

Suffragist Hellraiser: Breaking Free from All That Entangles Life

Sharon Margolis

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Margolis captures the bold spirit of the women's suffrage era through her heroine's bravery and passion.

When socialite Katherine Moore returns to the provincial town of River Run under mysteriously scandalous circumstances, her outspoken views and relentless investigation into some shady business practices place her reputation, and possibly her life, in danger. Closely following the 1911 campaign for women's suffrage in California, Sharon Margolis captures the bold spirit of the era in *Suffragist Hellraiser*.

Kate is determined to do what she thinks is right, even if it means ruffling a few feathers along the way, and no one is quite as easy to rile as Police Chief John Gallagher. Kate stirs up quite a bit of trouble and passion in her pursuit of equal rights, and with the opposition growing louder and more threatening, she must decide who to trust with her secrets, and ultimately, her heart.

Although raised to be a genteel lady, Kate embodies the independent turn-of-the-century woman as she follows her own moral compass, often putting her safety in jeopardy for the sake of the cause. "Women will never get the vote if we do not put ourselves forward." Kate's strategies include an "intention to evoke violence" and garner media attention, an attitude often shared by Kate's historical counterparts, several of whose real-life escapades are interspersed throughout the narrative. The efforts of Lillian Coffin and Harriot Stanton Blatch, and events like Winston Churchill's violent run-in with a suffragette and a whip, add an element of realism and urgency to Kate's cause, making her actions and reasoning entirely believable.

The sparks between Kate and John Gallagher and the riddle of Star Enterprises add elements of romance, mystery, and action to the rich and entertaining history. Even so, spacing issues occur regularly, including cramped punctuation and inconsistent use of double and single spacing throughout. Scattered grammar and punctuation errors as well as a repeated lapse turning Gallagher into "Gallegher" take some of the polish off an otherwise bright and lively tale.

Much like the titular juxtaposition of the antiquated term "suffragette" with the more shocking "hellraiser," Margolis includes many sensitive topics that, while taboo for polite society in small town America 1911, were still very much a part of life at that time. Once again, Kate's attitudes and convictions regarding such controversial issues as women's roles in society and government, abortion, and even abolition are progressive for her time, but understandable given her circumstances and treated with respect and realism by Margolis.

Budding feminists and lovers of historical romance set at the turn of the century will relish Kate's journey and indomitable courage in *Suffragist Hellraiser*.

PALLAS GATES MCCORQUODALE (December 9, 2014)

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