

**Wendy Wax Talks About
WHILE WE WERE WATCHING DOWNTON ABBEY,
the PBS series, its Characters and the Legendary
Highclere Castle**



Hello, Wendy. Welcome!

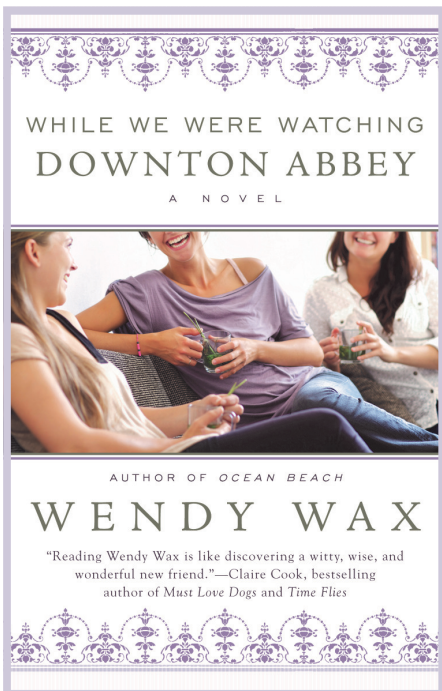
It goes without saying, readers want to know more about your new novel, WHILE WE WERE WATCHING DOWNTON ABBEY. What inspired you to link your story to television's *Downton Abbey*?

My addiction. Yes. I'm addicted to watching *Downton Abbey*. To make sure I didn't miss it, I turned down social events, sent my husband to pick up take out and locked myself in the TV room on Sunday nights. I wanted more *Downton*. Writing a book that revolved around fans of the series meant I got, er *had*, to watch each episode over and over.

So it was research?

Absolutely! I had somehow missed season one when it first aired, so I had my own little mini marathon one weekend. Then I was hooked and the idea of characters who loved *Downton Abbey* as much as I did started floating around in my brain. Then I had to watch and re-watch season two. I had to! Then I inhaled everything I could get my hands on that was related to the series. This included Julian Fellows' novel, *Snobs*, his niece's *The World of Downton Abbey*, and the Countess of Carnarvon's *Lady Almina and the Real Downton Abbey: The Lost Legacy of Highclere Castle*. But I couldn't stop there. I devoured it all--articles and pictorials in *People* magazine, *TV Guide*, *Life & Style*, *Woman's World* and on and on. I set up Google Alerts, visited fan sites, read blogs. It's amazing what I did to further my obsession. I mean craft. Further my craft.

So how does your plot incorporate the program?



I began by letting the show bring my primary characters together. Thankfully, they turned out to be just as passionate about Lord Grantham, his family and those below stairs as I am. When I saw how the show might actually help change their lives, I was hooked. The story takes place in the Alexander, a historic Atlanta building, whose British concierge invites residents to weekly screenings of *Downton Abbey*. That's how Samantha, Claire, Brooke and Edward, who have little else in common, forge bonds that will sustain them through some of life's hardest moments--all of it reflected in the unfolding drama, humor and lives of the program.

Is this the first time you've dedicated a book to someone you haven't actually met?

Yes. I dedicated **WHILE WE WERE WATCHING DOWNTON ABBEY** to Julian Fellowes with thanks for bringing us such an incredible show, even though I haven't completely forgiven him for all the tears I shed this season. The writing, acting and lavish costumes and settings always leave me wanting more.

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Can you imagine yourself living in Downton Abbey?

Assuming I lived upstairs, yes . . . but, I'm not sure that place and time would work for someone as into immediate gratification as I am. I don't think I'd have the patience. For instance, upstairs, happily ensconced in your boudoir, you realize you're thirsty. You have to pull a cord and wait for someone below stairs to respond to a bell that is...well, downstairs. Between locating the correct servant, waiting for her to climb the stairs, asking for something to drink, and waiting while she retrieves it and comes back up . . . Phew. I'm thirsty just thinking about it.

Of course, I'd probably be thinner.

Thinner? Why do you say that?

For one thing, I've never watched a scene where Lord Grantham and Lady Cora are standing in front of the fridge trying to decide what to snack on next. In fact, I've never seen them near an icebox at all. If I lived at Downton, I wouldn't be in the kitchen so much either. I mean, who's going to take all those stairs every time the writing's not going well?

Do your protagonists reflect specific Downton Abbey characters?

To some extent, yes. For instance, Edward, the Alexander's British concierge, was inspired by *Downton's* butler Carson but has George Clooney looks and a diploma from the Cornell School of Hotel Administration. Samantha, who has married old Atlanta money, faces some of the same kinds of responsibilities to her family that Lady Mary does.

What are some of your favorite things about WHILE WE WERE WATCHING DOWNTON ABBEY now being in stores?

The best is the wonderful moment when it hits me that my story really is a book and that people are reading it. I love to hear what readers think and, now, with people on GoodReads, Shelfari, Facebook, Twitter and other sharing sites, as well as being able to post their reaction on various bookselling sites, there's more feedback and it comes to you faster than ever. Also, with social media, I can talk directly with readers and book groups. I often learn of a just posted review or comment when they're discussed on Facebook and Twitter.

The other thing I'm loving is hearing all the opinions that have started coming in about which characters and situations reflect the show itself--especially the guesses on who readers think is most like the Dowager Countess.

And contributing to the fun surrounding this particular book, Woman's World has a **WHILE WE WERE WATCHING DOWNTON ABBEY** giveaway that has just been announced. The winner gets a trip for two to the U.K. and a tour of Highclere Castle, where *Downton Abbey* is filmed. It's in the magazine's April 22nd issue and will be on their site into May (www.winit.womansworldmag.com). It's been really exciting to be able to tell people in person and online about how to enter. The enthusiasm has been contagious--now I'm itching to get to Highclere even more than before.

As you can see, I can go on and on about how much I'm enjoying the first weeks on sale for this book.

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**What's next--especially for all of us who want to know more about the women of Ten Beach Road?
Will we see them again soon?**

Yes! I've just started writing the not-yet-titled follow-up to Ten Beach Road and Ocean Beach, in which Maddie, Avery, Nikki, Deirdre and Kyra travel to Key West to turn the languishing estate of an aging, down on his luck rock star into a bed and breakfast. I must say it's hard to concentrate while in the throes of *Downton Abbey* withdrawal. I mean, I'm worried about what Lady Edith is getting into with her boss and what will happen with Lady Mary and the new heir.

Oh, and I've finished my first e-original novella. It's a holiday story, out in October, that takes us back to Ten Beach Road.

I'll be sharing more on both projects at authorwendywax.com and on Facebook and Twitter. Hope to see you there!

Thank you, Wendy.

Thank you! I appreciate being able to share what's going on with you and visitors to your site.

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