

# The Temptation

*by Jane Jensen*

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a *Gabriel Knight* interlude

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PINKERTON ROAD STUDIO





# I

Gabriel was hunting.

Or, to put it another way, he was spending the third freaking night in a row huddled in the freezing cold outside some guy's house who didn't especially want him there.

Six months ago, he'd discovered a body that might or might not have been the Son of God in a cavern near Rennes-le-Chateau. Six months ago, he'd found a note from Grace and that was the last he'd heard from her. Six months ago he'd hit the ultimate peak of his three 'quests' as a Schattenjäger. He was thirty-six years old.

Was it possible for the story of one's life to be done and written that young? That the rest of one's existence could stretch out into a whole lot of nothing? It sure felt that way.

*This is a waste of time,* said a voice in his head. *Seriously, you're not even getting paid for this shit.*

Gabriel sat up and blinked hard. He knew he was exhausted when his brain started talking to itself. He probably wasn't falling asleep, not when he was this cold and uncomfortable. Maybe he was going into a hypothermic coma, though. That was a real possibility. He forced himself to move, taking his gloves off and rubbing his hands together briskly, blowing warm breath on them.

The German house, all white and wood and pine bough-filled window boxes, was at the edge of the Black Forest in the little town of Wolfach. It was a quaint town with a stream running through it, and Gabriel might not have minded spending a few days there if he could have spent his nights in a brauhaus instead of on guard duty.

The house he was watching belonged to Herr Schmidt. He ran it as a small pension, but he'd had to close it when guests started falling ill in the night. The most upsetting incident had involved a miscarriage. A guest three months pregnant had been so ill she'd lost her baby. Herr Schmidt was having the house professionally cleaned and painted inside, and a new air filtration system installed. He was a practical man, Herr Schmidt. He believed in microbes and disinfectant. His sister Berta, however, who lived near Rittersberg, was convinced the cause was supernatural. She'd begged for Gabriel's help, asking him to 'just take a short holiday there and see what you can find out.' Bored and desperate to get out of the castle, Gabriel had agreed.

At least his room and board at the pension was free.

*What are you doing with your life? This isn't heroism. It's fantasy,* said the voice in his head.



“Shut up,” Gabriel muttered.

*There's nothing here.*

It was hard to argue with that in the inky darkness of midnight with the few outdoor lights at the house revealing nothing but—

Wait.

A human figure, small and shrouded in black, scuttled along the side of the house, into the beam of the light and out again.

*What the hell was that?*

The cold was forgotten in the rush of dread-tinged adrenaline. Gabriel pulled the dagger out from its holder in a coat pocket and with the other hand checked the talisman. It was under his coat and shirt, solid and reassuring. It felt warm, too warm to be down to body temperature alone, not when he was freezing his ass off.

He crouched over and moved toward the house.

He was the only guest staying in the pension at the moment, thanks to repairs. He was the only guest who had been there for weeks. Sticking to the shadows, he moved around the perimeter of the house, trying to spot the strange figure again. The back of the house was less well lit, but there was some light coming from a downstairs window and a bit of help from a half moon. And... there. The bottom of the house was painted white and a shadow darker than the rest moved along it steadily. The figure stopped and seemed to press against the wall, lifting up its arms as if reaching....

It was directly under the window of the room where Gabriel was staying.

Disturbed and fascinated, Gabriel watched the figure strain, long fingers wiggling like spiders against the wall. It wasn't trying to climb though. It was... *sensing*? Now he could see the figure was maybe five foot tall and it wore a cloak of inky black, its head and body covered, only those arms and fingers protruding.

With an audible growl of frustration, the figure slumped at the window.

*I'm not in the room. Does it sense that? What does it want?*

Making up his mind, Gabriel moved swiftly forward to grab the figure, but it turned its head to look at him, face shadowed, and took off with unnatural speed, running along the wall of the house and straight into the trees beyond.

“Stop!” Gabriel yelled. He ran after it.



*You lost it,* said the voice in his head.

Gabriel paused, struggling to catch his breath. He was out of shape. Too many nights spent watching old movies on TV, trying to chase away the silence. There were paths through the woods, walking trails. Which was all well and good, except there were too many of them. The trail had intersected with others several times. He'd stopped at each branch, closing his eyes and trying to sense which way to go. He thought he could feel the thing, up ahead. The talisman on his chest was still warm.

*Eight parts pure bollocks and two parts imagination. You have no idea where that thing is.*

"Stop it," Gabriel muttered.

He had a flashlight in his pocket, but he left it there. Better to let his eyes remain adjusted to the dark. Better not to broadcast his location.

Ahead. He was pretty sure. He walked another five minutes before exiting the woods at another house.

The small house was unremarkable. It was at the end of a paved road that probably led into town. There was a small chicken coop in the yard with a fence around it. Down the road he could see the lights of another home.

There was no sight of the shrouded figure.

*Lost it. It's probably miles from here by now.*

Gabriel assessed the house—no dog that he could see. There was a dim light coming from behind what looked like kitchen curtains. A perfectly ordinary place. He slipped over a low stone wall and walked forward as quietly as he could.

*It's called trespassing.*

He peeked in the window. There was a small crack where the curtains met. He saw an old stove and a small pine table and two chairs with red checked cushions. An old woman sat in one of the chairs. She had a cup and saucer in front of her but her eyes stared at the wall as if lost in thought.

Was she in danger? Did she know anything? The voice in Gabriel's head was silent on the matter.

The woman sighed and turned to look at the window. She saw Gabriel before he could pull away.

"Shit," he said, backing up.



He was heading for the wall when the door of the house opened.

“Halo? Wer ist da?” the old woman called. She didn’t sound afraid, just curious.

Gabriel sighed and stopped. He turned around and approached the front steps. “Hi. Entschuldigung. I didn’t intend to bother you, but since I did, could I ask if you saw anyone go by here? Tonight or any other time? A figure in a cloak.”

The old woman looked at him suspiciously for a moment, then grunted. “Not that one again. Well, come inside. I can’t sleep and I was about to make some tea.”

Without giving him a chance to answer, she went back into the house, leaving the door wide open.

*A witness. Oh, goody.* The voice drawled sarcastically. What was wrong with him? Yes, he could be an ass, but normally he wasn’t this much of a dick *to himself*. God, he was tired. Gabriel stifled a yawn and went inside.

“Have a seat,” the old woman said. “It’ll just be a minute for the tea. Kettle’s already on. I’m Emma Tourney, by the way.”

He should refuse, but he’d sell his soul for something hot and caffeinated about now.

“My name’s Gabriel. Gabriel Knight. This is kind of you. Sorry to barge in. I was followin’ this cloaked figure through the woods. You’ve seen it?”

“Oh yes,” the woman gave a small shudder. “Since I was a small child. And it’s not the only thing in these woods.”

Gabriel perked up. Although it was true that the old superstitions lingered in these small German towns, to have it acknowledged in such a matter-of-fact way was unusual. There might be a lot he could learn from this woman. And she reminded him of his gran—with a face that must have been lovely in her younger years, a neat skirt and blouse, and an air of gracious dignity.

“I’d like to hear about it, Frau Tourney. The cloaked figure. Do you know what it is?”

“Mmmm,” she hummed thoughtfully, her sweet face furrowed with thought. “It has various names.” The kettle began to make an anxious noise and she turned off the burner. “Black tea or herbal, Gabriel? I have mint. I grow my own.”

“Black, please.”

She fussed with getting tea from a box on the counter and arranging it in the cups. “I’ve heard it called a *seeleesser*, an eater of souls. Also a bat, a night wraith. Though it could also be a witch, I suppose. Here we go!”



She brought the tea to the table and sat heavily in her own chair, sighing with relief. "It's my legs. They just don't want to let me rest at night."

"Sorry to hear that. About the... eater of souls. Does it have a human form? Any idea who it might be?" Gabriel was still surprised to be having this conversation out loud, and with someone who didn't laugh in his face or call for the special bus. It was a pleasant feeling, after having spent the past months so isolated. Grace's face floated up in his mind. He missed her smart-ass company.

"I don't know," Emma said thoughtfully. "It might have a human form. But if it does, I honestly have no clue who it might be. I've never warmed to the butcher in town, you know. Something about the eyes. But I'd expect Herr Steiner to be a ghoul if anything. All that bloody meat." She shivered and took a delicate sip of tea. "There's cream and sugar on the table."

"Uh... thanks." Gabriel added a dollop of cream, raised the cup to his lips, and hesitated. His eyes met watery blues ones over the porcelain.

*God. Now you can't even have a quiet chat with a little old lady without getting suspicious. The job is making you nuts.*

Gabriel drank some tea. It tasted of black tea and milk and nothing else. He smiled at Emma. "Tell me about the soul eater. What exactly does it do? Does it kill?"

Emma took a sip of tea and shook her head with a tsk. "It drains energy. Usually not fatal, but it can be, if the person is sick, old, or an infant." At the look on Gabriel's face she smiled. "Oh, don't worry about me. I have wards all around this house. My mother believed in the old ways, you see. Generations of my people lived in the Black Forest. We're used to the creatures here."

"That's... amazing. I'd like to hear all about them. Anything you're willing to tell me."

She tilted her head and looked at him with a stare that would have made a schoolmaster proud. "And who exactly *are* you, young man? Most boys your age have no interest in anything that isn't on a computer. I've tried passing our knowledge on to my grandsons, but they think I'm senile."

Gabriel took a deep breath. "Have you ever heard of a Schattenjäger?"

Her blue eyes narrowed and pierced through him, as if trying to tell if he was lying. At last she grunted. "Well. Haven't ever met one of those myself. Didn't think they still existed."

"There aren't many," Gabriel agreed. *Or any. Except for me.*

"In that case, I might be willing to share some of my stories."

"I would love that." Gabriel meant it. He was, of course, curious, but he also liked Emma.



She seemed pleased herself, pink dappling her withered apple cheeks. Her thin lips pressed tight against a wayward smile. “Best wait for the light of day. It’s risky to speak of these things in the dark. Words are powerful, you know.”

A small shiver went through Gabriel. “All right. I can come back tomorrow. But about the... soul eater. Have you been seeing it pass by here lately? There’s been some trouble nearby.”

“At the Schmidt pension. Yes, I heard.” Emma shook her head sympathetically. “It’s unusual for a creature like that to haunt the same place so frequently. Usually it spreads out its takings. No one notices an illness here and there. Perhaps its movements are limited. Could be it’s wounded. Could be trapped by a binding spell...” She winked at him cheekily. “Could be old age.”

He found himself smiling. “I definitely need to come back and pick your brain.”

“Oh, some of us still know the old ways. But before you go, there is one thing I want to show you. You should take it with you. For protection.” She stood up, moving gingerly and wincing as she put weight on her legs. “Now it will take me a minute to find it.”

“I’m not in a hurry.”

She hobbled out of the room.

*Hey, maybe you can team up with the old gal. She has a few years left in her still. And it’s not much fun being a hunter all by your lonesome, is it? Dangerous even. You should travel in pairs. Like socks.*

Gabriel took another sip of tea.

*After all, at least with Emma, you’re unlikely to have sex with her and ruin your working relationship.*

The tea went down the wrong way and Gabriel coughed, gasping for air. Christ, he was losing it. He’d been getting these weird thoughts more and more the past few weeks. Maybe he needed to get out of Rittersberg, and not like to a place like Wolfach. He needed a city. Nightlight. Beautiful women who spoke English and didn’t look at him like he was a stupid foreigner. Maybe even a short trip back to New Orleans and *friends*, for God’s sake. He wouldn’t mind seeing Mosely.

Maybe he could try to figure out if Gracie was there.

“I found it!” Emma sounded very pleased with herself as she hobbled back into the kitchen. She was carrying an old velvet case about the size of a small handbag. “I bet you haven’t seen one of these before.”

She stood at the table and opened the lid of the box carefully. Inside was an antique-looking black leather man’s glove.



Gabriel frowned at it. It looked like any other old glove you'd see at a flea market. "What is it?"

"The story goes that this glove belonged to a sorcerer," Emma said with enthusiasm. "It's said that the wearer is able to touch the insubstantial—like a ghost or a soul eater or night wraith. I want you to borrow it until you've found this creature you're looking for. I'd hate to see you hurt."

Gabriel looked at the glove, uncertain. It looked harmless. Powerless too, an old discarded thing. *Like you.*

Maybe he and Emma were a matched set of crazy. "Um...."

"At least try it on, dear boy. See if it fits," Emma insisted.

Gabriel plucked the glove out of the box and looked at both sides of it. A perfectly ordinary looking old glove, maybe late 1800's. He didn't want to insult Emma so he held it in his left hand and inserted the fingers of his right, tugging it on.

"Ow!" There was a pain, like a sting, deep and sharp. He jerked his hand out of the glove. The tip of his index finger had a smear of blood.

"Oh, dear," Emma tsked. "Must be an old pin in there or something. I'm so sorry. Let me get you something for that."

In a moment, she had a white cloth and was squeezing his finger with it. Blood on white.

*Blood on white.*

He looked up from where Emma was collecting his blood on the cloth and into her rheumy blue eyes. She smiled at him sweetly but there was a glint, just a glint, of malevolence in her eyes. The talisman on his chest burned hotly.

*Magic, like life itself, is born in blood. Never let a witch get your blood.* He'd read that just last week in the Ritter library.

*Or it could be a witch.*

Without thinking, Gabriel's dagger was in his hand and, in the next instant, slashed hard across her throat.

Emma made a strangled sound, her old lady's hands flying up to clutch at her neck, becoming coated by the blood, red and coppery-smelling, that spurted from her severed arteries.

Gabriel had a moment of horror, a moment in which he could have been wrong, a moment when hell yawned. Then her face flickered—old to young to middle aged and to something that had no name.



Gabriel scrambled backward, knocking over the chair.

“You...” she managed to gasp, more gurgle than word. Then she fell to the floor and lay still, still except for the blood that spread out from her body as if it was fleeing the moment of death. Gabriel took another step back, his pulse pounding in sickening thumps, as it crept toward him.

The voice in his head was silent.





The circle was complete, and the spell ingredients were arranged in their little bowls in the sigil—dried mare’s blood, salt from the dead sea, dirt from a distant land (Argentina, in this case, the furthest away he could find). He lit the candles.

*You’re like a child playing with blocks, you know that don’t you? You don’t really believe half of the spells in this old library work. There’s a reason why they’re called the Dark Ages.* Von Glower stood at the window in the library, looking out the window, bored.

Gabriel ignored him. “Recesserimus ubi sordes. Exterminant et transferam vos....” He lit the candles and repeated the spell. Nothing. He repeated it again.

The figure at the window rolled his eyes. *What is that anyway?* Von Glower strode over to the table and looked at the ancient spell book. *‘Banishing unwanted spirits.’ Well, that would explain why it didn’t work. Do you think I’m a ghost? Really?*

Gabriel gave up and sank back on his heels. Damn it.

He spoke directly to the... the thing for the first time, his exasperation outweighing his reticence. He’d read that you shouldn’t acknowledge these things, that attention gives them energy. But what choice did he have? It was getting worse. It had just been the voice at first. Then after... after Emma he’d woken up the next morning and the voice had a face. *That face.*

“Then what are you? Because I really could see the back of you about now.”

Von Glower squatted down by the hex circle, his large hands draped casually in front of him, his eyes bright. He looked so goddamn real.

*You don’t know?*

“If I knew, I wouldn’t be asking!”

*I’m your first true kill. Malia didn’t count. She did herself in. Convenient that. As for von Zell, it was kill or be killed. But me... I befriended you. I liked you, Gabriel. I offered you the world. And you pushed me into a goddamn blazing furnace. You burned me alive. How did that feel? Did you feel good about yourself? Did you feel like a hero?*

“Leave me alone!” Gabriel blew out the candles in the useless circle and went to the library door, wrenching it open. Von Glower followed him down the stairs, his footsteps silent. Gabriel



had tried to touch him once, when he'd first appeared, but his hand had passed through nothing. Only his voice made any sound.

*Answer the question! Did you feel good, seeing me burn? Is that what you imagined being a Schattenjäger would be like?*

"I had no choice!" Gabriel spun on him. "I had to kill the alpha werewolf or I would have been a monster!"

*You would have been a God,* Von Glower said intently, all fire and passion. He always had been a conceited SOB.

Gabriel sighed. If anything was stupider than arguing with a thing that may or may not be your imagination, he didn't know what it was. He lifted the bolt on the front door of the castle and went out into the night air.

*Is it any wonder your self-doubt wears this handsome face? Vow Glower circled his face with his long fingers, pouting like a super model. You still feel guilty about that. Now you're slitting the throats of little old ladies. What's next? The iron maiden? Disemboweling librarians?*

Gabriel gritted his teeth. God, he just wanted the thing gone. The spell didn't work. He had no one to talk to about this, no one who would believe him. Grace was God-knows-where and Wolfgang was long dead. What other option did he have, psychoanalysis?

*You could kill yourself.* Von Glower leaned against the little stone bridge that led to the castle gate, shrugging as if it was just a random thought.

Gabriel laughed bitterly. "That will never happen. If that's your game, you might as well quit now. Sorry."

Von Glower smiled knowingly. *Suffer then. I don't care. It's not like you matter. Who do you think you are? Moses? Look around you, Gabriel. Do you see anyone else joining you for your noble efforts?*

*Grace left. Gerde left.*

"She got married."

*And left. Obviously she didn't think this whole 'hunter of evil' thing was important. No one does. No one believes in you. No one does this anymore. Ever wonder why?*

Gabriel's hand tightened on the stone wall.

*You finished the big quest. That was the only reason Heaven cared about you in the first place. You retrieved the body of their Lord, now it's done. You're done. Here's your severance check. Forgotten.*

"Stop," Gabriel said tiredly.



*It's not like you'll have a son. The line will end with you anyway. Just as well since the monsters have all been replaced by car chases and video games. Sell this dump. Go back to New Orleans. Have fun, for God's sake. Maybe you could look up that girl. What was her name? Candy? Remember how much fun life was when you didn't owe anyone a damned thing?*

The horrible thing about it was, Gabriel knew the words were his own. No matter how real this thing looked, it wasn't Von Glower's words that came out of its mouth. It was Gabriel's own deepest thoughts—the stuff you bury, the stuff you hide from yourself because thinking about it is useless and self-defeating.

Like the bit about carrying on the Ritter genetic pool. It bothered him like a slow-growing itch. It was a family line that was supposedly descended from the time of the Golgotha. Talk about responsibility. But he wasn't the marriage-and-kids type. He never would be.

Wolfgang hadn't left progeny either. And where were all his cousins and distant, procreating relations? The dying of the Ritter line couldn't be laid entirely on him. It wasn't fair.

In the distance, a streak lit up the sky. It looked like a shooting star only it was larger, brighter, with a slightly green glow. It looked like a meteor falling to Earth. The trajectory lasted for a good five seconds, and when it disappeared behind some distant hills he braced himself for an explosion, a slight tremor, *something*. It never came.

He stood straight, blinking. "That. That's the second one. I saw one exactly like that two weeks ago." His brain shifted through the intervening days. "Just before *you* showed up, in fact. As a voice in my head."

Von Glower looked unimpressed. *It's just a falling star. Not everything has to do with you, you know.*

"No... it did. It appeared just before I started hearing you in my head. And the papers couldn't explain it. People saw it, but nothing was ever found. And you—I'm not smart enough to feel that guilty."

Von Glower snorted.

"Or imaginative enough to make you up. Sorry."

The specter made a grunt as if Gabriel's accusation wasn't even worthy of comment. *Solitude does funny things to a man. But if you want me to leave, you only have to say so.*

"You'll just... go?" Gabriel looked at the handsome face directly. *He looks so real.*

*I might. Unlike you, I'm free as a bird.*

Gabriel folded his arms across his chest. "Fine. Good. Then get out! I'm busy."



Gabriel turned and headed for the castle. He was going to get the car and go look for the meteor or, if he couldn't find it, some better eye-witness accounts of what it was. It had to mean something.

He strode quickly to the castle door, already reaching out a hand to open it. The door handle was sticky. With blood. He drew back with a gasp.

There was something there, slumped at the base of the door, but he couldn't see it in the dark of the door well. Grimacing at the feel of the congealing blood, he grabbed the door handle again and pushed it down, opening the door slowly.

The light from inside the castle cut like a blade across the doorstep. It illuminated the lamb that lay there, its white woolly coat smeared with the blood of its cut throat.

*Magic, like life itself, is born in blood.*

A chill went through him, and he understood then. The falling stars, Von Glower, the dead lamb, maybe even Emma. Something was happening, something new.

He turned around to ask Von Glower what it was. But Gabriel was utterly alone.





A 20-year veteran of the gaming industry, Jane Jensen is an internationally renowned game designer. Her Gabriel Knight PC adventure games won numerous industry awards and continue to be fan favorites in the adventure community. In 2003, Jane co-founded Oberon Media and went on to design best-selling casual games such as Deadtime Stories, Women's Murder Club, and the recent hit Dying for Daylight. Her newest adventure game, Gray Matter, came out in November 2010 to great anticipation and praise. She most recently worked at Zynga. Jane has also written four novels. Fans are invited to connect with her on Facebook.



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