



HURTS SO GOOD

WHEN IT COMES TO SKINCARE, THE
GOLDEN RULE STILL APPLIES.



Most beauty pros will agree that looking great is all about playing your genetic ace cards. If you're a woman and you have fantastic eyes, some mascara and a touch of liner will only add to their allure. A guy with great hair can afford to keep it slightly shaggy and layered (not to mention unfairly free of goopy product). For me, grooming has always been an attempt at beating my dry, thick mane and oily skin into submission. At 27, I've come to terms with my hair — I keep it short and get a trim every two weeks — but I'm just not ready to give up on my face. That would mean idly sitting by and condemning myself to a lifetime (or at least a few more years) of hourly blotting sessions. So for the past two decades, in an effort to avoid this, I've assaulted my skin with an almost constant barrage of scrubs, astringents, pore minimizers and oil-absorbing masques only to have it defiantly continue to produce the equivalent of the Exxon Valdez spill on my T-zone.

So when Manhattan's Face to Face NYC day spa approached me about trying their Boot Camp Facial, I accepted their invitation. What attracted me to the offer was the facial's combination of a deep cleansing, mini-microdermabrasion, and heavy extractions designed to remove blackheads and reduce the appearance of enlarged pores. It sounded tailor-made for a sebum overachiever like myself. My eager anticipation was further validated when I strode into the spa's East Chelsea location and the founder and lead aesthetician Enrique Ramirez greeted me with a smile. Judging by his great build and flawless olive complexion, I could immediately tell that he's someone who takes good care of himself — the perfect man to whip my skin into shape.

As I lay on my back, Ramirez began the 70-minute treatment with a cream cleanser and hydrating toner from Jurlique, an Australian brand known for its chemical-free formulations. (It's rumored that the products

are so natural that founder Jurgen Klein has eaten some of them.) The gentle cleansing and toning process seemed counterintuitive to me. Shouldn't someone with skin like mine use a foaming cleanser and astringent to get rid of excess oil? Ramirez tells me otherwise. Apparently, like a disobedient child, my epidermis had been rebelling against my harsh tactics, producing more oil to make up for the constant drying caused by products that were stripping my face of vital moisture. A kinder, gentler approach was in order.

Next up was the microdermabrasion. Though new to me in practice, I'm familiar with the intricacies of the process: a powerful device that resembles a teeny tiny Dirt Devil spits tiny micro crystals onto the face to remove dead cells and resurface the skin's topmost layer. I braced myself for the discomfort, yet none came. At most, I felt a slight tingle here and there — up to this point, boot camp was a breeze. But just as I began to let my defenses down, the extraction process (beauty speak for popping blackheads) commenced. At times, the pain was intense — especially around my nose and cheekbones — but again, my brutal beauty behaviors were to blame. According to Ramirez, my skin was so dehydrated thanks to overly drying products, he needed to use extra force to clean my stubborn pores. Still, I took it like a man, barely flinching throughout the whole nasty process. Finally, a soothing mask was applied to calm my irritated, post-extraction pores.

When it was all over my skin looked great and I decided to take Ramirez's advice. No more daily scrubs, no more harsh spot removers, no more drying face masks. From that day forward, I resolved to treat my hide better and maybe, just maybe, it would respond with fewer breakouts and shine. It worked. Whoever said "beauty is pain" never met a masochist like my complexion. **BRIAN UNDERWOOD**