

MEMOIR XII.MMXI



Swiss Stone

Chapter 5 (in creation)

By Tammy Frazer

A cool stony scent hidden in the dark earth and rich soil.

I am attempting to balance the sharpness of a green conifer top note. The aim is to achieve a positive immediate response from one upon initial exposure to the perfume. It still needs to remain light and crisp so this is better achieved with patience - one drop added every few days.

Just today I decided to include a few crumbs of cedar moss which work well mellowing the layered linear top overtones.

Still not sure whether the inclusion of Sea fennel (*Crithmum maritimum*) is accurate. While it is one of my

stand alone favourite raw materials - a light yellow oil of the sea, sand, air and kelp - it is an odor foreign to many and therefore not initially welcome or easily placed by reference.

What is working well is the heart of geosmin. It is a faltering accord. It is hollow. When I breathe it in I imagine breathing in dry ice or helium in effect.

This composition is a first. It will be my introduction to volatility and lightness.

Next I will consider the balance between hot and cold. I am thinking it should remain cool throughout and any hint of warmth only present in the

same way dark soil captures warmth.

This year started with an expedition to Switzerland. It was to be the first time in my life to experience snow.

Revisiting the places ventured in the summer of last year but discovering the new. The familiar in an unfamiliar climate.

To date this is my research journey for Swiss Stone.

Chapter 5 released in 2011.

Petrichor

The smell of rain

By Tammy Frazer

Geosmin is the distinct smell that soil gives off when it is disturbed or on which it has just rained. The particular fragrance let off by geosmin usually occurs where humidity is involved and literally translates to “earth smell”.

It is not surprising then that geosmin is used to confer an earthy scent in perfumes.

An organic compound with a distinct earthy odor and a contributor to the strong scent that occurs in the air when the rain falls after a dry spell of weather (petrichor).

The human nose is extremely sensitive to geosmin and is able to detect it at concentrations as low as 5 parts per trillion.

Petrichor is the smell that derives from an oil exuded by certain plants during dry periods, whereupon it is absorbed by clay-based soils and rocks. During rain, the oil is released into the air along with geosmin, producing the distinctive scent.

Daily walks in the Swiss Alps during last summer at an altitude starting point of 2000m above sea level were filled with the scent of cold stones and rocks under the fir trees, hidden from light.

“From the Greek *petros* “stone” and *ichor* the fluid that flows in the veins of the gods in Greek mythology is the name of the scent of rain on dry earth.”

Bear and Thomas (1965), Nature

Little did I know that what I was experiencing was the wonder of petrichor and geosmin. In my minds logic stone did not have a smell but I kept stopping and leaning in to find what it was that drew me to it. The moss or lichen on the rocks perhaps? The water running steadily along the pebbles while lightly brushing the fronds of grass at the waters edge?

To my delight I have found the source. My research plays a vital role in the creation of this composition. Coupled with memories of the place, the taste of the clean mineral water melted from the glacier and the dark soil exudate, all indicators of an emotion of being grounded.

A CLOSE UP ON RAW MATERIALS IN CHAPTER 5

Right: German chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*) flowers in bloom during the European summer (2009) at the foothills of the Alps. It was sublime! TF

Far right: A microscopic view of lichen: a composite plant that contains photosynthetic algal cells. Lichens obtain their water and nutrients from the atmosphere and can be sensitive indicators of atmospheric pollution.

