world is bliss. I go alone, hesitant to share my experience in case I'm required to communicate with my guest. The women in my life seem to understand that this is a solitary pleasure and all the more precious for it.

I adore the fluffy bathrobe, the fruit snack so delicately skewered on a stick, the minted water and other touches that add to the sensation of luxury. Resistance is futile, feel free to make an appointment and check it out for yourself and if you see me staring into space, pummelled into an aromatherapeutic submission, ignore me. Please...."

Amanda's latest book, Bad Blood (Pan Macmillan, R195) is out now.