



A Collection of Black Phoenix Alchemy Lab

PERFUME REVIEWS

S . E L I Z A B E T H

CONTENTS

AMERICAN ECLIPSE

AMERICAN GODS

ARS INSPIRATIO

BLOODMILK

CARNIVAL DIABOLIQUE

CRIMSON PEAK

GOOD OMENS

LUPERS

-2016

-2017

-2020

-2021

-2022

-2023

YULE

-2016

-2017

-2020

-2021

-2022

-2023

WEENIES

-2016

-2017

-2020

-2021

-2022

-2023

MISCELLANEOUS



AMERICAN ECLIPSE (2017)

The Sun Has Perished (Tunisian amber, wilted asphodel, myrrh, and smoke.) I have read that Babylonians were so fearful of eclipses, they would protect their King by placing a substitute King on the throne at the time of an eclipse, while the actual ruler laid low to avoid being seen—you know, just in case. As part of this ritual, if no negative portents were observed, the substitute king was put to death—therefore fulfilling the prophecy of the celestial omen while saving the life of the real king. The Sun Has Perished smells like being swallowed in swirling, smoky mists; of the grey ghost this mock king must feel he is becoming, as he trembles and curses myths and monarchs and his lot in life in general.

The Curtain of the Temple was Torn in Two (Radiant golden amber suffused with holy incense smoke compounded from acacia, myrrh, cassia, balsam, frankincense, cinnamon, onycha accord, and galbanum.) Immediately dusty and spicy with an underlying, nose-wrinkling mustiness; an essence both piquant and bitter which roams strangely concurrent to a vague, golden sweetness, a powdery memory of buttery cakes.

The Sun in Anger Swore (Red amber spiked with dragon's blood resin, black pepper, red musk, and red oudh) This is indeed a sour seether; burning gall and biting acid and the peppery musk of a cursed reptile that even the gods abhor.

18 June 1860 (Amber, collodion, silver nitrate accord, and white lavender) Inspired by the first wet plate photograph of an eclipse, 18 June 1860 opens with a jagged streak of lightning shocking an inky sky; the scent of electrical discharge and absurd, astringent energies, which dries down to the prettiest bar of soap in your guest bathroom—a shimmering lump of lightly sweetened nectar nesting in a small metal dish.

All Ruinous Disorders (Amber, bergamot, and honeyed saffron blackened by smoked oudh, patchouli, ti leaf, scorched thistle, leather, and yew.) 'Tis strange, strange! This is such a well-blended, complex scent that recognizing the individual notes is a challenge. I'd guess that the patchouli and leather form the rich, earthy base of this scent, and it is sweetened by amber, brightened by aromatic bergamot and lightened by the green freshness of the glossy, grassy ti leaf.

Disastrous Twilight (Blue amber, gurjum balsam, pale orris, Somalian myrrh, benzoin, red sandalwood, and ylang ylang) evokes the eerie melancholia of midday darkness; the dim strangeness of the afternoon sun obscured; of once brightly burning stars, cooling and becoming small, still shadows. Mysterious, powdery florals belie a soft, woody warmth that surprises and disappears, and a leathery licorice note that really begins to amp up the longer the scent wears.



AMERICAN GODS (2017)

Media (a news anchor's cologne, a soap star's perfume: perfect, pixelated, and glamorous; aglow with cathodes and anodes, coated with phosphor) A bright, feminine scent, almost like a Sephora deluxe sample—one of the glowing, white musk-y, celebrity endorsed samples that they send as a gift with purchase (J-Lo Glow mixed with a bit of Lovely by Sarah Jessica Parker, maybe? Not quite Narciso Rodriguez); a scent that always makes you feel a little itchy when your normie friends or your mother in law tells you that they love it.

Mister Wednesday (sleek cologne, the memory of a Nine Herbs Charm, gallows wood, and a splash of whiskey) a sweet deceit; the scent of a man who would offer you a lollipop and leave you holding a snake. You might even thank him for it. Also, perhaps a sort of trickery by my brain, but in smelling this, I am reminded of Mister Wednesday's ice cream-colored suit, and so I cannot help but to think it smells like a creamy, cloying liqueur upon which a really sleazy cocktail is built .

Belief (a scent of compression and release, of heat and faith, of plunging through the jet-shadowed darkness of uncertainty. The heart of the land: roots plunging ever deeper into thrumming black soil through the graves of faith, disillusion, and skepticism); wet cow and acrid, peaty earth. Scorched, smoky grasses and deep, thunderous

vetiver. I'm not kidding about the weird, sour bovine tang. Like a herd of buffalo aggressively sending smoke signals! As it dries though, the scent becomes a gentle thing; the herd is slumbering, snuggled together for warmth under a blanket of stars.

Mama-Ji (spices, cardamom, nutmeg, and flowers) Is a feisty floral; a sweetly spiced bouquet. What are these soft, warm, beautiful florals? Roses? Certainly carnation. A gorgeous, golden, heady scent—very reminiscent of one of my very favorite BPALs, Morocco, but there's an almost fruity resin at the heart of Mama Ji that renders it quite different, and very much it's own scent.

Black Hats (gunpowder residue, patent leather, pomade, and aftershave) Full disclosure here; throughout every aspect of this American Gods sniff-a-thon, my shnozz has been severely compromised. Bronchitis, head cold, allergies—throughout the past month I have fallen prey to all of these. So when I tell you that Black Hats smells like an expensive pair of leather shoes has been finely ground and mixed with a high quality nag champa and repackaged as a ceremonial incense to burn in, I don't know, haute, esoteric ceremonies to the runway gods or whatever, well, I guess you'll just have to take my word for it. Also—Neil Gaiman, where are the gods of the runway, huh?

Mr. Czernobog (unfiltered cigarettes, the leather and metal of sledgehammers, aortal blood slowly drying, and black incense) Wet, just out of the bottle, there is something about Mr. Czernobog that tugs at the edges of memory. A sweet, spicy heat, but tempered by a child-like treat. Milk and grains. Soupy cinnamon oatmeal, or a forbidden breakfast cereal like Cinnamon Toast Crunch? Or...no! I have it. Little Debbie Pecan Pinwheels. Once applied to skin, however, that strange, wonderful association fades as a mentholated, metallic aspect momentarily asserts itself. From there it becomes an iron tooth lost amidst coniferous detritus underfoot.

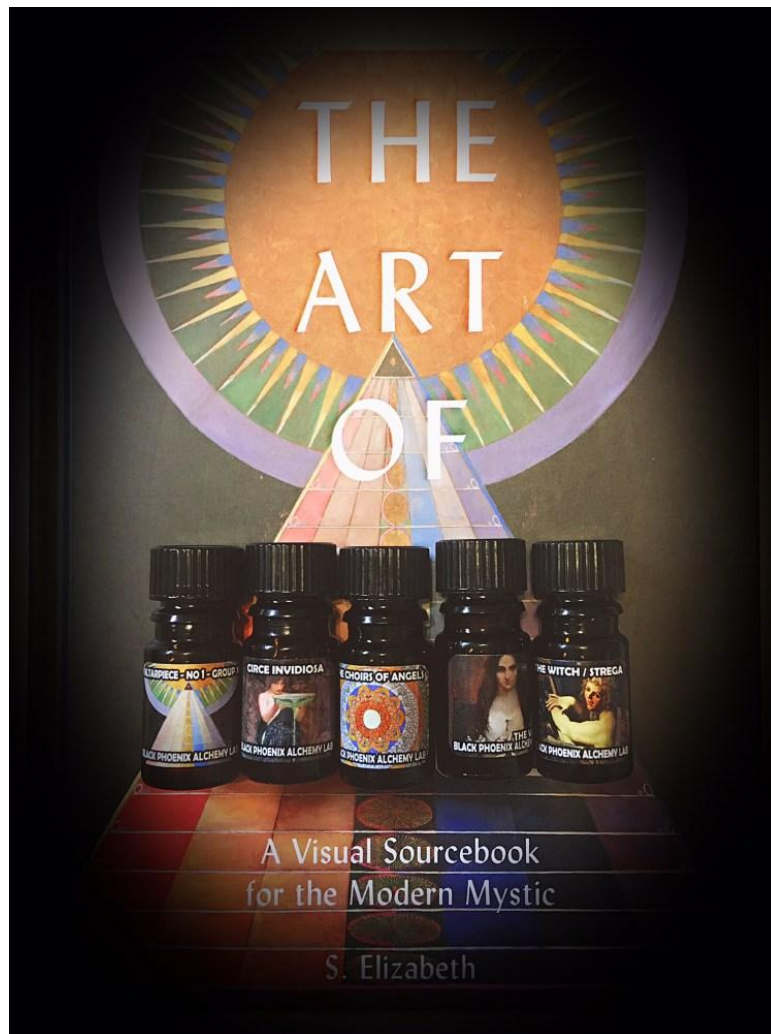
The Norn's Farmhouse (dusty, ancient wood, horehound, and sage, with viper's bugloss, mugwort, chamomile, nettle, apple blossom, chervil, and ashes). Another one wherein straight from the bottle, the impression is so immeasurably striking—The Norn's Farmhouse is an immediate herbaceous cacophony. As if one ran their hands through every bush, shrub, and vine in the garden, crushed all the fuzzy leaves and flowering bits between one's fingers and bottled the resulting lively green-bitter-savory-sharp residue. Wait a while and it becomes the subtle sweetness of dried apples decorating an aged, brittle grapevine wreath.

For The Joy Of It (whiskey, mead, honey, gold, sweat, and blood) The coppery tang of gore on a blade...used to stir a big, tupperware bowl of the most ridiculously sweet party punch that's ever existed. But that's only a momentary impression, and that sticky sweetness lightens to reveal a gorgeously juicy scent, a refreshing glass of something that'll get you deliciously fucked up.

Laura (violets, upturned earth, mothballs, formaldehyde (mixed with glycerin and lanolin), and the memory of the taste of strawberry daiquiris suspended in twilight). I guess I wouldn't even volunteer to review something like this, with this huge mythos and these wonderfully nuanced characters as part of it, without having read the source material right? But at the same time, if you know these people's stories, it's so hard not to let your perceptions intrude when you're sniffing a scent based on that particular person. I am wearing Laura right now, and my first thought is "...Hm, smells like a corpse drinking a fruity frou-frou drink. Embalming fluid + strawberry slush." How do you get around that? I can't. And that's exactly what this smells like.

Zorya Utreennyaya (sweet black coffee and a touch of ambrette seed) I wish I were one of those people who drank their coffee, “Black as night, sweet as sin” –which I believe is a quote from Anansi Boys, not American Gods, but ...details, details. I take mine with almond milk and stevia and I can assure you that my coffee does not smell nearly as amazing as Zorya Utreennyaya. Freshly sniffed, it is the darkest, oiliest most intense coffee beans, freshly ground, but it very quickly becomes a soft–almost powdery–coffee-flavored marshmallow of a scent.

Mr. Ibis (papyrus, vanilla flower, egyptian musk, african musk, aloe ferox, white sandalwood) I previously had a bottle of Mr. Ibis from the 2007 release, which I recall as being a soft, delicate scent, evoking a dewy-skinned sort of bath-time nostalgia. I don’t think the scent has been reformulated, but somehow it does not smell quite the same. It still conjures rituals of cleanliness; hands, gently lathered and rinsed, a soapy whirlpool of warm water slowly draining...but whereas an old cotton towel might have dried those hands in the past, now they automatically reach for a squirt of antibacterial hand-sanitizer.



ARS INSPIRATIO (2020)

Altarpiece – No 1 – Group X. Hilma af Klint 1907

(A prism of sacred frankincense refracting a golden amber light into a spectrum of daemonorops draco, King mandarin, golden oud, verdant moss, blue tansy, indigo vegetal musk, and wild plum.)

I was privileged to visit the 'Hilma af Klint: Paintings for the Future' exhibit when it was at the Guggenheim in 2019. The scale and scope of some of these visionary works were of such a breathtaking nature that I grew faint and strange; I thought (hoped, even!) I might be experiencing an art attack, a psychosomatic episode, a soupçon of Stendahl Syndrome. What made the afternoon complete was when my boyfriend's mother wandered into the Mapplethorpe exhibit and was a bit scandalized. not having any familiarity or context before doing so. All kinds of feels on this day!

A brightness as glimpsed through shadow, a keyhole's view of the sun. Small and still as a single candle's flame against the immense dark; as vast and total as annihilation's afterglow. This is a scent that proves to me, more than anything, how much I have to learn about fragrance and perfume, how little I know. I can only speak of this in terms of fractured, fragmented imagery, the slivers and splinters of a dream. "It's beyond everything," is a phrase I just read in a (totally unrelated) book, and that's how I feel about this gorgeously evocative offering: a bright, dry citrus haloed by amber's translucent sweetness, bound by the spiced warmth of dragon's blood and fixed in a state of permanent darkness by the heady, heavy imprint of where oud once was.

Circe Invidiosa, John William Waterhouse. 1892

(Salt-spray dotting an azure cove, its waters swirling with noxious poisons and venom drawn from dreadful roots: a cascade of blackcurrant and crystalline blue-green waters infused with theriac accord, bruised henbane accord, white gardenia, pear, cedarwood, emerald mosses, tuberose, and bitter almond.)

The colors in this painting are so lush and beautiful that they defy description. I have always thought that tipping dish of poison, the shade of crushed emeralds and mantis wings, must be the precise color of our heart's blood when we are in the venomous throes of enraged, envious desire.

Circe Indiviosa captures the scent of exercising one's powers...one's divinity...in murky and dangerous and exhilarating ways. It's such a gorgeous fragrance, mossy and musky with a subtly bitter treacle, and vaguely electric in the way that euphoria resulting from ill-advised behavior makes you feel. Sort of like WHEEEEEEEEE OH SHIT WHOOPS.

The Choirs of Angels, Hildegard von Bingen 1151-1152

(A radiant blend of three frankincense oils, white bergamot, crystallized cistus, lavender, angelica root, and fiery neroli)

I always thought these holy mandalas looked a little bit like saintly Spirographs. Also: can you imagine peeking into the inner sanctum of a superfluity of mysterious nuns and discovering them lounging around, playing with Spirographs and Fashion Plates and LightBrite toys?

This is a lullaby. But not one of those dark Icelandic cradle songs about sleeping black-eyed pigs falling into deep pits of ghosts or the children of the ogress growling in rocky caves. This gentle scent is a blessing, not a warning; a dozy, tranquil cocoon of soft mallow, honied ambrette, and kindly, calming musk, ensconced in a delicate, opalescent radiance, like the promise of the not-too-distant dawn.

The Wish, Theodor Von Holst, 1840

(An incense of candied smoked fruits, Oman frankincense, red oud, labdanum absolute, sheer vanilla, patchouli, red musk seed, osmanthus, and datura)

I've always wanted to know what wishes are longed for in the dark-eyed gaze of this intense young woman. Myself, I simply wish to rifle through the box of baubles and jewels in the bottom right of the canvas. Maybe help myself to that pearl-tipped hat-pin.

Rich and decadent but wonderfully absent of drama, like late-night Nigella Lawson b-roll. Watching the dying embers of the midnight hearth from the luxurious comfort of a generations-old leather chair, while shamelessly munching on leftover desserts after the rest of the house has gone to bed. Canelés, deeply caramelized, redolent of

vanilla and an herbal liqueur that someone swapped the rum out for because they thought they were being clever...and strangely, it works, it really does.

The Witch/Strega, Angelo Caroselli, 17th Century

(Leatherbound tomes and rose cream, flickering flames of twin ambers, and a cascade of shadows: black oud, teakwood, black beeswax, 13-year aged patchouli, cinnabar, balsam, sweet labdanum, tonka bean, and smoke.)

Look at this witch's face! You know she's going to be a cutting-clever one, uttering snarky-sneaky observations that make you both gasp and splutter with repressed laughter about mutuals you can't stand. I want to be her Facebook friend. She'd be a scream in a Netflix watch party.

Somewhere between angelic and infernal is a mercurial earthiness that tips the scales, either way, depending on where you're standing. And then: venomous vermillion kisses, a canopic jar of scorpion dust, and the scent of rock reacting to the draw of the moon. That's just in the first sniff. Later, there are phantom beehives teeming with smoke and shadows and an unforeseen katabasis with a delicious consequence: there's something decidedly Smutty happening with this scent, but almost as if you are translating the notes of the First Smut from ancient etchings in interconnecting caves far under the earth's surface, each carved by water seeping through the rock over thousands upon thousands of years. That's it, then. This witch has journeyed to the underworld and, having discovered the centuries-old grocery list for the Ur-Smut ingredients, delights gleefully in her findings in this vision before us.



BLOODMILK

Briar Rose (red roses swirled with mandrake accord, bois de rose, ambrette seed, and khus) At first sniff, Briar Rose is a dusty late summer bloom, recalling somnolent stories of crumbling castles bound with prickling vines, charred spinning wheels, and moth-eaten slumber. It blossoms, furiously, into a full-blown curse, ripe with lemon, berries, and anise, and finally wilts with the trembling fear of sleep and the scent of crushed, desiccated petals, marking the page of a terrible tale that all too often is more true than we can dream.

Petite Planchette (Tendrils of frankincense and myrrh curling around polished woods, sugared honey, and bourbon vanilla) My first thought regarding Petite Planchette is that it is a dreadfully charming scent. Imagine, during an evening with the spirits, employing a delicately wrought planchette, carved of a sweet, somber wood, and connecting with a childish phantom. Peals of laughter float throughout the darkened parlour as she riddles and mocks, and a faint scent of sugared treats lingers when she falls silent. There's a touch of something that won't quite behave—not fruit, not cake or pudding, but a fruity-not-fruitiness that's really quite bratty in its unwillingness to reveal itself. I can perfectly imagine golden-haired, tragically complicated Claudia of Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles* smelling of Petite Planchette.

Belonging To The Darkness II (3-year aged patchouli and vintage amber, smoky cardamom, gilded juniper leaf, and a drop of golden vetiver) I am blind, initially, in the cool, murky patchouli-fied and daunting darkness of this fragrance, (somewhat similar to the dark, root-y Owl Moon from Chapter I) but in the dark there is a glimmering speck, a glowing point of warmth that begins to grow brighter. A kind traveler with a light aloft in the gloom,

flickering and flaring, and redolent of a salty, maple/molasses note. This unexpected sweetness wonderfully balances out that coldly aloof, earthy dankness— a tender meeting of one's shadow in the light.

Belonging To The Darkness: Moonstone & Silver (7-year aged patchouli, tuberose, jasmine samba, lily of the valley, opalescent white moss, and white musk) Based on the BloodMilk jewel, Belonging To the Darkness is a glowing, luminous scent, where the velvety opulence of the tuberose, the sultry, narcotic jasmine, and the clean, bright lily of the valley sing, crystalline and delicate, softening the earthy edge of the patchouli. A night-blooming bouquet, wrapped in a gauzy veil, and glimmering with the tears of the moon.

Lydia (opium tar and sweet patchouli with labdanum, awadh, and black myrrh) is inspired by the sparrow claw clasped Lydia cocktail ring and does indeed smell like how you might imagine our beloved goth icon and kindred spirit Lydia Deetz in 2016. Bitter at the onset, with a metallic tang, it swiftly evolves into a rich, leathery, balsamic amber fragrance. Sharp and biting, moody and mercurial, Lydia is indeed strange and unusual.

Djed (white sandalwood & sweetgrass, California white sage, and sand) is inspired by the talismanic rattlesnake spine ring of the same name from the BloodMilk line, and conjures a painful ceremony of transformation; intensely private, personal magics, rites of slithering through dust and grit and shadows and shedding one's skin. Fiercely peppery upon first sniff, this is a bone-dry, nose-tickling experience that after time, morphs into a pleasantly herbaceous, aromatic sage that straddles the line between sweet and savory. Depending on time of day, temperature, body chemistry, and who knows what else, at this stage in its metamorphosis, it fluctuates between the honeyed haze of a ritualistic smudge and the astringent warmth of that essential herb in your granny's Thanksgiving stuffing—and sometimes it is both at once.

Silky Bat ("sugared patchouli") is the only scent in this collaboration not directly inspired by a BloodMilk jewel, but instead comes from a Black Phoenix Trading Post limited edition Hair Gloss. This is patchouli like I have never encountered it; wet, it is straight up patchoulified candy fluff, dirty spun-sugar. Dry, it is more complex, caramelized brown sugar and woody musk. I'm not usually one for foody or gourmand scents, but Silky Bat is a delightful, delicious creation.

Books (Ancient tomes, well-loved yellowed paperbacks, leather-bound grimoires, crumbling parchment scrolls, mimeograph ink, and tattered zines) I can't imagine a lovelier scent than this fragrant interpretation of the object my heart treasures above all things. The dusty-grassy-vanillin smell of faded pages from a favorite tale and a glossy, enchanted ink distilled from marzipan and apricots dried to small, sweet wrinkled pillows in a 100 years' sleep.

Owl Moon (Dark, rooty, sweet patchouli swirled with honey) A symbiosis of the moon and the magnificent night owl. A dark, rooty, sweet patchouli swirled with honey. A scent steeped in mythology and magic, Owl Moon opens with the blackest, earthiest patchouli (before learning of the notes, I actually thought it was vetiver!) and calls to mind cool, moist soil at the base of a pine tree through which all of the busy little night creatures slither and crawl, the pale, ghostly light of the moon glinting off their scales and wings. A yellow-eyed owl, perched overhead, meditates briefly before silently embarking on his nightly hunt; the sour, screechy scent of his nest, littered with rodent bones and pellets, serves as a warning nearby. This is the fragrance of potent night magics, rich and ripe with darkness and feral mysticism. The sharpness of the patchouli streaked with high-pitched honey combine to form an aura that is both graceful and grotesque, sacred and profane. It dries down to a spellbinding, narcotic musk within an hour or so, and I predict many a darkling will fall rapturously in love with this bewitching nocturnal perfume.

Ariel (Crushed seaglass and glittering coral, rockrose, salt water, iridescent algae, and white oudh) The sea, grey and restless on an overcast morning, just as the sun is glimmering through the clouds. A scent of marine breezes, salted shore, and fluttering sea grasses, with a gleam of something glowing and chilly, a streak of citrus, a lemony-floral-fresh yuzu, with a bit of a mineralic tang. Bioluminescent algae dappling a dark sea cave wall.

Amour Fou: (a vintage 1920's dry moss chypre with warm brown leather and a drop of sweet vetiver) I have always loved the idea of having a "soft place to fall"; a love that offers safe harbor, that wraps you in its warm, uncomplicated embrace. This, I think, is far from the imagery that the idea of "amour fou"--mad love, or insane passion, is wont to conjure when you roll the concept of it around in your imagination. But that is what Amour Fou smells of to me: the dusty, woody soft shadowy green musk of moss, combined with the bitter/smokey birch tar scent of worn leather, combining to create a warmth that is equal to that of gently falling asleep at night, curled quietly in your lover's arms. And, yet... perhaps that wild, frenzied amour fou simmers low and silent in your heart still and surges madly with every deep, dreaming breath they take beside you. What a marvel, this balm. This haven. This fever.

Mourning Eye (Rose water and sorrowful carrot seed, cognac and faded lilacs) A shimmering, aquatic rosy floral; phantom twins connected by sadness & secrets, waltzing mournfully in the moonlight, their iridescent, flickering veils intertwining and unwinding, soaked in rose water and tears.

Forget Me Not (Polished white sandalwood, dried rose petals, and rice powder) This fragrance opens with an intensely nutty note; a woody, toasty/starchy extravagance of hazelnuts, mounded by decadent hands no stranger to excess, perilously piled inside a faceted garnet goblet and spilling over its vivid brim. A single rose blooms on an ornate table nearby, its aroma startling, dewy, and pure in contrast to the dry, powdery salt and crunch of the noisettes.

Lorraine Cross (steam-distilled Somalian myrrh with wild crafted rockrose, Moroccan rose absolute, and white sandalwood) The woody warmth of the sandalwood in Lorraine Cross glows like a solemn halo, bright and golden where upon the first light strikes and delicately crumbling to milky powder where the shadows possess it. The blooming beauty of the rose is the earthy floral tether that twines around the heart of this scent, anchoring it to this world. Lorraine Cross is a scent both lofty and grounded, comprised of light and darkness and summons visions of dignity, noble intent, and pure hearts. I can totally imagine Brienne of Tarth wearing it.

Planchette (Dry, aged Oman frankincense with saffron and rare woods) A divinatory object, a supernatural decoder spelling out secret and lost messages between the living and the dead, or the conscious and the unconscious. A dry, aged Oman frankincense with saffron and rare woods. On a personal level, Planchette is the most elusive of the three scents, and the message it communicates to me is mutable, mercurial. An undercurrent of sweet, fruity resin remains true, but apart from that, and in the span of five minutes, I catch alternating whiffs of honeyed cherry tobacco, dark, sugared confections, and lemony anise tea. I am reminded more of a lively, charged atmosphere wherein strangers sip and nibble amongst whispered chatter, and clasp hands excitedly, anticipating a custom, phantasmal communiqué from beyond--rather than the medium through which the ectoplasmic memo arrived.

Sea of Grief No matter how cavalier your attitude toward mortality, living through the death of a beloved person is to suffer an utter fracture in the underpinnings of your worldview and beliefs, a brutal violation of things thought unbreakable and everlasting. Grappling with grief is a perpetual choking of the throat, a deep immersion into the light-devouring waters of a hundred-year flood. On both my wrists I am finally, maybe half a year after receiving the scent, wearing Sea of Grief. I think I had subconsciously tucked this small bottle behind a stack of books because

maybe it felt like too much to sit with. I lost my mother, my grandmother, and my grandfather in the years between 2014 and 2017, and just when I think I have a handle on my heartache, something small—a memory, a photo, or even a scent, will bring it all back and my heart is broken anew. I often think of that quote from Wanda Vision, “But what is grief, if not love persevering?” Now, I know lots of writers and philosophers have offered some version of this sentiment, it’s not new, whatever. A lot of people heard it for the first time on this show, though, and it offered a great deal of comfort, so just let them have it, okay all of you high-brow writers and poets on writer-twitter? (Sorry, still annoyed by that particular discourse.) Sea of Grief, though. I think it may be those words, bottled, as a balm. It opens bitter, almost too bitter to bear. Like an open wound treated only with the salt of your tears. I think this could possibly be the vetiver and the carrot seed at the opening. But so quickly, more quickly than you could possibly believe, it becomes one of the most incredibly stunning fragrances I have ever encountered. The rich, floral incense of neroli and the musky green candied nuances of angelica along with the complex resinous citrus of bergamot and chamomile’s light, sweet herbaceousness alchemizes the extremes in experience and shifting realities associated with grief into a potent drop or two of aromatic solace. It is a beautiful thing to continue to love someone, even when they aren’t there. Sea of Grief is a gorgeous comfort with which to scent this love you forever carry in your heart.

Grief Moth (dusty woods brushed by a stroke of bourbon vanilla, gaiac, raw green fig, black labdanum, and 7-year aged patchouli) is a fragrance of half-light glooms, that liminal borderland of light and dark accessed between wakefulness and dream. When the mind, half-shrouded in night, barely begins to discern the glow of the sun beyond closed eyes, but the temporal curtain of the eyelid has not yet revealed its truth. In this place all things are possible, nothing is beyond your grasp, and in these shadows you are safe and held. These are the soils where, in nocturnal sublimity, your subconscious has struggled with the raw and murky things you’ve been carrying, and in these lightless labors, you are slowly becoming whole. As Jarod K. Anderson writes in a poetic excerpt from *Love Notes From The Hollow Tree*, “The work to bring a violet up into the light happens down in the dark.” Grief moth is the flinty grey umbral amber, fog-faded forest of ghostly trees in your interior landscape where this work takes place.

Grief Moth Part II (rosehips and hemp with bittersweet balsam, mushroom, and patchouli root) A fitting companion for bloodmilk’s Grief Moth, this is a scent that gently arms the wearer with a little lightness and a small measure of hope when you wake of a morning, limbs weighted with the crushing gravity of grief and soul wracked with the shivers of sorrow. When in those seconds your eyes adjust to the light through the curtains and you think, “I have no heart for it all today.” But our stubborn human hearts, they keep on beating, don’t they? “Approaching sorrow,” reveals Francis Weller in *The Wild Edge of Sorrow: Rituals of Renewal and the Sacred Work of Grief* “requires enormous psychic strength.” And though in the frozen time/cracked-watch face/inexorable slowness of loss it feels as though those moments of darkness and despair will last forever, the throb and thrum of your heart reminds you that (as it’s been said by many) that grief is your love living on, persevering—and this is a thing to cherish, a sacred strength that asserts itself despite ourselves. It’s a fearful thing to love what death can touch—but we keep doing it, beautiful, amazing fools that we are. And that in that timeworn compulsion lies the soft, quiet joys of this fragrance of subtle, diffusive woods and bittersweet balsamic sap and resin, rich, resilient soil and stone, and a delicate floral-fruity tannic tang. The only way out is through, but sometimes we need a little help reaching the other side. Grief Moth Part II is a beautiful scent of belief and elusive hopefulness that may light a lantern to lead the way.

Time is a Phoenix Time is a Phoenix is a scent of the mythical and miraculous, but also of the intensely, personally, mundane. Fed on tears of sacred incense, resinous, volcanic, honeyed, and bittersweet, fanning its own ancient, acrid spice-scented flames, a fiery vision of scarlet and gold and eternal return, the scent left in wake of this being

is incendiary, incandescent, immortal. A funeral pyre flipped through a pinhole in the darkened chamber of a camera obscura, the ashes of the afterimage captured in a winding sheet of amber: the wild, joyful zest of loving, the sour sighing sorrow of leaving, the impossible weeping, sweating, earthy-tethered, salty-sweetness of living—and through it all, climbing into our own, us-shaped mortal infernos, again and again, and again.

Oil and Flight and Vision is rooty and resinous, dark and droll, and brings to mind Ralph Waldo Emerson's poem "Hamatreya", in which the poet reveals the earth song of dark-humored flowers, laughing to see the men who steer the plows unable to steer clear of the grave. How every one of them who lay claim to the land, who wished to control it, are now asleep beneath the very dirt they thought they owned. I like to imagine subversive, psychoactive roots and blossoms,—hallucinogenic henbane, tarry opium, bittersweet mugwort—growing from the bones of those dead and being used in enigmatic preparations like fabled witches' flying ointments. And whether or not those witchy botanical balms induced actual levitation and soaring under a full moon through the midnight air or was key to a ritual for one to travel the astral planes in spirit, I delight in the imagery of witches being borne aloft on the musky-throated gallows humor of grim growing things sprung forth from and thriving in grave dirt. Oil and Flight and Vision perfectly encapsulates the poetry of that sentiment.

LEKYTHOI (Rivulets of myrrh and pelanon clinging to ancient clay, remnants of thyme, moringa, spikenard, and hyssop) Smells of the brine of the ocean and resinous petrified sap of ancient trees, like cool, polished sea glass and golden amber laced with tiny bubbles, heaped tall in vessels of dusty clay and submerged in rich, grassy olive oil. Offerings to appease the sirens, left on the crashing tides of lonely islands amidst tumbling, clackering piles of sailor's bones.

PELANON (thick, ancient roots growing through honey, olive oil, and zea) There is a work by pre-Raphaelite artist John William Waterhouse that depicts two robe-draped figures refreshing a small altar of bronze statuettes, making humble offerings to the household gods. Not of divine nectar and sacred ambrosia, but rather commonplace, earthbound flowers, honey, and fruits—a quietly luminous but very human and everyday moment of ritual and reverence. This fragrance is the incense of that span of heartbeats and intent, ensconced in a golden beam of fading afternoon sunlight.

ENAGISMATA (goat's milk, honey, wine, myrrh, and a glint of gold) Translations of Homer turn up many instances of the evocative phrase "the wine-dark sea," which, if parsed literally, may simply be describing rough, stormy seas—but I first heard the turn of phrase as the title of one of Robert Aickman collections of weird, unsettling stories. If you're unfamiliar, this author revels in disquieting tales of haunted psychology and thoroughly unnerving but initially routine and unremarkable experiences. They're not quite ghost stories but perhaps just quotidian situations and circumstances, slightly off-center, low-key, and almost indefinably mysterious. If you've ever observed the turned-inside-out-mixedup-madness of a multicolored knitted sweater, you can see how you wear the chaos of your clothing so close to the skin, the nightmare side of something so ordinary, carried unknowingly right next to your heart. Enagismata smells of the syzygy-space where these weird divisions of unbothered/uneasy align: both a dark-fruited velvety-opulent wine with a strange, vaguely unearthly terroir and a secretive, slithering salinity, dark and bottomless from the most lightless depths of the ocean; the ways in which these elements relate to each other is in a constant flux that recalls shifting voids and pocket dimensions just outside our experience of reality. But so close, we can almost feel it. Hear it. Smell it.

Sphinx Skin Even though I have always wished it were otherwise, I have never sniffed a precious jewel, glimmering gem, or polished stone that smelled of anything in particular—even though the dazzling drama in those crystalline depths seem to promise, at least to me, that these geological treasures should somehow be radiating the most

marvelous perfumes. Alas! Nope! It is sadly a wish I've long let go. Sphinx Skin, however, rekindles this daydream in the most fantastical and feverish ways, because I'm absolutely certain that if a moody, golden topaz had a scent? It would be the smoky umbral honey, spectral shed snakeskin musk of Sphinx Skin: heady, tobacco-infused amber with subtly shifting floral vanilla facets, a rich, sticky, resinous vein of dragon's blood, and the faint, slithering earthiness of patchouli, dark, damp, rooty, and grounding. A stone formed from crystals in cooling magma (or so I understand), in reality, topaz probably smells of the fumes and vapors wafting amongst the cavities of igneous rocks in which it grows, but here, in the surreal secrecy of our intimate cocoon, where the writer and reader connect via a shared dream and can believe as we please - let's choose to believe in exquisite lapidary aroma magic, and that a glowing sphere of topaz smells like a small bottle of Sphinx Skin.

Comets (white plum, crystalized pink peppercorn, Oman frankincense, and silvered amber arc through a midnight haze of Sumatran patchouli, velvet oakmoss, and hothouse orchids) Passing between worlds over an unfathomable span of time, an ancient journey's ending, and the abundant exuberance of new life that springs from it. This is a scent which opens with an incendiary collision of superheated offgassing resins and the euphoric kaleidoscope of a summer meadow in full bloom, a curious but joyful amber-floral conflagration. As the incandescent radiation of the crash site dims and cools and condenses, strange alien flora, dormant in the ice and dust of deep space, burst forth and blossom, a vibrant pageant of lush, aromatic petals unfurl and and fruit and ripen and decay in the span of seconds, releasing soft, fleecy seed pods in a cloud of bittersweet, powdery musk. Carried softly on the breeze, these small travelers burrow in the earth, float to the clouds, enter warm bodies with an intake of breath. Other journeys. Other worlds.

Dream Skin (lavender and orchid incense suffused with red labdanum, champaca orchid, patchouli root, champignon, Italian bergamot, and white oakmoss) is akin to a dream diary, a midnight scrapbook of filmy filaments teased from nocturnal murmurs, pressed between pages of mist and glass. Belled flowers gently floating across the face of the moon, reflected in a dark, fathomless pond. The whispered conversations between spectral, silvery quartz rock and wild, golden lightning, a tender grinding cascade of stardust. A pale moth glows and dims and dies on a cool silk shirt; a marble egg wrapped in lavender ribbon, shattered and swathed. An atlas of personal symbology, a grimoire of private fables, something beautiful but annihilating filtered through the eeriness and unreality of deep sleep brainwaves; an echo, unraveling at dawn.



CARNAVAL DIABOLIQUE (2016)

The Parliament of Monsters (dust, incense, wet tobacco, singed straw, and a curl of opium smoke) smells of dry, glowing frankincense and intimate contact with another being. It's the scent of being close enough to a creature to feel the thrum of blood rushing beneath its skin...or pelt...or carapace...or well, you really don't know what this entity is. That's the thing with this scent – it pricks at your memory and experiences, and you almost recognize it, but it's just beyond your grasp. It's a charmingly off-kilter combination of familiar and completely alien.

Arachnina, The Spider Girl (black currant, poppy, musk, lilies, nicotiana, tobacco tar, and patchouli). The Spider Girl does indeed make your skin crawl at the onset; the scent is very much one of acrid fright–biting, bitter-sharp, and vaguely stomach-turning. With time, as the fragrance warms on your wrist (or perhaps it's the venom attacking your nervous system), it becomes a hypnotic blend of lush red fruits and dramatic florals of the darkest, most corrupt variety.

Eshe, A Vision of Life-In-Death (embalming herbs, black myrrh, white sandalwood, black orchid, paperwhites, olive blossom, tomb dust, and Moroccan jasmine): the waft of pale desiccated blooms strewn on antique linens, the fragrance of dried aromatic funerary herbs, and the subtle hint of unholy dalliances with sweetly rotting things, unlife and undeath.

Faiza, The Lady of Serpents (black amber, oakmoss, green sandalwood, bergamot, jasmine sambac, gardenia, ti leaf, ginger & other notes). Faiza is a heady jungle bouquet, damp and sultry, sharpened with the greenest citrus. At turns both murky and sheer, this is a lissome scent that twists and morphs and refuses to be pinned down.

Green Tree Viper (four mints, bergamot, and green tea), which is crisp and cool to goose bump your tender flesh, but rounded by creamy sweetness; **Coral Snake** (blood orange, blood apple, lemon peel, plumeria, and red gardenia), all fresh, juicy, red apple and misty tropical flowers; and **King Cobra**, (orris, white frankincense, and black copal), a surprisingly understated scent which nips gently and whose bites scar pale before they've ever bled.

Saw Scaled Viper (cinnamon, cassia, and red ginger) is fiery spices, at turns as soft as sticky sweet rolls and then sharply burning and medicinal, while **Asp Viper** (King mandarin, myrrh, and almond) smells of a deliciously lickable cone-cake of luxurious marzipan incense, and **Temple Viper** (sugar cane, frankincense, champaca, opoponax, labdanum, and hyssop) is smoky, powdery resins, glittering syrupy amber with a crystalline coating of sugar, wreathed with the exotic warmth of champaca flowers.

Death Adder (vetiver, black coconut, vanilla, and opoponax) is a dry, gritty coconut and the blackest scorched earth; **Western Diamondback** (leather, tonka bean, red sandalwood, and sage) is the softest, most supple, sun-warmed leather piqued by an herbaceous, subtly camphorous zing; **Australian Copperhead** (acai berry, amber, cardamom, white sandalwood, neroli, and smoked vanilla) is a shifting slide between the warning tang of bittersweet berries and a gentle woody musk.

Boomslang (cocoa, teakwood, and rice milk) recalls the rich, velvety indulgence of expensive, foreign chocolates—the sort on which you, personally, didn't spend all your francs, as they were a gift from generous friends who were traveling abroad and thinking of you. It shortly fades to dusty cacao nibs and sweet rice pudding. **Banded Sea Snake** (mosses and olive leaf) while an aquatic scent, is no watery, limpid affair. And frankly it's less a scent and more an image that is conjured: a vibrant tide pool teeming with bright, lively, colorful creatures; a playful island breeze glides across the translucent surface of the water, and—oh, hey! Here's a fancy cocktail with a paper umbrella! Where'd that come from? It tastes like green mosses and french-milled soap, but it's weirdly refreshing.

Cottonmouth (linden, calla lily, passion flower, and narcissus) is predominantly somber, waxy spring lilies brightened by the soft, honeyed green of fresh linden blossoms. I've not referenced any comparisons to previous formulations until this point but feel compelled to note that it is with Cottonmouth I sense the most notable difference. The 2006 Cottonmouth had a distinct linen/fresh laundry vibe that, when combined with Snake Oil, smelled like Bath & Body Works' Fresh Cotton Blossom (sadly discontinued) had an affair with a super potent head shop. The result of this odd union was 2006 Cottonmouth, which summoned an apparition of the babeliest, most badass all-black-everything coven-gang leader, but who is also super approachable and cool and would respond to your comments on Instagram and you would have a total "senpai noticed me!" moment about it. All this to say: while they are two completely different creatures, both Cottonmouths are worth seeking out.

Hope & Faith, The Siamese Twins (simplicity and innocence, gleefully despoiled! Hope is sugared rose, Faith is sugared violet): Hope is at first dewy pink rose blossoms, sweet and sheer, and dries to candied rose petals and fizzy, spun sugar. Faith calls to mind a tea tray brimming with elegant treats: violet buttercream petit fours, violet macarons, violet pastilles.

Isaac, The Living Skeleton (Bourbon, black tobacco tar, bay rum aftershave, cologne) is the bone dry ghost of a sleazy boozehound, the horrible ex-boyfriend who ran around on you all the time and was generally no good but you kept him around for the sex, and because dammit, he made you laugh. Isaac is the scent of your man after he's been out all night doing God knows what with who the fuck knows, but you sort of want to lick his armpits when he gets home, because despite all of that, he's really fucking hot.

Kataniya, The Clockwork Woman (Gentle flowers over hot metal, shocked to life) is the scent of summer's last blossoms laid to rest on cool, wet concrete after autumn's first rain; the wind gusting around a corner on a blustery, grey day.

Meskhenet, The Vulture Maiden (frankincense, hyssop, hibiscus, river reeds, orris root, palm frond, and olibanum) begins with a screechy, tart, acidic note, reminiscent of slightly unripe berries or tangy rosehip tea. It fades to peppery cedar shavings, tears, and dust.

Thalassa, The Galapagos Mermaid (seaweed, kelp, salty ocean spray, bitter almond, night-blooming jasmine, frankincense, and benzoin), is a gentle fragrance, more like "mermaid bathtime" rather than the "mermaid beat-down" that her menacing visage promises. Salty midnight sea-spray and hypnagogic night blooms swirl in foaming, soapy waters in a glowing grotto where sirens soak in secret.

The Wild Men of Jezirat Al Tennyn (red amber, Spanish moss, Indonesian patchouli, ambergris, sweet ambrette seed, red pepper, two cloves, and vanilla flower). Only slightly feral, The Wild Men of Jezirat Al Tennyn is a scent that opens with a dry, smoky clove and the singed loaminess of a bit of spidery Spanish moss that fell into your campfire which was mostly burnt down anyway, because it's late and everyone has crawled into their sleeping bags. You're still awake though, and roasting a pillowy vanilla marshmallow, speared on a stick of cinnamon, over the still-glowing embers.

Wulric, The Wolfman (cocoa absolute, French vanilla, birch tar, lavender, bourbon vetiver, wild musk, cardamom husk, clary sage, and cistus) is a cozy cup of hot chocolate with an odd spike of dried lavender buds, herbaceous and mildly astringent. It dries down to the softest, sweetest memory you have. A comforting moment from childhood that you'll go an entire lifetime without ever experiencing again. The heartbreak of growing up.

Zarita, The Doll Girl (white carnation, iris, orange blossom, poisonous pale white berries, and sugared cream) begins with notes of dreamy orange creamsicle and caramelized creme brûlée and gives way to berry-studded baked goods with burnt brown sugar topping. The berry is strange, unpredictable and lends to the scent a bitter, somewhat psychotic edge.

Priala, The Human Phoenix (three deep, dark myrrhs, smoke, cassia, and cinnamon bark), is, as the old folks are wont to say, a "spitfire." As cheesy as it sounds, it's the first thing that comes to mind. Dry, dusty earth, ashen smoke, and a gently spiced, creamy cinnamon pudding combine for a sassy, sweet scent that somehow floats just above the skin and yet feels amazingly grounded.



CRIMSON PEAK (2016)

Edith Cushing (pearlescent vanilla musk with white sandalwood, grey amber, white patchouli, ambrette seed and oudh) smells of wholesome beauty, youthful innocence and somehow...of butterflies and ruffled nightgowns. The airy warmth of delicate musk and sweetly powdered limbs.

Both Sir Thomas Sharpe (black amber darkens a pale fougere) and **Lady Lucille Sharpe** (faded red roses and a glimmer of garnet with black lily, yang slang, smoky plum musk and black amber) share the same melancholy amber base. Sir Thomas is a close to the skin scent – slightly sweet, with a hint of light musk and tinge of tears – it is a somewhat sad-smelling thing. Lady Lucille, on the other hand, is plummy with dark roses and the tang of something deliciously unhinged. “Love makes monsters of us all,” she mused, and you can smell that cruel, desperate sentiment in this bottle.

Dr. Alan McMichael (Bay rum and sandalwood) is a deceptively simple, comfortable scent. A feeling of safety, of familiarity, of leaning into a warm neck and breathing in skin and a hint of luxurious aftershave. Also...of horses. I have never actually seen a horse in real life, mind you -I only know them from books, but I am fairly certain that story-horses share this smell.

Crimson Peak [EPONYMOUS] (snow marbled with blood-red clay frozen over the scent of decayed wood) conjures a bleak, chilled incense. Not an entirely welcoming fragrance at first, but as it sinks into the skin, becomes a part of you, you detect a very slight woody warmth and its peculiar charms become a thing to crave.

The Manuscript (leather and paper and splotches of ink, with a hint of ghostly chill) Rich, buttery leather, parchment dried with age and subtle, acrid scent of something you can't quite place -something from the corner of your eye or a mostly forgotten childhood memory. This smells of déjà-vu to me; a book I've not yet read and yet have somehow have committed the tale to heart.

Black Moths (wild plum and black currant with aged black patchouli, vetiver, red rose petal, tonka absolute, and opoponax) Brittle, papery, musty darkness that becomes lighter in the wearing never but quite loses that tinge of unease, of quiet menace.

(Atmosphere sprays)

Young Edith's Bedroom (beeswax, leather-bound paper, white gardenias) hints at porcelain and wood, lace and shadow but becomes the most incredible, bombastic honey scent I have ever encountered.

Lucille's Room (lilac water, fossilized black amber, lily of the valley, violet leaf, oakmoss) is a lighter, more subdued fragrance, recalling the play of shadow and light and the flutter of moth wings in between.

The Workshop (sawdust and gear lubricant, metal rods shining in golden afternoon light) –is it possible to smell a vision of dust particles floating lazily in a patch of dim afternoon sunlight on a cold, clear afternoon in late January? I believe I have.

Allerdale Hall (A grand house brooding against the horizon, a silhouette of jutting chimneys and sharp angles silhouetted against the grey sky) Allerdale Hall is a challenging scent to pin down. Dark, oiled woods and the scent of the sky before a snow.



GOOD OMENS (2019)

Deeds of the Day (scorched aluminum and white-hot copper solder, cracked aluminosilicate glass, conflict-full tantalum, and the gingery-bubble of a short-circuiting vibration assembly stewing in a thick, hot black musk). I can't reconcile myself to these notes but what I can tell you is that it smells like being fifteen and skinny dipping in your boyfriend's grandparent's swimming pool when they're out of town for the summer and it's a blistering hot day, with the tose-tickling scent of chloramine, concrete hot enough to barbeque teenage feet, and the wisp of spicy-oakmossy-lavender Drakkar Noir in the air. I don't think any of these are unpleasant smells (I actually still love Drakkar Noir and that's totally what I am going to name my Norwegian Ridgeback one day.) Anyway, this scent conjures fun memories for me.

A Flaming Sword: (fiery red amber and sweet oudh, flickers of honeyed patchouli and red musk, pale white coconut flecks, and crushed peppercorn.) Fruity amber, sweetened, resinous oud, and milky/woody coconut meld for a gentle, gossamer glow.

Don't Touch: (a scattering of apple blossoms and apple pulp, a handful of pomegranate seeds, and a soft, serpentine hiss of poisonous green musk, opoponax, and frankincense) A startled apple tree awoke in a rainforest, and surprisingly, flowered and flourished far from its midwestern orchard home amongst the lush, humid jungle vegetation; or, a few ripe apple slices hidden in the midst of a tropical fruit platter, touched on one side by tart pineapple, the other by jammy guava.

Slate Black Clouds Tumbled Over Eden: (a rapidly darkening sky blasted by thundercrack of ozone, blast of cold, black rain, punctuated by a thin flicker of amber) A storm, gathering on the horizon all afternoon has with boom

and bluster, announced its arrival, as a torrential rain begins to rattle and splatter against the windows. Placing a clean, earthenware pitcher in the far corner of your darkened kitchen, you watch a slow trickle, drop by drop, suspend and fall with an inaudible swish and a soft clink from that rotted, sagging spot on your roof. These cold droplets smell chilled, and earthy, and electric. As a shriek of lightning splits the sky in two, you inhale the comforting scent of yeast rolls browning in the oven. They only have a few minutes left on the timer; you send a small hope skyward that they finish baking before the power goes out. *Slate Black Clouds Tumbled Over Eden*, interestingly, smells like all of these things.

Sister Mary Loquacious (white musk, lemon peel, vanilla incense, and wild bergamot) There's a scent, or the dreamy memory of a scent, that I really love and I feel like I may have mentioned it before. A sort of plastic-y, vanilla scent, like maybe if you buried your nose in your 1980's Strawberry Shortcake doll's synthetic hair and just huffed that strangely pretty childhood fragrance for a moment or two. Imagine if you crossed that memory with a pocketful of lemon candies and a wisp of Antique Lace. Now that I think about it, if you're bummed that Antique Lace is no longer available, I think Sister Mary Loquacious has got a similar feel and would make a lovely substitute.

Anathema Device (white sandalwood, blackcurrant, bourbon vanilla, and warm amber) There's a quote that is used frequently as people's Twitter bios: "though she be but little, she is fierce!" and I regret to inform you that until just now, I had no idea that is taken from some dialogue in a *Midsummer Night's Dream*, but I'm not as well-versed in my Shakespeare as I ought to be and anyway, that's not my point. Anathema Device smells like a fierce, little creature: a teeny-tiny, big-eyed anime blackcurrant wearing comedically large cyborg boxing gloves. This is a pulpy, juicy beatdown of a berry scent, strengthened by a vaguely metallic backbone, powered by a syrupy amber core.

Beelzebub (black, red, and white pepper buzzing through a brimstone-suffused bloody clove musk) Hooooooo, old Beelz is a spicy boi! A massively peppery, lightly musky, incense. Fiendish. Gorgeous.

A Complex Wiggly Sigil (blood-red ink, fiery pomegranate, and black oudh) A shadowy wine, bitter at the tip of the tongue, velvety as it lingers on the palate, and smoky as it slides down your throat.

The Nice and Accurate Prophecies of Agnes Nutter, Witch (a seventeenth-century tome, pages lined with witching herbs and lightly spattered by gunpowder residue) Fruity herbs, the sweet grassy-vanilla smell of old books, and an odd whiff of a burning, ozoney tang.

Old-Fashioned Satanists (armchair leather, chamomile tea, cashmere, and a tangle of sweet 7-year aged patchouli) When I first sniffed this, I caught notes of coffee, milk chocolate, and the cozy comfort of warm, worn-in robes? But today it smells of a delicate porcelain cup of black tea brightened with a spritz of lemon, warming and softening the embossed tooling of the old leather book it is perched upon. Those wily Satanists! I can't quite get a fix on them, but it's a wonderful scent, either way.

He'd Been an Angel Once (leather and smoky musk, damask rose, incense, brimstone, and vetiver) This is going to sound nuts, and there is no evidence listed in the notes here to support what I am catching whiffs of, but this smells like sauntering into perdition with a pocketful of skunky cookies. Edibles for the end-times.

Three Rounds, One Fall, No Submission (beatific gardenia, virtuous lemon flower, and sacred frankincense clashing with infernal musk, a burst of sulphur, and a little bit of hellfire) A soapy, creamy white floral musk paired with the vaporous ghost of a charcoal briquette ; the soft scent of summer's wilting gardenia blossoms against the vast and

vaulted cloudless, cerulean cathedral of an August afternoon sky, while you wait for the hurricane to hit. A moment's glimpse of an endless heaven...before all hell breaks loose.

Evil Does Not Sleep Perfume (blackened lavender, red labdanum, sweet hops, and violet leaf) Although that astringent, herbaceous lavender is at the forefront, it's immediately both tempered and goosed by the sweet, animalic labdanum.

An Ineffable Game (pitch-black vetiver with a strange, sheer patchouli, orange blossom, and fig leaf) Within every collection the Lab creates, there's always that one scent that seems perfectly quaffable, so delightfully juicy and spirited and effervescent, that no one would blame you or think you'd taken leave of your senses if you just tipped the bottle past your lips and downed the whole thing in one gulp. Of course, let's please not do that and I am definitely not suggesting it! I would, however, suggest conjuring a cocktail inspired by this fragrance, an ineffable tippie of our own devising: a libation citrusy and bright, with an undercurrent of something earthy and bitter and strange. Do patchouli bitters exist? Maybe patchouli syrup? An Aperol Spritz with a smallest dropper drip of dank, and perhaps mythical, patchouli bitters.

Mr. Young (Pipe tobacco, black tea, starched white cotton, and a very respectable aftershave) smells of freshly laundered linens airing on the line on a cloudless spring morning, and the lightest, lemony musk of wholesome thoughts and honest deeds.

Annales Veteris et Novi Testamenti (fossilized amber, dusty white sandalwood, galbanum, balsam of Peru, and brown oakmoss) Rich, earthy and slightly bitter balsam and leathery-green oakmoss lend some glam-gorgeous 70's chypre vibes to a dusty, crumbling dinosaur vertebrae propped on an ancient piece of driftwood in a vast warehouse of musty arcane books and bones.

The Adversary, Destroyer of Kings, Angel of the Bottomless Pit, Great Beast That is Called Dragon, Prince of This World, Father of Lies, Spawn of Satan, and Lord of Darkness (baby powder, goat's milk, and a distant whiff of brimstone) For the briefest, most flickering second, you do get a sense of all of those unholy nursery notes. A smoky, perfumed iron cradle and a sweet, powdered milky fragrance. Teensy-weensy little hoofikins!



LUPERS

Lupers 2016

Beanman and Beanwoman Climb Genital Mountain (hazelnut smoke and leather with dark musk, white cognac, caramelized vetiver, and a drop of honeyed whiskey) is depicted by two intrepid explorers—Mr. and Mrs. Bean, one would presume—who appear to be both spelunkers and mountaineers, and are hiking their way through a carnal landscape. My first thought is that this is an aggressively nutty scent, although perhaps I’m being overly influenced by the hairy, bulbous nutsack upon which Mrs. Bean is precariously perched. It effortlessly morphs into creamy booze and soft leather, and I like to think that the Beans took a moment to toast each other with snifters of Drambuie while settling back in well-worn leather arm chairs to enjoy the show.

Blossoming Vulva (golden amber and bourbon vanilla with sweet oak, blue lotus, and tea blossom) is a soft, tender scent, with a disarmingly plastic tinge to it—but somehow it works. Like, if you walked in on your friend making sweet, sweet love to a beautiful blow-up sheep (who also happened to be wearing your favorite vanilla lip gloss)...and found yourself alarmingly horned up by the whole thing. You know, like that.

Those who revel in refreshing, invigorating scents will enjoy **Rendezvous at the Bath** (minted green tea and cucumber), a simple scent that at its core calls to mind the revitalizing aroma of a bracing swipe from a super-posh moist towelette. Which you probably needed after the sheep incident. In a similar vein, **Geisha in a Green Kimono** (gunpowder tea, yellow bergamot, white thyme, blackcurrant, red mandarin, wormwood, neroli, and green musk) evokes a fortifying restorative; a citrusy, herbal draught for flagging spirits (or, you know, your limp, spent junk.) Not quite medicinal, but with a sinister undercurrent of “is this stuff legal?”

It’s probably not.

Fleurette's Purple Snails (white sandalwood, orris root, wood violet, sugared violet blossom, and violet leaf) is all candied violet pastilles, powdered dressing tables, frothy petticoats and curious feelings/fondlings involving your roommate at parochial school. On the opposite end of the spectrum, **The Initiation** (red wine and vanilla pod infused with caramel, peach, tobacco flower, and coconut) is a decidedly wicked scent: a honey-spiked crystal goblet of claret and soft nibbles of ripe stone fruit from the end of a jeweled-encrusted dagger. Madame traces its cool, sharp point down the skin of your neck as the wine burns a delicate fire in your throat...

The Two Old Men (sweet brown leather, cacao absolute, coffee bean absolute, and teakwood) is the peculiar scent amongst the bunch wherein I cannot make out a single one of the notes listed. And yet—it is utterly perfect. It's less a specific smell and more a certain person it calls to mind. A rich weirdo with strange desires. It's a rather...Grey scent. Oh, god no. Not that Grey, don't look at me like that. I'm talking the creepy, conflicted E. Edward Grey, James Spader's character in the 2002 film *Secretary*. This is the smell of a handsome lawyer calling his girlfriend on the phone and instructing her to eat just a scoop of creamed potatoes, one slice of butter, four peas. Then he probably goes home and sobs uncontrollably.

It's sexy as hell.

I need help.

Dark Chocolate, Black Tobacco, and Vetiver which conjures the dreamiest leather-daddy sex demon from the nether realm and **Milk Chocolate, Myrrh, and Gunpowder** which smells of the unmistakable tang of post-coital musk alongside warm, cocoa-infused fondue. Sort of like a raunchy porno filmed in an overflowing chocolate fountain. Like all the best things in life are.



Lupers 2017

Speaking of smut, let's begin with **Smut 2017!** (three swarthy, smutty musks sweetened with sugar and woozy with dark booze notes) My first thought is that this is not as aggressively smutty as Smuts of yore (my boss made me go home when I wore it to the office in 2008). Like, maybe Smut went to rehab and detoxed a little. While the older versions of this scent I have are heavier on the booze and musk, this version seems lighter and sweeter and ...fruity? While this smells nothing, of say, blackberries, I'm reminded of the syrupy, glazed bits of the fruit mixture crusted to the edges of a cobbler dish after the dessert is removed from the oven. I think many people are going to find Smut 2017 a touch more wearable than it might have been in the past.

Luperci (patchouli, Gurjam balsam, and essence of Sampson Root, beeswax, virile juniper, oakmoss, ambrette seed over honey and East African musk); inspired by rites of the Luperci ("brothers of the wolf") this opens with raw,

powerfully earthy patchouli, piercing and damp. The grassy soil which cradled the She-Wolf, suckling the Sacred Twins, shaded by the leaves of a fig tree and made rich by its rotting leaves and fruit, and the blood of the sacrifices spilled there. Luperci remains green and wooded and though it does not sweeten with time, it softens and becomes muskier, murkier.

Womb Furie (an itch that needs to be scratched: Snake Oil and three types of honey) I don't know if this happens with everyone—or anyone, even—but usually anything with prominent honey notes ends up smelling like pee on me. As you can imagine, I am very saddened by this because honey is divine and delicious. However! Though this initially exhibits the sharpness I associate with most honeyed scents, there are none of those pungent, ammonia-like associations, so I suppose I can breathe easier. Snake Oil by itself, is, I believe, a rather divisive scent; there are those who love it, and there are those who are wrong. But the general complaint I hear is that it is a incredibly potent, sometimes headache inducing scent. In Womb Furie the harsh edges of Snake Oil's exotic Indonesian oils and intense vanilla are tempered by the delicate, powdery honey and strikes a pleasingly satisfying balance; it conjures feelings not so much of itches that needs scratching but rather the warm afterglow of desires sweetly satiated.

White Chocolate, Marshmallow, Honey, and Goat's Milk Straight from the bottle this smells of cocoa butter and marshmallow, and something else I can't quite put my finger on—a cookie-like quality. Something with a cloying graham cracker crumb. It conjures a treasured confection from childhood, a sacred, special treat which I have just now remembered: Mallowmars!

Dark Chocolate, Whiskey, and Cardamom-Infused Caramel Whoa. This is some business, here. Rich dark chocolate, the intensely bitter sort with the amped up percentage of cacao that you don't even have to hide from your significant other because they can't even handle it. The whiskey is so smooth you can barely detect it, and layered with the goopy sweetness of the gently spiced caramel, this makes for an incredibly decadent bonbon of a scent.

Milk Chocolate, Cacao Cream, Ceylon Cinnamon, and Coffee Absolute While I have insisted for years that I am not a lover of foodie or gourmand scents, this may be the one that changes my mind. I'm going to give you a visual, okay? Imagine an amorous encounter with your sexy barista crush, (the one who works really long hours because they hand-grind a lot of beans), while rolling around in \$240 worth of creamy, milk chocolate pudding.

Lupercalia Single Note: Riding Crop This is an exquisite "worn in" leather scent, but I don't mean to imply that it smells somehow beat up and rugged like cowboy boots, or a horse's saddle that has seen many denim clad bottoms across it. No, this is the scent of madam's favorite corset—smooth and black, and perfectly fitted to her elegant curves. A handsome, tight-laced thing whose strict shine has dulled over the years but in whose reflection can still be seen countless memories of hours spent meting out untold pleasures...and in the exquisite instruction of delicious pain.

Pleasures of the Imagination I (black amber, leather, and myrrh) Clean, powdered skin, and shiny black leather and oddly enough, the delicately antiseptic smell of an expensive lingerie department. Imagine wearing your Agent Provocateur scanties underneath a leather moto jacket with just the right amount of silvery zipper accents.

Pleasures of the Imagination V (black leather, red sandalwood, orris root, tobacco absolute, oakmoss, and sweet patchouli) This is an inconstant leather, at first, lined with the softest cotton, and then, filled with strange, sweet earth. A marvelously mutable scent, I soon detect a watery greenness and sharp, metallic freshness. At the end we

are left with not the pin-up girls in Art Frahm's campy illustrations, but rather the surprise stalk of celery that is lurking, ever present, as a poor woman's skirts fly up and her underwear, inexplicably, fall down.

Kitten with Shamisen Daydreams of a Phallus Palanquin (rice milk, white musk, and pear) It is not pear I smell at first, but strawberries. Or perhaps some other twinkling, pink, "youthful" smelling fruit. The longer the scent wears, the more I feel I am aging backwards, and I am surrounded by small, plastic dolls whose, fruity, synthetic, multi-colored hair I sniff obsessively and no doubt rudely, as I am serving an imaginary tea and that's not the behavior of a polite hostess. In our small teacups with the curly-cue handles I still dream about as an adult, we are drinking a shimmering champagne spiked with dollops of lightly sweetened cream. I apologize for the hair sniffing.

Delightful Visitor Among the Haystacks (chrysanthemum incense and red carnation) I was keenly interested in this scent in particular... I found unexpected beauty in the brevity of the notes listed; it pierced my heart with a fleeting sort of sadness. And too, this fragrance is strange and sad, musty and full of ponderous longing. Years of incense woven into threads of a poet's pillow and perfuming their final inhalations as they pen their last words in this world:

Rusu naredo // tou hito mo kana // notorikigo? — Kizo, 1851
When I am gone // will someone care for // the chrysanthemum when I leave?

Consoling Pussy of Horse Face Mountain (tuberose incense, blue wisteria, and oakmoss) A cool, creamy, intimate floral that conjures a flood of memories for me, none of which have anything to do with each other, or with anything in particular. The fragrance of my mother's carved wooden boxes that held sticks of nag champa and faded tarot cards; the chlorinated, rubbery scent of a pool supply store that we used to frequent when I was very young. I don't think this is a scent that I will reach for very often, but not because I don't care for it. Rather, it is the perfume of a life that I have already lived and know quite profoundly.

Le Vice Suprême (leather and a splash of gin, whiskey swirled tobacco, rose petals, and bourbon vanilla) What a nose-tickler this is! While I don't smell gin, per se, I smell something a bit effervescent and dry and not quite boozy, but somewhat woozy. It's the olfactory version of a gleeful gulp going awry, laughing and gagging until your eyes swim, and the prickly little cough that remains for the rest of the evening. At this point, you've also got the hiccups. Light, fizzy, giggle water.

Les Incubes et des Succubes (blackberry pulp, Bordeaux wine, grape leaves, and wild patchouli) This, my friends, is the Kool-Aid fueled orgy that you have been dreaming of. Sugar macerated berries and wildly overripe grapes squelching amongst heaving, naked bodies as an oversized anthropomorphic plastic pitcher MCs the depraved festivities. I won't end this sentence with his iconic phrase. It's just too easy.

À Un Dîner D'athées (white lavender and ambrette seed, grey patchouli, rum absolute, and vetiver) A somber, sobering scent, with an initial blast of lavender which oscillates between cool and medicinal and sharp, salty licorice. The vetiver and rum add a dry, bitter, molasses tinged edge to what, at its heart, remains a brittle, humorless scent. It is a fragrance that borders on unpleasant, but leaves me intensely curious as to its inspiration. "À Un Dîner D'athées", or, At a Dinner of Atheists, is an illustration by Félicien Rops to accompany a story of the same title in *Les Diaboliques* (The She-Devils), a collection of short stories written by Barbey d'Aurevilly. According to my two seconds of research just now, the acts committed by the characters in these stories are induced not only by their extreme passion but also by their boredom—and it's strange to say, but this fragrance does conjure images of ennui and tedium, but also of rage and revenge and other manias not given proper outlet, but allowed to fester,

silent and hidden. I can't quite think of who I would recommend this scent for, but whoever this person is, they are both fascinating and dangerous.



Lupers 2020

Green Lovebird (vanilla mint, spun sugar, and pistachio) This smells so familiar. The vanilla-mint combination contributes a sort of... shifty/shady 80s cartoon villainess-type vibe? I feel like if the Baroness, Evil-Lyn, and Pizzaz were at tea together, deviously munching sweetly iced petit-fours, this is the sly, scheming, miasma that would emanate from the cackling chambers of that tea-room.

Belgian Chocolate, Black Pepper, Whiskey, and Bourbon Vanilla is surprisingly wearable; and after the individual notes of creamy chocolate, peppery-floral heat and boozy whiskey-vanilla announce themselves, they blend seamlessly into a scent that somehow smells like none of the above, but rather just a mild, but wonderfully cozy perfumed-skin scent.

Elizabeth of Bohemia (the perfect rose oud) ROSE WITCH QUEEN. A rose that is both dark and bright and smells like a tragic Hans Christian Andersen fairytale that has been illustrated by the unhinged black and white gorgeousness of Harry Clarke.

Cacao and Black Moss A hushed, milky-musky chocolate subtle chypre.

Spectral Lovers Entertaining the King of Hell Home & Linen Spray (lily of the valley, white gardenia, cherry blossoms, and black pepper) I am never certain what I am meant to be smelling when it comes to lily of the valley; to my nose, it is a soft, sorrowful, delicate sort of floral. As if you could milk jasmine of its tears for the purpose of keeping the pale, aromatic droplets at hand for some sort of doleful spellwork. Pairing it with the efflorescent piquancy of black pepper is a fair bit of genius and as a room spray, it's a fragrance that's pretty without being cloying and lively without being obnoxious.

Beach Scene (driftwood, white patchouli, sea salt, and kelp) I grew up living close to a beach, and while I truly love the sea, the trashy delights offered up by Daytona Beach (our new motto: WIDE OPEN FUN. Good lord.) do not contribute to my platonic ideal of The Beach. I want jagged cliffs and icy waves and widows walks and the ghost of a lighthouse keeper. I want wild gorse and heather and selkies. I want monstrous scarlet lobsters with googly eyes bobbing at the end of 12-inch stalks! I know I am probably confusing the geographical landscapes of Maine and Cornwall, and I also don't have a clear grasp on lobster anatomy, but these are the beaches that have long haunted my imagination. Beach Scene smells like this eerie mash-up of chill winds, salt spray, migratory shorebirds, and vegetative cover like witchgrass and beach-pea... which have never seen, let alone smelled...but I could be right?

Michiyuki Koi No Futusao (green tea, oakmoss, and star anise) The sage and coral hues of the couple's robes on the label's artwork are mirrored in the dusty, honeyed citrus/earthy-green tropical-watery cucumberiness of the scent.

The Sun Is Rising (Tunisian amber, French beeswax, jasmine grandiflorum, golden peppercorn, myrrh smoke, and neroli) Beautiful and understated and utterly intoxicating all the same; jasmine, soothed and quieted, its piercing sweetness hypnotized by soft hands of beeswax and spectral smoke.

Alleviate the Frenzy Hair Gloss (heady peach musk aglow with sugared amber) (TW) Peaches, man. I don't like to eat them and typically I don't like to smell them and quite frankly I don't even care to look at them— and we can blame this, I suppose, on the preponderance of slick, syrupy Del Monte canned peaches I was served for “dessert” as a plump youngster by a mother concerned about diets. Alleviate the Frenzy has presented me with a flummox of a peach, and it's got me in quite a state. It's a slightly sweet and toasted bit of warm, tilted at odd angles with a wonderful sour musk, and it recalls for me Letter 8 in a collection of bizarre correspondence by the hand of surrealist art-witch Remedios Varo. The author has sent a missive to an unidentified scientist with regard to dissolving the skin of a peach, but through the circumstance of a cat's meow and the mishap of a stranger's miscast shadow, she has instead dissolved a hole in the atmosphere. This peach presents a shifting cipher whose charms I would very much like to mail a stranger about.

Body, Remember (raw black coconut, ambergris accord, ambrette seed, champaca flower, and sugar cane) a trembling sigh of coconut on a brown-sugar lollipop breeze.

Ooyogari No Koe Home & Linen Spray (aloe, bamboo reeds, ti leaf, lemon peel, eucalyptus leaf, and sea salt) I really hate to use the word “fresh.” I hate the actual word “fresh” and all of the clean, minty, youthfulness that it implies. Give me stinky and skanky and musty and shabby, and old, any day. But I'll say it: with its woody-green bamboo, lemony clean cotton vibe, Ooyogari No Koe does smell, well, kinda fresh. Overwhelmingly so. This is a potent scent that I can smell in a room 24 hours later. And I love it. This is perfect and beautiful and my ideal guest bedroom scent. Then again, I'd really love to festoon the walls of my guest room with Louis Wain art and Clive Barker quotes graffitied on the walls...so maybe you can't trust my sense of home decor or hospitality.

Snake's Kiss (Snake Oil with sugar, honeycomb, and thick vanilla cream) While I do love Snake Oil sugary vanilla resins with all my heart—it is, after all, the first BPAL scent that I fell in love with!—even I can admit, well, it's ...a lot. Snake Oil is intense; it's as if you took your most favorite thing, dialed it up to awesome and then broke the knob off. You love it, but it's a lot to handle all at once, let alone for a sustained length of time. Snake's Kiss is as if you get to enjoy your favorite thing from ...across the room, or even more apt, from across time. The memory of your favorite thing. Your favorite thing as seen (or sniffed) through rose-tinted glasses. Snake's Kiss is Snake Oil on the collar of your cotton pajamas two days from now.

A Vision of the Courtesan (tobacco leaf, rice milk, and frankincense) This walks the line between a foody/oriental fragrance but it never quite seems to inch even a toe in either direction. Imagine a monastic incense of horchata and cherry tobacco; the hands of the monks who labor over its creation are spiced with its very essence and they sleep in tranquil clouds of the stuff as their skin exudes the scent during slumber.

Tengu Demon Using His Nose As A Phallus (red musk, black pepper, Mysore sandalwood, ambrette seed, and smoke) A sharp-toothed, fiendish breath of dry, peppery musks and creamy woods, shifting and whirling through smoke and ash.

Dark Chocolate & Dried Red Fruits An intensely chocolatey chocolate cookie, something with a bit of a crisp and a crunch and a crumble; that's dry and not too sweet; it's less wafery and more biscotti-y, and perfect for dunking in midnight coffee. Did I mention it is studded with chocolate-covered blueberries? Or maybe the coffee has hints of blueberry mocha notes. I don't think I am actually getting any coffee from this scent, but now I want a big steaming mug of it.

Champagne and Maraschino Cherries This is a vivid scent, that, once applied, you can nearly see it. Lurid day-glow red, almondy/syrupy cherries floating in a bit of soda-type fizz...totally reminiscent of my favorite Shirley Temple drink at Red Lobster when I was a little girl. Except there's something a bit spring floral about it, too. Instead of finding this drink in my small midwestern town's only seafood restaurant, I stumbled into a fairy circle...and somehow still wasn't allowed a grown-up drink... and I was offered a Shirley Temple Flower Maiden instead.

Wild Cherry Chypre and Smoky Patchouli Hair Gloss This is such a fun, earthy, rooty take on cherries! A pulpy, juicy, bitter-sweet cherry jam atop a mud pie, decorated with dried oak bark shavings and autumn leaves. Bright Red Dildo Hair Gloss (red leather and honey) Glossy leather, not the earthy or worn-in stuff – it's maybe patent leather or vinyl, even— sharp and shiny and bright, made supple and smooth by sweet, musky honey.

Belgian Chocolate and Scorched Caramel Home & Linen Spray Creamy and decadent and feels like a luxe, grown-up version of a chocolate factory tour but no one is being greedy or harassing any Oompa Loompas because you're an adult, dammit, and you paid too much money for this tour to get kicked out.

Dalliance With An Amorous Bat Demon (honeyed patchouli, sweet benzoin, smoky labdanum, and white sandalwood) This wafts between a golden, close-to-the-skin scent, veined with sweet smoke and shadows, and also something a bit salty...and musky...and the slightly reminiscent of... chlorine? And something else? I texted Sam at Haute Macabre the following: "Is it the worst idea to include in one's perfume review that splooge smells a little bit like chlorine?" Her response: "Is it a Luper? Because if so, splooge is accurate and applicable." There you have it.

Various Penises Hair Gloss (smoky brown vanilla husk, bourbon vanilla, dark amber, pink oud, and burnt cocoa bean) I'm not a crotch-sniffing pervert, but this is sort of a cool, plasticky vanilla, and which sort of reminds me of the smooth groin area where a Ken doll's ding-dong should be?

Pink Love Bird (cotton candy, cardamom, and confetti cake) Before I even read the notes for Pink Love Bird, it conjured a vivid image in my mind: a delightfully kitschy, celebratory, vanilla bean flavored cake, frosted with a rich, rosy pink buttercream and trimmed with an abundance of sugary, multi-colored sprinkles.

Cheerful Oxen (warm brown musk, honey, patchouli, hay absolute, and brown oud) A wonderful, rich, bright fruity-floral drizzly honey. Honey sometimes turns a little strange and screechy on me, but this is a cozy scent that grows warmer and lovelier as it wears, with a subtle sweetness that's mystifyingly this side of foody.

Blue Curtain at the Brothel Home & Linen Spray (amber musk, crushed violets, red currant, wild peony, plum blossom, and carnation) A marvelous, wild, springy mingling of tangy and verdant and sweet talc-y violet pastilles.

A Prostitute's Account of Vernal Love (red musk, cherry wood, apricot, and fig) A fruity, candied musk; a translucent confection, vibrant and shimmering where the light shines through.

Womb Furie (Snake Oil and three types of honey) Do you guys ever watch the Bon Appetit test kitchen channel on YouTube? One of their test kitchen chefs, Brad Leone, has a segment called “It’s Alive,” in which he makes all kinds of fermented foods and that sort of thing. On one episode he’s out on Sauvie Island in Oregon with a bunch of “bee whisperers” and they’re showing him how they harvest their honey. There’s a clip where they are wafting smoke near the honeycomb, for the purpose of calming the bees, and it strikes me that Womb Furie initially smells of what I imagine is the scent of sleepy bees drowsing in smoked honey. As it wears, that luscious honey becomes somewhat more intense, but also a bit powdery, as if Brad had taken a viscous slick of the stuff, spread it evenly on a dehydrator tray and let it dry out for 24 hours. Afterward, he ground the resulting sweet shards into a sugary sprinkle. Womb Fury is that honied trajectory of sweet, smoke, and powder.

Happy Couple Reading A Book Together (White tea, Italian bergamot, jasmine sambac, and cucumber) A fetching citrus + saline + dreamy floral scent. Not related to the scent itself, but just now I had to google the name of the fragrance to put the link in the description, and the results produced a great deal of barfy stock images. Don’t get me wrong, happy couples are great, reading is great, happy couples reading together are great, but for the love of God, read your own books! Don’t cramp up in each other’s business reading the SAME book at the SAME time over each other’s shoulders or whathaveyou. Lordy be.

Awake (A sunrise shimmering like abalone, struck through with beams of red musk and amber) Like its evocative and poetic list of notes, this scent is unfathomably pretty. A sugary floral musk.

To Lesbia (a vivacious carnation incense) A bronze offering dish of ashes and spicy blooms, a shifting chiaroscuro of vivid and muted, fluorescent and dusky.

Maraschino Cherry Buttercream Hair Gloss It’s always the ones I am certain that I won’t care for that seem to surprise me most. This is like ...Luxardo cherries, in a syrup made from cherry juice, tart and rich and complex, the kind that might go in an expensive craft cocktail made by a man with an elaborate waxed mustache. The buttercream is the sweet, fluffy delicious sort that you eat with your fingers straight out of the can. Together they combine for a delicious scent that speaks more to a...sensory decadence, rather than just straight foody deliciousness.

Green (skin musk and chilled apple wine dappled with a scattering of discarded pale petals) A cool, soapy subtle blossom-type skin musk, not quite otherworldly, but not quite of this one, either. Not exactly apple-y, more like the greenest wisp of an apple fairy’s dream. If a polished chrysoprased stone had a scent, this would be it.

Teppo Hair Gloss (sweet amber, mandarin, and lemon peel) OH MY GAWD. Just buy this. Buy 12 bottles of it. Fantasy lemon spun sugar fairy floss. Weirdly, I get some Antique Lace vibes from this. Maybe if Antique Lace did some sort of crazy manga magical girl transformation into a Havisham-esque Sailor Scout who comes at you with a delicate lemon candy-based attack. Rhapsodic Lemon Tangy Cosmic Kiss!

Pink Cherry And Pink Pepper This is a playful scent that nibbles at the edge of memory...a soft rosy-peppery almond that conjures up the cookies that my late aunt Carla used to give us when we would visit her at her place of work in small-town Ohio when I was a very small child. Wow, I can't even believe I remember this, I could have only been four or five at the time. She worked at a meat market and I am not sure why we would have been visiting her or why there were treats on hand, but I think these specific treats were a sort of almondy-buttery piped cookie with a solid little button of frosting/icing in the center. Pink Cherry And Pink Pepper smells like those mystery childhood sweets, the sort that you didn't understand what you did to earn them and later haunt you as an adult because you sometimes, quite frequently, feel that you haven't quite earned what you've gotten.

Fragment 38 (red amber, fig wood, and olive blossom) This is a freaky, fruity, fragrant combo of bitter/sour rhubarb mixed with strawberries, pungent black licorice, and a woody something-or-other, not exactly woods, but more a sticky sap, a viscous resin before it fossilizes. This is a cursed pie that you trick your cheating spouse into eating and then later realize with horror that your daughter gobbled down a juicy wedge of said cursed pastry for breakfast while you were sleeping. In despair, you prepare to face your doom—this pie was prepared for you, after all— and as you spoon the first oozing mouthfuls past your lips, you muse, sadly, “huh...is that tarragon I smell?” /END SCENE.

Lupers 2021

Levitating Phallic God (vetiver, opoponax, licorice root, black tea, lemon peel, and cashmere wood) Earthy and rooty at the opener, like the wheelbarrow crawling with uprooted aloe vera plants that is currently danking up our garage with scents of soil and clay and rock, deeply disturbed from the digging. It perks up, so to speak, as the fragrance blooms on the skin. Pillowey, musky woods and a mysteriously sweet, herbal powderiness that call to mind the golden notes of wild fennel pollen round this out to a velvety dream of a skin-scent.

Since There's No Help (silver-frosted white musk, juniper, and cade with bitter carrot seed, lemon peel, davana, and white tea) Interesting! This is described as “a cold scent, a severing” and as I am wearing it I can't help but think it would be perfect for a sweltering summer afternoon. The bracing juniper and tart lemon, combined with a bitter, tannic fruitiness, conjures ice-cold, dripping glasses of sweet southern tea, and it is suddenly a glorious June evening, post-apocalyptic blazing sunset, pre-eerie electric streaks of heat lightning.

Cacao, Lime Rind, and Coconut This smells exactly like the chocolate-covered coconut bonbons that I always used to pick out of the Whitman Sampler box that my grandmother perpetually had lying around when I was a little girl. The lactonic tropical sweetness of creamy, flaked coconut and the luxurious aroma of cocoa butter is such an amazing confection of a combination that I just want to eat it out of a trough with my face. Which I can do because I am an adult now!

Dragon, Rabbit, and Snake (blue cypress, butterfly jasmine, green tea, black orchid, and white champa blossom) This is a soft, lovely floral fragrance given some earthy depth with the vegetal, grassy green tea and enlivened by the mildly licorice-like, balsamic aroma that I am guessing is from the cypress. It conjures the prettiest imagery of watercolor botanical illustrations.

Peach Vulva (sweet apricot, sugared amber, frankincense, golden cardamom, rice milk, and golden peach) I had to try this one a handful of times before it spoke to me, and when it finally did, it was a tale of the most wildly

gorgeous fruit salad orgy: lychee and mango and pineapple and condensed milk and palm sugar. Even sweet corn got a last-minute invite, couldn't leave that weirdo out!

The Elephant Is Slow To Mate (deep burgundy musk, red labdanum, smoked rose petals, opoponax, 17-year aged patchouli, blackened vanilla bean, dried black cherries, blackberries, and tobacco absolute.) What's the word for bombastic but wearing a bow tie of gravitas? For the cartoon image of someone having their mind blown, their eyes all wide and googly, their hair frizzled and electrified and pointing straight to the sun? This is the reddest fruit of the painter's palette, juiced and syruped and concentrated so that it's the most extra version of itself, spices that I can't pick apart but which are very potent, and *dramatic* resins. This is a big, bold personality that you just feel more interesting and special being in the room with, the kind that everyone gravitates toward, and when they look at you, you feel like the only person who exists. It's A Lot. Wow. I love it.

We Must Love One Another Or Die (white rose, muguet, white sandalwood, ambrette seed, vetiver, and smoke) This combination of notes, creates the impression of summer berries in a fancy antique silver compote dish. There's the plushness of soft fruit flesh and a glamorous metal tang and it presents as a deceptively simple and thoroughly elegant fragrance that somehow makes me think of this painting.

Honey, Black Lilies, and Gardenia Petals In the first moments, a plummy-jammy scent, and then, a viscous, vicious dark amber-honeyed slithery undercurrent of something sinuous and sinister. This scent is the creepy-crawly that shows up in the exquisite still life painting; there's the velvet table cloth, the artful bouquet of somber blossoms, the requisite skull or pile of dusty books, and –HEY WHAT THE! There's a SNAKE oh my god what the hell! This is a "THAT'S A FUCKING SNAKE Y'ALL!" of a scent.

Snake Smut (Snake Oil and Smut with leather accord, cardamom, and 7-year aged patchouli.) With all the woozy boozy musky sugary spices, you'd like this would be the kind of scent that would make your eyes pop from your head like a sleazy rat in a cartoon when a gorgeous dame crosses his path...and yet. It's not the sort of thing to make your skirts fly up or your pants tent impressively or insert whatever over-the-top horny synonym you like here. It's actually more subtle than you might expect. I smell all sorts of deliciousness; sweet, sugared black tea, a warm, gooey spiced and iced dessert, densely chewy vanilla candied things...but imagine if you were to take all concept of foodishness out of those things. What do you have left? A deeply sensual scent, dark and delectably textured and utterly enticing, but rather than wanting to eat it, you're content to wear it.

Honey Marzipan begins as the chewiest, most decadent brick of sweetened almond paste, then almost immediately acquires that lovely cherry note intrinsic to so many almond fragrances, and then before you can blink it swiftly shifts to a honeyed-heliotrope-apricot fairytale storybook princess of a scent where it lives out the remainder of its days in a spun sugar and spring stone fruit syrup château. From start to finish, it's an intense and rapid progression, but at every stage in its evolution, it's absolutely enchanting. P.S. Honey Marzipan + Snake Smut is an amazingly over-the-top evil queen + blushing maiden battle royale of a scent combination.

Unsubtle Euphemism (milk bread, amaretto, star anise, almond cream, and cardamom) It's interesting that milk bread is listed among the notes; by coincidence, I have just recently become obsessed with making fluffy, sweet, marvelous milk bread and I'm a little peeved at myself that I didn't start my bread experiments with this one several decades ago. It's just impossible to go wrong, and with all that sugar and full-fat milk and butter, even if you did somehow manage to screw it up, I bet it would still taste fantastic. Straight from the bottle and on my wrist, this Unsubtle Euphemism is an onslaught of saltiness, with nutty nuances, and something with a flaky, burnished, and crackly crust. There's an eventual subtle sweetness, like a sweet paste of scant sugar and egg yolks more than of

something milky or creamy, and it makes me think of treats like deep-fried sesame balls, or cured egg yolk buns, and as the scent settles in, even egg custard tarts.

Cacao, Black Pepper, and Khus don't judge this by how it smells in the bottle, it's unfortunately a tad reminiscent of unwashed stockings— not that anyone remembers what those smell like anymore! On the skin, it's a bar of earthy, nutty artisanal chocolate with peppery, grassy nubs of woody-herbaceous marjoram leaf. Which is a weird-sounding combination, right? I'll answer that. Yes. It totally is. And it also totally works. Surprisingly, Cacao, Black Pepper, and Khus is my second favorite from this collection For my no.1, see Levitating Phallic God, above.

Discarded Sandal (beeswax, hinoki wood, Japanese black pine, juniper, tolu balsam, and muguet) The cypress and pine is at the forefront of this scent, but it's a gentle incarnation of what can sometimes be austere and astringent notes with prickly, camphoraceous, insect-repellent aspect. These woods, however, have reached the highest levels of self-actualization and they are the most spiritually uplifting lemony and resinous evergreen best versions of themselves. An hour later the golden nectar of honey has emerged, and it too is a soft and tranquil embodiment of what can sometimes be a note that is too cloying, too sticky. If you're looking for a suggestive aphrodisiac from this collection, I'd say Discarded Sandal is the way to go, although it's more a perfume of desires sated than libidos feverishly spiking. The discarded sandal, a witness to lascivious sights and exquisite sighs, waits patiently. It will whisper these secrets to its mate, later tonight when they are reunited.

Lupers 2022

The Houses At The Back – Frosty Morning (a haze of misted ambers, orris root, and dappled lilac) I am a sucker for landscape art—especially that of the eerie, melancholic variety— and in this scent I really do smell the dull light of the wintry morning as the sun rises above the trees, the frost-topped roof and the backlit branches and chimneys, where you could almost see the marshes if not for the houses in between. A cool, subtle scent of iris and sweet violet, both sweetly airy and damp at once, velvety and diaphanous.

Cameo Chaperone (tulips scattered over silvery musk, ambrette seed, black orchid, and red benzoin) I don't think you could possibly trust any chaperone more than this paragon of virtue. She's all gorgeous madonna lilies, soft white musk, and delicate clouds of chantilly cream, and you almost want to give her a chaperone herself because she's maybe too pure for this world.

Honeyed Mushroom and Incense is the ripe reek of sweet, earthy fungi, which when reducing in a pan, nearly have a simmering mycelial incense of their own that reminds me of the musty jasmine and the warm balsamic woodsiness of nag champa. The honey accord reveals itself as summery, honeysuckle bright and grassy but becomes richer and stickier and more full-bodied with time, all autumnal burnt sugar musk and pungent dried fruits. This is a fragrance that immediately makes me think of the sweet woodland adventurers rendered in watercolors by contemporary artist Lily Seika Jones.

Sweet Hypsithilla (pulsating red musk, thick golden honey, a slap of leather, filthy patchouli, pious frankincense, frothy ambergris, sweet vanilla, gritty cacao, and fiery red tobacco) A roasty, earthy, unsweetened cocoa shadow enveloping amber honeycomb and dried plum-studded fruitcake.

Under The Silvery Moonbeams (rain-spattered, shimmering soft green mosses, mints, matcha, jasmine, cardamom, chestnut, pine needle, and sweet labdanum). This is a beautiful lemon made deeply, profoundly more lemony by the addition of gentle mints and loamy, leathery labdanum. It seems like I've been sampling a lot of

minty-scents lately, and if I haven't mentioned it before, mint is one of those notes that ruins all fragrances for me. I wrote this elsewhere, but I will share it here as well: It's a sort of false freshness that I paradoxically associate with really gross smells as well as the attitudes of people who pretend they never get crusty or farty and think their shit, as they say, don't stink. Listen, all shit stinks, it's okay, it's supposed to. While I wouldn't call Under the Silvery Moonbeams "mint-forward," you can definitely tell it's in there and for me, at least, it's one of the rare instances of mint done right. It's refreshing in a mental or emotional way, as opposed to a surface level, "gotta chomp on my gum if I don't want to smell like the ham sandwich I just ate for lunch" way. It's the "escape into the cool, wintry midnight and linger alone under a street lamp and breathe in the frosty starlight after being suffocated by small talk and excruciating awkwardness at the new year's eve party that you didn't even want to go to in the first place" kind of refreshing. That's the stuff. That's a breath of fresh air for your soul and that's exactly what this fragrance conjures.

Stainless Steel Dildo (gleaming polished steel and a buzzy floral aldehyde) This is a complex floral composition of dazzling brightness, woodsiness, and animalic waxiness, alongside a luxurious triad of something like rose, jasmine, and lily of the valley floral. It feels "retro" and "perfumey" in all the best ways, and despite its space-age Hajime Sorayama porny implications (nothing wrong with that!) it's actually a softly classy scent.

Olisbokollike (a shockingly stiff and lightly oiled symmikto proto-baguette with a dribble of sweet cream) hardened breadsticks generously seeded and salted, made with a base of ancient pounded grains, lubed up with sweet, soft unsalted butter and crowned with lightly sweetened, freshly whipped cream baked by and shaped by the perviest of Athenian artisans.

White Chocolate, Strawberry Pulp, and Calvados Strawberry milkshake vibes! Or maybe strawberry Nesquik? A chilled, foamy frappé of vine-ripened strawberries and zingy rhubarb nectar, blended with fresh milk, sugar, and cream.

White Chocolate, Pink Carnation, Coconut Cream, and Clove A white chocolate scone with sugar-crisped edges and a drizzle of coconut cream glaze. There's a bit of spice that comes across as gooey cinnamon chips studded throughout the mild vanilla-floral scented crumb. If these aren't served at the next high tea that I am invited to, I shall be most put out! Also, please host that specific tea party and add me to your high-priority invite list.

Lupers 2023

Green Silk Carnation (cypress-green carnation petals crushed into grass, hemp flowers, and weed) A sweet vegetal mustiness with a tiny amount of terpenic funk, which as it wears is, at turns, sweeter and greener, never committing to one or the other. It dries to a frosty-soapy pleasantness. It has a chilly, verdant vibe that calls to mind the greenhouses in a snowstorm from the first story in Kelly Link's forthcoming collection White Cat, Black Dog.

Pink Silk Peony (cotton candy peonies, rose cream, and white cognac) Sweet, cold strawberry ice cream scented with lush, velvety rose petals; alternatively, if the entire cast of Rose Petal Place were whizzed up in your ice cream maker, with fresh cream and tons of sparkling sugar.

How Write The Beat Of Love (red musk, red mango, labdanum, black honey, black gardenia, Indonesian patchouli, and champaca blossom) A swoon and sweep of pulpy fruits, deeply jammy, wine-drunk on umbral honey.

Dalliance With A Comedian On Stage (sawdust and red musk, blueberries, black currant, plum blossom, sake, rose petals, and frankincense) A fruity-herbal tea, left to steep and steam in a porcelain cup, now fermenting in a jar. Berries and blossoms begin as a humble, wholesome tisane but somehow end up a tart, tipsy kombucha.

Chocolate Chypre (no notes listed) Cocoa butter incense smoke, the mysterious aura of scholarly studies late into the evening, accompanied by a chocolatey treat rummaged from deep within velvet peacoat pockets.

White Silk Chrysanthemum (vanilla floral aldehyde laced with spicy chrysanthemum) An enchantingly fizzy vanilla cream soda/ ebullient ginger ale hybrid, but not something you'd want to drink; rather, the scent of a strange, invisible bloom trailing up a trellis, something you walk by every day without really noticing, and then one day the breeze blows just so, bobbing its petals invitingly. Intrigued, entranced, you stop to sniff it, and in that small instance, with the slightest deviation from your path— everything changes forever. This is the scent of that singular, crystalline moment, tremulous and flickering, between the before and the after.

The Morning Star Among The Living (black fig encased in saffron-threaded amber) The scent of a honeyed, floral lozenge that began as a liqueur made from macerating figs —both the delicate, fresh fruit as well as their rich, dried, pruneey counterparts—in two parts bourbon to one part vanilla. Mash the pulp and the liquid together, simmer until very thick and allow to set on cool, aromatic eucalyptus leaves. Administer these sweet drops as needed to individuals who pride themselves on their brutal honesty, but you suspect they enjoy the inherent cruelty of that sentiment more than the idea of actual truthfulness and sincerity.

An Oiran on New Year's Day (polished mahogany, black tea, green cardamom, russet peppercorn, and ginger root) Dark, fruity woods, rich, rosy, and resinous. This is a scent that becomes darker and darker and begins to smell both rare and obscure and somehow a bit crafty and cunning, something you'd find on the black market from a dealer whose expertise lies in acquisition rather than provenance.

Contest of Colors, Pink Peach Blossoms and White Plum Flowers (pink peach blossoms, white plum flowers, carnation petals, labdanum, skin musk, and white amber) Reaching down into a barrel of vibrant fruit blossom flavored hard candies, just to feel all of those thousands of small, sweet treasures with your fingertips, pushing further down through their cool weight, sugared orbs clicking together like porcelain buttons, glass eyes, faceted gems, a plume of fragrance released, boiled syrup and dripping fruit flesh, and frothy clouds of frilled, perfumed petals.

Wandering Eye (blackcurrant, carrot seed, rose otto, immortelle, salt musk, violet leaf absolute, and lemon peel) First off, get a gander at that label art! Long-time readers of this blog will no doubt instantaneously recognize what I have come to think of as The Eyes of Becky Munich, as this artist's eerie ocular renderings are truly things of eldritch beauty. And though I was not familiar with the particular sonnet that this fragrance was inspired by, there is no denying that the scent overall encapsulates the mournful lyricism that I associate with Edna St. Vincent Millay. For me, this is more a whispery, poetic feeling with an exquisitely elegiac quality—somewhere between gothic melodrama and tragic Victorian fairy poetry— than it is an actual smell that I can pinpoint ...but envision this: a handful of sweet, dried chamomile brewed in a teacup of tears and pebbled with precious stones gathered from a reliquary; left as a graveside offering on a day when the sky is sullen, and the light is bruised and the descent of evening fog, milky, opaque, thick as wool, concludes the silent ceremony.

Courtiers and Cats (amber musk, cedarwood, agarwood, spikenard, black pepper, cacao, tobacco absolute, toasted cardamom, and cream) The biscuity warmth of musk and roasted cocoa beans, a sassy spike of black pepper,

spikenard's earthy, dirt-between-paws mustiness; between the woods and the amber and the hint of creaminess, this is a softly rumbling purr of comfort and coziness.

Aristocratic Warriors (gleaming tamahagane, polished leather, and auburn amber) A clan of juicy citrus samurai brandishing swift, shining steel swords and disco dancing; not a "lemon party" in popular parlance, but also, a lemon party is exactly what this is: a party of literal lemons, jubilant and joyful, bright, bouncy, and boogieing down. "Boogieing down"? Oh, Sarah. Are you Stephen King-old now? Also, there are no lemon notes in this scent, so maybe like King's telepathic chef at that haunted hotel, I'm smelling something that's not there right before I'm hit with the shinning.

Dark Chocolate, Blackcurrant, Rosewater, and Apricot (no notes listed) The most exquisite chocolate truffle, hand-piped with a velvety wild woodland brambleberry jam filling, enrobed with another layer of chocolate, embellished with freeze-dried bilberry pieces and rose petals. You'll only find this treat deep in the forest at a pop-up stand run by hedgehogs with little purple jam-stained claws and sugar-crusted quills.



Tarot (2018)

The Empress

The Earth Mother (patchouli and clary sage with a host of dark mosses and lichens, wild grasses, warm acorns, dammar, burgundy pitch, pine needles, mandrake root, hay absolute, and sweet vetiver). Imagine a bosomy earth mama hug, all patchouli deodorant, wild hair tangled with leaves and moss, a tiered and torn cotton skirt, patched wildly and smelling of summer grass and fresh-dug earth, and the intimate metallic tangle of vintage copper jewelry, tarnished and tinkling and maybe worn even when the wearer is running around starkers under a full moon.

The Queen of Love (red rose petals, benzoin, honey myrtle and ambrette seed). A bouquet of the sweetest, pinkest roses, chosen for the unblemished beauty of their petals and their peerless fragrance, and secreted away in a chipped jam jar, accompanied by a dripping fragment of honeycomb, redolent of clover and ripe apricots. The one

who scrapes a morsel of this concoction across their morning toast, or who adds a fragrant, sticky pinch to their bathwater, will soon be accused of the unfathomable transgression of self-love.

The Eternal Queen (white gardenia and tuberose with ambergris accord, vegetal vanilla musk, bourbon vanilla, and amber incense) She is every queen that has ever walked on this Earth, and every queen that shall come. She smells of lush, velvety, sun-warmed magnolia blossoms mingled with vanilla-tipped white musk incense.

The Queen of Earthly Paradise (daffodil, gladiolus, tulips, crocus, aconite and jonquil, amber) A glowing grove of blonde woods, yellow pollen across a veiled wing, and golden bulbs bursting through the soil at the first warm light of Spring.

The Robe of Pomegranates (pomegranate and bakhoor oudh, honeyed incense, fig and ambrette seed, sandalwood and carnation)

To my nose, pomegranate, no matter how sophisticated the blend in which it makes an appearance, always manages to smell like a combination of Robitussin and Hall's cough lozenges. Milky fig and carnation's piquant, clove-like undertones, however, transform this into a remedy more cocktail than head-cold related, and I'd gladly quaff a spoonful (or champagne coupe) or two. BUT! Turns out I wrote two reviews without realizing it. Apparently, two days ago, I noted: "this is not the red, ripe, syrupy blast of pomegranate that I was expecting, but instead a more sedate fruit, cooked down a bit, calmed by soft spices and baked into a desert with a lightly caramelized crumb." It seems that any way you slice it (pour it?), I want to eat or drink it.

The Forest of the Empress (clubmoss, silver fir, blue spruce, red cedar, cypress, and live oak) A verdant grove of evergreens, the promise of peace, quiet, and refuge within the heart of Nature's embrace. Sharp and green with a brilliant hint of something bitter and candied (rock candy pine needles?) A honeyed tea brewed from both the flotsam of the canopy and the detritus of the forest floor.

The Shield (white patchouli and helichrysum with blackcurrant, white sage, praline, vetiver, and orris root) In some interpretations, her shield bears the eagle of dominion, in others, it is emblazoned with the symbol of the planet Venus. The sovereignty of love, the protection and succor of a benevolent mother-queen. An initial patchouli darkness dissipates immediately (maybe white patchouli is the ghost of regular patchouli?) and reveals a most intriguing combination of powdery cotton, dusty straw, and creamy, sugared pecans.

The Starry Crown (French lavender and star anise, Roman chamomile and leather) A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. I believe it was one of Aldous Huxley's characters, when assessing a champagne, remarked, "it had the taste of an apple peeled with a steel knife"; Starry Crown smells to me of that assessment, along with a dreamy creamy-lemony note and a bit of soft, warm tobacco.

The Scepter of the Empress (amber oudh, mandarin rind, Florentine bergamot) One half of the Tarot's binary expression of archetypical sovereignty, governing comfort and succor, the healing power of the natural world, the fecundity of the countryside, the stability of earth supported by the passionate tides of water, and all that gently nurtures humankind. At the forefront, the citrus mingles in such a way to tickle the memory, But it's more the leaves and the twigs and seeds of a citrus tree; waxy and bitter and almost a little soapy, with a halo of sweet orange oil hovering elusively just out of reach. In opposition to that fleeting sweetness is a pungent, indolic funk at the very heart of this scepter (like if you went to Ollivander's and he took one look at you and said, "aha! You need a wand with a core of fossilized skunk pee!")

Funky bits aside, this is actually a lovely and interesting fragrance.

The Harvest of the Empress (wheat stalks, hay absolute, and clove) The first time I wore this, I thought “wow, this is a really rich, mature scent”, but you might not come to that conclusion unless you’ve worn it for an hour or so. Sniffed straight out of the bottle, The Harvest of the Empress is super clove-y; once settled on the wrist, it’s the interplay of fresh, tangy hay and warm, balsamic woods with a spicy bite. It culminates in a scent that I associate with skin-warmed, vintage costume jewelry.

The Squishy Cushions (rose petal attar, red oudh, Mysore sandalwood, red benzoin, elemi, silken musk, and jasmine sambac.) The glory of Venus as the apex of luxury and sensuality. I’ll be honest with you; I believe I am pre-programmed to adore a scent called “The Squishy Cushion”. Comfort is my life’s goal. “She was comfortable” is what you will find etched into my headstone. And is there anything more symbolic to my cause than a well-squished cushion? I daresay there is not. The Empress’s squishy cushions are a vague mélange, a faint but incredibly luxe blend of roses and resins; a posh pillow (or Chanel cardigan, or Burberry robe) upon which the scented imprint of someone glamorous has been left. You want to rub your face all over it, but you know that’s kind of weird.



The Magician

The Lemniscate (frankincense and black pepper, Himalayan cedar, cognac, and tobacco) The sign of life, the sigil of eternity. Dry, chilly woods with a piperine zip and a nose-tickling, lemony cedar nip.

The Magician’s Belt (frankincense, white rose, balsam, almond flower, and benzoin) The Ouroboros, the serpent as he consumes his own tail. My notes tell me that I thought this was “a creamy, grape-y rose, dipped in sugar”, which makes me sound like a simpleton, but...there you go.

The Magician’s Garden (Flos campi and lilium convallium, Rose of Sharon and Lily of the Valley) The blossoms of transcendence and spiritual aspiration. I didn’t know this until just this moment, but Rose of Sharon is not really a rose at all, but rather a member of the hibiscus family—and which is why I don’t smell any rose in this lovely garden (which is fine with me, rose and I have a complicated relationship). Instead this is a charming white floral that is somehow both dusky and heady, light and lacy. There’s an odd mineral tang hovering at the edges, which cuts the cloying and keeps things weird. For what it’s worth, The Magician’s Garden is my favorite of the collection. My second favorite is...

The Magician’s Robes (red and white musks alight with frankincense, white oudh, sweet labdanum, and saffron) The unification of opposites, putrefaction and individuation, the culmination of the Great Work. The way up and the way down are one and the same. Straight from the bottle, this reminds me of a sauce that comes with the naan

which I usually stuff myself with and which leaves me unable to finish my cauliflower tikka masala at one of my favorite restaurants. It's bright green and I always worry it's going to be fraught with mint, but I'm not certain there's even any mint in it. It's slightly sour, slightly sweet, and slightly bitter and never fails to make my mouth pucker in surprise. On my wrist though, The Magician's Robes are a deep, velvety embrace, utterly saturated with sweet, musky magics.

The Magician's Tools (Clary sage and patchouli for Earth, lavender and yarrow for Air, tobacco and Dracaena cinnabari for Fire, lotus root and myrrh for Water). Wand and cup, dagger and coin. A scent lofty and bright with tinny/camphoraceous herbals, and anchored by a gritty, earthy darkness.

The Magician's Wand (ash, rowan, oak, and elder wood, polished with sweet resins but handworn, glowing with inner fire) Energy, will, and the manifested Word of the Magus. It is the generative process, the act of creation. Lush golden resins, and pillowy vanilla musk. There's almost something fruity about it, but it's very elusive....maybe like some sort of fluffy syllabub flavored with the essence of a fruit that never existed.

Il Bagatella (pomegranate and Lebanese cedar, the martyr's red rose, and an aspergillum of wine-soaked hyssop) The Carnival King, the embodiment of the liminal space that exists between the death and resurrection of Christ. *consults notes* : "...this is a punch that will really fuck you up." A sticky, red wine-soaked pomegranate floating in the middle of your Nana's cut glass punch bowl.

Taschenspieler (peru balsam, tobacco absolute, leather, white sage, and blackberry juice) The master of sleight-of-hand and trickery: dexterous, clever, and roguish. Darkly refreshing, an herbal draught in a wooden cup. Savory at the sip, and sweet at the swallow, it becomes sweeter and more potent the longer you drink from its depths.

The Harlequin (vetiver-steeped raspberry and red currant) The Divine Comedian, the Eternal Jester, instructing through pranks and buffoonery. A jammy, fizzy summer drink dankened by the barest whisper of vetiver, counter-brightened by a squeeze of lemon. This is, of course, served in a smiley-faced plastic pitcher.

The Legerdemain (black silken musk, dark clove, guaiac wood, black pepper, frankincense, and cardamom) The twilight in between the stage performer and the Magus; the sleight of hand trick transforms into true sorcerous skill. A sharp, funky waft from musky, brooding spice cabinet that softens to the must and dust of peppery ghosts with time and expiration dates past.

The Magus (honey absolute, Oman frankincense, and asphodel) The Sorcerer, the Cunning-Man, the Sage. Soft, green herbs steeped in honey. A taste on the tongue to sweeten your kisses as you pass through the underworld.

The Mountebank (leather, sweet balsam, white sandalwood, thieves' rosin, and dusty lavender) The Hustler, the Scoundrel, the Grifter, using the magic of misdirection, charm, and subtlety to swindle his way through this world, and through all worlds, seen and unseen. Roguish leather, dusty from the road. Balsamic molasses. Fluffy lavender clouds. A tricky scent that keeps you guessing.

The Storyteller (beeswax, leather, hearth wood, and campfire smoke) The Raconteur, the Town Gossip, and the first character to appear on the stage in the first act. A clean, respectable sort of scent, straight from the bottle. The soft, citrusy cologne of an upstanding citizen. Once on the skin, however, it's an entirely different story than the one you thought you were getting. Still respectable, I guess. But less rigid. Less wake-up call and more bedtime

story. The soft supple leather of a well worn chair armchair, a hearth whose smoking embers signal the late hour, and the sweet, dripping wax of a candle that has illuminated an audience from its rapt, wide-eyed beginnings to its soft snores at the tale's end.



The High Priestess

The Night Priestess (night-blooming jasmine, clove bud, cardamom, moonlit vanilla orchid, and moonflower.) Who leads the star-dazed hero in a moon-blessed quest for his mythical lover. Turn down service that includes a patch of shimmering moonlight illuminating a milk-white pillow upon which candied jasmine awaits a sleepy tongue, orchid incense lightly perfuming the bedclothes, and hushed moonflower lullabies.

The Moon Goddess (vetiver, white pine, hay, Sicilian lemon, leather, and agarwood) Virgin, huntress, witch, holding the mysteries and powers of womanhood between her palms. A small, leather bag into which spells of leafy, wooded camouflage and swift, quiet-footed enchantments are stitched, then stuffed generously with bitter lemon peel, crisp pine needles, and dry prickly hay.

The Eternal Virgin (white carnation, cardamom pod, and honey milk) The keeper of the secrets that are hidden at the moment that life begins; she is the mediator between the supplicant and the word of the gods. An ambrosial desert of rich, honeyed cream and floral spices.

La Papesse (rose oudh, blackened myrrh, and cathedral incense) A visionary heretic, martyred to usher in a new Aeon. The remnants of a dream wherein the middle-aged goth headshop proprietress leads you to the far end of the woo woo store, behind the heavy velvet curtains to the back room, where you just know that she keeps the good stuff. Instead of a coterie of giant quartz crystals, brilliant and glimmering and full of Instagrammable vibes, however, you meet a dark goddess, your shadow self, in a blackened, lightless cave. Are you both the “good vibes only” girl-goddess and the dank dream priestess of doom? This scent, shifting from light rosy florals to dark, smoky chambers and sibylline vapors would will it so.

Pomegranates and Date Palms (pomegranate, dates, and cypress infused with ketoret smoke veiled in violet, purple, and crimson) The Mysteries of Persephone's divine descent entwined with the Mysteries of the Temple of Solomon, forming a map of the Tree of Life. This is fun! Reminds me, at first, of Daytona Beach middle school spring break and time spent at the beach wearing bikinis that were a little bit inappropriate for a 13 year old and liberal spritzes of Exclamation by Coty. Of course, there is nothing beachy or cheap about this scent, really. It's a complex, fruity blend; a rich, colorful still life in real life—ripe amethyst and ruby-hued fruits, sticky amber dates, and a plum-shadowed cloud of smoke.

The Pillars (white cedar, cypress wood, sweet myrrh, honey myrtle, white sandalwood, spikenard, and frankincense) The pillars at the entrance to Solomon's temple. Vavavoom! So glamorous, dense with exotic woods, florals, and resins. And in this respect, The Pillars reminds me a little bit of BPAL's long-discontinued-but-recently-revived Venom. Both elegant, ominous Wicked Stepmother scents, but different aspects of that perennial cruel, selfish trope. Where Venom is seductive and serpentine with dark wild berries and that sinuous opoponax, The Pillars, perhaps due to the fresh foliage/evergreen aspects of cypress, feels less lush, more whittled down and spare. To borrow from children's literature, let's say that Venom is Aunt Sponge, and The Pillars is Aunt Spiker.

The Crown (blue chamomile, mugwort, and orris root) The three phases of the moon fashioned into a lunar triregnum. From The Crown, I'm getting competing cedar and violets from this, at first, perhaps duking it out over an herbal sweetness lurking below. Simultaneously I am piqued by peppery and poked by powdery. It later becomes the still slightly peppery, but vastly comforting, Johnson's baby shampoo.

The Crescent Moon (amber and copal with white sage and juniper) The mystery of divine virginity, insemination, and the cradle of all birth. Fertility, wise counsel, and the gift of true wisdom. Amber and sage sounds like a kind of weird combination to me but it results in a bright, shimmering, lightly resinous scent. Teenaged resins, roller skating through the suburbs, without the cares and worries and addictions and affairs that darken the psyches of adult resins.

The Scroll (honeyed myrrh with a drop of Ceylon cinnamon) Her scroll is sealed, her book is closed, and she is silent: the wisdom that she grants is that which cannot be put into words, that which cannot be recorded but must be experienced. A cozy, close to the skin scent; a cup of lightly spiced tea, its steeping playfully sweetened an effervescent splash of cream soda.

The Cross (frankincense, styrax, oakmoss, patchouli, and birch tar) The integration of spirit with the material world. Both sharp and smooth in the same sniff, The Cross is a many layered, nose-ticklingly pungent enigma of bitter and waxy, dry and woody, and bottled in a sort of pope-blessed-in-ballpoint-pen, incense-y plastic.



The Emperor

The Huntsman (black pine and vetiver, leather and clove) Leading a host of spectral hounds, he scourges the earth in search of errant souls. A still, solemn forest of tarry, resinous pines, greenest firs, and crisp midnight air. Woodsmoke and loam, lichen and fern, and musty mosses creeping over logs and hidden pathways. Spiders sleeping in their dew-jeweled webs, high in the branches. If you love deep, green woody scents, then you are going to need this one.

Pater Populi (bay leaf and olive blossom with ambrette seed, white oakmoss, petitgrain, lavender, cedar, and leather) The foundation of a stable and just society, the keeper of tradition, the enforcer of laws. This is lovely and sweet, but not in a cloying, saccharine way that you taste on your tongue, but an emotion, a feeling, a tug on the heart-strings. A sentiment, rather than the scent of sweetness. A gentle iron, the edges buffed with woods and resins. A clean, musky, mallow-y tobacco.

The Horned God (Ash and white cedar, frankincense and acacia, holly and oak, verbena and nettle) Lord of the cycle of death and resurrection, he is the personification of the rhythms of order found deep in the cycles of nature. A citrusy cedar, wreathed in verdant greenery.

Eternal King (juniper and yew berry, black pine, white sage, soil, and pyre smoke) At first, all piney pine-pine-pine. Pine needles rubbed in your eyes and mouth, up your nose, when your face has been smashed into the damp earth. Why are you laying prostrate on the ground, abased and humbled with your head bowed low in the dirt? It is, of course, the will of the unyielding king at whose undying feet you kneel. Your petitions for mercy, for love, make him laugh—and it's a joyous, terrifying sound. He sets fire to your hair. You wake up with a start, your bed clothes soaked in bittersweet sweat, your cheeks streaked with grime and tears. A pine needle has worked its way into the fabric of your pajamas, and you leave it where it pokes your tender skin, a reminder to hold your love and loyalty close, defend its sanctity, even and especially from kings.

The Emperor (steel and gold wreathed by a crown of bay and iris) Cool and powdery, regal and sophisticated, this is indeed the steely eau de cologne of a sovereign commanding his legions to secure the safety of his people and promote the expansion of his lands...but this dedicated ruler also moonlights as a chef! Sometimes, as he crawls under his silken sheets at night after a clandestine visit to the night market to search out the perfect seasoning bouquet for a pot au feu, his companion stirs from slumber to sleepily note the bitter, herbal pungency of her lover's hands. "Is that...parsley?" she inquires in a drowsy mumble, before nodding off again. Damn, he thinks. Should have washed my hands after chopping the bay and thyme. Probably should have washed the blood of my enemies from them before handling the herbs, too. Eh, what're you gonna do?

The Emperor's Throne (tobacco leaf, stone-grey ambergris, cistus, benzoin, and Himalayan cedar). I am currently reading a fascinating book about ambergris because I have long heard it mentioned with reference to perfume, though I've never been entirely certain if it is actually supposed to smell like something, or if it is in fact a fixative with which to increase the staying-power of the scent. I still don't know, but maybe I'll have a better answer after I finish the book! At any rate, I can't stop thinking about ambergris lately, and seeing it mentioned as a note in The Emperor's Throne probably has me overthinking things (for example, I certainly don't smell much in the way of musky, earthy cow dung, which is how traders and scholars describe—fresh—ambergris, but then again, BPAL is a cruelty free business and no doubt uses a synthetic variety, not the actual whale poop filled with squid beaks and whatnot, and which sells for obscene amounts per ounce.) Rather than a fecal marine scent, then, what this is instead is a musty cedar with a sweet, rounded bottom note, and I can't confirm this for a fact, since I don't actually know any rich people, but I'm certain it smells like rich people airing out their linen cupboards.

The Emperor's Rams (dragon's blood resin, red peppercorn, red poppy, red musk, and red amber) Sweet, spicy, and utterly hypnotic, dragon's blood resin is one of my very favorite notes, and its inclusion in the rams representing the twin symbols of Aries, signifying courage and aggression, provides a warm base, a blanket of familiarity—with an interesting twist, when you peek from over your cozy, resinous coverlet. Hot metal upon which something fragrant

burns, sizzling peppercorns, hissing and popping, like so many mustard seeds in an oiled pan, stirred quickly with curry leaves and cardamom pods.

The Emperor's Crown (frankincense and styrax with bergamot and lemon peel) Rulership blessed by celestial providence; bright, metallic opulence, righteous and austere. A dry, bright citrusy frankincense, a little piney, a little woody, and vaguely creamy vanillic something in the dry-down.

The Emperor's Beard (sweet tobacco and raw patchouli with Italian bergamot, pine needle, vintage dime store musk, and red sandalwood) In writing these reviews and scent stories I do try my best to not make comparisons to other scents, even other BPALs, because I think that's a lazy kind of workaround, and besides, it really doesn't work for people who haven't smelled what I might be comparing the scent to. However! BPAL's limited edition lunacy scent Schwarzer Mond has been released a few times over the years, beginning, I believe, in 2006. I own several bottles of it. In fact, you might say I hoard it. It is my all time, no.1, A++ scent from Black Phoenix Alchemy Lab, and it smells of wicked, brooding resins and that dark lurker, patchouli. Now, imagine that scent, but anthropomorphized as a wooly beard (no man attached, just the beard) that also smells vaguely of a maple porter.

The Emperor's Scepter (golden myrrh, calamus, iris root, and cardamom) Formed into the crux ansata, symbolizing his absolute power over life and death, The Emperor's Scepter has got the oddest, and most fleeting olfactory opening act of strawberries and cream that quickly exits not just the stage but this plane of existence entirely, leaving no trace it had even been there. The main event—you know, the whole reason you bought the ticket in the first place (I'm looking at you, hotly anticipated Beats Antique show in 2012; doors were at 8 but you didn't show up on the stage until midnight when I was practically asleep!)—enters shy and soft but strange and stunning; rich, nutty (?) resins and the subtle warmth of delicate spices.

The Emperor's Armor (Roman chamomile, frankincense, ylang ylang, vetiver, and Italian bergamot) A talisman against fear in the form of a ylang ylang lozenge; that heavy, heady, slightly medical floral scent boiled to a sugary syrup, cooled in a lovely wax mold, and painted with a lemony chamomile glaze to help it go down easier. Procure from your local miracle worker and use as needed.

The Red Robes (red musk and leather streaked with tomato leaf and tobacco) Absolute power in the temporal world. This is a perfectly pleasant scent but I'm unable, even after several samplings, to really pick out individual notes. An earthy-fruity, well-rounded musk with a hint of tobacco.

The Stream (lavender buds and gentle bells of Lily of the Valley floating on a calm river of lychee, ylang ylang, and white magnolia) The intuitiveness, compassion, sensuality, and creativity that nourishes and sustains Order. Musky, zingy, effervescent apricots and dewy white florals bundled close and dry in a basket woven from sharply fragrant lavender.

The Orb (bitter almond and gold oudh) The orb is immediately, deliciously almond-y, in a sweet marzipan paste way, but there's also a scant handful of roasted, salted nuts lurking in the background. Sweet mandarin oranges and tiny clementines sit, piled high, in a vintage pyrex bowl nearby to create a melange of notes that hover closely for a moment together, but mostly spend time apart in separate corners of the room.

The Fiery Mountains (clove, birch tar, red ginger root, and frankincense) The aspirations of man, both in the material and spiritual worlds. Red hot candies are some people's favorite sweets, but these people are gross and they are wrong. Ok, maybe not all of you, but I am definitely thinking of one lousy person in particular and I hate his rotten guts forever and I might be associating him with a poor candy that never did anything to me and now I am a candy-shaming bully. I guess I'll own up to that. Nonetheless, I maintain that Red Hots are super gross. But imagine them made with deeply aromatic clove and peppery fresh ginger and nuances of woodsmoke and birch sap and packaged in a fancy box carved with runes and sold at a secret artisanal witch's market that you can only find out about from a cipher hidden deep in the pages of the previous year's farmer's almanac.



WEENIES

Autumn 2016

The Ghost of a Woman Confronts Her Murderer on a Stormy Night (blackened cypress tar, bleached white cedar, asphodel, patchouli, and night-black musk). Caustic, like acid erosion on metal—straight from the bottle this does smell very much like a bloody curse, an enraged accusation. It shortly becomes pungent and tarry with a chilly bite, and then, inexplicably, a sweetly earthy, heartbreakingly delicate scent.

The Drowned Man's Ghost Tries to Claim a New Victim for the Sea (black kelp and opoponax, silt, and dark things dredged up from the depths of a seabed). Admittedly, I am all a-swoon for anything that lists notes of opoponax, and it lends a honeyed, balsamic quality to this lightly oceanic fragrance. As the scent lingers on the skin it smells less and less of salt spray against gull-flecked skies and more like sun-warmed resins, a chunk of myrrh sunning itself on a splintered piece of driftwood.

The Ghost of Clytemnestra Awakening the Furies (opoponax steeped in black wine, spindle tree sap, nightshade accord, yew needles, and a drop of blood). Opoponax plays a different role in this aromatic summons to the Erinyes; a bitter brew, a toxic temptation, this ghost lures us with a syrupy sweetness under which lurks a poisoned bile. This is a fragrance that attracts and repels in turn.

Four Grave Robbers Awaken a Ghost (dragon's blood resin, olibanum, galangal, bdellium, and myrrh). To be honest, I don't know the difference between olibanum and frankincense and I haven't the slightest as to what galangal or bdellium are, (they're related to ginger and myrrh, respectively—thanks Google), but this bone dry scent conjures visions of shadowy mounds of dusty dark chocolate shavings with slivers of sandalwood tucked between the sheaves, and the once you've fallen under it's spell, the more arcane details just don't seem to matter.

The Gambols of Ghosts (Rivulets of beeswax and amber flame illuminating a pale blue midnight, eddying with phantom violets, olive blossom, and moss) is all tangy dairy and cool, green florals, as if a compound butter were made with fresh cream, the lightly bruised petals of spring flowers and slightly sweetened with their verdant nectar. As the scent dries on one's skin you can smell hints of the wax paper it is wrapped in, and the viscous violet essence that has been drizzled atop in dulcet presentation. If this were an actual food, I would desire to spread it on crumbling oatcakes, served alongside afternoon tea in a fairy ring.



Autumn 2017

Cinnamon Chai Cupcake (no notes provided) The coziness of lightly spiced cake batter on a chilly autumn night, a bowl of sweetened buttercream frosting, a dusting of cinnamon.

Pumpkin Brownies The Lab's description indicates this is a pumpkin brownie swirled with caramel and topped with sour cream frosting, but to my nose, these are peanut butter brownies. Begin with a beurre noisette, and swirl high quality butter in a pan on low heat until it gets foamy and brown, and begins to release that nutty, toasty, delicious scent. Toss this in a bowl with a minimal amount of cocoa powder—really, just a dash— and add a jar of the chunkiest, saltiest, most delicious peanut butter you can find. Then do all that other stuff that makes brownies, brownies. I don't know man, I make mine from a box.

Hallow-e'en, 1914 (Dried ivy and maple leaf with honeyed fig, black cypress, and grave dirt.) An incense of dry, dusty earth sweetened with dark, syrupy fruits, for welcoming for the dead come home.

Samhain 2017 (Damp woods, fir needle, and black patchouli with the gentlest touches of warm pumpkin, clove, nutmeg, allspice, sweet red apple and mullein) Autumn fruits stewed on the stove, spiced with all the usual seasonal suspects, and with half a mug of local apple cider stirred in to gild the lily. The mixture, perhaps left on the burner a few seconds too long as you stepped outside to turn your face up to the October sun, begins to break down into a pulpy jam, the sugars caramelizing and smoking slightly.

Haunted Seas (Seaspray and flecks of foam welling with opoponax and labdanum's sepulchral moans.) Ooh, at first Haunted Seas smells very much like one of my long-discontinued favorites—Danube. A cool, dark, and mysterious floral-aquatic. A slow, lazy current, running through a sun-dappled glade, swirling with strange, pale blooms. As it

dries on the skin, the spectral grey skies and cool, faint fog become apparent, but even so, there is a hopeful brightness at the core of this scent, the breaking of dawn after a midnight of storm-tossed seas.

La Calavera Catrina (Autumn leaves, wild roses, bourbon vanilla, dry chamomile, and a bouquet of bright chrysanthemums and Mexican marigolds.) This elegant Lady of the Graveyard's arrival is heralded by a sour pungency, green and bitter, and the sweet rot of fallen foliage, damp and decaying. She extends her hand, and gripped lightly in the furled, gleaming bone of her fingers, is a bouquet of the reddest roses you can imagine, their scent lemony and uplifting, mingling gently with the sweetly herbaceous chamomile and the musty spice of marigold petals, crushed underfoot.

Pumpkin Chypre (A gleaming auburn chypre shot through with streaks of pumpkin) Roasted pumpkin, sprinkled with sea salt and not quite Parmesan. Maybe nutritional yeast? Foody, but in a savory main course sort of way, as opposed to the fancy dessert cart options. There's...something here. I can't put my finger on it. I want to say umami-esque. Umami adjacent. I don't know if I want to smell like it, but I'm pretty sure that I like to eat it.

Dead Leaves, Hemp, Mossy Soil, Frankincense, and Oudh Confession time, friends. Your stinky friend here never properly partied it up during her youth and wouldn't know what hemp or any other weedy business* smelled like even if she was right in the middle of it getting a contact high. Is that what you call it? I don't even know the language for drug talk. My sister once laughed at me because I referred to "crystal meth," she told me I sounded like an out of touch octogenarian. I was 30, by the way. I've led a fucked up, fascinating (well, I think so, anyway) existence, but super fun, mind-altering substances were unfortunately not a part of that. ANYWAY. This particular Dead Leaves blend smells briefly of dank earth, but it's final form is a rich, fruity resin.

*I know hemp and marijuana are different plants! ...but that's pretty much all I know.

Dead Leaves, Violet Candy, and Sugar Crystals This initially struck me as one of the more unusual Dead Leaves combinations and I wasn't entirely convinced it was going to be a pleasant. It begins with an earthy, murky, pile of damp leaves with the powdery woody-floral of the violets growing in a patch next to it. A waxen, sugar-crusted candy wrapper blows by in a brief but sudden breeze. All of these pieces are like jerky stop motion animation; you see them in separate frames in your mind's eye, disparate entities that don't even interact, let alone connect, until all of a sudden they do. Underneath the decaying plant matter is an elusive fragrance that smells like, oh, I don't know...nougat made by dryads? Pillowly and sweet and utterly magical. Imagine there was a secret woodland fairy folk candy shop, shelves sweetly stocked with confections concocted and created with forest roots and resins. You'd have to go pretty far into the forest to find it; you might not be allowed to leave once you do. If you do make it back home again, you'll not remember a single moment of your delicious adventure ...but you'll dream about those sylvan sweets for the rest of your life.

Pumpkin Spice Shoggoth (Bursting bubbles of self-luminous pumpkin spice!) Amorphous and radiant, and definitely drinkable as a latte, it's possible that something either went horribly awry...or exactly as it was meant to be, when the The Elder Thing created created the Pumpkin Spice Shoggoth. Iridescent lemongrass and coconut slime, pustules of tartly fizzing lime, rolling over and crushing the gentle pumpkin spices, like so many frantic penguins—this is an oddly refreshing fragrance that is not at all terrible or indescribable.

Chiroptophobia (Fear of Bats) A flutter of leather becomes a swarm of buffeting musks, tangled with a white flash of sandalwood and near-inaudible shrieks of eucalyptus and elemi. Dark and velvety in the bottle, Chiroptophobia immediately turns screechy and bite-y on application, nipping with tiny mentholated fangs. This phase is fleeting

too, as the fragrance shifts again to a mild, oily leather and milky, soft sandalwood. The result is a fuzzy creature that you want to cuddle and feed banana chunks to just like in those bat rescue instagram accounts, but whose dark heart beats an unknowable, alien song...and you remember why you were afraid of bats to begin with.

Blood Squib Who knew that blood splatter smelled of rich cherry cordials and marzipan?

Suspicion of Foul Play (Clean wood floors, a clean tub, clean, clean, clean, with no stain of any kind, no blood-spot whatsoever) I had to try this one a few times before I got where it was coming from. At first I thought it smelled like one of the scratch-n-sniff stickers that you always tried to trade away because you wanted something that smelled like ice cream or popcorn, not hot garbage. Obviously my sniffer was off that day, for the next time I tried it, it made total sense. I might have been getting a nose-burning trash heap pile of citrus peels right out of the bottle, but Suspicion of Foul Play is actually just a very limey floral cleanser. Nearly caustic, but it reigns itself in after a moment or too. Could you clean the shit out of some blood stains with this? Well. Maybe just scent yourself with it. Or you know, don't do any murders.

Groan of Mortal Terror (Opaque grey amber and opoponax swelling up like thick smoke, pressed under the weight of baleful tobacco.) Soft smoke and delicate resins. This is a gentle scent that makes me think of a lonely soul who might volunteer to spend a night in a haunted house because the ghosts might be the most company they have had in quite some time. Groan of Mortal Terror is absolutely lovely and wonderfully wearable. And think of all the phantoms you'll befriend!

The Dead Hour of the Night (Mist-shrouded pine and moonflower creeping over flaccid opium poppies.) THIS SMELLS EXACTLY LIKE A WOMAN IN A FILMY PEIGNOIR RUNNING HEADLONG FROM A TOWER, WITH A SINGLE LIGHT IN ITS TOP MOST WINDOW, IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT. Seriously. This smells like running for your life across a landscape of darkness. If you've been searching for the perfect scent to pair with your date night ensemble worn to impress the creepy sweetheart who may or may not want to kill you and also possibly has a lunatic spouse locked in their moldering attic, this is the one.

The Mournful Influence of the Unperceived Shadow (Thick black patchouli, shadow musk, myrrh, and threads of hot saffron mired in sweet, viscous labdanum). I wore this one afternoon, and felt myself cocooned in a cloak of old-world glamour. There's a deeply powerful leathery note present that seems simultaneously mellowed/amped up by something earthy and intimate and just slightly sour. It reminded me of the last dregs of perfume in a cloudy glass flacon on a starlet's mirrored vanity table from another era.

The Hellish Tattoo of The Heart (Blood musk and pulsating black pepper, a throb of bitter almond, and cracked pimento.) This is a gloriously bittersweet scent for me; it conjures every time I ever crept into my mother's bedroom and inhaled the combined odors of her perfume tray, her costume jewelry, her stacks of astrology books precariously piled at her bedside. The wafts of Rachel Perry products from her medicine cabinet, with that gorgeous label artwork that I thought was so very beautiful and sophisticated when I was younger. For you, The Hellish Tattoo of The Heart may smell of cool musks with a peppery bite, but for me it's the scent of every secret my mother kept, and the sadness I forever carry knowing that I no longer have the chance to unlock them.

I Heard Many Things in Hell (black iris, French lavender, Roman chamomile, and frankincense) These Tell-Tale Heart scents are crazy, I tell you what. I don't think I have ever had so many shifting and contradictory thoughts about a collection of scents. When I initially sampled the scent, I got a strong blast of something that I can only refer to as bubblegumm-y. It pains me to say that. It pains me to even type that. If there is one thing you should know about

me, it is that I just cannot even with gum. People chomping and chewing on their gum grosses me out me out in such a way that I can't even think about without retching a little bit. I'm sorry, I don't mean to gum-shame. I don't mean to tell you that what you enjoy is wrong. But that's just a thing about me, okay? So, anyway, when I smelled that, I thought "what in the world...?" But, in researching the fragrance of iris, though, many gardeners do say that their irises smell very much like grape bubblegum! That validation would be all well and good, but the next time I wore I Heard Many Things in Hell, the metallic, medicinal aroma of the lavender was most prominent—but was soothed and softened by the apple-y chamomile. The iris, that strange, hateful bloom, was nowhere to be found.

The Wild Audacity of My Perfect Triumph (A jubilant and deranged lime absinthe) I've never been able to reconcile myself to the taste of absinthe (which I of course want to adore, but I think in reality is disgusting); but I think The Wild Audacity of My Perfect Triumph is the perfect antidote for my absinthe aversion. This is a remarkable little fragrance. The notes are so simple, and so well-blended that you can't tell where the tart, tangy lime ends and the dry, bitter absinthe begins—because it is actually none of those things at all. It is a cool, woody cologne that smells vaguely but handsomely poisonous, but in the very best way, and I imagine it would smell equally beguiling on men, women, and dismembered corpses with still-beating hearts.



Autumn 2018

Samhainophobia (menacing Haitian vetiver, patchouli, and clove with a shock of bourbon geranium, grim oakmoss, and dread-inspiring balsams pierce the innocuous scent of autumn leaves) Does this smell like a diagnosable condition, an unrelenting escalation of anxiety and even terror, about things related to Halloween? No, it smells like grinding against David S. Pumpkins under black lights in a stranger's basement while listening to Peter Steele during a sexy murder party and I am INTO IT.

Pumpkin Musk and Black Oudh A "strangely romantic, disturbingly erotic" perfume; If you're intrigued by Samhainophobia's sex appeal but you're feeling a little trepidation because you're just "not that kind of pumpkin", you could consider Pumpkin Musk and Black Oudh to be its shy wingman of sorts: a rich oudh buffed and rounded by gentle musks—its attentions softer, sweeter, and utterly sincere. This is a scent that just wants to retreat to a quiet corner and hold your hand and learn all your deepest secrets and take you out for pumpkin pancakes in the morning.

Midnight Bonfire (night-blooming jasmine, smoldering maple leaves, a cluster of patchouli and blackened ti leaf, black sage, and pinewood smoke) Lighting the path between worlds, the beacon at the threshold; leathery autumn leaves and smoke-tinged hair, an unsettling souvenir of the embers and ashes from a towering blaze in what you believed to be a dream, encircled by shadowy celebrants of the midnight hour.

Ghost Music (sheets of white musk and lavender curling around a melancholy song of violet root, iris, neroli, and honeysuckle) One of the eeriest things I have ever smelled, and, ghostly indeed—in the sense that is a nebulous manifestation: there one moment, gone the next. A visitation by something that was never there. A tremulous puff of ozone, laced with the spirit of lavender and the memory of violets.

Yipe (sweet bloody black cherry cream and crushed dried blackberries) This is one of those scents that most definitely pushes me out of my comfort zone, but I am happy to report that this smells exactly like one of those delicious cherry danishes that are shrink wrapped in crinkly plastic and stacked in a basket at your morning meeting, where all of these C-level corporate dildos are spouting gibberish about holistically evolving vortals, and robust synergies in the cloudification of benchmarks, or how to objectively synthesize high-payoff human capital. You just bite into your pre-packaged cherry danish, discreetly lick the glaze from your fingers, suck the crumbs from your hair, and think to yourself, “wow, this danish is the best thing that will happen to me all day.”

Inside the Golden Amber of Her Eyeballs (sleek black fur and gleaming amber shining in the shadows, a rumble of myrrh, and claws as sharp as ti leaf.) A massively fruity amber. I wanted to love this one more than all of the Weenies put together (if solely because of the marvelous label art, and the accompanying poem) but alas, on me this smells less of sweet, furry feline companions, and more like the mixed berry yogurt/gummy bear-scented version of them.

Pumpkin Dust (shavings of white pumpkin rind and honey powder) Dessicated dumplings flavored with pumpkin puree and autumn wildflower honey, crumbled to dust and scattered to the October winds.

Feeding the Dead (a barrel of beer, a pyramid of cakes, and three sticks of incense.) This is an awfully lovely chocolate scent for a fragrance which contains no chocolate notes. It’s not necessarily boozy, but definitely malty, with nuances of popcorn and darkness. Incidentally, “Popcorn and Darkness” is also my Midwestern death metal/campy horror movie parody band.

The Hag (black musk, bay leaves, galangal, bourbon vetiver, blackcurrant, and rum) is a wonderfully aromatic scent, that of dust darkened, woody bramble berries, and the zing of black pepper and pine needles.

Scarecrow Turned Philosopher (corn husks waving on an autumn breeze, beams of amber sunlight, hay bales, and late summer wildflowers) A peppery, honied flurry of dried blossoms whirling across your path like so many fiery autumn leaves. A stray petal, smelling of the dream of nectar and summer’s golden pollen, briefly tickles your nostrils before it lightly lands on the surface of a drying puddle and, floats undisturbed, alongside the sodden remnants of a waxen candy wrapper.

Huesos de Santo (orange-glazed cake, dotted with anise seed, and filled with custard, set beside a bouquet of celebratory funeral flowers) A wonderfully rich, but perfectly balanced pound cake—not too buttery, not too sweet—with a dense vanilla crumb, packed with a creamy custard center and anointed with the barest drizzle of orange syrup. The florals are sheer, anonymous blooms and the anise (for those with concerns re: its medicinal bite) is, at least for me, baked so well into this cake as to be nonexistent.

Jupiter Nourished by the Goat Amalthea (goat’s milk, nectar, ambrosia, and honey) Imagine the perfumed components of this scent burnt as a sacrificial offering, and you will glean an understanding of how this opens, initially. Goat’s milk and honey, purified by fire, with only a scant scattering of ashes to indicate it ever existed. Pause. Rewind. See how it began its life as a milky cold foam latte, whipped to a frothy fluff, drizzled with golden

bee butt-juice (how many different ways can you say honey, anyway? I'm giving "bee butt juice" a go to see if it catches on.)

Beloved combinations from the Pomegranate Grove: Promegranate Grove: Snake Oil Is a scent that I know lots of folks are dying to hear about, and I wish I had more insight for you, but it's a very subtle fragrance (which is weird because Pomegranate is always so loud on me, and Snake Oil can be very intense!) The pomegranate is fleeting, sort of like a beaded curtain made of sweet-tart candies, through which the sugared vanilla of Snake Oil surreptitiously peeks its head and disappears. It's okay, Snake Oil, we love you! Come hang out for a while! I might almost recommend this to someone in search of "Snake Oil lite". Though I love Snake Oil, I think **Pomegranate Grove: Embalming Fluid** is more my speed; the dark fruit mingles with the green tea, aloe, and lemon to create a lightly musky spritzer that is wonderfully wearable and absolutely divine. As in, were I serving cocktails to goddesses, I might base them on this scent. Maybe not Persephone. That would be a little gauche. If you are a sweet + fruity scent lover, then **Pomegranate Grove: Alice** may be your jam, so to speak. To be specific, a dollop of ripe, jammy preserves spooned over a bowl of honey-sweetened cream and sprinkled with a generous handful of red rose petals.

Dead Leaves And Maple Sap Opens with a brief blast of those dead leaves, that damp, slightly sour and musty vegetal scent, but is quickly engulfed by the most glorious treacly, sticky ooze of dark amber maple syrup. After a moment, it's apparent that the leaves are quietly rustling in the background, calming that maple sap screechy sweetness and providing a wonderful earthy balance to what otherwise might be too cloying, and not nearly as huff-able as it truly is. This is a perfect Dead Leaves scent.

Dead Leaves, Green Cognac, Iris, and White Leather This is a cool, powdery, rooty incense; unlit, and nestled on a small metal dish, it gives the impression of linens dampened with a spritz of violet water.

Dead Leaves, Sweet Myrrh, Leather, Green Pomelo, and Red Currant zooms right out of the gate with zingy, almost effervescent, bittersweet citrus peel, and softly dries to a light, lemony resin. Hours later it's slightly reminiscent of a classic eau de cologne...but created from a base of sunshiney shards of crushed lemon candies.

Dead Leaves, Apricot, Ambergris And Tobacco I was expecting an overripe fruit bowl of a scent, but this is a lightly sweet/sour, apricot/lychee scent, ginger-tinged, with a core of salty musk. It's very pretty, and don't get any ranky, dead leaves from this at all!

Dead Leaves and Warm Sugar Cookies I thought Dead Leaves And Maple Sap was my favorite until I tried this variant. Every leaf tells a story, and this is the story of the time you sat on that park bench in the center of town on a drizzly October evening, half-drowned leaves at your feet, dripping foliage just overhead, and you in between them both, desperately trying to keep your oversized, fresh-from-the-oven, vanilla bean-flecked, caramel-edged browned butter and brown sugar cookie warm. There's probably more to this story, but do you care? You've got an amazing cookie. The End.

Red Death collection (weenies 2018)

A Multitude of Dreams is the wanton, bizarre lavender + licorice pairing you never knew you needed; **All Is Silent Save The Voice Of The Clock** gorgeously swells and swaggers with merrily burbling pink pepper, writhing, sultry jasmine and velvety red musk;

The Scarlet Horror, listing only notes of blood musk and vetiver is a chilling, yet utterly intoxicating blend that conjures visions of nag champa-saturated grave wrappings;

The Tastes Of The Duke Were Peculiar, a lustrous, luminous intoxicant, an exquisitely wicked delicacy, all bitter wormwood, glittering lime-soaked sugar cubes, and a barbarous spike of mandarin;

Illimitable Dominion Over All is an addictive cypress/birch/tobacco hybrid— a dangerous draught, a toxic tonic, a sharply herbaceous/coniferous pill of the most bitter variety, stirred into a leathery, swampy tar. It sounds miserable but it's strangely habit-forming.

A Certain Nameless Awe is a soft jasmine snuggie of a scent

The Red Death is a study in gorgeousness, all smoky, dusky woods and a bruised violet heart.

Here's a secret about me. When I die, I want you to prop up my corpse with a jumbo-sized margarita clutched in my dead fist because margaritas are the best cocktails and I'll fight anyone who says otherwise. Lime is basically the best flavor. Neon green squeeze popsicles and green sour patch kids forever, is what I'm saying here! I had highest hopes for **A Group of Pale Courtiers** because of that lime note, and though it's a shy one, and you might have to wait through a powdery musk, and a bit of spectral cologne, I promise your patience will pay off. It is the softest, glowing ghost of a lime, it is a little lime-y, close-kept secret, and it is all mine.

Autumn 2019

Les Heures de la Nuit (blackcurrant musk, white lime, and sparkling white cognac) Mimosa icing sugar frosting a tea cake? Cold black tea sweetened with a citrus blossom sugar?

Songs of Autumn I (sometime before: rain-damp grass and white sage) a herbaceous, purifying scent; hand made soap and icy, clear water.

Songs of Autumn III (dust and tumbleweeds, dry sage and chaparral, cactus nectar, and cinders) The scent of the absence of a thing; a melancholy, echoing pocket of once-was in a space where a thing was just-there. A faintly sweet, and slightly sad slip of void.

Songs of Autumn V (dry maple leaves, blackcurrant juice, patchouli root, and bourbon) It's the sort of earthy-forestry-berried brew that a wood-witch keeps in a flask at their side for the revivification of lost souls and a nip for themselves on bone-cold nights. It's probably about 51% ABV. I wish POM Wonderful made a version of it.

Dusk in Autumn (black tea, currant cake, mandrake root, a whirl of dried leaves, and hearthsmoke) Sara Teasdale made perfectly fragrant (I feel like the sweet comforts of her wonderful poetry were made expressly for this!) Dusky, musty, sweet autumn vegetation; the ancestral memory of smoke twisting up into a starry sky.

The Shadowed Veil (black pumpkin, leather, pomegranate incense, agarwood, and bourbon patchouli) a browned butter cake topped with autumn leaves and smoky icing sugar, served by the misty hands of by a solemn ghost; a widows (cake) walk.

Are You Digging on my Grave (snuggly musk, milky puppy breath, upturned earth, and a gently-gnawed bone) I was previously unaware of this poem, and the imagery plus the wonderfully pupper-centric scent notes make my heart sigh weepily. Dabbed on the wrist the fragrance conjures November-chilled cemetery gates, a frigid wind biting through woolen mittens, and an afternoon treat—a softly crumbling scone perhaps, wrapped in a clean cotton handkerchief, and stuffed deep into coat pockets for nibbling over forgotten gravestones.

The Empty House (black oud, woodsmoke, mahogany, pine pitch, and blackened pumpkin) the most delicious pine-log campfire coffeecake, enjoyed post-Wendigo escape.

Fall Leaves, Fall (starry musk melting into blackcurrant, black oudh, black roses, and blood-red maple leaves) this smells the way the phrase “a murmuration of starlings” feels on the tongue; spectral silhouettes fluttering behind closed eyelids in a cinematic sort of way.

Mictecacihuatl (copal, precious woods, South American spices, agave nectar, cigar tobacco, and roses) An intricately carved wooden tray with offerings of dried roses and fresh apricots, dusted with cocoa and cracked pink peppercorn.

The Listeners (mist-pale lilac, orris root, bruised violets, mugwort, white amber, yuzu, white champa, and white musk) Intensely aromatic dry, bitter citrus mingles with paraffin wax and fresh-cut, almost savory green capsicum for an oddly enjoyable scent that somehow smells exactly like the aggressively weird label art would have you believe it smells.

Pistachio Pumpkin Truffle an immediate deep saltiness, bordering on savory toastiness, followed by a wild, animalic chocolate. Like if cacao pods had scent glands.

Cozy Pumpkin Sweater (a dribble of pumpkin spice spilled onto a fluffy orange angora sweater) Ok so imagine that demented cashmere sweater scene from Lord Love A Duck but transplant it into the eternal autumn of the Sabrina universe. Pumpkin spices and that enchanted inch or so of knitted or woven fabric along your cardigan collar that even when removed at the end of the day, retains the warmth of your skin and the phantom perfume of your favorite shampoo.

Cardamom Cream Pumpkin Cake Cardamom is one of my favorite kitchen spices and, I think, one of the most unique scents and flavors that I’ve ever encountered. Woody, incense-y, soapy (is this just me?) and wonderfully aromatic—I add it to every “spiced” baked good I make, whether or not the recipe calls for it. In this instance, it makes for a warm, delicious fragrance, with milky-sweet aspects and a “fresh out of the oven” vibe.

Pumpkin Mead And Honey Cakes quintessential caramelized carbohydrates; the platonic ideal of a dense sticky, brown bread

Apple Butter Rum A fresh stick of butter, and a basket of fresh-picked apples. Later, these notes will come together in a cast-iron skillet and caramelize with sweet spices and a liberal spike of Kraken rum, but fresh out of the bottle, those two elements, the creamy dairy and the crisp fruit flesh, are so incredibly vivid and present and magically distinct from one another.

Sugar Skulls In The Pumpkin Patch Deliciously mouth-scratching Sour patch kids (strawberry?) + Downeast Maine pumpkin bread, the recipe I’ve been using from allrecipes.com since 2002

Miskatonic University Pumpkin Patch LILY→GILDED Everything you love about the Irish coffee, dusty tomes, and polished oakwood of the original Misk U scent, added as an extra shot to a grande PSL. Somehow this really does call to mind a campus coffee shop for me (I went to a community college which I am pretty sure had no coffee shop, but I’ve got a good imagination.)

Devil's Night In The Pumpkin Patch (a flaming pile of pumpkin guts, booze, and sweaty dark musk) A leathery dark musk, and the vegetal funk of clingy-stringy seasonal gourd innards. A crazy skeleton on a lurid horror paperback cover smells like this. Maybe this guy.

Popcorn Ball Snake Oil Popcorn is my favorite food. I could eat it for every meal. And while there are many “foodie” scents I don’t think I’d like to smell of, popcorn gets a pass. Hell yeah, I’ll smell like popcorn! This is the hot-toasty-salty-buttery-corniness of movie theatre popcorn, bound stickily with that sugary-resinous Snake Oil, which gives it a complexity and depth that you wouldn’t get with your run-of-the-mill, plain old popcorn perfume (because ... there’s so many of them out there?)

Pumpkin Spice Snake Oil Here’s my Downeast Maine pumpkin bread again! But imagine if you substitute Snake Oil for the cooking oil (which I already swapped for olive oil) and the result is a sugared-vanilla incense-xxxspicy loaf (because I use at least three times as much cinnamon, too.)

Lollipop Snake Oil Effervescent, grapefruity-limey Fresca + a watermelon Dum Dum!

Carotene (sunset orange, a marigold-bright throb of light: sweet amber, ginger root, apricot, patchouli, red mandarin, chrysanthemum, and yam) if carrots smelled more like tangerines—fresh, citrusy, a little waxy; if tangerines grew up from the rooty earth rather than hung down from high, sunny branches.

Chlorophyll (dew-dotted grass, tea leaf, and sun-warmed herbs) Oddly enough, this smelled like a matcha custard bun when I sniffed it straight out of the bottle! On the wrist though, it is a riot of vibrant greens, from fresh tomato leaf to sharp ivy to sweet marjoram.

Anthocyanin (red musk, mandrake root, patchouli, pimento, saffron, red oudh, clove, and basil) Fall air rich with decaying leaves and cider-y scents and gorgeous spice and incense-saturated veils billowing in a sun-warmed October afternoon’s breeze. Like... if your very favorite head-shop had a stall at your favorite autumnal renaissance fair. This is basically the best of all worlds.

Dead Leaves, Cacao, and Sandalwood The most wearable chocolate I have ever encountered, sort of a dry, mossy cocoa chypre?

Dead Leaves, Nutmeg, Sweet Vetiver and Virginia Cedar I don’t normally love nutmeg, but this is such a sweet, simple, wholesome combination that now I want to start putting nutmeg and cedar shavings in my morning porridge. I also want to be the kind of person who eats porridge.

Dead Leaves And Chai Really lovely, reminds me of the enchantment of autumns in NJ. A sweet-tempered spiciness mingled with those manky, musty, softly rotting vegetal dead leaves—this is such a great combination. It conjures the memory of an evening stroll I took over a decade ago, on Halloween night. Without the slightest hint of a breeze, a whirlwind of crushed and broken leaves rose up from the sidewalk to swirl around my head. One smacked me in the face so hard it felt like someone punched me. It was weird and exhilarating.

Dead Leaves Green Cognac And Tea Rose Very-extra-super rose-centric! Damp rose petals, tenderly bruised.

Dead Leaves, Moss, And Mushrooms if there was ever a better argument for “more is more,” I don’t know what that could possibly be. My favorite “Dead Leaves” scents have thus far been those signature dead leaves plus some

unexpectedly bright or springy floral pairing...but as it turns out, the very best one is comprised of a “like + like” formula. This one smells as if you had swept your favorite mug across an autumn flotsam of forest floor and brewed up in boiling rainwater all the sylvan sweepings you had gathered. Best served warm and cozy in tiny acorn cups, to ring of sleepy woodland creatures. If you love fall but you don’t love pumpkin, maple, or apple scents, I think you are really going to fall for this one. Pun intended—I always intend my puns.

The Country Gets Wilder As We Go (a snow-capped, untamed maze of fir, poplar, and oak. Ghostly beech reaching skeletal arms into the ink-black sky.) Sweet, peaceful mountain flowers.

The Meaner Things (thundercrack of ozone and moist, salty fog. A flap of leathery wings, a cluster of bark-brown feathers, and skittering, chattering black musk) A wolf in mermaid’s clothing; a subtly sweet aquatic for people who think they don’t like aquatics. Beautiful.

Wax Cylinders (polished mahogany, soft leather, and gold-molded wax) soft swirls of waxen, creamy, chewy, golden confections;

Death’s Head Moth (dusty brown sandalwood, nagarmotha, brown oudh, clove husk, white patchouli, black pepper, vetiver, green cumin, and ash.) Hand-made lace, only a little moth-eaten and musty, that has retained the gentle perfume of its owner—a combination of warm skin, fine-milled soap, and sweet, cooling herbs—a century later. This is an understated and sublimely beautiful scent. *I believe “nagarmotha” is a kind of cypress*

The Empty Coffin (dead roses, oud blanc, and white sandalwood) at the risk of sounding hyperbolic, this is the creepiest thing I have ever smelled. If you have ever sat, alone, in a funeral home and sniffed at the sterile atmosphere and softly rotting blooms, almost certain that your nose could eke out the decaying flesh and embalming fluid and grief and loss and heartbreak and terrifying dread of your own mortality, underneath it all. Well, then. I challenge you to dribble a bit of this on your wrist and try to read Dracula without going a little bit insane. (Edited to add: this dries down to an eerily beautiful rose.)

Flesh of my Flesh (deep crimson musk threaded with mesmerizing Tunisian amber, voluptuous champaca blossom, vanilla absolute, labdanum, bitter almond, and black orchid) This is a wildly hypnotic, narcotic scent; a feral floral with a hint of musk and talc.

Come, Sister (icy musk draped in osmanthus and white gardenia, a whisper of ti leaf and orchid, crystalline amber, and incense smoke) A chilly scent-scape of misty wheeling figures and transparent gloom, of intolerable laughter in sweet, tingling tones; the low voice in a dream that befools, and leads you from one nightmare to the next, promising weak light and wakefulness. A fragrance of lightly falling snow and beguiling madness.

The Sleeping Draught (a haze of lavender and black oudh, laudanum accord, and opium tar) first: sharp, somewhat camphoraceous lavender steam; later, a dark, sticky, honeyed sweetness, like opium manufacturers jumped on the cbd gummies trend. Ye olde-time sugar-dusted opium gumdrops.

The Sun Rises To-day (blue lilac and violet leaf, white musk and eucalyptus, carrot seed and ti leaf.) Fruity amber, a lavender + violet tonic, lemony green tea.

The Blood Is The Life (blood trickling through thick, dark myrrh and a rivulet of unholy, desecrated sacramental wine) This is the deepest, richest, reddest, most indecent goblet of spiced wine.

Kisses for us All (red roses and honey, a throb of red musk, bitter neroli and clove husk all staining a slash of sheet-white vanilla sandalwood) Out of the bottle, this is very similar to the deep claret of The Blood Is The Life, but it shortly differentiates itself as jammier, stickier, and more floral in the way that sometimes tuberose smells to me like grape jellies.

The Embodiment of Funeral Gloom (a shroud of black agarwood, cypress, myrrh, and upturned earth, scattered with crushed lavender and creeping with moss-smothered stone) This is an uncanny creation and smells exactly like this passage: “Never did cypress, or yew, or juniper so seem the embodiment of funeral gloom.” I mean, that’s always the point, I’m sure, to have your work match up with your vision, but dang they nailed this and if you want whispering shrouds and grave tombs and misty clouds and ominous doom, you have come to the right place.

Lucy’s Eyes (a pulsing infernal amber, shot through with lilac-blue, bloodshot and blazing) Lilac and amber really is a strange and sinister combination! Miky green leaves, dewy and fresh, incased eternally in a glowing amber shrine. The amber lends a perversely sweet note to the potion, a sort of “evil Play-Doh” vibe. If Lucy rose out of her coffin and filmed a relaxing slime ASMR compilation for her YouTube channel, the shimmering ooze would smell like this.

Autumn 2020

Dead Leaves On Fire

- The rank, softly rotting vegetation and the dry, smoky embers are a spellbinding and pretty sophisticated arboreal chypre-like combination
- Makes me think of little forest goblins gone for a weekend of glamping
- This is ingenious

Pumpkin Gazpacho (roasted pumpkin pulp, tomato, bell pepper, cucumber, sage, and cream)

- I feel like...it’s not what you think it’s going to be!
- Warm autumn gourd -creamy sweetness at the outset, and then it morphs into something sort of airy and green and cool with a crisp bite....but still somehow a little sweet?
- It is sort of like a cold soup...but more of a palate-cleansing dessert soup?
- Like a fancy little after-dinner treat Ina made for Jeffrey because they are trying to eat less cake but they still want to end the meal on a sweet note.

Flickering Lights, Fluttering Curtains (Brittle smoked vanilla lace with yellow champaca, white cognac, davana, white amber, and chamomile)

- This seems to have that delicate vanilla and phantom floral of Antique Lace
- Also a smokiness that gives it a bit of depth of heft and an almost bitter 70% dark chocolate quality.
- A great many people will like this one!

From Sunset to Star Rise (Thorn-strangled roses, vetiver, honeysuckle, twilight musk, and black oud.)

- At the outset, strangely sour and a bit... fungal? Also smells alien and unknown, like feeling your way blindly through forking forest paths in the deep dead of night
- A bit earthy and rooty, things that grow at the base of ancient trees in feral violet shadows.
- Cosmic mycelium under the silver-scratches of a meteor-streaked midnight dome.

In Night When To All Colors Into Black Are Cast (ink-black vegetal musk, opoponax, velvet myrrh, nagarmotha, black champa, labdanum, and plum honey)

-I feel like I am typecasting myself, especially since I thought I was slowly coming out of my all-black-everything phase (but don't worry, it wasn't just a phase in my heart) but honestly, this is the me-est thing I have ever smelled in my life.

-If there was such thing as:

– “sad dried flowers from my mom's funeral, marking a page in a ghost story” musk

– “when I have to get up to pee at midnight and I divine phantom shapes from in the shadows of the shower curtain” musk

– “reading poetry by candlelight at 5am because I perversely read early in the morning and not late at night” musk

– “ordering a lucid dreaming blend from Etsy and drinking it, not realizing that the seller and I got our wires crossed and she made potpourri—not tea— and I stupidly brewed up and DRANK potpourri” musk

-All of the me-ness of me, all of my weirdness and sadness and joy, and strange inner darkness, but also so much joy for beauty and friends and the lovely things in the world, this too.

-Somehow found a way into this bottle.

-And it smells like me.

Dead Leaves, White Champa, Palo Santo.

-Reminds me of hippies and crunchy types? Is palo santo the new patchouli?

-Not the 60's hippies, but rather a particular brand of YouTuber, zero waste, off-the-grid species of vlogger.

-I actually really love this, it's a sort of refined outdoorsy scent, there's a whiff of “fresh air” in it, and astringent herbal/lemony woodiness but there's also a hint of garden gloves and sunbonnets because we want to get all up in the dirt but we want to look cute doing it. Our fans notice these things.

-And now while I'm guilting you about your single-use plastics, let me tell you a bit about our sponsor, Squarespace.

*

*I'm not shilling for Squarespace and neither is Haute Macabre or BPAL. I've just been watching a lot of YouTube...and man, a lot of YouTubers sure are doing that. Jokes are less funny when you have to explain them, but I felt I should probably make this point very clear!

It Was Just A Cat (a flash of amber fur skittering through shadows of opoponax, red labdanum, and myrrh)

-Old, vaguely antiquarian books and nose-tickling fur, fluffy fur with a pulse and a warmth and a softly rumbling purr

-Warm musk, rich, treacly myrrh, and a dry, powdery amber

An Open Grave Underneath the Heavy Leaves (Sweet hay, dry grasses, and wild herbs)

-Dry leaves on sun-warmed ground on a cloudless day, no decomposing plant matter or off-gassing leaves, here

-Light and clean, just this side of sharp, dry, and cool. Almost lemony, but...a cool weather, frost-tolerant lemon?

-Conjures the scent of air so pure and clear that you can smell winter from a month away

Dead Leaves, Red Currant, and Tuberose

-A dash of eerie, with the spot-on decaying harvest of those dead leaves

-A spike of edgy with the bright bite of red currant, sort of like a punk in a twilight graveyard

-Like Linnea Quigley stripping in a cemetery, but with the addition of holly, and wintry greenery and Christmas lights?

-Festive, in a naked, brain-eating zombie way?

Dead Leaves and Black Licorice

- An anonymous benefactor (or villainous arch-nemesis) has sent you an unmarked packing crate, the olde-timey kind that cursed objects are stowed away in for overseas travel.
- Inside this box, once you have opened it with your rusty crowbar and/or Wile E. Coyote dynamite, all of a sudden everything goes sepia-tinted and you're wearing a stiff corset and pointy-toed boots, and you see that swaddled inside is a bundle of fragrant, crackling autumn leaves several layers deep cocooning a mysterious bundle.
- You slowly peel away the autumnal wrapping to reveal that you have been gifted with a thick, glossy, twisting rope of Icelandic black licorice, dank and herbaceous and salty and delicious. Also included is a copy of the Icelandic version of Dracula, but you can go ahead and scrap that with the rest of the packing materials, it's trash.
- Wow, these boots and corset are tight. But sepia-tinted November afternoons are lovely. And black licorice, as you are late in life to discover, is freaking phenomenal.

The Ghosts of the Year (white musk, lemongrass, neroli, white pepper, lavender, white cedar, oakmoss, dandelion sap, and white amber)

- This does smell deeply of the "April-clear" feeling referenced in the poem this perfume is inspired by; of daisies and dandelions, tremulous in a grassy spring breeze.
- A frank, appraising stare from the ghost of one's self. Uncomplicated and uncompromising and free of all sentiment. Lemongrass smells like a cross between citronella and geranium to me, and that is the powerful core of this scent, a truth that you must get to the heart of and climb inside and ultimately embody...in order to properly meet the gaze of this other version of yourself.

Please Scream Inside Your Haunted House (funnel cakes entombed in teakwood, cedar, and sawdust)

- French toast from fancy, eggy bread?
- Ultra-luxe crème brûlée bread pudding?
- A floral, cedary thing? A sweet breakfast casserole, plated on a fragrant wooden tray, served with a spray of lilac?
- Tobacco? leather? Eating the above in parlor while your uncle oils his saddle nearby with an unlit pipe clamped between his teeth?
- At the very backside...ivy and green tea? Maybe? There is a lot going on with this one! A lot of loveliness, but still...a lot.
- To sum up, this is a delectable morning meal in a very charming and efficiently run haunted bed and breakfast which also happens to have a stable nearby.

Unsettling Portraits (amber resin, faded turpentine and torn canvas, pulverized frankincense, verdigris, and crushed malachite, lead white sandalwood, smoky umber, and lampblack)

- At first: a decimating wave of nostalgia, something that smells like memories and echoes of hearts long silenced
- Minerals and sooty carbon, oil, and wax and flickering flame
- The taste of oxidized copper and ghostly pigments
- At the last: the portraits have been taken down for a cleaning, dusted and polished, and the heavy curtains drawn to let the sunlight scour away the shadows. A slightly sweet, vaguely citrusy lightness remains.

Figure In The Attic Window (white frankincense, star anise, wormwood, and iridescent bergamot)

- Both translucent and occluded; cloudy visions in a teacup
- The tea was palest green and pleasantly bitter

-The pretense of a facade. A re-veiling of revelations for politeness and appearance's sake. Embarrassed by what we shared after too many martinis, we pack it all back in, like we never said it in the first place. And now we are all pretending not to know each other's secret scars, the ones that have seeped into our bones, and which are haunting both our own bodies and undermining our connections with others.

-What has got me thinking of martinis? There's something about this scent, that, along with conjuring visions of secrecy and uneasy trust and damaged connections... makes me think of how I described my first sip of a martini: "sweet at the sip, savory at the swallow."

-A trickery of the tongue, conned by aromas that lure you in and then morph and twist and disarmingly: junipery herbal and briny berries, and a bittersweet woodiness.

-This one was quite a journey, but cheaper than therapy.

-(I haven't called my therapist in ten months.)

Pumpkin Smut

-Do you have a moment to talk about the autumnal gustatory goodness that is the Downeast Maine Pumpkin bread recipe from Allrecipes?

-Can you imagine this earthy, spicy bread gyrating alongside the breathtakingly tarted-up Christina Aguilera, Mýa, P!nk, Lil' Kim, in the 2001 Lady Marmalade video?

-Or maybe I need to pretend I'm not a million years old and divulge that the molasses-moist pumpkin loaf was most recently a guest dancer in this video, because it is without a doubt a certified freak seven days a week.

-Brown sugar caramelized crumbs and boozy pumpkin flesh and musky black satin sheets and you don't cook, you don't clean and while we don't have to guess how you got that ring, I am gonna place bets that you probably ordered that amazing pumpkin bread from Goldbelly.

-Waaaay later. In a twist that no one was expecting, the filthiest Smut yet calms with time and becomes a soft, warm and disturbingly classy thing? But also very, very hot. Look, I don't know how to talk about sex because I am incredibly repressed but smelling my wrist right now gives my lower bits a jolt that's both electric and wibbly and it's as if Mads Mikkelsen is smoldering at me from one side of the room and Tessa Thompson has brazenly caught my eye from the opposite corner and I don't know where to look or what to do with myself so I just lock myself in the bathroom and cry. But in a good way? I mean I don't know how your libido works, so I can only speak for me.

-Maybe let Pumpkin Smut do the speaking for you.

Autumn 2021

Pumpkinville (a sultry, sweet red musk blend with pumpkin spices and pumpkin pulp) Eye-wateringly indolic, sultry red musk, and a strange spirit of irreverent mischief that really does conjure forth the bottle art by the inimitable Becky Munich: the madcap marvels of a swishy-skirted pumpkin-headed, velvet-choker-that-keeps-their-gourd-on-their-neck-wearing friend who zooms up your driveway in a rickety hearse and a cloud of feral autumnal spice and cackles GET IN LOSER WE'RE GOING WEENIE-ING.

Pandemic Vanitas (fresh baked bread, takeout fries, raw cookie dough, and cotton-blend sweatpants) A salty crispness? But also some sort of chocolate-covered wafers thing? Some Little Debbie Treat? Holy childhood snacks that I never had so I stole them from classmates—this is a Nutty Buddy! This triggers some kind of memory, being packed away to day camp during the summer, and snacks in the afternoon between god's eye yarn endeavors and popsicle stick craft projects and little hikes to make gravestone rubbings... and now that I am talking about it, wow day camp was wasted on little-me. I'm definitely more into the idea of it as an adult.

Skull With Shell, Books, and a Crumple of Blush-Pink and Night-Blue Silk (creamy yellowed paper, pink tuberose, star jasmine, and blue cypress with incense, eucalyptus leaf, and iridescent sap) Artisinal smoky ylang-ylang-esque, lemony, balsamic-minty cough lozenges! The sort that an apothecary ASMR YouTuber who pays great attention to details would keep on set. These little pastilles would be so unusually delicious that you want to scarf them down like candy, but she sternly looks you in the eye and tells the camera, "NON."

Paisley Sheet Ghost (weedsmoke-infused white sandalwood, wild oakmoss, cannabis flower accord, hash resin accord, tonka bean, lavender bud, champaca flower, and tolu balsam) This is an alluring musky chypre or a chypre-y musk. Sophisticated and mysterious in the way that your mother's sister with her flashing rings and her purple-tinted glasses and her swishing caftans always seemed. I'm a square, friends, and I can't speak much to many of these notes because my only real experience with any of it is a weird evening with a very special brownie, but Paisley Sheet Ghost definitely calls to mind people who are way cooler than me doing things that I'm just not ready to experience. And inexplicably they've invited me somewhere, or offered me something, and because I'm too scared or weirded out I say no and then sort of fade into the the woodwork and wish I could die because I'm so embarrassed by my timidity and lack of gumption for new things and new experiences. At almost 45 years old, I am still like this. Plus I don't like to smoke things. Wow. As always, come for the perfume reviews, stay for the TMI.

Mouse's Long and Sad Pumpkin (vanilla-infused pumpkin, two ambers, sweet pea and white sandalwood) This is such a pretty scent. It's vaguely floral and vaguely foody, but not enough of either to be overwhelming in the way that those combinations can sometimes be. The more I sniff it, the more I'm convinced that "pretty" is more apt than "beautiful"...because something beautiful can be a bit stupefying, too. This is a vanilla-specked marshmallow, the homemade sort that you cut into enormous, fluffy squares, dusted generously with powdered sugar, drizzled with dark, musky honey, and—okay, so imagine this—what if pumpkin pie seasoning came from the crumbled petals of the autumn blooms of the pumpkin spice flower? Such a blossom garnishes this confection.

Dead Leaves, Spruce Bough, and Ti Leaf a green tea scent with an extra elven oomph; these types of scents can have a sort of spa-like vibe, but in this instance, the soft, earthy decay of autumn leaves and the balsamic wintriness of the spruce whisks it away to something different and unexpected.

Still Like With Dooting Skull (bourbon vanilla with wildflower honey, licorice root, coconut milk, and nutmeg) This is one of those scents that has a texture in my mind's eye, a sort of milky jelly, not sticky or tacky, but like a really nice plumping serum that you might use as part of your nighttime skincare regimen. I think it's that combination of the lactonic coconut milk and the delicate floral nectar sourness of the honey, combined with a slightly medicinal anise aspect of the licorice, its sharpness muted by the creaminess. It smells... "efficacious"... if that makes sense.

The Harvesters I don't think this scent is part of the weenie release but there was a bottle of this nestled in with the others in this box o'stinks and it seems seasonally appropriate, so I'm going to include a review anyhow. A quick bit of research shows that this scent was a gift with purchase in 2013 (someone please correct me if I am wrong!) and the notes are "pear trees, boiled oats, and wine beside a ripe field of wheat waving under a late-summer sun." Before I even knew that though, when I was still trying to figure it out, my first thought was, "wow, this is the scent of a tasty jam sandwich snack!" Now that I've got a bit of context for it, I might further add that it's toasted, fresh-baked bread with the addition of rolled and ground oats, and a gorgeous pear preserve that you made one solitary autumn weekend in November with just-harvested fruit (okay you harvested it from a gift basket, there are no pear trees around you, whatever!) stewed with red wine and a few broken cinnamon sticks. You were going to share a jar with a friend but you ended up eating it all yourself on slice after slice of steaming bread, warming your belly in the chill light of the afternoon.

Pumpkin-Scented Sticky Bat (sticky, lemony, and very pumpkiny) Lemon bars with olive oil and sea salt, fluffy lemon mousse, warm lemon pudding cake, lemon drop tart with a shortbread crust. All of these things at once! I really don't like the word "yummy", unless Terri Hatcher is saying it to Cathy Moriarty in Soapdish, but I will admit that its usage is entirely appropriate here.

Floral Sheet Ghost (strawberry-stained rose and peony with squished carnation and sugared pineapple) As a child who loved "all things floweredy" and who has carried that love into adulthood, I am okay with wearing all the florals in waking life, dreaming under them at night, and being garbed in them in my eternal afterlife, as well. Flowers 4ever, please! It would stand to reason, that this was the scent from the Freak In The Sheets collection for which I was most excited. I don't get any florals from it, though... it smells just like a very specific Japanese candy the name for which I cannot recall, but a certain perfume swapper always used to include some in the packages they sent me. Pineapple, lychee, sweet-tart, sour-bright, syrupy deliciousness.

Dead Leaves on Houseplants The first sniff of this is quite deceptive, so I do hope you will stick around for what comes after because it's pretty magical. The initial whiff is that of musty celery, a sort of watery, vegetal greenness. But it immediately becomes something bright and lemony, glossy-glowing-green and exuberant, sort of how you feel when you first bring a houseplant home, hope in your heart, swearing this time will be different! You're not gonna kill this lil greenie no way, no how! This is a scent that calls to mind lists of why you should have green things growing in your house, how they improve the air quality, they raise the vibe, the aesthetic and acoustic benefits, whatever—this is what those emotional and visual improvements smell like in action.

Traditional Sheet Ghost (cool white cotton, marshmallow fluff, and lemony Oman frankincense) I had to check some reviews on this one, which I typically try not to do. I am easily influenced and if you tell me that you smell a specific thing, I might, too! But because my perception of Traditional Sheet Ghost was so unexpected, I just had to see what everyone else said! General consensus points to vanilla floofery, clean cotton sheets, and lemony breezes, but what I smell is a warm orchid-like note (which to my nose is also sort of an oaky vanilla) and ...sandalwood? I have revisited this a handful of times and with every sniff it's this soft, mellow, musky, malty, slightly-tipsy snuggie of a scent.

Dead Leaves and Molasses Pumpkin Cookies sweet loamy decay, browned butter AND pumpkin butter, and chewy, deliciously-spiced soft cookies. Nibbled on a midday forest ramble when the sun is low, the wind is still, and the path is eerily disappearing behind you. When searchers trek through the woods to locate you days later, there is only a sweet dusting of crumbs and maple leaves crunched underfoot where you had once stood.

Her Eyes Have Feasted on the Dead (bruise-purple violet and Spanish moss) This is a sun-bright, chipper, vivacious Rainbow Bright Pollyanna optimist with a secret burning goth black hole at their core! Blithe, beaming florals—I don't smell violet exactly, but rather a plummy bouquet of glossy blossoms— with a little jumping spider living at the middle. “I am darkness!” they squeak joyously as they breathlessly enthuse about their serial killer obsession, their favorite horror movie, the time they left silken threads as tribute on Jim Morrison's grave. “I am the wound and the knife! I am the vampire of my own heart!” they warble and bounce as they recite Baudelaire and let loose an adorable powdery fart!

Black Satin Sheet Ghost (black patchouli drenched in mate, clary sage, narcissus, and opium tar) Heady and opulent, the narcissus note smells to me like a creamy jasmine-like floral and pleasantly skanky; there's a surprising streak of mint running through the scent that pairs interestingly with the earthy patchouli and the bitter astringency of the mate. It somehow all works in a really odd way, and it reminds me of those old ladies (or maybe it's just the same old lady all the time?) who always show up on fashion blogs and interviews, the ones who have sharp, angular haircuts and big, round sunglasses and wear those white-striped Adidas track pants with, I don't know, a silk floral Gucci shirt or something.

Ivy Twining Around Discarded Skull (incense, scorched brown sandalwood, drooping petals, noxious English ivy berries, and a tangle of leaves) Impossibly green incense, a smoldering cyan. The cool, creeping, verdant language of crawling greenery set alight, whispering soft variegated ashes skyward.

Innocent Souls Turned Carrion Birds (grey musk, grey sandalwood, and labdanum) This is a beautiful burnished and balsamic sticky-honied tobacco, with a peppery, sparkling citrus aspect that reminds me of voluptuous illustrations of jeweled autumn fruits. I almost want to say it's gourmand-adjacent; while it's rich, bordering on decadent, it's not at all edible—the sort of gorgeousness that beckons from a window display or behind a glass counter and you think to yourself, “no, I could never eat that, it's just too exquisite!”

Signum Crucis (rosehips, ambrette seed, leather, and mushroom) Ok, I gotta be honest here. I am reviewing this after the actual occurrence of one of my worst nightmares (I have a lot of those, but still. This one is pretty high on the list.) As an anxious, dysthymic people-pleaser this was the sort of thing that bunged all of my triggers and I am still in a state of high whateverness, my face on fire, my heart beating out of my chest, my body wanting to both barf and diarrhea, maybe also out of my ears. I am very keyed up and don't know what I am smelling, let alone what I am thinking. BUT! As an experiment, I am reviewing this scent as I am all spiked up on adrenaline and then I will come back a few hours later and see if there is any difference. Right now it's an ashy floral, sort of like flaming blossoms of petaled confetti, fizzling in a misty drizzle. Not fresh roses...not quite incendiary...but maybe a dusty bouquet, post-immolation, a little damp and singed and sheepish. Later it has a subtle, woody aroma, along with a note something very much like dry fall leaves. I don't spend a lot of time sniffing mushrooms, but this feels like a scent that if I were a Little, or a Borrower or Arietty, and one of my soft, earthy fungi-friends gave me a hug? It might smell just like this. At this point, it's actually a very comforting sniff and it's making me feel better? Okay then!

Autumn 2022

Gooped Familiar (black musk, golden amber, cedarwood, catnip, and hay absolute with a shock of carnation, clove, and cinnamon bark) I love this scent from BPAL's Witches, Sorceresses, and Sorceries in Art History collection for several reasons. One, because it is inspired by an element within The Love Potion created by Evelyn de Morgan, an artist whose lush mythical and allegorical paintings were associated with the later Pre-Raphaelite movement. This was an artist who defied the expectations of her class and gender to become one of the most impressive artists of a generation, whose canvases conveyed a profound sense of feminism, and spirituality, as well as rejection of war and material wealth, rendering them quite relevant today. She's pretty fab and I love her. Two, because I love seeing derpy and weird animals in art. Not exactly in the same vein, as this cat, but I think Jamie Wyeth's A Very Small Dog is my very favorite. And three, because this scent immediately brought to mind a certain cinematic feline. Giallo fans amongst you may conjure the image before I write another word, but Gooped Familiar is a fragrance that smells like opulence through the filter of fur. A perfume of spicy florals and musky amber that adorns the wrists of a beautiful and beguiling stranger with a heavily fluffed cream-colored Persian cat in their lap. When you bury your face in that fancy feline's neck later in the evening, you catch the phantom of the perfume through the heat of the animal's skin and its vibrating purrs.

Lightning Struck a Flock of Witches (a crack of ozone slicing through blue benzoin, indigo musk, tobacco, and opoponax) this is unexpectedly fruity! But not a fresh, juicy harvest; this is more the fruity aspect of tobacco, sticky dried cherries, the intensely golden bronzed honeyed sweetness of dates, and even a bit of dried pineapple. As it wears, there's a lovely incense of vanilla and hay, a mingled smokiness of a scented broom whose bristles singed when lingering too close to the hearth, a domestic ritual of ashes and small, satisfying work. It's a scent that makes me think of this thing (but much lighter on the cinnamon.)

Torta Settevelli (alternating layers of chocolate sponge cake, hazelnut Bavarian cream, chocolate mousse, and hazelnut praline crunch, enrobed in a dark chocolate mirror glaze) This is an impossibly creamy, rich dessert of a fragrance brimming with buttery goodness, a decadent paste of toasted oatmeal, ground nuts, and brown sugar nestled beneath a coffee crème bavaroise with mocha sauce— and blended into a thick, cold, vanilla McFlurry.

Abelard (coconut husk and pearwood with frankincense and carnation petals) Fresh...cold...produce? I'm not a farmer, but I just imagine pulling up the last of a harvest before the frost hits. Or maybe harvesting your cold-weather vegetables, your cabbages, and leafy greens and carrots and such. And then you immediately juice them and drink them down with a scant teaspoon of honey. There's something so fresh and vegetal-sweet about this, with the tiniest bit of ozone-y plasticity as well, like veggies stored in a plastic bin. Like you carved a disconcertingly jaunty little face into a crooked carrot with a plastic spork.

Heloise (polished limewood, myrrh smoke, and blackened spices) I blame a friend for the immediate association I made when I sniffed this perfume. On Facebook, the other day, I was asking folks for their favorite persimmon recipes, and Angeliska shared a sort of "salad of the underworld": persimmons and radicchio and pomegranate seeds and a few other goodies, and they suggested serving it with a lime and ginger dressing. A sweet-tart-bitter and lightly spiced foil for all the unctuous richness at a banquet table for the dead. Erehwon salad bar katabasis.

Abelard and Heloise are intended for layering. When they get together, Heloise is like, "Abe, hush your darn beta carotene," and Abelard is all, "Weezie, shush your dang chicory," and combined, they mingle in cozy skin musk, vegetal sweetness.

Bobbing for Daddy (apple, diabolical incense with a splash of bay rum, and a hiss of infernal fougere) Before I reminded myself of the notes, I thought to myself...what is this? Apple and ...latex? Apple ...and chlorinated water? In this blend, nibbles of autumn apples are blended with BPAL's Daddy scent, and that's where the "diabolical incense" and the "infernal fougere" come in, and I don't know what comprises either of those, and I couldn't even begin to guess. But whatever latex-esque chlorine mingling vibe I am getting initially, it paves the way for a vibrantly grassy, subtly woody, absolute freshest, most hyper-realistic apple perfume I have ever sniffed. So weird and so very cool.

October 32 (leaves fluttering against a thick wool sweater, the cool amber glow of an autumn sunset, dollops of thick cream swirling in black tea) begins as vegetal and brisk, but not a brisk pace, like you're huffing and puffing to keep up with your spouse's long legs on an autumn stroll (it's not a marathon to Mordor, Yvan, for Pete's sake slow down!) but rather the weather has turned brisk and crisp overnight, there's an unexpected chill in the air, and you're taking a PROPER stroll at a REASONABLE pace, YVAN! And you're moved by that familiar olfactory symphony, that annual concert of sniffs, that gorgeous, romantic decay of fallen leaves on a late October afternoon, and you just look at your person and soften and think, damn, what a wonder it is to spend any moment at all with someone you love. And as your mood softens and hazes, so does this fragrance, like the scent of a comforting candle, something with hints of amber and vanilla bean and sandalwood and cashmere musk, but the flame been lit for an hour or so, and you barely smell it anymore, it's hovering at the edge of your senses, pleasant and cozy and familiar.

Autumn 1990 (decaying leaves, exhaust fumes, maximum-hold hairspray, and clove cigarettes) It's a challenge not to experience a perfume like this one through one's own lens, this "scent of a disaffected deathrock kid skulking around Hollywood with her ne'er-do-well friends...but minus the Boones Farm." In 1990 I was 14, a freshman in high school, and desperate to shed the bookish, nerdy, teacher's pet image that had been following me around for as long as I could remember. ..so the first week of school, I snagged myself a heavy-metal boyfriend. I am not sure how this happened, but I suspect it was because I was wearing an Iron Maiden tee shirt and an impossibly short, incredibly tight skirt. This was a case of someone probably being way too cool for me, but not in the actual-cool way that I would have been comfortable with, rather the smoking and drinking and badly-behaved-way that teenagers think is cool. Anyway, I ended up skipping a lot of school, receiving a lot of detention, and getting threatened through a third party that I was going to get beat up by some girl I'd never met because she liked my boyfriend and wanted him for herself, I guess? I never got beat up, so I still don't know what that was about. Autumn 1990 smells like realizing dozens of times over that I was too bright, too clever, and too interesting for this guy, but then worrying that no one would ever ask me out again, and deciding to be okay with having a boyfriend who people thought was cool but with whom I barely had a single thing in common. Spicy incense smoke and caustic hairspray, and pilfered, musky spritzes of my mother's nice perfume, embedded in a denim jacket that he wouldn't let me keep, but that he would sometimes let me wear on rainy November days.

Three People Plucking A Mandrake (a tangle of mandrake root and patchouli root bound by champaca resin) According to the 1812 Family Herbal written by John Hill, the fresh root of mandrake is a violent medicine, the object of so many strange superstitions, Satan's apple, and all that sort of thing. I imagine this book was found in the loamy earth surrounding the vestiges of forest temple ruins, fringed with fern and moss, sticky with whisps. Phantom incense, balsamic, honeyed and heady, clings to the pages, is embedded in the nearly illegible inked letters.

The Unreturning (wisps of spectral white musk and ambergris, blackened leather, yew needles, cypress boughs, gnarled patchouli root, and the memory of frankincense smoke) A cosmic floral inkiness, like the atmospheric

glitterings of black salamanders in love, like the glowing lunar movements of shadow people in the mica-flecked dreams of an ancient cave, like a dark song in a holy house at the end of time.

Dead Leaves, Vanilla Bean, Pink Fig, and Brandied Dates This is scent of the Amazoness Quartet, CereCere, PallaPalla, JunJun, and VesVes of the Dead Moon Circus in Sailor Moon Super S, boiled down to their essences and formed in molds into sweet, fruit-jellied, squidgy, flower-shaped candied versions of themselves. I will not be taking any questions at this time.

Lightening Strikes Literature (a lightning storm stirred with beeswax candle smoke, yellowing notebooks, and pools of India ink) oh, I do like this! But I don't know that I am getting most of the notes. To my nose, it's the electric peach and ozone-y vanilla that I envision this dream of a dress smells like, with maybe the tiniest, almost undetectable dribble of camphorous ink smeared on the skirts. A note that begins with "Dearest Mother," and a foggy sense that one has slept too long in the moonlight.

Despondency (pumpkin puree, lavender bud, night-blooming violets, purple sandalwood, and tears) This really does smell like a sad, 20 ft. tall skellington on the day after Halloween. A sort of morose green note bringing down that lofty sandalwood, the chill breath of lavender extinguishing the warmth of a candle illuminating a week-old jack-o-lantern's rotting grin. Evocative of that bummer feeling of gloomy liminality, that space between where we started and where we're going, the bitter business of the banished excitement of the thing that just passed and not knowing what to next look forward to. The feeling of emptiness after sustained contact with the ineffable.

The Necromancer (dusty tomes, russet cashmere, green velvet, and leather, frankincense and cinnamon bark, galangal root and fig, rosewater and lilac cologne) This necromancer is an incredibly learned worker of the dark arts who is very secure in their knowledge and would never be up in someone's DMs being a "well actually" know-it-all and they've got better things to do than troll the comments section with their obnoxious devils advocate scenarios. They've got quite a subtle presence, you hardly even know they're in the room, they're just minding their own beeswax and working their magic in the background. How do they fragrance their person? It's a faint perfume of mild, milky fig, and heady lilac—but just the barest dab, on skin softened with sweet almond oil and warmed in cashmere cloaks.

Pomegranate Turkish Delight I was a little afraid of this one at first—pomegranate can be so syrupy! And C.S. Lewis tricked us dreadfully re: our formative notions of Turkish delight!—I needn't have worried. This is a fresh, exuberant pomegranate seed, unencumbered by the burden of expectation and dread associations. This is a juicy, crisp, bright pomegranate seed with complex floral nuances and the tiniest bit of tart sass, a pomegranate that has actually never experienced anything than pure utter, joy. This is a pomegranate seed living its best life. It's going to become a wholesome, universally beloved TikTok influencer and get signed for a dozen bankable sponsorships and give an inspiring interview on Oprah. (Is an interview on Oprah the gauge of having made it, nowadays? Maybe it will get invited onto Hot Ones, instead.)

Dead Leaves, Pralines and Sheer Vanilla Initially, this is a fragrance focusing intently on the dead leaf aspect of this combination of notes, that element of sweet autumnal decay and sour, earthy fungi farts that the Lab does so astonishingly well. Then, without warning, that aspect of the fragrance disappears completely and is replaced by a rich, rich, buttery vanilla custard.

X-Rayed Candy Bag (the sugary contents of last night's Trick-or-Treat bucket blasted with atomic particles at your local hospital, producing a stark image of ghostly treats cast in a greeny-white radioactive glow) This is wild, even

though I have applied the same amount of this same scent on each wrist, it smells like in one hand I'm clutching a fruity fistful of tropical Jolly Ranchers and Smarties, and on the other side I've got a pocketful of creamy butterscotch Werthers, but I'm smelling them collectively through a luminous white musk, green tea, and honeydew haze.

Witches Kitchen (bourbon tobacco absolute, nagarmotha, vetiver, tomato leaf, gunpowder, yarrow stalks, brimstone, vervain, seared leather, and castoreum accord) I am so curious to know how this sits on other people's skin, and what sort of smells jump out at them from this kitchen sink jumble of kitchen witchery. It's not listed in the description, but what I experience immediately and intensely is a minty aspect, cool and camphorous and mentholated. I'm not a huge fan of mint, but this isn't the unpleasantly spearminty toothpaste variety that makes me gaggy, this is more like a cup of fresh, strong emerald-hued mint tea. I keep looking at the notes, though, and thinking, "where is this even coming from?" Maybe a combination of tomato leaf's distinctive velvety astringency, vervain's lemony-grassy aspects, and yarrow's pineiness? Huh! As it wears, the mint loses its manic fervor and almost becomes a bit sleepy, there's a warm woody aspect that surfaces, like a worn wooden tabletop where upon aromatic and sweet herbs have been processed and dried, tinctures and elixirs have been portioned out, and all of those oils and essences have worked their way into the grain. At this point, what began as a really energetic "wakey wakey!" perfume now urges you to curl up and take a lovely little nap.

Bobbing for Oblivion (Arkansas black apples with inky musk, wood spice, labdanum, patchouli, dark African woods, and saffron) You arrive at the inn early and await your companions—five strangers who are meeting for the first time, anonymously accepting the intriguingly vague but highly lucrative-sounding adventure guild request. You are served a measure of fresh-pressed apple cider in a rustic wooden goblet. There is a bit of dried patchouli leaf and a thread of saffron floating on the golden surface of the drink. Is this evidence of a hexing or perhaps a culinary oversight? You inquire of the barmaid, who only repeats the same question, "what'll it be, love?" Huh, that's weird. Almost as weird as when you noted that you only have one arrow in your quiver, and one health potion in your bag. Almost as if...you have to play at some game to earn more of them. And hey, that's no barmaid, that's just a random NPC! Wait a second! Did you get sucked into an RPG again? How does this keep happening to you???

Fleece Skeleton Onesie (freshly-washed fleece skeleton onesie and a little bit of smeared eyeliner) when you realize you're never going to smell as good as whatever fragrance it was that you wore five months ago and which still faintly clings to the stitches of your coziest cardigan, mingled with whatever uniquely intimate magics your skin oils and musks were making on that particular day, this is that smell.

Shadowed Veil (black pumpkin, leather, pomegranate incense, agarwood, and bourbon patchouli) If one were to pack a picnic for venturing into the shadowy otherworld of the Fae (and one definitely should, because it's best not to eat any of their tricky offerings) one might pack a loaf of the humble but gorgeously tasty Icelandic rúgbrauð, a dense, dark rye bread made with golden syrup and soured milk and baked or steamed low and slow. It's delicious with briny salmon or smoky lamb or even just a dollop of cold, creamy butter, but even—especially!—if you don't dress it up with a single thing, it still smells absolutely amazing. Rich and hearty and sweet, and really, it kinda smells like Christmas, and you don't even need to visit fairyland, because this is already some really good magic. Cancel your plans (yay for canceled plans!) and make some bread instead. Or don't do any of that, maybe you agreed to all that stuff, but now the vibe is off, and you just want to be a potato for the evening. You can conjure both the fairy ring and the bread by liberally smearing yourself with Shadowed Veil. Protip: slather and suit up in your coziest fleece onesie, skellington or otherwise. Future you five months from now will thank you.

Pomegranate, Patchouli, Moss, & Fir Needle. More an ambient murmur than a sonic scream of a pomegranate, it's such a subtle red fruit, I can barely tell it's red, or that it's a fruit. I smell it faintly on my wrist, in the warmth of my skin, the throb of my pulse. It's a heart healing itself, stitching itself back together in the small devotions of gentle fairy tales, favorite flowers, and pictures of baby Snoopy. Being kind to yourself when you get sad, and homesick for a home that doesn't exist anymore. Allowing yourself to weep for someone else's grief when you read for the 100th time the howling sorrow of Andrea Cohen's poem "Refusal to Mourn."

In lieu of
flowers, send
him back.

Letting your heart feel all of it, so much of everything. Breaking it every day. Mending it forever. Hoping and dreaming and loving and doing it again and again and again and waking up in the morning with the sunrise and feeling and smelling that tiny throb at your wrist and knowing that it's the only way any of this works. What else can we do?

Autumn 2023

A Timid Twinkling Golden Star (tuberose and sweet amber) A dusty, honeyed wistful, sepia-tinted floral; the olfactory representation of the concept of "dés-vu", or the awareness that this moment will become a memory.

A Little Silver Scimitar (foamy orris and ambergris accord pierced by a sliver of white fir needle, moonflower, and cypress) This smells ... "incisive" is the word that comes to mind. It knows something, visions of silver, fruit, blood. I picture less a scimitar and more a little letter opener, sharp-edged glinting, used to liberate clever missives, mince sour slivers of plum, impale inconstant hearts.

Witch's Currant Cake (red currant and rosewater gooseberry cake with a sugar-dusted gingerbread crumble topping) Whenever I see the word "gooseberry" I think of the time I spent listening to Eddie Izzard's memoir and

how his British pronunciation (“guuzbury”) always makes me smile. As a matter of fact, this sweet/sour, tart/tangy scent blanketed with a molassey-gingery cozy streusel, could even be the cake he’s talking about in his “Cake or death?” clip from his Dressed To Kill special. Let’s just make it canon. Our beloved, wicked Eddie Izzard circa 1999 smells like a guuzbury gâteau, a witch’s currant cake.

Ghost Milk (goat’s milk, marshmallow, vanilla cashmere, honey dust, and white chocolate) There’s nothing fruity listed in here but this perfume is fruity, cereal-miky, and fuzzy, like slurping a bowl of Frankenberries from the pocket of your softest, pinkest, plushest hoodie. A hoodie that definitely hoodies. I watch too much TikTok.

Mummy Milk (condensed milk wrapped in coconut shavings and tea-stained linen with a hint of bitumen, myrrh, and embalming resins) Wild grains and rustic incense, something roasting over a fire until it pops and frills, and carried over the fields on the dry wind of a warm September daydream.

Snooty Bat (sugared patchouli, nag champa, black leather, and clove) and **Snootier Bat** (all the sugared incense you can shake a wing at with double the leather and a dollop of thick, inky black musk) These two fragrances initially reminds me of how my sisters and I might gaze at each other in abject befuddlement and say something like “That is such a bizarre thing to do—how are we even related??” Snooty with a leather that’s almost midnight-stormy sky-ozonic at the onset, and Snootier opens all gloomy musk and plummy treacle. After a moment though, it becomes apparent that they are siblings, an iron-rich vein of incense connecting them. As they wear, they grow apart and drift away from each other, Snooty becoming darker and more unrepentantly patchoulified by the hour, and Snootier, half sick of shadows, transforms into a soft, cozy creamy thing.

Batty Lace (dry flowers, aged linens, and the faint breath of long-faded perfumes with well-worn leather and caramel musk) “A leathered up, musky interpretation of BPAL’s Antique Lace.” The caramel aspect of this blend is what I notice most, a buttery-milky brown sugar caramel that wants to ooze over vanilla ice cream rather than firm up into fudgy squares. Shifting beneath the caramel are those faint, faded attic-trunk florals and creamy cobwebby linens I recall from Antique Lace and a cracked leather buckle so ghostly and elusive I’m not sure if it was actually ever there at all.

Batty Cathedral (leathery wings flapping through billows of incense smoke) I was writing this review and Yvan walked into the room, saw the label art up on the screen, and exclaimed, “Say, that bat’s wearing a fez!” So it is! Anyway. The leather in this blend is an airy, floral leather, conjuring visions of a little bat snoot dootling deep in trellis vining, moon-luminous night-blooming flowers. The incense is cool and crystalline, frost on stone, smoky winter mists high on a mountain while a witch sits in silence, tracing runes in the snow. Like a Wardruna video. With more bats and flowers and witches.

Dead Leaves, Paper, and Smoke This one has a spectral and musty quality, like shed snake skins and brittle, broken bird’s nests, but also oddly evokes spring leaves, damp and dewy and almost jittery green, teeming with chlorophyll. It culminates in a fragrance that you might attribute to an altar deep kept in the wood, obeisance to a thing so old it doesn’t even have a name, with offerings of shoots and stems, bones and claws, trinkets both living and dead.

Dead Leaves, Balsam, and Green Musk The greenest stickiest resins, tree gum, and sap, tingly with a frisson of spearminty-pennyroyal cool-electric-crispness.

Dead Leaves, Shortbread, and Crystallized Ginger The softly decaying dead leaves component of this perfume is so fleeting, almost as if leaf litter and loam were used as padding for a parcel of treats, but the parcel was delivered and the packaging was tossed willy nilly, and what we are left with is the sugar-cruised delight of candied ginger-flecked buttery shortbread with crisp, caramelized edges.

Skelemingo (pink grapefruit and black licorice) it's the most bonederful time of the year! Wherein even things that do not have bony skeletons inside their skins get treated to cheap plastic skeletons and sold for \$5.99 at Michaels and Party City. Worm, you get a skeleton! Octopus, you get a skeleton! And so on! The flamingo does in fact have a skeleton and as scientists know, its aroma is that of the most delicious bitter grapefruit Haribo candy cross-bred with salty Icelandic lakkrís, spliced with white chocolate. When I talk about my profound love for things that inspire a sense of demented glee, a fragrance like this is exactly what I am thinking of.

Hand-Knitted Witch Gloves (raw wool, sweet oakmoss, and cranberry brandy) I don't talk about fragrances in terms of whether they are masculine or feminine—that's dumb and limiting!—but I will say that this scent is initially, and surprisingly, quite "handsome." An aroma that at first evokes some sort of rare, centuries-old cognac and things being aged in French oak barrels, but then because you have no use for stodgy tradition, you eschew drinking it neat and instead concoct a cranberry Manhattan with bitters and vermouth, garnished with a wooly frizzle of earthen moss because you are actually just three gnomes in a trench coat.

Things Are Fine (white sandalwood smoke, hinoki, white tea, and falling leaves) Washing your hair with a fragrant aromatherapeutic "spa-like" shampoo and then immediately running outdoors on a crisp October afternoon and rolling around in a pile of loamy leaves and moss, like a great shaggy golden retriever after a bath. This is stunning. STUNNING.

A Melancholy of Goths (clove smoke, champaca incense, plum velvet, and hairspray) Can you think of anything more goth than a marble gargoyle in a mourning veil perched atop a crumbling gravestone wearing perfume of honeyed funereal florals & infernal incense ash? That is exactly what this smells like. It also smells like what I imagine Anna Falchi in Cemetery Man smells like.

Pumpkin Spice Dark-n-Stormy (extra spicy rum fizzed up with ginger beer and garnished with a lime) Utterly incandescent. Crystalline radium glass lime, the sticky bite of ginger syrup + a dry dram of allspice's mince pie charm.

Make A Face (yellow bergamot, white pomegranate rind, lemon peel, and white musk) This smells like a thick, nourishing lemon salve that you aren't supposed to eat but holy jeez you are definitely tempted to eat it. Yvan says he thinks it smells like luxurious lemon peel soap, to which I countered "But do you want to eat it?" And he was like like "Well, I mean yes." This is one of those simple scents that somehow doesn't seem like there's much to it, and yet is more than the sum of its parts and is weirdly definitely habit-forming.

Halloween Cat (cacao and coconut husk dusted on shining black fur, illuminated by electric green mandarin and raw amber) I wouldn't typically use the words "chocolatey" and "fresh" together in the same sentence and I don't know that's what I am doing here either—but I don't know that I am not? Halloween cat smells a bit like huffing dry brownie mix; absent the sweetness and gooeyness, there's a bracing, savory aspect to the cocoa. A pale nimbus of citrus hovers, a timorous, shimmering aurora haloing the arid chocolate.

Witch in the Woods (blackthorn, mandrake root, and myrrh scratching through cypress boughs, blackberry resin, and incense smoke) A tangled orchard, a forest-jam tart, a sharpened blade kissed-thrice, batwings circling an autumn moonrise—all of these trapped in a waxen candy wrapper curse.



YULE

Yule 2017

On Seeing a Tuft of Snowdrops in a Storm (snowdrop and sweet pea, wintersweet, winter-flowering honeysuckle, and deep purple honeywort) Less a furious whirlblast and more a light zephyr, a gentle breeze laced with delicate florals and a dash of old-fashioned honeysuckle soap.

Claircognizance (rockrose, white amber, Corsican immortelle, Siamese benzoin, white sandalwood) A beautiful caramelized floral; a honeyed, grassy tea.

Diable en Boîte (redwood, bitter clove, tonka, hemp accord, and tobacco with peach blossom, black currant, and red musk) Like its namesake, a tricky scent... a woody, spicy, musky peach. I am not fond of peach-scented things, but the peach is at the very bottom of a curious box, and you only catch subtle whiffs of it between the rickety coiled springs jumps of a sly jumping devil.

Allodoxaphobia (Flecks of cranberry sauce spatter the table as a fist pounds in anger: a boisterous, conflicted, bombastic lather of red pepper, boiled cranberries, and bergamot) The sour tang of red-fruited seasonal candles that dries down to a peppery Earl Grey.

Krampus (Sinister red musk, black leather, dusty rags, and wooden switches.) Buttery soft leather and musk, warm fur. A Krampus plushie.

Hypothermia (no scent notes listed) The scent of bone-chilling, heart-stopping cold opens on a bleak note, that of metallic, mentholated ozone and frosted pine needles. Despite the profusion of mints, ("not a fan" doesn't even adequately describe my feelings on mint) with time, this chilly whisper of a scent becomes pleasanter and pleasanter, a dreamy combination of icy musks and pale, frosted cream.

The Magi: Melchior of Persia (Sweet oudh, Bulgarian rose, chamomile, and frankincense) This is the Magi who gives the best gifts; I think it's a gift certificate to a used book store or your favorite New Age shop; he smells of the bricks of a historic building downtown, cool, shadowed corners where the imported goods are stacked, dusty shelves of rocks and minerals and glinting crystals, the beaded curtains you step through to get to the vintage clothing racks, and piles upon piles of old astrology paperbacks. Maybe a little bit of China Rain and Nag Champa, too. This Magi smells like a ticket to your low key favorite place in the world.

Frostbitten Snake Oil is, depending when and where you wear it, either mostly the snowdrift chilly sweetness of Snow White, or the heady, sugared incense of Snake Oil. They never coalesce to create a perfect hybrid of the two, but rather twine their way sinuously about your wrist so that, at some point during your day, you smell one or the other.

Who Would Not Tremble Too (sweet orange blossom, white honey, jasmine tea, white sandalwood, green apple, and lily of the valley) Sunny bright and nectar sweet, this scent of spirit-touched courtship recalls for me something far more innocent and definitely more on the level of this plane of existence: trips to the community swimming pool, the sunlight glinting off the water in a pleasingly blinding sort of way, a bounty of spring flower gardens along the damp walkway, cement not yet hot enough to burn small, tender feet. Chlorine and the smell of wet swimsuits drying in an afternoon breeze.

Noche Buena (purple sage, plumeria, chrysanthemum, tuberose, Angel's Trumpet, Mexican tiger lily, dahlia, and azucenas). This is a lush, vibrant peacock of plumeria; a gingery, citrusy, syrupy floral, with airy green notes. It is such an apologetically a cheery, joyous fragrance—and why should it be sorry? It's the holidays, you Grinch! Let people love what they love and find cheer where they may.



Yule 2019

DAY ONE: Jólábókaflóðið A dribble of candle wax, distant hearth-smoke, a fleck of chocolate Yule log on a thick wool sweater, and aged, yellowing paper bound by well-loved leather that has passed through many gentle hands.

When I first heard of it, I immediately loved the idea of this Icelandic tradition of the year-end “book flood,” the exchanging books on Christmas Eve, and then spending the evening reading them—but I was sorely disappointed when I asked my Icelandic partner about this tradition, and sadly digested his ensuing reply: “yeah...it’s a thing...but it’s not really A Thing.” Like a food coma and watching football after Thanksgiving dinner, he conjectures, “it’s not really a tradition...it’s just a thing that happens.”

But, I’m thinking...well, if the thing happens frequently enough at scheduled intervals...doesn’t this annual widespread phenomena then just, you know, become a tradition? Can’t we just make this A Thing? CAN’T WE MAKE YOUR FAMILY MAKE THIS A THING? Well, the only point I am making here is that this particular Icelandic family sits around and talks and laughs FOR HOURS after dinner and yeah that’s great and all, but at no point does anyone ever retire to a soft, shadowy corner or a cozy sofa with their books, and for years I have been feeling bitterly misled about this Jólábókaflóðið tradition/phenomena/thing indeed.

As for the scent it has inspired, I am in no way embittered at all: it is the delicate ivory of white chocolate, the mild honeyed floral of beeswax candles, and if this can be translated to fragrance (and our friends at BPAL are experts in such translations) the gentle, tremblingly anticipatory manner with which one handles the crisp cover of a brand new book.

DAY TWO: Frostbitten Alice is from the Snowdrift series, a collection of scents that have been combined with BPAL’s beloved Snow White. A limited-edition fragrance introduced in 2003, Snow White is beautifully chilly and crystalline, conjuring visions of snow flurries, frosty winter winds, and the icy ghost-breath puffs of night-blooming flowers. Paired with Alice’s milky carnation and citrusy rose, the result is the loveliest vanilla-honey-creamy white floral snow cone confection, served with a tiny spoon in the daintiest dollhouse china teacup.

DAY THREE: Krampus Sinister red musk, black and rust-brown leathers, dusty rags, and wooden switches.

Whenever I think I might know a thing or two about perfume and fragrance, I get a whiff of something like Krampus that has me rethinking everything I thought I knew! Krampus opens for me with dusty shards of medieval wintergreen candies, with which I assume Krampus is heartily pelting naughty village children as he chases them down to the river. An hour later I smell, very close to the skin, a sort of woodland brûlée, a winter tree flan that has been dusted with sugar crystals and torched up a bit. Tethering the two stages is that roguish red musk, a bit fruity, a bit floral, and deeply narcotic.

DAY FOUR: Black coffee and old books smells both exactly like you think it might, and more, and less. The bitter grounds and dusty pages make themselves known not at the beginning, but rather a few minutes into the scent's life on your skin. First though, is a tender waft of light green musk, gently bracing, a tugging at the corners of one's mouth as you contemplate the sacred promise of the pleasure one derives from the rituals of their black coffee and old books. What old books to you turn to during the wintry season?

DAY FIVE: Christmas Pudding treacle, suet accord, custard

Loosely based on a medieval recipe, and crafted, as tradition dictates, from thirteen ingredients, Christmas Pudding smells of a boozy, syrupy compote, swimming thickly with brandied currants, dried plums, glacé cherries, and stewed long into the hours of a chilled evening.

DAY SIX: Brown Butter Bourbon Cookie is pictured here with some cookies that are definitely not of the brown butter and bourbon variety, but they made a good stunt double, I guess. No matter! This is the butterscotch puddingest butterscotch custard tart. That complex, decadent ambery-vanilla-toasty-malty-creamy-oddly-pineapple-y butterscotch fragrance present even in the most humble of lunchbox pudding cups, poured into the butteriest, flakiest, crust and baked in a 350 oven to caramel-colored perfection.

DAY SEVEN: From the Gingerbread Cotillion offerings, I anointed myself with Gingerbread, Honey Dust, and Vanilla Bean. Tempted beyond measure by the extreme creamy-vanilla-sandalwood deliciousness radiating from my wrists, I gobbled them up immediately like the limbs of so many tasty gingerbread boys and now I am typing this missive with disembodied hands and phantom carpal tunnel issues.

DAYS EIGHT AND NINE: The Moon's My Own mugwort, white musk, lemon peel, and moonflower & I Hear You Call, Pine Tree lotus root and pine needles.

Three-quarters of the way through a piece of writing is, I'm sure they'll tell me, no place for an introduction but it's 2020 and what are literary rules, anyway? What are words, even? It's all made-up nonsense, and in light of that I'll do what I want. I initially shared these Twelve Days Of BPAL in my instagram stories, and in between now and then I lost some of the images. So at this point, we are switching to what they call in the industry*, "just making shit up." Ok, intro over.

*some industry? probably?

I suppose I am predisposed to love any scent inspired by the words of Yosa Buson, one of the greatest Edo-era poets, and The Moon's My Own, which reads:

Miles of frost –
On the lake
The moon's my own

...translates to a perfumed poem that is, in my estimation,

earthbound and bitter–
and starlight, sharp, clear, and bright.
moonbeams, in between.

I Hear You Call, Pine Tree, also inspired by a Japanese poet, but one with which I am not familiar is a briskly astringent energizing pine that dissipates after a moment on your skin, and you are left with the softest, loveliest watery blossoms and soothing, gentle rains.

DAY 10: Peacock Queen a blood-red, voluptuous rose, velvet-petaled, at the height of bloom.

I know I've said it before, but I really struggle with roses. Dead Mom issues and all that. I've got a convoluted matryoshka tangle-stack of nested baggage attached to the scent of a rose. But I try to stay open-minded, and more importantly, I think, I try to keep my heart open to the fragrance of these lush, symbolic blooms. Peacock Queen is a velvety rose, heady but not overripe, restrained elegance and refinement that suggests high necklines and legs crossed at the ankles but also which cannot resist a glimpse at itself when it walks past a mirror and is always exceptionally pleased with the exquisite vision reflected back. As the scent fades, it becomes a sumptuous silk cushion filled with countless bouquets worth of such beauties.

DAY 11: Black Ice chilly white sleet-like notes with a hint of vetiver, a breath of smoky asphalt, and winter wind

This is a Yule scent that's been around in some form or another since 2005 and it's the first time I'm smelling it! That's pretty exciting, but what's more thrilling is how much I desperately love it. An icy, smoky floral that calls to mind less a vision and more a sensation, of the throb and thrum of deep sleep brain waves and the nocturnal cerebral meditations of 2am shadows. This is utterly, breathtakingly gorgeous and I think it has become my new bedtime fragrance.

DAY 12: Coffee Bean, Cardamom, & Vanilla Pod

In 2007-2008 or so, I was pretty wretched. Lonely and bitter and frightened and terribly, terribly sad all of the time. And so cold! I wasn't used to winters at all and I found myself in a place that felt like the frigid shivers of an eternal February. However, amidst these wintry melancholies I connected with some wonderful internet friends and so I cannot regret a single second of it.

One of those friends– a dear, clever, deeply kindred soul–shared a recipe with me over the course of one of those winters. I will never forget how useful it made my hands feel, to mix and knead that dough, how it awoke my languishing senses with its fragrance of delicate, floral spices wafting through that strange chilly house that never quite felt like a home, how it warmed my heart at a time when my heart felt so desperately trapped under a frozen Raritan river's worth of ice. Coffee Bean, Cardamom, & Vanilla Pod brought rushing back those memories of my first time attempting to make Finnish Pulla, a subtly sweet, cardamom laced, yeasted bread braid, brushed with

strong, black coffee and sprinkled with coarse sugar. I remain immensely grateful for both the recipe and to an even greater extent, the friend.019



Yule 2020

Fir Needle and Smoke In the past year or so, my partner and I have switched gears about our future plans and where we see ourselves living. Though we both grew up in Florida and have family here, we've known for a long time that the land of palm trees and 80 degree Christmases and Florida Man having sex with an alligator behind the Bob Evan's dumpster was not the right place for us, and our dream was eventually to make our way to the Pacific Northwest. Quarantine and lockdown, however, had us rethinking just how close we really wanted to be to a lot of people, and coupled with the fact that it's terribly expensive out there (and all of those fires really worry us), we've gradually shifted our thinking back to the East Coast, somewhere we can get some land and grow some vegetables and have orchards and goats and chickens and tap our own maple trees and maybe keep bees, and and and....

Ok, there's a lot of stuff we want to do, and some of it might be a little (or very) ridiculous, but these fancies have had us frequently peeking at Zillow in our moments of spare time. There is a stunningly perfect place out in the middle of nowhere in Vermont and an aerial drone photo captures this property nestled in the midst of a lush grove of wildly vivid autumnal foliage. This, of course, stirs and stokes the embers of my imagination, and the bracing evergreen, musky oakmoss, and subtle ashy haze of Fir Needle and Smoke is the scent permeating the landscape if I were to step out onto that chilled wooden back porch after supper on a December evening and gaze out into the encroaching woodland shadows as the stars slowly begin to appear in the darkening sky, one by one by one.

Midnight Mass I think I maybe attended one midnight mass in my life, with my high school boyfriend who, though his family was Catholic, I'm fairly certain he wasn't the slightest bit spiritual or religious or had much in the way of any belief in anything at all except for low-rider trucks that blared bowel-quaking bass. This brings me to a very important question, aside from why was I even with this guy or why two teenagers willingly partook of the drama and symbolism of beliefs and tradition that they hadn't the slightest interest in. But rather this: when we conjure our expectations and wishes for what something might look like for us, we say that we "envision" this, that, or the other thing. What's the word we use when what we mean to say is that this is what we imagined a thing might smell like? We ... "ensniffen" it? That sounds dumb, but in lieu of a better word, I always ensniffen Midnight Mass to smell like this story. Dry and dusty and skeletal, like incense made from the bones of a creepy, grasping congregation. I've sniffed BPAL's Midnight Mass fragrance once or twice before, I'm sure I have had more than once

bottle in my possession over the last few years. And I'm quite certain it smells nothing at all like this that legendary Christmas Mass of the Dead.

Instead it brings me back to that surreal evening, decades ago. The unsettling, musky crush of warm bodies, the feverish agitation of gathering with people you don't know to talk to a god you don't even believe in, the warmth and glow of candlelight made aloof and indifferent in a disconcertingly unfamiliar setting. The shadowy mumblings of prayers you can't follow, slowly coalescing with the smell of incense smoke that you don't recognize, until the scent and the sound becomes one thing only, the swirling, rushing phantom of everything you don't know about everything in that moment. But also: being fogged and fuzzed and befuddled in that unassailable teenage cocoon of a heady-something-or other that feels a lot like love when you're young—and maybe it is—but it's also a bunch of hormones and recognizing that you're feeling new and strange and wonderful things for another person for the first time in your life. And no matter how out of your element you feel in the midst of this bizarre situation with all its kneeling and chanting and scores of seemingly devout strangers but who knows, really ...you're holding the hand of someone you're going to drink wine coolers and make out with a whole bunch, afterward.

Cucidati (lemon-frosted cookie filled with Calimyrna figs, dried dates, orange peel, dark rum, and almond paste) I've never tasted this Sicilian holiday treat, but my first impression of the fragrance inspired by it is that of baked dough, tender and buttery, enjoyed outdoors. Or at least maybe in front of an open window. There's a cool, airy-almost-ozone quality alongside the fresh-out-of-the-oven warmth that's really interesting to sit with and toggle between for a moment— but only a moment, mind you because it swiftly becomes a deeply caramelized jammy sugar scent. Fruits with all the fruitiness rendered out and what's left is a candied, deeply complex, toasted syrup confection. What's funny about this one is that never in my life has a fragrance changed so rapidly from one completely different thing to another, and it was really something to experience.

Narcissus and Snowflakes Animalic and wolfen, but with a shy floral sweetness buried far beneath acrid, feral pelts, and bitter icy loneliness and snapping, snarling, gnashing dagger teeth that will bite you before it gives you the slightest chance to hurt it first. A lonely, fearsome, wolf-hearted girl. This following reference may not resonate with many of you, but if you've watched the AMC series *Halt and Catch Fire*, this scent is the character Cameron Howe through and through— and it makes me think of this tender quote, the words of a dear friend as they part ways for what could be a long time, in the last episode of the show.

"You got a lot of love in you. More than anybody I ever met. It's bursting out of you. You're taking the world in these big gulps and you can't help but to let yourself get drowned in it. Overwhelms you, makes you feel like you're gonna explode at any minute. They don't see it. I do. It's a burden you carry."

Marshmallow Snow While the official scent notes are described as "soft poofs of chilled marshmallow", I don't detect a ploofy confection, so much as a glittering trap of twinkling fairy lights, glowing with an icy, effervescent-translating-as-iridescent light. Shards of rosy-pink sugar crystal glistening in the snow, a lure for human children out past their bedtime in the dark.

Cranberries and Popcorn Tart and salty? It's tough to be more specific. I am definitely not a sweet and salty person. Like, chocolate-covered potato chips? Thanks, I hate it! Get it out of my face! Not my thing at all. Salty and tangy, though? Or salty and sour? Or salty and tart? That I can get on board with. This scent doesn't have a whiff of sweetness to it, which seems like a super impressive feat to accomplish. It smells of hot, savory, saltiness, but somehow not super foody, not like a beef stew or anything, and a juicy, though not overly fruity, momentarily mouth-puckery bitter piquancy.

The Icebergs (peach musk, fir needle, immortelle, white moss, turquoise musk, juniper sap, apricot rind, fleur de sel, white rose, misty orris root, and white amber) A very chilly tropical scent, which initially calls to mind something like shaved ice drizzled with pineapple or lychee syrup, but it's not as cloying as that may sound, and it's also a very translucent feeling scent. Like falling asleep in a snowdrift and dreaming of balmy climes and salt on your skin and platters of succulent fruit by the sea, but the sleeper is seen through the gleaming glass of a snowglobe or the soft, crystalline wobbles of a jellied aspic. This dries as a thickly pulpy, then gently powdered peach.

Klosterruine Im Winter Mit Blick Auf Heisterbach (Crumbling marble under a blanket of snow, echoes of incense smoke, and crushed frankincense tears) The pearly, soft dawn through a frosted winter windowpane (when you're not brutally hungover, that is—I had to test this bottle twice) energized with the promise of pristine beginnings, fresh starts, blank slates. A clean, lemony floral that lingers a but a hasty half-second before clouds occlude the sun and shadows begin to slip over the windowsill and slink across the floor. The scent becomes subtle incense and gloomy musk and dust motes floating in the last rays of the sun sinking on the horizon.

Gingerbread Invisible Man (champagne-soaked gingerbread, candied ginger, lemon, and white sugar) I'm always happy when my sniffer picks up on various notes before I read the corresponding scent's description. When I first sampled Gingerbread Man, I thought, huh, now this is a gingerbread person... peeped through the damp bubbles of a vinyl showercurtain... while they're exfoliating with some sort of fizzy, spiced-citrus emulsifying sugar scrub! Ok, so I wasn't totally spot on, but I was close, right? Also, please don't peep at showering gingerpeople, unawares. Everyone deserves privacy whilst bathing.

Partridges in the Snow (roasted chestnut, oak bark, sawdust, balsam, and warm brown musk against a backdrop of white sandalwood, orris butter, and juniper) Rich, rounded, balsamic toasted sugar and a woody vanilla oakishness. It's simply a beautiful scent, and I feel in every BPAL collection there is one, that while not always my favorite, it's sure to be a crowd favorite. This is that one. Note: I originally typo'ed that as a "crow favorite."

Ghost Milk (goat's milk, marshmallow, vanilla cashmere, honey dust, and white chocolate) I try not to read or listen to other people's reviews of these scents before I attempt formulating my own thoughts. I don't want to be overly influenced to like or dislike something, or to go into the experience with any sort of expectations other than my own thoughts. I did, however, read that Labbie and marketing guru Tom Blunt mentioned over in the BPAL Facebook that Ghost Milk smells of Rice Krispie treat soap (I am paraphrasing, but it was something like that) (and not your fault, Tom, I should have minded my own business!) and so I'm afraid I did go into sampling it with some preconceived notions. As it happens though, one person's saponified crispy rice and marshmallow snack is another's cream-filled, tube-shaped, golden sponge snake cake—so either way, if you coveted and longed for the sweet treats and sugary desserts that all the other kids but you had in their lunchboxes, I think you are going to enjoy this subtly sweet, creamy vanilla scent.

Yule Cat (Malevolent musk, a drop of infernal civet, vetiver, club moss, birch, goosefoot, and rowan) It's difficult to believe that I haven't reviewed Yule Cat before, but I just checked and apparently I have not! The Jólakötturinn or Yule Cat, has long been a traditional Christmas-time enforcer of good behavior in Iceland. My sweetie is Icelandic and tells me that he was always grateful and relieved to see what he calls a "soft package" under the tree, because receiving items of clothing like socks or sweaters meant that you were a good kid and the Yule Cat wasn't going to gobble you up! I guess that's one way to get your children excited about not seeing video-game shaped packages under the tree. As an adult, he longs to find Yule Cat decorations gracing the shelves of shops during the holidays,

but the closest we can ever get are black cat decorations at Halloween. I don't precisely know what this thing would look like, but it would be big, and it would be terrifying. Sculptor friends, if you're up for a commission, let me know—I would love to be able to surprise my partner-in-crime and goofier-half with the Yule Cat of his dreams (or of his nightmares!) ANYWAY, this review was not simply a ploy to get the attention of an artist who wants to collaborate with me! Or maybe it was! But I'll review the scent, anyway. Yule Cat is honeyed-balsamic moss, dry earthy musk, and soft, wintry woods.

A Moonlight Winter Landscape (smoky grey amber, frost-black oak, snow-covered soil, Tuscan iris, storm-grey musk, fenugreek, linden blossom, and benzoin) A, sharp biting wind from the north, one hundred years of cursed and frozen silence, and the offer of sugary confections whilst being wrapped in furs in a swiftly swishing sleigh, at the foot of sketchy lady of regal stature who may or may not be an infamous sorcerous. The moodiest, broodiest midnight wander conjuring all of these memories when you're older and wiser, but also a sorry sort of sorrowful musing on how your time of snowblind adventures and marble-skinned, whispering witch queens is long in the past; how that dark, lustrous, tower-shaped structure in the distance is just a tired old oak, its dead branches heavy with snow; how your heart skipped and trembled under those cold, fathomless eyes, and you sometimes wonder at how it's beating, still.

Yule 2021

Hildegard's Cakes of Joy (spelt, nutmeg, clove, and a dollop of honey) I've long loved me some Hildie and was super jazzed to see Atlas Obscura post a recipe this past autumn for her "cookies of joy." I then recalled that I actually own a book of her recipes and remedies and when I peeked inside, sure enough—there's the recipe! So of course, now that I've got the instructions along with an inspirational scent, I think she's giving me all the signs that I need to make these cookies. The scent itself is that of grainy, honeyed sweetness and it did indeed bring a joyful smile to my face. I'm usually not a fan of nutmeg (I suspect it is harvested from the underside of the devil's dingleberries) but the spices in this fragrance are so smoothly measured and sifted that I can't even pick it out. And what began as a rich, baked kitchen scent is eventually suffused with light and radiant warmth, it's like a stained glass dream of a cookie. As you can see, I did actually make the cookies and quite frankly, they are the best cookies I have ever had in my life.

The Garden of Shut-Eye Town (lavender twined with passionflower, breeze-touched sways of wisteria, lemon balm, cowslip, poppy, and star-sparkles of chamomile) Every time I sniff this I get something different and then everything I thought I smelled begins to go fractured and unfamiliar. At first, it's a sort of spiced lavender, but not spices, exactly, more like a well-seasoned salty, peppered lavender. But I also get a soft floral coconutty apricot something-something from it? And also a lemony-ozone musk? There's a lot going on in Shut Eye Town and it's all so varied and interesting, I wonder if anyone gets any actual shut-eye. A line from a book I just read has been stuck in my mind recently, "the nest of a hummingbird, high in a hemlock." For some reason this scent conjures that vision for me.

Gingerbread, Vetiver, and Black Tea at first I thought this was a slice of soft ginger cake and lemony black tea, but the more this wears it becomes a gingery-peppery pfeffernusse cookie with an iced lemon glaze.

Crystal Gazers (white musk and yellow frankincense, black plum, neroli, verbena, and green cognac) A crystalline, sparkling fruity-floral, that dries down to a soft creamy almond musk.

Violet Fog (orris root and white sandalwood bruised by violet petals, champaca attar, and smoked lavender) So, weird story! In early December I posted a photo on Facebook of a cocktail I had created one evening, consisting of the following recipe that I had just made up to go with a new gin I was trying: “Measure with your heart: gin, orgeat, lime, crème de violette, sparkling water, butterfly pea flower tea.” It was lovely and tasty and I christened it a “Violet Fog”. I had no idea that there was soon to be a Violet Fog in the Yule update! Synchronous serendipity through the psychosphere!

Violet Fog the fragrance smells of crushed candied violets, starry midnight ozone, musky darkness, and going in an entirely different direction, here’s a thought. One of my favorite books of poetry is *The Ink Dark Moon: Love Poems* by Ono no Komachi and Izumi Shikibu, *Women of the Ancient Court of Japan*; I feel like Violet Fog is the base from which many of these poems could be aromatically interpreted. There’s something of late-night longing and loneliness wrapped up in this combination of notes that perfectly evokes the sadness and solitude of these poets’ writings.

Sugar Cookies with Extra Sugar there are no notes listed for this one, only that “this perfume is ridiculous,” and if by that they mean “this perfume is ridiculously incredible” then, ok, I absolutely believe that. In the bottle, it’s a Royal Dansk Danish butter cookie (a combination of the piped vanilla ring and the heavily sugared pretzel-shaped one) but as it wears, it’s less buttery baked good and more a sublime candied vanilla musk. With sprinkles! Sugar Cookie Satyr is a crumbled tin of those cookies combined with feral, virile, earthy musk and ALL of the aphrodisiac after-dark spicy-spices and formed into inappropriate shapes with highly NSFW cake pop molds.

Scientific, Occult, and Inexplicable (The bronze, brass, iron, glass and polished wood of Victorian scientific instruments obfuscated by a swirl of incense and a spatter of ectoplasm) A sense of detached antiquarian speculation that is somehow minty/mentholated-adjacent without any actual mintiness, cool and frosted, with an unsettling metallic tang and an added undertone of unease. This is a scent that causes a weird, unsettling feeling, almost like the olfactory equivalent of infrasound, frequencies so low that they’re inaudible to humans, and which can cause symptoms of uneasiness, fear, and chills down the spine...and which are sometimes linked to perceived paranormal experiences!

Gingerbread Limoncello Is somehow magically dense and chewy AND fluffy. Moist, light, and cakey old-fashioned gingerbread scented with warm spices and a kick of freshly grated ginger for contemporary palates and topped with both a sweet-tart lemon glaze AND velvety clouds of lemon cream cheese frosting.

Alischereshasa (an imp’s worth of Alice stuffed into a 5ml of Rakshasa plopped into Scheherazade’s mother bottle). In the spirit of turduckens and piecakens, the Blaps labbies have metaphorically stuffedimps into 5mls into motherbottles in order to make a series of absurd combinations. I get a lot of rich, fruity-resinous red musk and honied rose from this one, tempered by a milky sandalwood. A rosy-golden-hued fairytale of a fragrance. Separately, you know that invisible imp of the perverse who sits on your shoulder and tells you to do the thing that you know you shouldn’t do? Midwarkust (an imp’s worth of Darkness stuffed into a 5ml of Midway plopped into Lust’s mother bottle) is an exuberant scent of candied devilry and jammy-juicy ambrosial wickedness and that’s exactly what this diminutive low-level trickster smells like.

Second Sight (lilac-dappled beeswax, champaca smoke, and agarwood) buttery, tangy ether; spreadable honeyed ectoplasm. Something like coconut oil and sour milk? But also a grassy vanilla. So different than I thought this might smell! I feel like this is some sort of precognitive coconut jam, rich and aromatic, and you want to slather it on warm toast, maybe a thick, sweet slice of Japanese milk bread.

Sugarplum Snow White There is definitely a part one and a part two to this scent. It opens with a deep plummy-fruityness that's also somehow a bit aquatic. Sort of a saucer of candied plum compote floating in the clear, blue depths of a fountain. End scene. With no preamble, Snow White's subtly sweet, creamy iced rice milk is present, just a small, simple glass of it with the tiniest dollop of whipped cream on top. No sign of plums or fruit. This really is like two very separate, scents in one! Sugar Plum Snake Oil is quite the opposite in that there is an immediate melding of the glittering Queen of the Kingdom of Sweets with that heady vanilla musk and it evolves into an enchanting spun-sugar-shard incense.

Yule 2022

Dapper Mandrake Goes A Courtin' (elegant tendrils of mandrake, vetiver, and galangal root splashed with a debonaire cologne) This earthy, spicy, jaunty rhizome is a snazzy gent and has splashed a verdantly aromatic-cedary-citrusy essence on his whiskery roots to make a good first impression, put his best foot forward, so to speak. It is unfortunate that in doing so, he neglected to put either foot through a pants leg. But he smells so dashing and handsome that you can almost forget the fact that he showed up for your date without a stitch of clothing on.

Ginormous Yule-ified Yard Skeleton (Sandalwood bones festooned with a pumpkin garland and twinkling multicolored lights groaning under the weight of crushed peppermint snow) You know how sometimes those glossy, glowing multicolored strands of Christmas lights on a dark, cold wintry night look like sour, sugar-crystal candied neon orbs strung on chewy licorice filaments? No? Well, they do to me! Imagine you could just crunch your way through all of them. That's what this scent smells like, just pure, irradiated broken-toothed-but-worth-it joy.

Snow White 2022 (a chilly, bright perfume: flurries of virgin snow, crisp winter wind, and the faintest breath of night-blooming flowers.) Though I've tried several versions of the Lab's Snow White over the years—even one all the way back in 2005!—I have never once written a review for it. It always smells like a revelation, and you know how wily and ineffable those things can be. It's almost impossible to paint a picture of; it's all fleeting impressions, like a dream that you wake up from and you're like, "...I was dreaming of Edmund Dulac's Snow Queen, and sugared almonds, and fluffy, and chilly-almost-minty-but-it can't-be-mint-because-I-hate-mint, right? And vanilla, coconutty filigree fluffy snowflakes, and whispery arctic-floral musks? ...And you were there, too!" You know, that kind of dream. It sweetly cocooned you all night, and even though you can't recall the specifics, you can still smell it on your wrists in the morning.

Kentucky Bourbon Fruitcake (a big hunk of homemade fruitcake soaking in 90 proof) buttery yellow cake batter laden with the hypernatural lurid fruity sweetness of jade green and synthwave sunset red candied cherries, a sour bit of citron, and the tartness of dried pineapple; there's a measuring cup nearby spilling with the potent tannic, caramel-scented fumes of oak barrel-aged whiskey and yeah, you're eventually going to drench the cake in it after it's done baking and leave the whole thing on the counter to mellow overnight, but for now you're gonna stick a straw in it and slurp a bit of the top as a treat for the cook. Maybe munch on a few of those pecans you decided at the last moment not to stir in. It's your kitchen, your rules!

Pink and Blue Candy Canes (the pillowy warmth of strawberry cotton candy, cooled with a gentle breath of blueberry vanilla mint) I don't know how to explain this in a way that makes sense to people who function normally. But do you ever resist something or not allow yourself to experience something because you feel in your heart that x/y/or z thing isn't meant "for people like you"? I'm not even certain what that means, exactly, but it's a feeling that's been tethered to my soul, strangling it, for as long as I can remember. And whatever those off-limit things are, I know them when I see them. They're usually fun, playful, or exciting things, and there's just something deep-seated within me that's forever admonishing me, making me feel foolish even for thinking that I could ever partake in anything merry and mirthful, that my presence would ever be welcome at the table of joy. I think the pink and blue candy cane, that nostalgic, old-fashioned hard candy hook in a fusion of blue and pink twisted stripes, epitomizes all of those feelings in one eye-twitchingly sweet, crunchy confection. BPAL's interpretation of these sweets is a fluffy, spun sugar strawberry jam-scented hug, with a cool, ozonic blueberry pancake whisper of "treat yo'self." It is warm, and it is gentle, and in my reviews, I desperately try not to use the same words and descriptors as the Lab has used in their note listing (because what's even the point of me writing this here and now if I am doing that?) But their description of this scent is exactly what it is, and my ramblings here about it are basically just me barfing my angst on you in the meantime.

Birb Mob (starry musk and smoldering pink peppercorn ashes cascading into a snowdrift) Frosty, flickering starlit vistas; a graceful matrix of fragmented crystalline horizon; a dazzling and dreamlike view observed by a curious, many-eyed creature, its hollow bones aloft in a strange sky illuminated by waves of flowing aurora, while three pale moons simultaneously rise in the evening. A soft woody-rosy floral piquancy scents the air as silvery stars fall like snowflakes, sizzling and shimmering in the breathless cold.

Black Julbocken Alchemy Lab (shaggy black wool and a slushy tangle of juniper, mistletoe, winter sage, spikenard, white moss, and terebinth) A blood-memory of pagan festivals, and mystical ecstasy, evanescent shadows coalescing into giant woodland spirits cavorting in the dark, the scent of the animalic and fungal, leathery root and balsamic wood, a reed-wrapped parcel tossed in the flames at midnight, gingery, peppery spiced sparks drifting lazily skyward.

Welcome Unto Thee (champagne and marshmallows) A fairy-tale fruit danish, some lush combination of passionfruit and apricot (but somehow not fruity at all? Like a ghostly indentation where the fruit once briefly was nestled, and then a gremlin crept in and ate it, so it never made it into the finished pastry?) swirled with cream cheese and wrapped in twinkly, effervescent vanilla cream soda cellophane.

Snow Snake (a chilly interpretation of Snake Oil; sweet, spiced musk with a crunch of snow and frost-hardened patchouli) I've countless times alluded to the sugared vanilla incense patchoulified potency of Snake Oil, how I adore it, how it's a massively swoony scent—but the key word there is "massive." There is no such thing as applying a "little bit" of Snake Oil; even a scant droplet is probably too much. I've not yet encountered a combination that can tame its monstrous throw...until they paired it with the wintry shivers of their snow, frost, and ice notes. Imagine Snake Oil's narcotic slithers relentlessly winding their way up your nose, but then envision those heady slitherations crystalizing into the magic of spiraling frozen undulations, blanketed in the cold and hibernating, snake-charmed, chilled out.

Shortbread Diamonds (crumbly dough made with brown sugar and butter) You think this is going to be a simple, straightforward scent. You would be wrong. It begins as rich, buttery, generously salted—nearly briny—shortbread crust, but just as you're imagining it quivering with, say, an eggy black olive and manchego cheese mixture just before entering a 350° oven to quiche-ify, it surprises you. It becomes a lightly caramelized oaky vanilla-orchid

floral, the type of thing that wants to catch more flies with honey than it does with vinegar, the thing that softens and sweetens with age and experience and has learned to pick its battles, and sometimes that still just actually means all of the battles because your life and what you've made of it—and of yourself, in all of your sweet and salty and quichey and caramel incarnations, in all the tragedy and beauty of being a human—is delicious and gorgeous and worth fighting for. I don't know why this fucking perfume is making me cry, but here we are. The above image is my attempt at making the recipe that inspired this fragrance (I'm afraid I let them get a little brown, le whoopsie.)

Cranberry Honeyed Sandalwood Patchouli Root A gnome and a hare picnic in the forest and share a small pot of sour, tart, aromatic cranberry tea lively with woodland nuances, along with a napkin-knotted plate of rich, brown, sugared-sprinkled honey cake. A bear on a scavenger hunt interrupts. A tense moment. A frog belches on a nearby log. The hare's whiskers quiver with of mixture of fear and giggles and a sweet dusting of crumbs, and soon, the trio is laughing companionably together as new friends.

Carved Wooden Bookstore (polished oak bark, tiny books with tea-stained pages and faux-leather binding, a scattering of dust, and the gleaming painted fur of a porcelain calico book shop cat) The rich, oaken warmth of a firelit library in a grand country estate that you've been entreated to make yourself at home in; your host had to take a phone call, so please, browse the leather-bound titles, flip through those well-worn pages to your heart's content. Beeswax candles flicker in the reflections of the gilt-edged mirrors hung from every spare inch of unshelved wall space, and as you marvel at the glowing refractions on the shimmering glass, a curious draft tickles your skin and shivers up your spine. Where could this peculiar chill be coming from? The room is nearly as warm as being swaddled in a down comforter in your bed at home! You trace its path to the bookshelf, where you notice a fine layer of dust along the surfaces of the floor-to-ceiling shelving and their contents, with the exception of one pristine title that appears absolutely untouched by time or human hand. You reach out to examine the book, and as your fingers graze the pebbled binding, you hear a series of clicks and the grating of hinges as that solid wooden shelf swings heavily inward...revealing a hidden staircase. Do you a.) hastily fumble the scene back into order, take a seat, and wait for your host? or b.) grab a candle stick and descend into the dark? In either scenario, you'll smell of a mysteriously cozy Choose Your Own Adventure room full of books and firelight and waxy, dripping candles sitting atop delicate powdery doilies.

Boozy Lemon Shortbread (a sharp, limoncello-spiked curd baked into a shortbread crust, dusted with powdered sugar) The scent of the best, the ultimate, the most winningest cookie to bring to cookie swap night! Just the perfect amount of sugar, fresh lemon zest, and real butter, the good stuff, Kerrygold or your local dairy equivalent—and your secret ingredient: each cookie is served with a full-sized lemon drop martini. I'm not saying you'll win because you got the judges drunk (and I'm not saying you won't be disqualified* for bribing the judges!), but I think either way, it'll be a good time.

*you guys, when I was writing this, for the life of me, I could not think of the word "disqualified." I kept wanting to write "excommunicated."

Carved Wooden Cultist Lair (sweet, dark incense swirling around flame-scorched ebony wood) I am currently reading a book called *The Honeys* by Ryan Lasala. I am actually listening to the audio version at 1.40 speed because I am attempting to read 200 books this year, and in scheming about all the ways that I can make this happen, I'm trying all the little hacks. So this story—which is marketed as a YA queer novel, described as "Heathers" meets "Midsommer," but it doesn't really feel YA to me, but then again, my idea of YA is from 20 years ago—takes place at a prestigious summer camp where there is a secretive, elusive clique of teenage girls. The Honeys. I think they are

aspiring beekeepers or somesuch. I'm not very far into the book, and they are not the main character (the MC is a gorgeously witty gender-fluid individual, Mars, who is at the camp investigating his twin sister's death), but when I smelled the incense component of Carved Wooden Cultist Lair, I immediately thought of The Honeys, and of honey in general. If you heat honey on the stovetop, and the lusty, dusky scent of wildflowers, orange blossoms, and jasmine, warming and cooling and hardening in some sort of arcane incense-making process, results in a series of small vaguely bee-shaped cones, smelling of burnt sugars, resins, musks, and florals. They dry and age on sharp, peppery, balsamic-smelling wooden shelves and are sold on roadside stands and farmer's markets, and whoever lights a little bee in their home is visited by strange, sweet, stinging dreams. (This doesn't happen in the book, FYI. Just me letting my imagination run away with me.)

Knave of Snowflakes (blackcurrant tarts and chilled rose jam) This is so pretty, it's almost unreal. Sweet, juicy-jammy, ripe blackcurrants cooked to deep purple stickiness, filling an almond pastry, topped with pillowy mounds of coconut vanilla custard, and served with a tiny scoop of wild rose petal ice cream. And somehow, none of this is in the least bit foody— there's this ghostly bitter-green veil that delivers the whole thing as a luminous, ferny fougère.

Teapot Full of Angst (black tea with vetiver, almond, black patchouli, tobacco absolute, bitter lemon peel, and oud) What an incredibly weird and wonderful fragrance! This is a thick, rich, gooey tea-flavored fudge spiked with citrus and which reveals some evocative earthy elements that emerge as it dries. It's as if a pot of strong tea was boiled down with a teacup full of brown sugar, a goodly glug of molasses, and slivers of bright yellow lemon peel, and then the mixture was stirred together with an entire box of sweet, nutty, whole wheat graham crackers crumbs and left on a counter to cool and set overnight. Fast forward about twenty years, and rather than the treat itself, this fragrance smells of its dusty, stained magazine clipping recipe card and which was secretly buried in the back garden by your eccentric relative because they didn't want anyone to have their recipe after they died. This is why we dig it up and make the hell out of it and shout the recipe from the rooftops— because we don't believe in gatekeeping the good stuff.

Miscellaneous

BROOD X (moist roots, sugarcane, hay absolute, a summer-scorched golden amber, upturned soil, dew-dappled leaves, nootka, hazelnut husk, moss-touched tree bark, and a dribble of 17-year aged patchouli) Having spent most summers of my life in Florida, the buzzing drone of the cicadas provide the ambient murmuring score that haunts the landscape from sunrise to sunset, starting mid-May and sometimes lasting through October. Singing from birth until death, they're said to once have been humans enchanted by the muses into singing and dancing for so long they stopped eating and sleeping and died without noticing. I think of them as local divinities and the spirits of this place and without their otherworldly thrumming chorus, summer doesn't sound the same. BPAL's aromatic ode to the emergence of Brood X is the wordless warble and urgent hymn of dew and roots, creamy floral sugarcane, sweet moss and grassy hay, and an earthy-nutty-musky-smutty hazelnut incense-- and if there is any scent you might want to wear for a two week extravaganza of screaming, fucking, and dying, this is the perfume to go out in.

Kobold Barista (freshly brewed coffee with ginger, nutmeg, cardamom, black pepper, cloves, cinnamon, and cream) A seasonal latte from your favorite local cafe; sweet cream, a dusting of autumnal spice melange, and the scent of roasted coffee beans, lightly caramelized and almost nutty, ground with aromatic pods and seeds and bark and roots.

Tiefling Therapist (white and red sandalwood, champaca attar, frankincense, and brimstone) Rich, velvety, vanilla-sweet floral with warm, apricot woody tea-like notes, it smells like sacred wine drunk by the moon and sun; a holy gloaming.

Bugbear Doula (motherwort, angelica root, and warm russet fur splashed with chamomile tea) Sniffing this straight out of the bottle, it's a gorgeously delectable blackberry danish, but that's so fleeting an impression I almost feel like I imagined it, especially considering that what it soon becomes is a warm, sweetly herbaceous musk, earthy, with a faint but lingering bitterness. The blackberries have all been plucked and it's almost like they were never there at all. A nap on sun-warmed rock softened by moss. Nightfall, dreams, the cool dusty flights of bats and swallows.

Lizardfolk Park Ranger (pine needle, oak bark, sweet birch, stream-polished stones, lichen, dark mosses, nootka, hazelnut, rivulets of amber, and blackcurrant bud) This is an extraordinarily beautiful scent and tremendously evocative—there's a whiff of something wild but also so safe and tender about it, when the scent first blossoms on my skin. The rushing creek below and the warmth of an old man's strong, calloused hand, leaves crunching under small feet, he pauses to show his granddaughter a buckeye tree, tucking a sprig of Queen Anne's lace in her pocket, telling her a snapping turtle might bite her toes off if she's not careful! Then: the soft, soapy scent of a grandmother's bubble bath, the soft pillowed fuzz of a flannel nightgown, buttery, pearl-sugared bedtime cookies from the rusted blue tin. All of these memories, that seem so very long ago but also close at hand, like I could reach into yesterday and just as easily tug its sleeve. On my grandfather's deathbed, he called me by the name of his sister and asked what we were wearing to church on Sunday. His childhood memories, just as near, just as vivid. Will memory always be this strange tug of rope? I'm 45 now and recall that autumn day, 40 years ago, without even having to close my eyes and step back into the byways of my brain. It's always, always waiting just right there. And now, right here, with this fragrance.

Drow Yoga Instructor (wild plum, indigo lavender, and a tranquil tendril of sandalwood incense) An elegant plummy lavender incense, more breezy than smoky, the sort of scent you could close your eyes and totally space out and lose time while wearing, and yet it's strangely grounded, too. Something earthy, rooty that tethers you, calls your essence back into your body before Lala Land claims you completely.

Drider Crossing Guard Perfume Oil (fig, black pepper, nutmeg, and black plum tea) This is such a confusing thing...from the notes I wouldn't think it would smell like this, but: if you are a lover of such things, this is a fresh, fancy fantasy plate of all of the ripest, juiciest fruits you can imagine. I can't pick anything out in particular, but wet on this skin this is definitely a pulpy, opalescent bounty of sweet, dripping fruit flesh. A few hours later it is a faint fruity-peony-vanilla. I realize neither of those two notes are listed, but I can't argue with what's on my wrist. Just reporting what I smell! Actually...in looking at this next scent, I have to wonder if maybe these two were accidentally mislabeled? Hm! A mystery!

Beholder Optician (eucalyptus leaf, white amber, pink bergamot, strawberry, and sheer, crystalline vanilla musk) In rereading this list of notes, all of these bright, electric fruity aromas are definitely what I smell in Drider Crossing Guard. The bottle labeled Beholder Optician carries a scent dry and figgy, woody and plummy and accented with a gentle grassy spice. Over time this just gets plummier, but not in a really fruity way, more like a plum wearing a handknit shawl and a bonnet and a monocle? I don't know what that means. A Mother Goosey plum? An Ida Outhwaite fairytale illustration of a plum. Whatever it is that I am poorly trying to articulate, it is a freaking gorgeous interpretation of plum.

Mommy Fortuna (Honey, gunpowder, dried herbs and pleonectic, twopenny magics) Cheap carnival tricks and homemade horrors cobbled together with rusty nails and sticky, syrupy dark wildflower honey. The peppery smoke from an ashen pile of herbs at this poppet's feet provides the wordless spell that animates it; once the vapors dissipate, it sleeps once more.

Schmendrick (sweet, raw tobacco leaves, chamomile, clary sage, meadow sage, Mysore sandalwood, sultana raisins, and caramel). I inhale this scent and my heart instantly hears "I know you. I'd be blind and I'd know what you are." Schmendrick brings me to tears. An earthy, woody, deeply aromatic tobacco leaf, vanilla-y, apple-y chamomile, and a thoughtful, pruney musk.

The Butterfly (fuzzy brown tonka bean, golden amber, bergamot, nutmeg, and petitgrain) The Butterfly is fizzy and effervescent, somehow both airy and earthy, the petitgrain so lemony and peppery, and the amber so honeyed...they're so sweet and playful together. In the bottle, it's deeply loamy—that sweet, dark, earthy scent that I love so very much!—but on the skin, the scent lightens in such a strange way that has to do with the absence of shadow more than any direct brightness. It is velvety and opulent but it's finery worn in jest. P.S. I hate to compare perfumes to other perfumes overmuch, it feels a little lazy, so don't think of this as a comparison, but rather if you like X, you may dig Y. In the dry-down of The Butterfly, there's some milky-musky-powderiness of an old, beautiful thing stored behind glass, that reminds me quite a bit of Antique Lace. Do with that information as you will!

The Last Unicorn (frosty lilac petals, iris pallida root, orris, violet leaf, white chocolate, coconut, wild lettuce, white sandalwood, white gardenia and oakmoss). This is a deliriously ethereal, gauzy, gossamer slip of a scent, with that wintry, woody orris and the aqueous verdancy of the lettuce, and the white quartz, snow-melt nip of chilled water with the tiniest bite of bitterness, the last drop in an icy chalice of sorrow. But there's a carnal quality there, too, of worldly concerns and sensual delights, like...cupcakes. A mild cocoa butter creaminess and a milky nuttiness coalesce to form a tiny mythical gateau, a small frosted treat with a floral crumb, sprinkled with a scattering of star shards— that one might leave out to lure magical creatures... fairies or pixies... or even unicorns.

The Lilac Wood (ageless trees, everblooming flowers, brilliant grass, a flicker of fireflies, and soft shadows) There are so many *perfect* scents in this collection, but every time I sniff the uncanny geography of The Lilac Wood I think, ah, this, THIS is the one! Green sap and misty grass, peaceful, delicate moss, emerald ferns, and the wistful dreams of flowers in a patch of shade underneath the old ash tree with the lightning-riven trunk. This is so, so beautiful. I want to wear it with this dress, all the time.

HEXENTANZ – Hazy clouds of bonfire smoke and dark, resinous incense envelops the silhouettes of shape-shifting witches dancing 'round a blazing fire: black incense, woodsmoke, sumac, turmeric, dried ginger, cassia husk, red cedar berries, 7-year aged patchouli, wood moss, and blood-red vegetal musk.

A scent fumaceous and piquant, fiery groves of birch, cypress, and pine, sizzling wafts of charring campfire, wisps of aromatic herbs and spices spindling in a smoky column toward heaven, and a tin mug of lapsang souchong tea under the pinprick glow and atmospheric glittering of one hundred thousand stars.

THE MAN IN BLACK – The Devil at the Crossroads: well-worn black leather, tobacco absolute, Haitian vetiver, ambrette seed, crushed tonka bean, and a flick of crossroads soil.

Leather and strange, bitter powder, mineralic like a finely ground rock and rain. Sediment from ghostly carvings on exposed bedrock in hollow, liminal spaces where cave meets coastline, land meets water. The descent into a dream, the dust in the footprints you followed in the hopes to meet yourself and give yourself what you needed most. The sweetness at the end of a cosmic journey, musky and sweet, cognac and mallow, deep, satisfied swallows of this honeyed brew.

OSCULUM INFAME – A scent of seduction, transgression, and danger: crystalized sap, candied red fruits, raw wildflower honey, black amber, and sweet red labdanum.

Ah, yes. The legendary salacious kiss bestowed upon the devil's bunghole. A supposed diabolic perversion of the church's Kiss of Peace. Classic Witchsploitation. All jokes about the devil's buttohole aside, Osculum Infame is a very intimate scent. Delicate, though. I wouldn't go as far as to say primal. The notes of raw honey and black amber are soft and languid, but most assuredly at the forefront, heightening and preserving the sweetness of everything in their wake. The sap more crystalline, the candied fruits more sugared, the resinous musk of the labdanum somehow fruitier. The scent of paying tribute to Satan's fundament smells pretty amazing, actually.

THE QUEEN OF MAY – An electric howl of dazzling spring blossoms; a rabid cacophony of bright, alluring, dew-splattered wildflowers streaked with lightning-white vegetal musk. An oil of youth, beauty, treachery, and liberation.

I wore The Queen of May on my birthday, and it is without question a scent of the riotous pageantry of blooms flourishing madly, an exuberant brightness of petals every shade of the spectrum, primrose and poppy, cornflower and calendula, lilac and lily are a few that I envision but it could be all or none of them! Florals delicate, milky, and sweet as well as earthy, green, and bitter, they could have hallucinogenic or aphrodisiac qualities, or they could have a soporific effect, and induce the most beautiful dreams of flower-crowned celebrations and dizzying May pole dances. Beneath these flower's roots, as the fragrance unfolds on the skin, is a heart note echoing with the whispers of dried bouquets and a phantom whiff of marshmallow musk.

Tomie (rose-tinted white sandalwood, ethereal white amber, voluptuous almond blossom, coeur de jasmin, and a gasp of bourbon vanilla) When I first wore it, it seemed a simple confectionary musk. I became unnerved and overwhelmed when I thought for a second there that it was beginning to remind me of something, a sort of candied heliotrope feather boa of a perfume that when I first smelled it in 2020 I became convinced that it was a monstrously annoying YouTube celebrity's signature scent. (She was revoltingly pink and OKAY YES I was obsessively watching her even though I hated her and found her vile and this all makes sense to me even if I can't explain it.) I don't want to say who because I don't want to be a mean girl, and I also hate comparing one perfume to another when I am reviewing things, but my only point here is, that I thought I smelled this perfume for a brief second* but when I obsessively began sniffing my wrist trying to pinpoint it, the momentary phantom was already gone. There is actually no comparing these two scents at all, but the thing is, from then on, I never stopped obsessively sniffing.