

## Free beating with every spa service!

Because I am lucky enough to still be cashing in on the whole birthday thing, my friend Sydney offered to take me for a pedicure today. *Pedicure!* Doesn't the very word just conjure up images of bubblebaths, martinis, and kitten-heeled slippers with those pink marabou feather fluffs on them? It should, right? It *should*...

We were heading over to Diva Something Something Nails to have our tootsies pampered. I mean...*Diva!* Yes! We had to be on the right track....my beauty math tells me that Pedicure + Diva = Something Utterly Fanfuckingtastic!

We fell into a pedi-trance upon entering the salon, most likely a beauty coma induced by the sheer amount of shimmery pink the place was bathed in. Pink + Diva + Pedicure = Beauty Bliss! *Exactly!*

"We're here for pedicures," I told the petite brunette behind the counter. "One for each of us," added Sydney. Counter girl gave us each a quick glance, made a lazy flip through her appointment book and rolled her eyes back at the full salon. "Bachelorette party," she said, before eyeing us a little more thoroughly. "There's no room for *you*." Ohmygod....the faint sound of hearts dropping. We would never be bachelorettes and there would be no shimmery pink and there would be no divas and we would never get pedicures. End. Of. World.

We stepped back outside into the hot, harsh New York sun. "Wait," I said, remembering a tiny nail spot I saw a few blocks up. "It isn't 'Diva,' but a pedicure is a pedicure, right?"

Wrong. So. Very. Wrong.

We walked up the block and were immediately seated in the pedi-chairs. My pedi-lady turned on the foot spa thing, and motioned for me to dip my feet in. With gusto, I did so...and *OH JESUS, BURNING HOT FLAMING WATER!!!* I yelped and whipped my feet out, much to pedi-lady's apparent amusement. "Oh! Oh! I make cold!" she snickered as I studied my red feet.

As she started working on my cuticles, I remembered one thing: *I do not like it when people touch my toes.*

I especially do not like it when people start *bending* my toes, reminding me of one of the main reasons why I do not like it when people touch my toes - they feel double-jointy, like the little foot phalanges weren't connected correctly in the womb. And pedi-lady seems to be enjoying my freaky toe flexibility, bending them all willy-nilly in her quest to remove excess polish, my cuticles, and an approximately 3" layer of epidermis from my toes.

I squirm. I make little uncomfortable noises. I even jerk my feet away in a protective manner. Pedi-lady just continues on with her unique brand of torture, smiling and saying mean things about me and my feet in Chinese to the lady next to her. It is when she begins to systematically *lift* each toenail with some medieval torture device and sloooowwwly, agonizingly scrape New York City from my nailbed - lifting each nail far enough that it makes me believe she might accidentally rip an entire nail off - that I consider kicking her in the head.

But I'm civilized. I let the woman slick on the polish. I gladly walk over to the foot dryer in my regulation-issue paper sandals. I begin talking to Sydney as if I haven't just been traumatized for 15 minutes.

Sydney's pedi-lady then walks over and places two gentle hands on her upper back, giving her a soothing massage. I believe that things will get better from here, that my pedi-lady will come over and rub away all of her indiscretions. I am saved.

*Oh! Um. Ow! Errrrrr....* (pedi-lady is kneading my back like I am Rocky preparing for the fight and she is a burly trainer from a seedy part of Philadelphia who has a lot of money riding on this fight)

*Oh! Um, geez....uh....you don't have to....* (pedi-lady is now pushing my back flesh up and down through my shirt in a manner that makes my entire upper body bob up and down with the back flesh, alarming Sydney, who is near-catatonic with bliss next to me.)

*uhhhhhhhhh....grmpppppp....schnffffffffff.....owowowowowowowowowow* (pedi-lady is actively punching me in the back. Punching. Me. In. The back. Pummeling me. Taking out a lifetime worth of aggression from working with people's disgusting, calloused, stinky, nasty feet on my back like she is Nanuck of the North and I am the baby seal that she is clubbing slowly to death)

Perhaps there is a reason why massage therapists are licensed to do what they do. And perhaps there is a reason why I will never again in my natural life get a pedicure.

*--Shawnté Salabert, July 2006*