



# REFLECTION ETERNAL

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It is morning in Montréal and the air is fresh... Spring is finally here and I feel like I can breathe again! I can't wait to take a long walk in the sun, on streets surrounded by tulips. Oh man, I wish tulips had a scent, if they did, I imagine them to be bright, with a hint of sweetness, almost like that of a nectarine. Add a little bit of C14, a touch of Cassis Base, because I can never resist, and a well-rounded musk, like Exaltolide... Oh and a drop of Citral... And let's not forget some Cis-3-Hexenol for the stem accord... Everything is blooming! I can't help but feel almost overwhelmed with how beautiful life can be sometimes. The smell of the exhaust coming from the car is a little much right now; the scent of pavement after the snow has melted is really prominent today too...

Time to go back inside and start playing around with some ideas. I feel a sense of excitement every time I'm about to sit down at my scale. I've moved so much in the last few years that it's been hard shuffling all of my materials around. But as soon as I see my ingredients right there in front of me, I feel right at home. First, I should practice, my nose isn't as sensitive as it used to be back in Grasse, France, but I want it to be. Training the nose is so important. The easiest way for me to remember an ingredient is by giving it a non-olfactive association – it's so unique to each person. I remember having a eureka-moment back in school when I first smelled Methyl Anthranilate. I kept thinking, "This reminds me of something, I can't put my finger on it." Then I realized it was grape soda! I looked around the room and asked what my fellow students thought about this ingredient. No one seemed to understand my association; I just got strange looks and a lot of "huh's?" Then my friend Ashley (who is from Los Angeles) looked at me and said, "YES! Grape Soda!" I wonder if it was because we were the only two who had been in North America long enough to understand the reference... It's amazing how each and every one of us has his/her own cultural scent dictionary, based on our very unique lives, a set of memories all rolled into one to create this subjective way

of perceiving the world around us.

I've been thinking about my next perfume, in fact I'm always thinking about my next perfume. Do I pick one ingredient and enhance its unique parts? Do I play two against each other? What's inspiring me first? Is it the primary image that comes to mind? Is it in the sound? I'm working on a wah-wah pedal accord for a potential Jimi Hendrix inspired piece. I always smell incense when I hear an almost synthesized tone – sharp and direct. Add that muted effect by using something cloudy, thick and ever encapsulating... Hmm something like sandalwood, a humid musk blend would work well here...

Snare drums! I want to recreate the scent of snare drums – tsssk tsssk tsstkaa tsstkaa. Pink pepper, white pepper, something metallic and somewhat powdery for sure. Maybe a little Ionone Alpha? Ooh how about some Cashmeran? It's always smelled "scratchy" to me. I think it would give it a soft grittiness. If only I could find an olfactive way to translate the space that occurs between each snare once one crashes into the other – instantaneously and simultaneously jumping right back off again in a millisecond...

Music has been such a big part of my life and the second I

realized that perfumery and music go hand in hand, I haven't been able to get out of that frame of thinking. How could I possibly not want to mix them together? After all, blending comes naturally to me. One ingredient or one sound is absolutely beautiful on its own, but how amazing would it be to bring two individually remarkable components and see what kind of magic they will create together? I can't help but smell in sounds. I have a hard time explaining it as it's almost involuntary. I hear a sound and it instantaneously translates itself into a scent. And since both mediums are closely linked to the heart and to the memory, I have felt at ease playing with the two.

Thoughts, thoughts, thoughts...do they ever stop? I feel like I always have something to think about, there's always something to say, but when I stop to smell the roses, literally, all those thoughts go away, even if for a moment. I always wonder what I would be doing if I wasn't a perfumer. I couldn't imagine doing anything else, only because for once in my life, I feel like I belong within a world. A universe of scent, a universe full of juxtaposing factors, where I can find inspiration in anything, a way of seeing or rather, smelling the world around me, enhanced by the senses and appreciated in the soul. I wonder how people don't realize how much they use their nose? The sense of smell has been undeniably underrated, and we use our nose with each and every breath we take! I can't imagine my life without my sense of smell. It has become my frame of reference for everything, I smell, therefore I am! My perception of things has completely changed, not to say that I didn't appreciate my senses before, but it is as if my nose brought all my surroundings to the forefront, adding luminosity to my everyday.

I miss my days in Grasse, you never know what you have until it is gone. It is the perfect town for a perfumer, full of all kinds of scents, ranging from marvelous to putrid. Life is slow there, which should really prompt one to appreciate it even further. A fellow perfumer once took me to a small alley where there was an opening into an old, abandoned factory, the scent still lingered, at least four hundred years later, how incredible is that? And how wonderful is it that someone else out there appreciated it as much as I did? My favourite thing about what I do is that anyone who truly understands the value of perfumery is not afraid to feel. Acknowledging emotion and embracing it are two very different things, and every perfumer I know is completely unafraid of letting a scent cross the threshold of the physical body and into the inner being, fulfilling it like no other, being in the moment, appreciating the present, continuing to enrich oneself by appreciating the beauty that has been so generously given, a gift, that's what it

is, a gift. No wonder I haven't met a perfumer who isn't completely and utterly satisfied with what he or she does for a living. It is not a job; it is a privilege, a way of life, and a daily reminder that we are alive and kicking.

Back to work, I seem to have drifted, as usual. My thoughts tend to sway like that. My imagination gets the better of me. I can't help it, thinking of Grasse and what it had offered makes me so grateful for where I am today. The road hasn't been easy, then or since, that was probably one of the hardest years of my life, from smelling ingredients at least six hours a day (and getting sinusitis as a result) to working day in and day out on a yearly brief. That year, I was asked to create the "scent of luxury". How could anyone really create that since it's all subjective anyway? I guess that's where the magic of perfumery lies, n'est ce pas? It's all about creating art that means something to you and then recreating it to affect someone else. Will they understand what I'm trying to say? Is the idea clear? I ask myself that question all the time, even with my work now. I want to stay true to myself and my vision, but will it be too constricted because it's coming out of me? I have no other frame of reference, I couldn't possibly and exactly know what a scent is like for anyone else. The perfumes I launched a few

months ago, I had been working on for years, and none of them actually smell fantastic on my own skin (they do smell great, however.) I had this need to express the

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merging of scent and sound so deeply, it didn't matter, it wasn't for me, it was for everyone around me. I feel this sense of obligation to extend the world of perfumery to the outside – it is necessary! We have to share this remarkable world with others, how could we not? It has history, it is full of culture, it respects and embraces nature and it encourages playfulness, dreams, and illusions... It's exciting, exhilarating and inherently satisfying. That year was also truly nostalgic for me; learning about new ingredients and finally understanding what they smell like, brought me back to moments in my life I thought I had long forgotten, it made me sad at times. I tend to live in the past, but I guess I can sort of blame that on my sense of smell. Other times, it was exhilarating because I would come back home and feel like I had accomplished something. Every day, I created an accord; I had this insatiable need to create formulae that I had in my head since before I was even in school. I felt very lucky to get the chance to do so in that amazing little lab. The most important thing to remember as a perfumer is; never forget why you do what you do and have fun, giving yourself the ability to get to know and play around with your raw materials.

I've come to have a very special relationship with how raw materials interact with each other in liquid form. I find it



fascinating to see how each drop of any given ingredient changes the viscosity of a blend, its colour, and its scent. It's fascinating how one drop of Indol will make a whole lot of difference in a Lilac accord (most floral accords for that matter), or how vanillin gets sweeter over time, changing the composition as it macerates. As I place my dropper right above my vial, I wonder how my blend will evolve; it's a balancing act between seeing where the accord will go on its own and placing more of one ingredient than the other to see what I can change. There have been many times where I did not trust my gut and kept meddling with something that I should have just let be. That approach goes for my life as well. Ahh, there's a lesson in everything.

I should take a break, my nose needs some air, besides, I want to be outside enjoying a rare sunny day. It feels like my sense of smell dies a little when it is below zero. I wish it didn't have to. There are special smells in winter too, but there's nothing like the scent of spring. Maybe it's knowing that the weather is finally getting warmer, all the scents of the city become more vibrant. People find me strange, but I tend to smell anything that is volatile enough to emanate a scent, I even find the scent of the benches on the pier in the old port interesting, even if it is faint. These benches have been sitting out there, enduring the cold winter months, and once it gets warmer, the wood I'm sure breathes a sigh of relief and lies there embracing the heat of the sun.

I love how everything has a scent, even when you don't think it does, it just does! I love how our sense of smell regenerates every thirty days. I love how people react to someone wearing a perfume

as soon as they walk into a room. I guess I could say I am the ultimate fan girl when it comes to the world of scent. It is so vast and so inspiring; there is never a lack of things to discover. We're always learning, always improving, always looking for new ways to understand ourselves.

Finding perfumery has made me who I am today, more comfortable with myself, more in tune with my body and the world that surrounds it, more appreciative of what I have been given. I have so much love and respect for this craft, for perfumers who have paved the way for me and others like me, for air (because it transfers odour molecules and that's pretty cool, for oxygen too!) and for my family and friends who believed in me enough to give me the chance to pursue something so out there, so unique and so rewarding.

Back to my workspace. I had been asked in the beginning of my career what my "process" was and I found it quite difficult to explain, I think because I wasn't sure what it was yet. But I've realized as long as I have my intuition and my imagination, my nose and my right hand to execute it all (and of course my trusted ingredients), I am happy and truly fulfilled.

**Dana is an indie perfumer, writer and entrepreneur. Her work focuses on blending scent, music and culture. She believes in perfume as a form of artistic expression and is an advocate for scent education. You can find her perfumes at [www.jazminsarai.com](http://www.jazminsarai.com)**