

Winter Game Jam Pitch

by Robert Corra – founding member of Small Loan Studio



Working Title(s):




- “Santa’s Secret”

Story Setup:

Not knowing where to turn, Bianca shows up at the office of Steele, P.I. She needs help with the disappearance of her dad who was working as a shabby street Santa. He was stationed outside of the seen-better-days Fowler’s department store with his donation kettle and bell. There was a mysterious disturbance that resulted in Larry the Elf’s murder and her dad going AWOL.

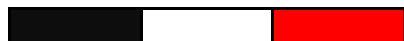
Bianca is surprised when Steele turns around and reveals himself to be an android. Not all humans and androids trust each other, especially her dad. Bianca doesn’t share this view and has nowhere else to turn, so Steele agrees to help.

When they first meet, Steele’s quirks are on full display. He has long been enamored of literary and TV detectives, and he mimics their styles in his interaction with humans. He wants to help, so who better than the masters of deduction to learn from? Steele shifts from the following 3 detective styles/approaches/personalities:

	Logical/Deductive/Analytical/Impish. Modeled after: Sherlock Holmes , Auguste Dupin.
	Folksy/Unassuming/Disarming. Modeled after: Hercule Poirot, Columbo , Miss Marple.
	Brooding/Noir/Hardboiled. Modeled after: Philip Marlowe , Sam Spade.

Visual Themes/Palette:

Black/White/Red: All art should be black & white (snowy), with red accents to pop. Sample red objects: Salvation Army kettle, Santa suit & sack, blood, the lit end of a cigarette, a drink, boxing gloves, hairclip, android eyes.



Locations:

- Detective’s office, desk, coat rack, old-fashioned
- City street, winter, in front of a small, dilapidated department store, not exactly bustling
- Close up of crime scene with elf chalk outline
- Snowy alley, poorly lit, with garbage cans, dumpsters, & back entrances
- Father’s dumpy apartment, couch, hung-up boxing gloves, dirty dishes/laundry, ashtray & empty beer cans
- Interior of a taxi, back of taxi driver’s head, entrance to a bank visible from window

- Department store rooftop, snowbanks, simple city backdrop, tarp shanty/tent held up with 2x4s, secret hangout/place to slack off and smoke

Characters:

- **Chrome Steele** - “Just call me Steele,” sole proprietor of Steele, P.I. Ever curious, especially of humanity. Loves jazz because he finds the lack of syncopation fascinating.
- **Bianca Fontaine** - 16. Brutally honest. Knows how to take care of herself because she’s had to. Loves & believes in her dad. Hates cigarettes.
- **Frederick “Freddy” Fontaine** - Former boxer. Former everything. A recovering ne’er-do-well. He’s gone straight this time, he swears.
- **Mariah Fowler** - Manager/owner of Fowler’s department store, a once noble chain of department stores that has been racking up more debt than sales. Very proud. Micromanages.
- **Jack Scanlon** - Freddy’s former coworker at the docks. Fallen on hard times. Can be found in the alley from time to time. Loves to gossip and smoke. Doesn’t always have his facts straight.
- **EZMK-2512** - Android Santa stationed across the street. Older model. Doesn’t want a “human” name. Ambivalent. Freddy sees him as a rival, but he’s just doing his job - rather unenthusiastically.
- **Larry the Elf (deceased)** - his height or lack of meant he always got stuck as the elf but he preferred to be a sidekick anyways. Seems to have been innocently caught up in the whole thing, which sums up his life.
- **Generic cop** - guards the crime scene. Tall. Bored. Hands on belt. Typically a man of few words.
- **Generic cabbie** - really just the back of his head. Wears a beanie. The air freshener is just for show.

Gameplay/Loose Story Structure:

After the initial introduction, backstory, and detective styles are revealed mostly through pure story, the player is aware of the situation and future dialogue choice types/icons. The investigation starts at the crime scene and then opens to choice. When conversing or interrogating suspects, the player might be presented with picking approaches. This can sometimes be narrowed down to just the 2 most appropriate. Other times, like jumping into analyzing the crime scene Sherlock-style, a specific personality will automatically emerge. Different approaches will typically all garner some bits of information, but suspects will be more forthcoming to certain styles. The narration of the story should give a good rundown of new characters when met.

There may be a choice that emerges and requires picking a path. One example is to hop in a cab and follow the store manager as she leaves or answer the “psst!” coming from someone in the alley. The other option will be lost to subsequent playthrough, but players will be given a small gist of what they might have missed.

Once all locations and characters have been visited, the story will funnel to the last location – Freddy’s hideout on the roof of Fowler’s where all is revealed. Mariah has been flooding the streets with shady department store Santas encouraged to aggressively empty the pockets of their customers and then skimming off the top of the gains. Freddy gets recruited but can’t stand the thought that donations meant for kids and families are being diverted to Mariah instead. When he held out and threatened to expose the cheating to an angry Mariah, Larry got caught in the crossfire and Freddy ran off, making his way back into the store and up to his sanctuary on the roof. Unsure if he would be framed for the murder, he laid low, until now being discovered.

Depending on the thoroughness of the investigation, one of 3 endings will be reached:

- Freddy survives/Mariah is captured: The final soliloquy is presented in folksy Columbo style.
- Freddy survives/Mariah escapes: The final soliloquy is presented in logical Sherlock style.
- Freddy sacrifices himself/Mariah gets it as well: The final soliloquy is presented in edgy Marlowe style.

“Kid, sometimes there ain’t nothing colder than the human heart...”
