

Vicki Gaia's Research Page:

Eliza's Hope

1913 Romance set in New York

Why did I chose 1913 for my latest historical? I started out wanting it to be set during the turn of the new century (1900), but as I began to study the era I wanted to include certain events that took place in 1913: **The Amory Show** and the **Washington D.C. Suffrage parade**. As America moved towards WWI there were underlying social changes taking place in New York and Greenwich Village. Eliza Lily begins to see she has choices in how she wants to live her life. For Eliza, who harbors a terrible past, getting involved in social causes and the women's movement is a path to a meaningful life besides marriage.

The Amory Show:

It was an exhibition of Modern Art and for the first time, Americans could view the paintings by French Modern artists. People were outraged, and it sent a shockwave through the art world. Art critics called the artist "insane" and "neurotic psychopathic freaks", wanting "cheap notoriety". Despite the harsh criticism, New Yorkers flocked to the exhibit that ran from February through March 1913. The *New York Times* ran an article titled: "Cubists and Futurists Are Making Insanity Pay" (March 16, 1913)

The most famous painting was Marcel Duchamp's "Nude Descending a Staircase No. 2:



Shock and outrage accompanied this painting, but people pushed and shoved to get a closer look! Here is an *unedited excerpt* from **Eliza's Hope**, Copyright 2006, Vicki Gaia.

William Bennett (her guardian) has agreed to take her to the Armory Show:

The Armory Show was housed in the cavernous armory on Lexington and 25th Street. The entrance took one's breath from the enormous size and breadth of the exhibit. William froze, the room filled with hundreds of artworks, from sculpture to paintings. Eliza grabbed onto his elbow, her eyes wide, her mouth parted. William peered down at her face, amused by the awestruck expression on her face. She met his gaze and frowned.

"This is your first time, isn't it, Mr. Bennett," she accused.

He chuckled and nodded. "I'm afraid you caught me in another lie."

Eliza smiled back and his heart dipped into a free fall of utter desire. No woman had ever affected him like Eliza. He feigned a cough and hid his mouth, swearing under his breath at his foolishness.

Eliza clapped her hands together, "Where shall we begin? There must be thousands of pieces here?"

William picked up a guide and shook his head. "My Lord, there's thirteen hundred works and eighteen galleries. We might have to camp out overnight."

Eliza ignored him and walked over to a painted screen depicting a leopard killing a deer. The artist painted in a Japanese style and the scene, while in a flat perspective, was oddly beautiful to William.

"You'll like this," she said. "How breathtaking but horrible."

It was true, he did like this painting. He understood the brutal killing, a necessity of nature no man could tame. Eliza grabbed his hand and he felt her fingers wrap around his palm. He enjoyed this moment of contact, and how he could make her feel secure in an uncertain world. She stepped closer, and looked up, her startling eyes hinting at mischief.

"Let's cheat and go directly to the French paintings. I want to see Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase*. I'm dying to see what all the outrage is about."

Freckles dashed across her nose and he longed to kiss each one. With Eliza, he felt in a constant state of wonder, and his mouth tweaked up at her suggestion. He faked a shiver. "You mean the Chamber of Horrors." William looked down the left side of the armory where a crowd bulged from Gallery I. "It looks like we'll have to fight our way through if we're going to see anything at all."

"Why do you think I brought you here? Promise, you'll get me up to the front."

"Even if I have to fight my way."

[Back to Research Page](#)