

## FEMININE FRAGRANCE

### **Beauty and the Bees**

by Tania Sanchez

**T**he question that women casually shopping for perfume ask more than any other is this: “What scent drives men wild?” After years of intense research, we know the definitive answer. It is bacon. Now, on to the far more interesting subject of perfume.

It is a mistake to think that the overwhelming reason for women to wear perfume is to attract the opposite sex. But as Luca once explained to me regarding the peculiar, temperature-independent scanty dress of many young women at night, what a woman on the prowl requires is something that men will register after six beers. Thus the use of simplified sexual cues, such as short skirts and big hair, and perhaps also a loud, sweet, pervasive perfume that will cut through a fog of spilled liquor, end-of-day body odor, the occasional vomit on the bar floor, and the perfumes of the nearest five girls, dressed identically. Of course, if your mating strategy casts this wide a net, you may drag in more old boots than big tunas. But that is probably fodder for another book.

Perhaps this attention-getting olfactive strategy can also, in a way, explain the second mistake, milder than the first but still quite wrong, that women tend to make when choosing a fragrance, which is to assume that the reason to wear perfume is to impersonate a flower bed. This is a very fine strategy if your aim is to attract bees. Otherwise, you could do better. Flowers smell good, it is true. Alongside their frequently loud colors and their petal markings that in ultraviolet light flash the message “Eat at Joe’s,” they release a steady mixture of volatile fragrant attractants tuned to catch attention at a distance, much like the aforementioned bar beauties, and with the same hardwired goal, which is to say sexual reproduction.

Yes, everyone loves the smell of a fresh tea rose on its thorny stem, or