

how to spend it

A top perfume blogger on the dark side of rose

The prim and pretty scent takes a moody turn



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There is something captivating about darkness. It conceals, it frightens, it beguiles. In perfumery, dark notes like smoky woods, balsams and leather can give a new dimension to familiar impressions. Nowhere is this more obvious than with rose. Infuse the rose accord with patchouli and amber and the composition suddenly smoulders, taking the rose out of the conventional prim and pretty territory. The sensuality of dark rose blends evokes a film noir set with a brooding *femme fatale* in the leading role.

Spices, incense, resins and other classical oriental notes create a dramatic setting in which even the most ebullient rose accord becomes moody. When Jean-Paul Guerlain created Nahéma, he was inspired by the icy beauty of Catherine Deneuve, but the fragrance itself is a sultry rose accented with ripe plums and dark woods. Ormonde Jayne Ta'if takes a page out of the *Arabian Nights* with its cornucopia of spicy roses, saffron-scented sweetmeats and dates. Ta'if teases with its gourmand impressions, but it alludes more to the boudoir than the patisserie. The lusty rose and amber gem of Annick Goutal Ce Soir ou Jamais makes it perfectly obvious to me why this perfume was called "Tonight or Never" by its creator.

But as a real *femme fatale* needn't bear her full décolleté to entice, rose likewise can be austere but still irresistible. The rose in Frédéric Malle Une Rose (first picture) gains a haunting beauty when contrasted with earthy accents. Une Rose evokes the nutty sweetness of fallen leaves, the mineral scent of rain on bare skin and the warmth of someone's touch. Similarly wistful is L'Artisan Voleur de Roses (second picture), except that it is even darker. The accord of rose and plum is wrapped into so many layers of patchouli and balsams that as the composition develops, the petals are transformed into wood shavings. It is a surprising twist – and a fortuitous one for gentlemen, since it reveals that the androgynous quality of Voleur de Roses makes it equally seductive when worn by them.

Victoria Frolova has been writing her perfume blog, www.boisdejardin.com, since 2005. It began as a hobby – her interest in perfume had been kindled while growing up in a family of chemical engineers – but it quickly turned into a full-time undertaking. Her blog is so-called because, she says, "the scent that never fails to move me is the aroma of jasmine in the warm evening air."

