



Jane Jensen's Gray Matter

Geek picks the famed game designer's brain

// WORDS: NEILIE JOHNSON

Jane Jensen's worn a lot of hats. For PC gamers, she's a respected game designer; for aspiring female game designers, she's a role model and for adventure game fans, she's a gaming icon. Having been mentored by the legendary Roberta Williams and cut her teeth on the venerable *King's Quest* series, Jane is most famous for the *Gabriel Knight* games which include some of the best and most well-loved adventure titles in the history of PC gaming.

After releasing *Gabriel Knight 3: Blood of the Sacred, Blood of the Damned*, Jane took a break from games, penning two critically-acclaimed suspense novels, *Dante's Equation* and *Judgment Day*. Rumor had it the last couple of years, though, that Jane was once again hard at work on a new game; fans were thrilled to have these rumors confirmed by the announcement of her new project, *Gray Matter*, currently in development by French company, Wizarbox. We recently spoke to Jane from her San Diego home and asked her to talk about life as a designer, author and proud parent of a brand new game project.

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Interview

Jane Jensen



Geek Monthly: Your education is in Computer Science—how did you start writing?

I went into computer science out of a desire to earn a decent living but I always wanted to be a writer. I enjoy technology but finding computer games was the best possible fit.

Is there a difference in the way you approach writing for reading audiences vs writing for gaming audiences?

Yes, it's very different. In a book you want the narrative to flow seamlessly—and hopefully engagingly, and you have complete control of how it unfolds. In a game the story is more like a screenplay—gotten across in dialogue and visuals, but also the player needs the freedom to move around in the story so you have to allow for different ways the story can unfold.

How important is it to educate your audiences as well as entertain them? Do you hope your games will inspire people to learn more about say, the Templars, King Ludwig of Bavaria or Kabbalah?

Entertaining is definitely the priority, but if people are excited about some of the topics

in my stories and do further research that's terrific—that's a sign that I managed to convey my own enthusiasm for the topic. **Your books and your games revolve around mysterious, esoteric themes. Where do you find ideas you can really sink your teeth into?**

I've always enjoyed weird news, the paranormal, mysticism, so I consume a lot on those subjects. When I find something that really strikes a cord, such as the Rennes-le-Chateau mystery, it usually ends up in my own fiction.

Game development is a collaborative process, while writing is generally done in isolation. Which do you enjoy more?

By nature, I am more of an isolationist. I prefer to sit in a chair with a laptop and get lost in my own head. So in that sense, writing a novel is ideal. But on the other hand, I enjoy the art, music and other artistic aspects that come in to play in a game—seeing your interior world interpreted into a visual experience. You don't get that with a novel unless you're lucky enough to be made into a film. So in the end there's good and bad about both

