

## CHANDLER BURR

# The Perfect Scent

*A Year Behind the Scenes of the Perfume Industry in Paris and New York*

**From the *New York Times* perfume critic, a stylish, fascinating, unprecedented insider's view of an industry and its charismatic characters**

No journalist has ever been allowed into the ultrasecretive, highly pressured process of originating a perfume. But Chandler Burr, the *New York Times* perfume critic, spent a year behind the scenes observing the creation of two major fragrances. Now, writing with wit and elegance, he juxtaposes the stories of the perfumes—one created by a Frenchman in Paris for an exclusive luxury-goods house, the other made in New York by actress Sarah Jessica Parker and Coty, Inc., a giant international corporation. We follow Coty's mating of star power to the marketing of perfume, watching *Sex and the City*'s Parker heading a hugely expensive campaign to launch a scent into the overcrowded celebrity market. Will she match the success of Jennifer Lopez? Does she have the international fan base to drive worldwide sales?

In Paris at the elegant Hermès, we see Jean Claude Ellena, his company's new head perfumer, given a challenge: he must create a scent to resuscitate Hermès's perfume business and challenge *le monstre* of the industry, bestselling Chanel No. 5. Will his pilgrimage to a garden on the Nile supply the inspiration he needs? The answer lies in Burr's informative and mesmerizing portrait of some of the extraordinary personalities who envision, design, create, and launch the perfumes that drive their billion-dollar industry.



SAM TINSON

**Chandler Burr** is the *New York Times* perfume critic and author of *The Emperor of Scent: A Story of Perfume, Obsession, and the Last Mystery of the Senses* and *A Separate Creation*. Burr, who earned a master's in international economics and Japan studies from the Paul H. Nitze School/Johns Hopkins, has written for *The Atlantic*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *U.S. News & World Report* (where he was a contributing editor), and *The New Yorker*. He lives in New York City.

### **Praise for *The Emperor of Scent*:**

“An amusing and poetic adventure in science and art.”

—*The Washington Post*

“A brilliant, feisty scientist at the center of a nasty, backstabbing, utterly absorbing, cliffhanging scramble for the Nobel Prize . . . a quirky, wonderful book.”

—John Berendt, author of *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*

### From *The Perfect Scent*:

Veronique Gautier had decided that Hermès would be creating a collection of fragrances called the Jardins, and had spent some tense hours turning it over with Hélène Dubrulle, the head of marketing. Gautier was Latin and emotional, intensely certain and didactic in the most French of ways: Here is what she believed, here were the reasons. Dubrulle was brisk and analytic with the look of a manager in an architectural firm in Stockholm. She could cut through a problem, give it a brief assessment, and dispatch it. If Gautier always seemed to be leaning forward into the question before them, daring it to make a move, Dubrulle seemed to be coolly taking its measure.

They worked together hand in glove on how to create the perfume brief out of this theme: They paced around the question, each in her way. What was the most evocative river? The Amazon? said Dubrulle. Mm . . . no. The Ganges? Gautier proposed the Yangtze. The Seine? (This, they dismissed. The Seine is romantic unless you actually live in Paris, in which case it is a combination of a sewer in winter, and year-round a Parisian version of the Long Island Expressway.) How about the Nile? They liked it. And, said Gautier, the perfume's name: Un Jardin sur le Nil. That was it. The smell of a garden on the Nile. There you went.



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