

Selections from the Sapphire Journal

Vignettes from Azuaveria — Episode 8

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It comes as no surprise that if one were to study the life and work of Julius Marlsay, then the obvious place to look would be within his journals and his music, and indeed he wrote copiously in both formats. The majority of research has centered around them thus far. However, Marlsay scholarship has only recently turned its attention to other personages in his biography. This novel opportunity opens up several new avenues for research, and marks an exciting development in the subject matter. Presently, we turn our attention to the diary of the socialite Alondra Stafferet, active participant in the Port Sokuit elite at the end of the Waterwheel Era, and heiress to the Stafferet & Nissita Logistics Company. Reproduced below are excerpts from one of her earliest journals, the newly-discovered “Sapphire Journal,” so named due to the four small gems encrusted on the corners of the volume’s front cover. Despite Stafferet’s learned and well-practiced penwork, the Waterwheel Era squid ink has begun to evaporate from the parchment due to the chemical reaction as described by Lana et al. in *Annals of Chemistry, Vol. 71*. Therefore, instances of pawwriting which are illegible or otherwise unclear are marked here explicitly with square brackets ([...]). We also use this notation to translate the Waterwheel revolutionary calendar into (approximately) the Gregorian one.

W.W. Turn 102, Day 55 [*April 29, 1888*]

Dear Journal,

Today is my birthday! Mother, Father, Grandfather and I celebrated with an afternoon luncheon at Derrick’s Restaurant. The roast pheasant and carrot-cake were delightful. Mother gave me a beautiful taffeta scarf (I am wearing it now!) and Father gave me a diary. That is you! I do not recall when or if I told Father that sapphire is my preferred gemstone, but I appreciate it all the same. I am

certain they make you feel important. Thus, I promise to keep you well-informed, Journal. I shall enjoy reading you when I get older and have even fewer things to do than currently. Lastly, Grandfather told me that he has begun working again, which has alleviated his restlessness at home. He will be an usher at the performing arts center in the coming weeks. He promises to give me tickets as soon as he can. I believe that will be splendid! After considerable effort, I finally admire Mother's shell-records of music by *[Garriona]*, so going to a concert with Grandfather could be fun.

Originally, thirteen years old seemed exciting. But I do not feel any different than twelve. I assume animals will treat me specially in the coming days.

I shall talk to you tomorrow, Journal!

W.W. Turn 102, Day 60 *[May 4, 1888]*

Dear Journal,

I must admit, Journal, the dining table was rather empty this evening. It was a tad eerie. Grandfather has begun his new ushering job, and Father worked very late yet again. "Burning the midnight oil," as the saying goes. Ships from all over the Azuaverian Archipelago arrive in Port Sokuit all the time, because it is the busiest port in the South. I suppose someone needs to be there in order to greet the sailors. So, Mother and I enjoyed a chicken confit at home by ourselves. I do hope Grandfather will be able to procure tickets for the symphony; I increasingly view it as a veritable treat. Maybe I could be an usher someday! I hope that was a valid use of the semicolon!

W.W. Turn 102, Day 63 *[May 7, 1888]*

Dear Journal,

I am sorry that I did not get the chance to talk to you last night. For the very first time, I accompanied Mother and Father to the monthly Leeward Soirée! I shall make up for my tardiness by writing an extra-long entry this morning.

Grandfather did not need to work, so he stayed home. I presume it is finally acceptable for me to go to the soirée, now that I am a teenager. I had thought that perhaps adults would start to take me seriously from here on out. I wore my favorite sun-dress, my taffeta scarf and my wide-brimmed sun-hat that I hardly ever have the opportunity to wear. It is made of straw, like a farmer's, but it is

adorned with so many flowers that nobeast will ever notice that detail.

Because the event is all the way in the Leeward Neighborhood, we had to take a cable-trolley. The trip was quite long. There are some interesting characters on the trolley, and at first, we were most assuredly the fanciest animals onboard. As we approached our destination, I noticed [*commonbeasts*] were gradually replaced with more animals who wore the same sorts of clothes as us.

I wish you were there with me, Journal, so that you could behold the sight! The event was truly as fancy as you would imagine. We arrived in the afternoon, and it was still warm and beautiful outside, and the breeze was gentle to the muzzle. Most animals gathered on the lawn around a grand fountain. I shall like to witness the fountain again. A sudden gust had sprayed some water on my dress, which was embarrassing. I hope no one noticed. I did hear lots laughter, but then again, everyone was laughing all night long (except me) so I guess I am allowed to return to the soiree next month after all.

The other reason I wish you had accompanied me is because there were not very many pups our age. Father had introduced me to some of his colleagues, and Mother, some of her old friends, but no pups. I remembered a few of them, but none of them recognized me. They told me I look remarkably different than before. I do not believe them. I feel just like myself, overall; nothing has really changed. (Incidentally, semicolons are my new favorite punctuation mark.) I met Mr. Salso, the leopard, he seemed very nice. Among all of Father's colleagues, he engaged with me the longest. He said he liked the way I looked, a remark I thought most peculiar. We talked about my home-studies and he convinced me to resume my piano lessons. He said it would help me foster a deeper appreciation for the symphony.

In conclusion, the soiree was as glamorous and fancy as I had hoped, but there was also an overabundance of animals Mother's and Father's age talking about work and finances, which are two things I don't understand in the slightest, and I pray I never will.

At least they had iced cream.

W.W. Turn 102, Day 66 [*May 10, 1888*]

Dear Journal,

I can tell you anything, right, Journal? For you are my dearest friend.

Mother tells me the ache in my bosom is normal for a Collie my age. She did personally believe the aches were “overdue.” I do not understand what that implies, it is not as if I borrowed a book from the library! We initiated a conversation about ~~[brassieres]~~, which made me feel thoroughly uncomfortable. Those *things* are for elderly dogs, not pups such as myself. I earnestly did not believe this would ever happen to me!

Journal, I do not like feeling awkward around my own Mother, not one iota. (I learned that word yesterday!)

W.W. Turn 102, Day 68 [May 12, 1888]

Dear Journal,

I love my Grandfather; initially, I was perturbed at how long he had taken to obtain tickets to the symphony. But, the wait was more than worth it, for he did not simply procure tickets. We now have *season tickets!* That means I can go to the symphony whenever he does! I look forward to spend time with Grandfather outside of the house. Such opportunities are rare, ordinarily.

W.W. Turn 102, Day 68 (again) [May 12, 1888]

Dear Journal,

The symphony was wonderful! It had been a long time since I had stepped paw in the performing arts center. The last time I was there, I was unable to appreciate the grand interior, but it is actually breathtaking to see! I cannot get enough of the brushed seashells and the starfish which adorn the proscenium. I wish you could see it.

Come to think of it, Journal... I have seen so many sights which I wish you had seen right beside me. Maybe I will begin to take you with me; would that please you?

Grandfather showed Mother and me our seats, as if we were anyone else. It was interesting to see him working like that. The job does not pay very much, but I do not think that is a concern. He just needs to be doing something, constantly.

I like Parsi Plumford, the badger conductor. He has a very strong presence and I enjoy watching his movements. I did not realize conducting an orchestra could be serious exercise! I do believe he was sweating by the end.

W.W. Turn 102, Day 72 [May 16, 1888]

Dear Journal,

Please forgive my impropriety, but I am currently engaged in the strenuous process of wearing a [(illegible)] [(illegible)] [~~brassiere~~] as I write to you, and I daresay I loathe it as I loathe pickled okra.

By the Maker, they make them look gigantic.

W.W. Turn 102, Day 75 [May 19, 1888]

Dear Journal,

Mother and I went to the symphony once more. But in the days leading up to today, I purposefully walked around the neighborhood whilst ~~enhanced~~ ~~augmented~~ adorned, for practice. I did not want my first excursion under these new circumstances to be at the crowded performing arts plaza. At least I can say with a high degree of certainty that the *thing* will never (inadvertently) fall off of me.

I wish I had the vocabulary to describe music. I know which sounds I like, and which ones I do not, but I am unable to put it into plain words. Mr. Salso was right about the piano lessons, though. Comparing my piano skills to that of the virtuoso onstage, I can easily appreciate what hard work goes into making such beautiful sounds.

Oh, also, there was this fox. He looked about my age. He looked like he was about to explode. He said he liked my scarf and then ran away. Is that not the most peculiar thing, Journal? I do believe that is the first time anyone told me that, so I decided I will cherish the moment. Frankly, I hope to see him again.

Why are boys so erratic? Perhaps I would understand them better, had I a brother.

W.W. Turn 102, Day 82 [May 26, 1888]

Dear Journal!

The fox was there! He donned far nicer clothes than previously. He did not wear shoes, which I suppose are not necessary most of the time, but it was noticeable nevertheless. I saw him at the plaza before Mother and I entered the concert hall. I finally have remembered to keep the program this time around, so I know that we listened to “Songs from Resanna,” by Garriona. Mother adores

Garriona. I do not. It took me forever to appreciate that one shell-record of hers. I suppose I do not have to love every song every composer composes. Although, Garriona himself appeared onstage at the end of the performance, so that was the first time I ever met a prolific composer.

But, Journal! After we stepped outside, the fox was *still* there! I begged Mother to give me an allowance so that we could interact. Journal, can you keep a secret? I lied to Mother; I told her he was someone I met at the soiree. I *lied* to Mother! I have never done that before! But, the fox is so pawsome and I wanted to thank him for the nice comment about my taffeta scarf. I earnestly have no idea as to how I managed to convince Mother so.

His name is Julius Marlsay. He speaks with a funny accent (Baharitani is Father's guess), he does *not* know how to bow (wish you could see it, Journal, it looked like a proper curtsy), and he took offense at my calling it "iced cream," which was rather queer. What a character. We went to the soda-fountain and we talked. He thought I had fancy tastes, with walnuts in my iced cream. That is rich, coming from someone who unironically likes pickled okra. He is very creative and knowledgeable in music, but it is unclear to me how much training he really has. The entire conversation was rather awkward because the bosom-ache had returned and I pray to the Maker he did not notice. He was astounded at the simple fact I have a piano (does not everyone have a piano in their home?) and we discussed the possibility of playing the piano together. I am not sure how that will happen, although at this stage I am willing to oblige him and his considerable charm.