

### Story Stack Analysis

The story stack is an intuitive model for understanding the core components of a game and how they relate to each other. As defined by Jesse Schell and Jason Vandenberghe ([GDC Vault](#)), these components, from **least** flexible to **most** flexible, are Player Fantasy, Action, Economy, World, and Story. Understanding this structure is a great asset in collaborating with the team and in successfully bringing story and gameplay together.

In this document, the Story Stack model has been applied to an existing game - L.A. Noire. Assuming the game was still in development, and the story (the most flexible part of the stack) was scrapped, 3 alternate story pitches are included as well.

#### Game



#### Story Stack

##### *Core Player Fantasy:*

- Detective: Solve crimes and investigate murders in a neo-noir setting. You are the hero/anti-hero.

##### *Actions (Verbs):*

- Investigate crime scenes, locations of interest, dead bodies
- Discover and manipulate physical evidence/clues
- Interrogate suspects and people of interest for information
- Accuse suspects of lying and/or arrest them
- Traverse the city via foot and vehicles (including cool siren!)
- Climb fences and ladders to reach important locations and/or chase suspects
- Fight enemies via melee attacks and firearms

##### *Game Economy:*

- Complete cases to progress the story
- Complete optional street crimes (side missions)
- Collectible items: golden film reels, vehicles, novels, and golden records
- Find landmark sites/buildings based on real monuments in Los Angeles from that time

##### *World:*

- Post World War II Los Angeles (late 1940's to early 1950's)

---

### *Story:*

The player assumes the role of Cole Phelps, a returning war hero that feels guilty after receiving a Silver Star for what was secretly an act of cowardice. Motivated by personal redemption, Cole seeks out to protect the people of booming L.A. as a police officer. Cole quickly climbs the ranks of the LAPD (beat cop, Traffic Desk, Homicide, Vice) by solving various crimes of increasing notoriety, some of which are reminiscent of real events such as the Black Dahlia murders. As Cole climbs the ranks, rampant corruption bubbles to the surface involving many high-ranking officials, as well as other former marines from his days in the war, and Cole struggles to keep himself clean. He is eventually disgraced by a dirty partner and demoted to Arson, losing his family as a result. When an investigation into suspicious house fires again turns up a corrupt scheme that points all the way to the top, Cole solicits the help of an old friend/rival. At this point, the player assumes the role of Jack Kelso, an Insurance Investigator, who reluctantly agrees to help. This leads to the climax, where the arsonist is cornered and killed in the sewers of L.A. Cole's mistress is saved in the exchange, but Cole gets caught up in a violent current that kills him before he can be redeemed. At the resulting eulogy, Cole's name is cleared, but it's clear that the corruption will continue.

## **Propose 3 New Story Concepts for this Stack**

In order of deviation from the original story:

### **Pitch 1: The Femme Fatale Comes Knocking**

(Inspired by the Maltese Falcon, etc.) It starts as these things usually do, with a mysterious femme fatale asking for help at the offices of Phelps & Kelso, Private Investigators. Cole accepts what appears to be a simple case of implied infidelity, but things take a dark turn when his partner ends up dead in a Hollywood alley. Now on his own, Cole must untangle a web of lies to solve the case. Who is his mysterious client *really*? What isn't she telling him? Why can't he resist her? And what does it all have to do with a string of murders of aspiring starlets and ex-WWII officers? The killer's calling card – a single Nazi gold coin left at the scene. As things escalate, Cole must use all his connections in the LAPD to search for answers – or die trying! The goal of this pitch is to establish a franchise around Detective Cole Phelps that explores and plays with noir tropes, while adding some twists along the way. His clients spiral down a neo-noir drain, threatening to drag him down as well...

### **Pitch 2: Reverse Femme Fatale**

(Inspired by Agent Carter) It starts as these things usually do, with a mysterious femme fatale asking for help at the offices of Phelps & Kelso, Private Investigators, but the client is surprised when Cora Phelps turns to acknowledge her. Cora, a former member of the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) and later a member of the Office of Strategic Services (the forerunner of the CIA) during WWII, accepts the case – it's not like they have clients beating down their door! Along with her partner Jack Kelso, Cora must dig for the truth, all while navigating late 1940's society, not to mention the LAPD. When their client turns up dead, another female victim of the Black Dahlia serial killer, Cora must make sure that she's not next! In this pitch, Cora is an homage to early women detectives and policewomen (Kate Warne, Cora M. Strayer, Annie R. McCully, Lulu Sollers, Dora Burton Rice, etc.), a role often seen as strictly male in other media.

---

### **Pitch 3: You've Got Your Chocolate in My Peanut Butter**

Sherlock Holmes (public domain) and his trusty assistant Watson (a veteran himself) take up shop in post WWII L.A. How do 2 gentlemen detectives find their way in the hardboiled city? Although seemingly out of his element, Sherlock must lean on his deductive reasoning skills to investigate a series of crimes most heinous. He will need to use his keen eye to sniff out the liars, solving cases with callbacks to some of his most famous stories. Instead of Scotland Yard, Sherlock and Watson must navigate the bureaus and the colorful cops of the LAPD, who aren't always on the same team. The corruption runs deep, but who is pulling the strings? Can it be...Moriarty? This treatment is meant to be a classic fish out of water scenario. The underlying time/location shift is the core conceit. How can Sherlock adjust to the so-called City of Angels?