



As a best-selling author of adult thrillers, **Gabrielle Lord** was well aware of the inherent challenge of creating and sustaining the necessary tension and suspense in writing a 12-book young adult series spanning an entire year.

Curious about her family, Gabrielle had previously learned of a distant ancestor, Black Tom Butler, the 10<sup>th</sup> Earl of Ormond. Initially attracted by his pirate-like nickname, she'd probed further. The basis for Cal Ormond's adventure in *Conspiracy 365* grew out of her discovery of the mysterious rumors surrounding Black Tom's relationship with Elizabeth the First.

Then came the actual writing. A successful sequential series is not just one book divided into parts. As Gabrielle explains, "Each of the 12 books had to be structured carefully ... with the dramatic build moving towards the climax and with each book ending on a tantalizing cliffhanger." The surprises, revelations and reversals in each book in *Conspiracy 365* keep the story fresh.

As a device to generate the action of the story, Gabrielle created the Ormond Singularity which gives "a distant horizon which beckons to the characters, promising something amazing – if they can survive the events of the plot." The series starts off in traditional folktale/fairytale fashion when Cal receives a warning from a crazy-looking man. "In stories, warnings are never heeded. And that's where the story takes off," Gabrielle explains.

With such a complex plot with its puzzles and riddles, a lot of information needed to be conveyed to the reader. In good writing, "exposition must always be concealed – that is, made almost invisible by the interesting drama that is surrounding the exposition, so that the reader is informed without really noticing it." Gabrielle uses "conflict," often in the form of misunderstandings between characters, to accomplish this. The other main characters, Cal's friend Boges and the mysterious Winter Frey, each have agendas of their own that at times conflict with Cal's needs and vice versa. The action of the story stems from all the forces and impediments in Cal's way to accomplish his "quest." Solving the riddles involves danger and difficulty which adds tension, suspense and thrills.

Gabrielle found she needed help in developing the Ormond Singularity. The series provided "the very best excuse" to visit Ireland for research on the stories surrounding Black Tom and Elizabeth and the setting for the final volume.

Readers have eagerly followed Cal's journey through 365 days of danger in Gabrielle Lord's taut, well-crafted series. It's Gabrielle's hope that "young readers will also discover much about themselves, and become better equipped to deal with the complexities facing them. Above all, *Conspiracy 365* is about love. Love is the foundational force behind creativity. The ancient secret at its heart is born of love, and Cal's strength in the face of adversity is also based in love – the love of family, friends... of life itself."





**Kane Miller**  
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Spotlight

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