**Selections from Mary’s Diary**

**Learning from the Past**

By Emmalisa Horlacher

Characters:

Cathy- Dramatic College student

Mom- mother of Cathy

Mary- Voice Over of Cathy’s great-great grandmother from the 1900s

Dad- Cathy’s dad

Scene:

Mom’s house.

*(MOM is busy in the kitchen, CATHY comes into the room and drops all her stuff down on the floor then flops down at the table.)*

CATHY: I’m never going to get married! Ever!

MOM: Welcome home Cathy dear. What makes you say that?

CATHY: I’ve been at college for almost a year and I still haven’t even come close to getting a boyfriend.

MOM: But don’t you go on dates every week?

CATHY: That’s the problem! Always a date, never a boyfriend. It’s hopeless! I should just give up.

*(CATHY lies in anguish with her head on the table. MOM just stares at her comically.)*

MOM: What about that George guy?

CATHY: *(Cathy looks up at Mom with a glare. She’s annoyed as if she’s heard it a thousand times. She sighs exasperated.)* I can’t be anything more than friends with George. There’s just no passion.

MOM: You know I found something in our family history and I’d like to show it to you. It’s the story of how your great-great grandmother married your great-great grandfather. One sec. *(Mom leaves then comes back)* This is the journal of your great-great grandmother Mary. She was quite the character. I’ve marked a few of my favorite journal pages. Just listen. July 25th, 1902 Went to-

*(Fades into Mary’s voice over and simple shots)*

MARY:

JULY 25th, 1902

Went to the BIG HOTEL for dancing tonight. I tried so hard to convince Leona to come with us but she wouldn’t have it. She’s much too mature and unsociable for anything fun and frivolous. Next time I’ll try bribing her with chocolates. But I had fun. I made some new friends too, a group of respectable young men, father would approve. When a creeper tried to cat-call Elisabeth, they rightly stood up for her honor. What men they were! There was John, Edward, Frank, and someone named Rodney or something, I can’t quite remember. Oh! Edward’s family owns a car! He invited us to go on a car ride this next week. Can you believe it! Me, wind in my hair riding in an automobile with such fine men! Oh, now I know I’ll be able to get Leona to come with me next time for sure! Well, maybe not. She doesn’t trust cars and new things like I do. I’m a forward woman, Leona is not. I love my sister, don’t get me wrong, but sometimes she rubs me just the wrong way. I really wish she wouldn’t with her nagging sometimes. Always thinks she knows better. Well isn’t it better for me to spend time finding a man? And that Edward man is pretty neat if I do say so myself. I’ll just let whatever happen happen. Let it all play out how it’s supposed to you know.

OCT 4th, 1902

Oh. My. Goodness! I had such a fun time tonight with John and the boys. We got permission from John to set up a surprise birthday party for Kate. We spent the whole day decorating with those new ribbons I got from the traveling salesmen that came by a few weeks ago. She loved it! But nothing happens without a hitch in the plan of course. I was going to make egg boats for an appetizer and I somehow thought putting Frank in charge of boiling the eggs was a good idea. He didn’t put water in the pot and the eggs ended up exploding in the oven! I had him clean up the awful mess he made, but in the end, we just ended up laughing the whole time. Who knew Frank was so funny! We did get that mess cleaned up and Alison was able to cover up the smell by baking a deliciously simple pastry using some old strawberry preserves in John’s mother’s pantry. The rest of the night Frank and I kept referencing the eggs and giggling. For such an embarrassing mistake, he’s quite good humored about it. Such a good friend.

DECEMBER 31ST, 1902

Leona has been nothing but a spoil. It’s New Years Eve! Just go have fun! You don’t have to drag down everyone else. I’ve been working for weeks to get her to come with us to this dance. I even went so far as inviting her to come with us for a ride in Edward’s automobile, she declined of course. But I finally got her to come to the dance at the BIG HOTEL and after one dance with one young man she stomped her foot and demanded that I take her home. I couldn’t believe it. You CANNOT let one bad experience ruin you for the rest of your life. If she doesn’t start taking chances she’ll end up an old maid living a spindling life with our parents for the rest of her life! I’m really quite worried about her actually. If she doesn’t start pursuing some kind of outside engagement aside from her reading, she’ll never get a life and she’ll die alone and sad. Or worse, she’ll make me and my husband take care of her in her old age. I don’t think I could handle an old-lady Leona, I can barely handle a normal-aged Leona! And Leona would make the worst kind of old lady too! The kind that nags and nags, even about things that don’t matter. Then she’ll give you her opinion when she’s never actually known anything about it in the first place. Ugh! Oh! I know! I’ll set her up with Frank. He’s sweet, thoughtful and she won’t mind that he’s a poor man just starting his career. There! It’s perfect. She can marry Frank and I’ll marry Edward and be rich and have three darling children. Except Leona would never go for it. She’s much too in love with Darcy from Pride and Prejudice. She expects every love relationship to be as easy as that. Humph, she knows nothing about working for love! And if she doesn’t learn she’ll end up an old maid, but she won’t be able to say I didn’t try to help her! I for one, will never end up like her: miserable and alone!

AUGUST 18th, 1903

I don’t know anything. I don’t think I ever did. It’s been a month since the doctor amputated my leg. The doctors say I’ll never walk again. Never dance. I was crossing the street when I was in an accident and my leg was ran over by an automobile. They couldn’t save it. Leona’s right. She’s always been right. I’ve always been wrong.

AUGUST 31st, 1903

Frank came and visited today. He’s the only one from my friends that has visited, it’s so kind of him. He’s so thoughtful. He made me laugh. I haven’t laughed since… well, it’s been a while. I’m glad he came, yet I also find myself wishing that I don’t ever have to see him again. He’s like a reminder of who I was and I don’t want that. I’m just trying to get adjusted to who I am now, to the life I have to live now. I’m not the same and I can’t have everyone trying to pretend that nothing has changed. I. can’t. walk. I can’t hardly do anything for myself anymore. I’m just dead weight for everyone. I’ve changed. Everyone else just needs to move on.

OCTOBER 12th, 1903

What have I done? Frank might not ever visit me again. I told him he needed to stop coming and seeing me. I told him it was just too hard and that I didn’t want to become dead weight holding him back. He got mad at me. I have never seen him so mad in all my life. He told me to wake up and get over myself. He said that I still have choices even though my situations and choices have changed. My mother ended up kicking him out but I think he’s right. It was very harsh but needed, I think. I’ve been staring out the window since then. Leona tried to talk to me but I ignored her. I know my mother is very worried too. But I can’t talk to them. They might try to vindicate me and I need what Frank said to sink in. Maybe I don’t have to always be victim. You know, this is the road that Frank walks on whenever he comes to see me. The road I’m staring at I mean. I’m not staring at it because I hope he’ll come back because I know he won’t. I’m just staring at it because it was also the road I used to travel. When I could walk.

DECEMBER 22nd, 1903

Frank believes that I’ll be able to walk! He talks about a thing called a prosthetic leg. It’s like a wooden leg. It won’t be perfect, not like it was. Dancing is still out of the question and I might always have a limp but a limp is better than nothing. It’ll be really hard I know, but I’m not one to give up. My family believes I can do it. Frank does too. And so do I! So what if I’ll have a pegleg. I’ll be like a pirate! I’ll be a pirate woman from this moment on. Nothing will be able to sink me, that was something Frank said. He’s so silly. I am so glad that he didn’t give up on me. Frank is the most amazing friend I could ever have. But I’m also worried. I’m afraid Frank might love me as more than a friend and I can’t have that. Even now, I don’t think I could ever see Frank as anything more than a friend. I don’t ever want to lose his friendship, but I’d be untrue if I were to try to be anything more with him. It’s not fair to him and I know it. I’m so sorry Frank. But you need to move on.

MARCH 11th, 1904

Frank might propose. No. No no no no no no no no no no no. If I say no he’ll never come back here again. He’ll stop being my friend but I can’t be with him. I can’t. I can’t, I just can’t. Maybe… maybe I’ll set him up with Leona. That’s it. That’s the solution. Leona’s still single. I know this is a bad idea but it’s all I have. I’ll set up Leona and Frank. Leona will never go for it. She thinks Frank and I are perfect for each other, she told me that after she saw Frank asking our father to go out on a walk, and everyone knows that he’s going to ask my father for permission to marry me. Ok. Here’s what I’m going to do. I’ll work it out on Leona. I’ll slowly talk about how Frank and her would be perfect together. I’ll plant the seed, slowly introduce the thought, so little that she won’t notice. Then I’ll butter Leona up to Frank, try to suggest that he ask her on a date. Then, I’ll be so bold as to suggest it in front of them. With so many seeds planted, they’ll have to go on the date. Then they’ll fall in love, because Leona is amazing and Frank is a dream. It’s perfect! They are perfect for each other.

APRIL 29th, 1904

I never. Never. Never thought that Leona would go for it. Yet, now here we are. Leona and Frank are on a date. I suggested it, Frank looked like he was a bit upset but Leona said yes. In fact, she seemed excited by the idea, giddy even! I was expecting this yet I can’t deny that I’m a bit surprised. Really surprised actually. I didn’t think Leona would ever go for it. She did. Good. Great! I’m happy. I’m so happy for them. This is good, really good, really great even. This is for the best. I’m so excited to hear how the date went when Leona gets back. Really, I hope it just goes just great. I really, really do.

MAY 1st, 1904

Leona is right. I hate to admit it but she’s been right about everything all the time. Except for a few things but those don’t matter anymore. What matters is right now and just now Leona put me well in my place. I’d been snippy at her all day. Leona told me that the reason I was so angry at her was not because of the way she made the pie, or how she washed my apron, it was because of the date she went on with Frank. I openly denied it, of course. But then she asked me this question. She told me that if she, or anyone, were to marry Frank, my relationship with him would have to change. I could no longer flirt as I do. He wouldn’t be the one I could lean on when I get off balance. Would I be ok with that? I realized I’m not. I’ve been taking him for granted in so many ways. Here I was thinking that we could easily live as we do without any change, when the only change I want is to grow closer to him. If that means marriage, well, maybe that’s the right thing to do. I’ll admit I’m still scared and unsure, but if I don’t marry Frank, I will lose him. Leona made that clear. Then she also explained to me what happened on the date. They… they talked about me the whole time. Leona had only gone on the date to make me jealous. And she was right of course. Frank didn’t like the idea of a ‘fake date’ but it worked. Now I know. Now I know that I have to marry Frank. I love him. Wow. I can’t believe I just admitted that! But I do! I love Frank Pritchett! I want to marry Frank Pritchett and be with him for the rest of my life and longer if possible! I love him. I love Frank.

MAY 5th, 1904

AHHH!!! He proposed!!! I said yes! Yes!!! Absolutely yes, yes yes! Why couldn’t I see it before? I was so blind. I the only one who couldn’t see it. I absolutely am completely in love with Frank Pritchett. And I get to marry the man of my dreams. I’m going to become Mary Pritchett, wife of the most amazing man in the world. I don’t want a very big wedding, ha! I’m going to have a wedding! After the accident I thought for sure I would grow into an old maid but Frank loves me. And I love him. And we’re going to get married! I love him so much. I want to marry him soon. I don’t want a long engagement. I just want to be married to Frank. You know what he did today? After he proposed, he took me in his arms and we swayed as if we were dancing. It was so romantic. I love that man so much. So much do I love that man. I wish I had more words so that I could express in everyway imaginable how much I love Frank Dean Pritchett!

*(Fade out of memory)*

MOM: Then she goes on to continually ranting about how much she loves Frank. Anyway, they ended up having a very long engagement and weren’t married until early 1905. They had seven children. One of which was your great grandmother Sarah, who had a son named Charlie who was your grandfather. So, what do you think?

CATHY: *(very long pause)* … I have to go tell George I love him.

MOM: *(confused)* Right now?

CATHY: I’ll be back later tonight. Mom, if I don’t tell him now… I might lose him.

*(DAD comes into the room as CATHY gets ready to go.)*

DAD: Hi Cathy!

CATHY: Hi dad! Bye dad! I’ll be back later!

*(CATHY runs out the door. MOM and DAD look at each other. MOM shrugs.)*