



A Guide to Fitness, Grooming & Health

# Scent of a Man

**Will wearing the right fragrance make women want to have sex with you?**

**By Robert Moritz**

Imagine, if you will, a milestone in our evolutionary journey from prehistoric sludge pool to high-rise condo, a moment in which one of our primordial forebears emerges from the woodlands covered in rosemary and sage, geranium and lavender, peach peels and lemon zest, cedar, cypress, nutmeg, pineapple, bergamot, juniper berries and carrot seeds and makes a startling discovery: Not only do I have a tasty salad on my hands but the chicks really dig me!

And so we have it, that fateful instant when the scent of modern man first tickled a nostril. But, of course, all great discoveries must have their naysayers. And when it comes to the world of men's cologne, I have always been one.

As a longtime student of the sweat-gland school of perfumery, I have dedicated my life to the proposition that I smell just the way God wants me to. But of late, I have forced myself to consider the big "what if," as in "What if wearing a cologne really does lead to mindless shower sex with Claudia Schiffer?" I feel I deserve to know.

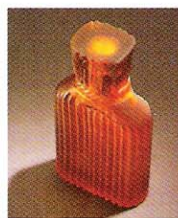
Having made the decision to smell all that I could smell, I was faced with a daunting dilemma: What scent should be mine? I needed to find a cologne that would express my inner soul. One that could project a message of rugged sensitivity, inescapable virility, incomparable desirability and incalculable wealth. I needed a cologne that smelled unlike my father—and even less like my mother. I needed a cologne that would turn women into putty.

To aid in my olfactory search, I devised a unique experiment. On eleven evenings, I would apply one liberal squirt from a random sampling of new colognes representing the latest developments in perfume technology and then dutifully trek down to the Tenth Street Lounge—a trendy, upscale bar in Manhattan's East Village—and make a single attempt to meet a woman. By observing strict test-control standards, I would ensure that my smell alone would determine whether I got lucky...or departed a pathetic mound of torment and despair.

My initial plan was to use one standard pickup line—up for consideration were "Some bodies were made for fashion, but mine was made for lovin'" and "Excuse me, do you have a quarter? I promised

my mother I'd call her when I met the woman of my dreams"—position myself well within smelling distance and then await results. Ultimately, I decided on a more traditional approach: I would send over a drink.

As a disclaimer, I should note that while I am no Keanu Reeves, I am very close to it. Also, my friend Jay B. played Crick to my Watson at the Tenth Street laboratory, providing interference and essential critical commentary. For the duration of the experiment, I wore a gray wool two-button Agnès B. suit with a wrinkled and partially unbuttoned white Wilke-Rodriguez shirt. I had my glasses on.



## Day One: Nicole Miller for Men

"Guy things." You know, like a baseball mitt and leather loafers. That's the inspiration behind Nicole Miller for Men, according to the official press kit. The advertised cachet: "fresh, modern and masculine." True to form, the tough-looking brown NMFM bottle is straight out of the Temple of Doom.

The scent is heavy 'n' leathery—faded brown, not black—without a girlie thing about it. Think Sam Shepard, or Kevin Costner minus the doofy haircut. Think your humble reporter at the Tenth Street bar.

After ordering the official test-control cocktail—an Absolut Citron martini with a twist—I spot a stylishly attractive brunette, mid-twenties, white baby T-shirt, slightly waifish, smoking a cigarette and drinking what looks like vodka and cranberry juice. I ask the bartender to fill her up, and then I tell Jay to leave.

Sitting as close as possible to the brunette so she can get a good whiff of me, I explain that my friend just took off and I was wondering if I could borrow her company. Accepting her noncommittal shrug, I begin an interrogation that yields exactly this information: She's a Capricorn, a fashion stylist and playing hard to get. I press on.

"Come here often?"

"Are you kidding?"

"Live around here?"



# Personal BEST



"Close."  
"Are most of the models you work with morons?"  
"Listen, why don't you crash another table."  
Picking up the remnants of my crumbling façade, I leave the bar, feeling neither fresh, modern nor masculine.

## Day Two: Havana by Aramis

I decide to add a little levity to the situation. Tonight I'm presenting Havana by Aramis—a spicy concoction that screams Bacardi, bikini and "I'll take that Speedo in black"—and have altered my technique to complement the playful nature of my scent. After commandeering the same two stools, Jay and I immediately locate two college-age contestants. I introduce the cocktail waitress to my friend Alexander Hamilton and instruct her to deliver a glass of cold water to the strawberry blonde on the right. Upon receipt, there's an immediate laugh and then a giggled "Thanks."

Welcome to Havana, ladies!

I position myself on the stool between the large, open windows and my new downwind friend, Cassandra.\* It's her birthday, and she is indeed a film student at NYU and seems to be enjoying my critique of *l'oeuvre* de John Hughes. With each gust from the windows, I can sense that she is shifting closer.

Drawing on the passionate force of the Havana breeze, I ask Cassandra if I may give her a birthday kiss. In answer, she offers me her face.

I feel tongue.

Unfortunately, Jay's new friend, Stephanie, has decided it's time to leave. After making a note to offer a ritual sacrifice to the Aramis bottle in my bathroom, I give Cassandra my number and say good-bye.



## Day Three: Égoïste Platinum by Chanel

Égoïste Platinum most assuredly is not for amateurs. While the literature explains that it has a "deep and sensuous aromatic note," be aware that this is something of an understatement.

Standing at the bar waiting for a drink, I am innocently surveying the situation when a very Winona-esque young woman directly to my left turns and growls accusingly "I'm a dyke."

Whether this woman was responding to Égoïste's "top note of lavender" or "base note of tree moss" I cannot say. All I know is that despite my inattention, she clearly felt my Platinum presence. It goes without saying that under the right circumstances Égoïste might be as good as liquid gold, but, unfortunately, I was unable to find out as my own ego fled east and out the door.

I have been invited to help a friend make a low-budget movie in Los Angeles. Realizing that this is a unique opportunity to provide the right environment for the sportier members of my aromatic posse—Donna Karan's DK Men, Wings for Men by Giorgio and Calvin Klein's CK One—I have packed the control suit and boarded a 747 wide-body, eager to spread my scent along the sunny shores of the Golden State.

For Test Control West, I have selected the Olive restaurant in the fashionably downscale Fairfax district and grown a four-day soul patch in order to better blend in with the local inhabitants. I have also extended my sideburns a quarter inch.



## Day Four: DK Men by Donna Karan

Tonight I am accompanied by my childhood pal Andrew, my brother Neal and my new citrusy friend, Donna Karan. I feel as though nothing can stop me.

From the press-kit fact sheet: "DK Men is living on the edge. DK Men is motion. Thrusting forward. All the time. DK Men is

energy raw and pure."

Standing next to an L.A. goddess wearing a white baby-doll dress, drinking a cosmopolitan and eating a complicated-looking pasta dish, Andrew and I order drinks.

Andrew: "I'll have a mahdraas."

Beautiful Filipino bartender: "What?"

"A mahdraas."

"What?"

"A mah-draaaaaas."

"Oh, a madras."

"Exactly."

I feel Ms. Karan working her magic as Ms. Baby-Doll Dress turns to me and seductively purrs "I couldn't figure out what he wanted, either."

Thrusting forward, I teasingly reply "Yeah, well."

Unable to escape my essence, she begins sucking on a strand of spaghetti—her eyes locked on mine—until Mr. Tattooed Dining Companion returns from the can. Fearing a display of raw energy, I retreat, confident of a DK victory for men.



## Day Five: Wings for Men by Giorgio

The latest fragrance from the Beverly Hills boutique is light and summery yet sophisticated. Considering the home-field advantage, I should have good feelings about Wings. Sadly, the ladies of the Olive seem to be experiencing sinus problems this evening.

Forty-five minutes after entering, we are out the door minus the cost of a glass of water sent to a humorless green-eyed vixen and a gin and tonic donated to a Sharon Stone look-alike in a tiny black dress and a mighty big hurry.



## Day Six: CK One by Calvin Klein

My first experience with a "shared" (read: unisex) fragrance finds me a bit uncomfortable about the other big "what if," as in "What if she and I smell exactly alike?"

Hoping to turn a negative into a positive, I decide to stalk a narcissist. Fortunately, I'm in L.A.

Sitting at the bar, I locate a stunning blonde with obscenely manicured nails and begin to stare. Clearly overcome by the raw passion emanating from my neck, she "accidentally" knocks over her drink. Reading her like a book, I begin shouting apologies across the bar and then send over a refill.

I am on fire.

Unfortunately, when she walks over to thank me, I can form only words without consonants.

I am pathetic.

As it turns out, she smells nothing like me and prefers talking to Andrew, who, this evening, is traveling fragrance-free. I leave alone.

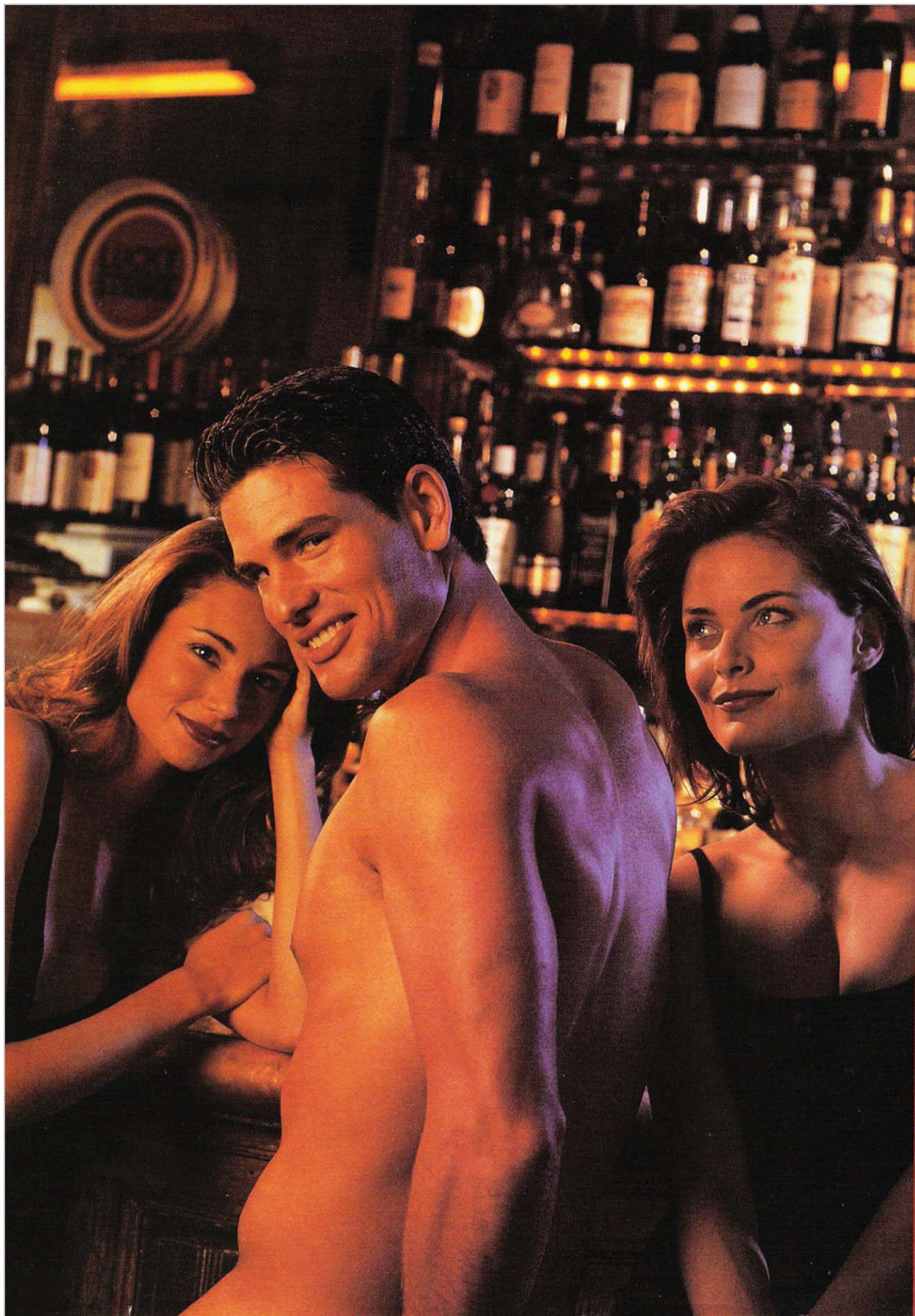
## Day Seven: New York

Ninety-six hours and counting: Cassandra has not called. ➤



**Robert Moritz**

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**GROOMING**





**Day Eight: Comme des Garçons**

Hanging solo this evening, I am marveling at how much I smell like a pack of Cinn-a-Burst gum. Staring off into space, I am awakened by a question I believe to be "Do you know anything about music?" My interrogator is a short-haired Demi Moore in a white leather jacket. I nod.

The long story short: Maria is an astrologer putting together a celebrity horoscope for a magazine and wants to know if I can help. Also, would I like to meet with her sometime so she can do my chart for free? Absolutely yes and yes. We exchange numbers—she has to get up early—and I get a peck good-bye.

I believe it's worth noting that I have never before been picked up by a woman in a bar. I vow to make another bathroom sacrifice.



**Day Nine: Catalyst for Men by Halston**

I need a break from the Tenth Street Lounge. Jay and I make plans to meet a female friend for dinner at Lucky Strike, a faux-Parisian bistro in SoHo. Waiting for our table, I notice a woman in a baseball cap scurry by. Catching sight of the telltale mole, I begin to sweat: Cindy Crawford is in the house.

I arrange to be seated well within smelling distance. I don't recognize her male dining companion. Straining to keep my neck upwind, I pray that the sophisticated Halston is up to the job. Cindy asks the waiter for a pen and begins scribbling on the butcher-paper tablecloth. She drops the pen on the floor. She cannot find the pen! Cindy Crawford is crawling past my leg. Cindy Crawford is at my feet. I offer her my pen.

I have asked Cindy Crawford if she would like to borrow my pen. There is no response.

She does not want my pen.

Cindy Crawford has experienced my scent, and still she does not want my pen.

I'm sure Catalyst would work for Richard Gere, but...



**Day Ten: Chemistry by Clinique**

Sitting at a Tenth Street table, I notice a very attractive threesome by the bar, about ten feet away. I'm taking notes when one of them comes over and asks to borrow my pen. Impressed that she can smell me at that distance, I lend it to her. When she returns, I ask her if she thought about writing me a note. Pleasant laughter ensues. She returns to her friends.

A half hour later, she calls me over and introduces me to Lauren and Sara, her roommates. Lauren wastes no time in describing herself as a "lipstick lesbian who spent all day sleeping with a guy named Brian"—hmm—but I'm more interested in Sara, a beautiful blonde advertising exec. I can feel the Chemistry between us.

Completely trashed, we all leave at 2 A.M. in search of another bar but come up empty. Before I can ask for a phone number, they jump into a cab and take off. I am pleased with Clinique but thoroughly disappointed with myself.

**Day Eleven: The Phone Call**

Obsessed with Sara, I decide to track her down. I call her office and get put through to her extension. She answers; I hang up. I call again two hours later and leave a voice-mail message. On the third call, we talk and make a date.



**Day Twelve: Brut Activ Blue**

We meet for drinks at the Temple Bar in NoHo. She is funnier than I remember. She is also a fox. I'm hoping that Activ Blue will pick up where Chemistry left off. After all, it was "inspired by thrill seeking experiences" and carries a promise to "energize your senses." Let's go!

Two martinis apiece later, we're on the street looking for a cab. Feeling cocky, I tell her that she smells nice and wait for her to put her nose up to my neck in order to reciprocate the compliment. What I do not expect is for her to pull out her perfume and give me a squirt. This being only my second experience with a "shared" scent, I am not quite sure what to do. We jump into a cab and begin to kiss. At her apartment forty-five minutes later, we are still kissing and I don't quite know whom to thank—Activ Blue or Beautiful by Estée Lauder.

Fifteen minutes later, she walks me to the door. I smell Beautiful.



**Day Thirteen: Kiehl's Original Musk Oil**

For our second date—and my final evening of scent appraisal—I decide to pull out the big boy of the batch. Kiehl's Musk Oil is one heavy-duty cologne—it goes on greasy and packs a wallop. This is not a wussy fragrance.

At my suggestion, we meet at a hole-in-the-wall Spanish restaurant and order a pitcher of sangria. I've got my back to the open window, so there's no margin for error scent-wise, and I make a point of speaking softly so she has to come in close to listen.

After dinner we go barhopping and then walk back to her TriBeCa loft. Along the way she begins rubbing my shoulders and neck. I consider calling my broker to see what Kiehl's is going for.

I walk her to the door and wait for something to happen. A breeze from behind elicits some groping and kissing. Then nothing. I nudge my heavily oiled neck up to her snooter. Still nothing. Going for broke, I ask "What are you thinking about?" She kisses me and answers "I'd like to ask you in, but I'm not going to." Then she asks what I'm thinking. "I'm just trying to decide between taking a cab or walking," I reply.

**Day Fourteen: Epilogue**

After playing five games of volleyball, I am a sweaty mess. Hypnotically, I head toward the Tenth Street homing beacon and enter the lounge for the traditional postgame beer, forgetting that I'm still wearing shorts, volleyball shoes and a T-shirt. To my horror, I catch a noseful of my scent—I am a Frenchman on the metro at high noon in August. Belying up to the bar, I try to order a Rolling Rock but can't seem to get the underemployed model-bartender to notice me.

*Je n'existe pas.*

I look across the bar and spot a young woman I recognize from the past two weeks. Sans cologne, I feel incapable of summoning the pure, raw energy I require. I can offer only the hangdog face that says "I am but a soiled snail in your presence." She smiles, laughs and then—this is a true story—blows me a kiss. I wonder if it is possible to bottle my sweat.

I am feeling fresh. I am feeling modern. I am feeling masculine. ♦

Robert Moritz is a writer living in New York City. He is the coauthor of *Sponging Your Way Through Your Twenties and Beyond* (Dune Road Books).