

Heard Any Good Books Lately?

I love books. I love the look of them, the feel of them, and the world they open. They've nourished my soul and fueled my imagination since I was given my first library card. Whenever I moved—be it to different states or different countries—the packing crates were always full of books.

Then came digital. It took me quite a while to consider a Kindle or a Nook a *real* book. If Santa hadn't given me a Kindle, it might have taken me even longer to catch on to the practical advantages of reading ebooks. But now I'm hooked and love the convenience of having dozens of books at my fingertips.

When my third book—and first novel—*Deadly Ties* (A Waterside Kennels mystery) was published last year, fans clamored for an audio edition. I'll confess: I was skeptical at first. How could a stranger possibly match all the voices I heard in my head? And what reader would trade the joy of lingering over the page (printed or digital) to listen to a narrator with no emotional connection to the words?

Fans and voiceover artists soon set me straight. Here's what I learned from them that changed my attitude about audiobooks and have me shopping at Audible and Amazon as often as I go to my local bookstore.

Audiobooks add a new dimension to the novel. When I opened auditions for *Deadly Ties* I was amazed at the response. Some of the top producers at Audible auditioned for the chance to narrate my novel. (What a thrill!) And although everyone was offered the same script and basic character notes, no two auditions were alike. Perhaps most fascinating part was the way each narrator interpreted the characters, and the marvelous variety of voices they brought to the story. The oh-so-talented Robin Rowan captured the voices in my head and transformed a manuscript into performance art.

Audiobooks can go where other versions can't. Fans tell me they prefer to listen to audiobooks instead of music when they're working. One mystery lover said she listens to a half-dozen books every week while working on the assembly line. (Who knew?) And yesterday, a friend told me she typically listens to three audiobooks at any time. One goes with her for her hour-long daily commute, another is reserved for her time on the treadmill, and she keeps one in her office desk to enjoy at lunch.

Audiobooks are the "value-added" answer to chores. Laundry, dishes, and dog-walking can take up hours of our time. Multitaskers tell me those pesky daily chores go a lot faster when their minds are engaged. And since you can load audiobooks on all sorts of gadgets and adjust the narration speed to boot, you can enjoy a great book just about anywhere.

So it's official: you can add me to the group of diehard audiobook fans. Professional narrators bring a new dimension to the printed word and offer book lovers another way to enjoy books. And let's add authors to that list, as well, because I found myself enthralled as I listened to Robin narrate *Deadly Ties*. Unlike some narrators who prefer to read the entire book before they begin, Robin wants to experience the story just as the reader does. Remember what I said about emotional connections? Imagine my delight when she sent me this note:

My heart was pounding—POUNDING—at the end of Chapter 41! Wow! I'm riveted!!!

Now here's your chance to get your own heart racing! Listen to a sample at <http://tinyurl.com/q7hcefv> and leave a comment for a chance to win your own copy of *Deadly Ties*.

Deadly Ties

Dogs. Family. Friends. Treasure. Stories and rumors from the past. Secrets and lies. They're all at the heart of this story. When trouble begins at the kennel, Maggie will have to dig into the past for answers if she wants to have a future. Because her search just might lead to murder.

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