

# Secrets of Grace Manor

## Q&A with Author Maryann Ridini Spencer

### **What gave you the idea for *The Secrets of Grace Manor*?**

Some themes that permeate my novels include topics such as friends helping friends, the necessity of living one's authentic life and truth, how something positive can come out of a negative, how we can learn to have more joy in our lives by being connected to God and following his Word, and "doing unto others."

As I wrote *Lady in the Window*, the title and story of the second Kate Grace Novel, *The Paradise Table*, came to me. The same thing happened as I wrote *The Paradise Table*; the title and concept for *Secrets of Grace Manor* became apparent. The idea for 'Secrets' stems from my childhood. My parents, grandparents, and other relatives told my siblings and me that my maternal relatives were lords and ladies in Ireland in previous centuries. I felt *for Secrets of Grace Manor*; it might be fun to have Kate discover something about her relatives from another time that she would find purposeful in the present.

### **Why did you decide to set the Kate Grace Mystery series in Hawaii?**

I've been traveling to the Hawaiian Islands for many years now. I resonate with living aloha, and the stunning, magical, and abundant beauty of the Islands fills my soul. In Hawaii, I am at home. I also felt that Hawaii would be a wonderful base for my characters to live—but I have always had the idea that they would travel and experience life in other locales as well.

### **Is the Kate Grace series somewhat autobiographical?**

I believe that a writer draws from his or her life experiences and perceptions, so yes, bits and pieces are my story, but not entirely. In particular, I drew from my experiences when it came to Kate's relationship and experiences with her parents, her career, and much of the "mystical" elements experienced by Kate.

### **Kate's dreams and intuitions sometimes speak to her. Do you believe this is possible in real life?**

Yes. I believe that under God's direction and by His will—and without us seeking it out—we are sometimes blessed with divine messages and inspiration.

### **When did you know you wanted to become a writer?**

I've known for as long as I can remember. However, although I always knew I wanted to write novels, it wasn't until 2014 that I began to pursue writing fiction. Then, after dabbling with some story ideas, in 2016 I put myself on a schedule to write.

Previously, I had been writing for newspapers and magazines, as well as producing and writing projects for television. However, around 2002, as a TV/film producer, I began to feel the need to write movie screenplays as a way to tell the stories I felt were meaningful. In fact, at the time, I made a conscious decision to concentrate exclusively on writing and producing my own projects.

Then, as soon as I began to write screenplays based on an outline, I realized I could also plot out a novel in a similar fashion. That was a breakthrough moment for me because I finally had a roadmap of how to start. The rest was discipline and hard work, but realizing I could break it down was what made something I always said I wanted to do become a reality.

### **What inspires your stories?**

Art, nature, music—everything I see, hear, watch, and read. I also get my best ideas when I'm driving, relaxing, on vacation, or doing activities other than writing!

You've written original screenplays, adaptations, and novels. How different is writing a book vs. a screenplay?

I always have a detailed outline, so I know exactly how the plot and scenes or chapters will unfold. I also visualize everything I write as I'm writing—whether it is a novel or screenplay. However, there is so much more freedom, exposition, and examination on the part of the characters when writing a novel. When writing screenplays, the scene must unfold in a way that tells the story in a very concise, visual style—in approximately 126 pages—while novels often have hundreds of pages.

### **When you begin writing a novel, do you know the ending?**

Yes. Because I follow a detailed outline, I always know how my story will end. Sometimes I change or add elements of the story as I write but not so significantly that the ending changes. I guess the best way to put it is that, even though I know what will transpire, I sometimes get a thrill out of what suddenly pops into my consciousness. All I can tell you is that I thoroughly enjoy the process. It's like going on a journey that transports me into another world.

**What types of stories do you plan to write in the future?**

I plan to write more Kate Grace novels as well as other fiction and, definitely, more cookbooks! As mentioned previously, I gravitate to a bit of mystery, themes having to do with family relationships, romance, and stories that inspire and give hope for the human condition. What determines my immediate focus and pursuit is how much a particular plot, theme, or character pulls at me.

***Secrets of Grace Manor***

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Find out more about Maryann, her books and film and television projects and her *Simply Delicious Living* blog at [maryannridinispencer.com](http://maryannridinispencer.com) or [alohawriter.com](http://alohawriter.com).

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