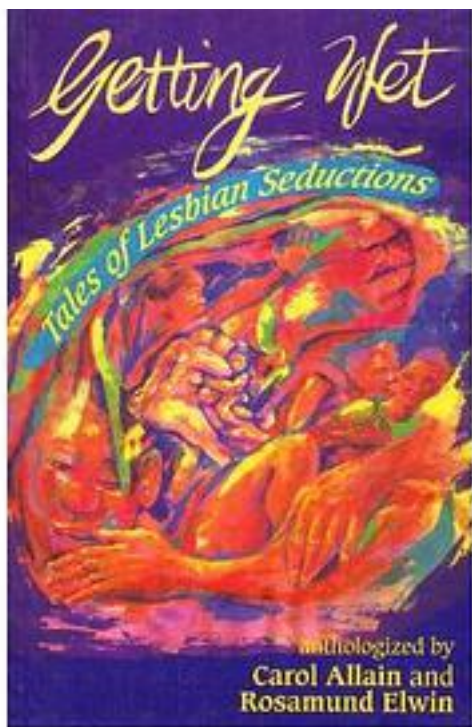


Getting Wet



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Talmadge, the Tokyo news editor for the Associated Press and a resident of Japan for more than 20 years, expands upon the many articles he has written about Japan's obsession with bath houses and delivers an insightful, thoughtful and often hilarious "glimpse into what Japan's bathing scene is all about." He shows the many ways in which the bathhouse is "a place to be openly and unabashedly Japanese." His travels take him to a range of places in what becomes an idiosyncratic yet strikingly insightful tour of Japan: a village in the Izu Islands, a string of volcanoes southeast of Tokyo;

neighborhood public bathhouses ranging from the average to a "super bath" called the Hot Water Fun House; the Oedo-Onsen Monogatari, a Disneyesque hot spring theme park built as a "lovingly sentimental, and unabashedly inaccurate" reconstruction of a feudal neighborhood; a secluded village featuring "one of the world's foremost radon hot springs resorts" that annually celebrates Madame Curie; and Yoshiwara, Tokyo's premier red light district featuring "Soapland" brothels offering head-to-toe baths done by just hand and tongue. In each of his adventures, Talmadge shows that, "[l]ike a tea ceremony or a session of Zen meditation, the Japanese bath is, at its best, a celebration of the beauty of the transcendent."

作者介绍:

目录:

[Getting Wet_ 下载链接1](#)

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散文

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His "adventure" in Japan...yeah...

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