

THE BOX

A NARRATIVE EXPERIMENT IN LATE NIGHT THEATER



PRODUCED & CREATED BY PADRAIC DUFFY & HANS GELPKE

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THE PREMISE



WILL'S STORY

Will is an old man now. He likes to sit on his porch and tell stories. He has many of them.

One of them concerns the time he hitchhiked his way to a small New England fishing village back in 1917.

He spent two weeks there. And it changed his life.

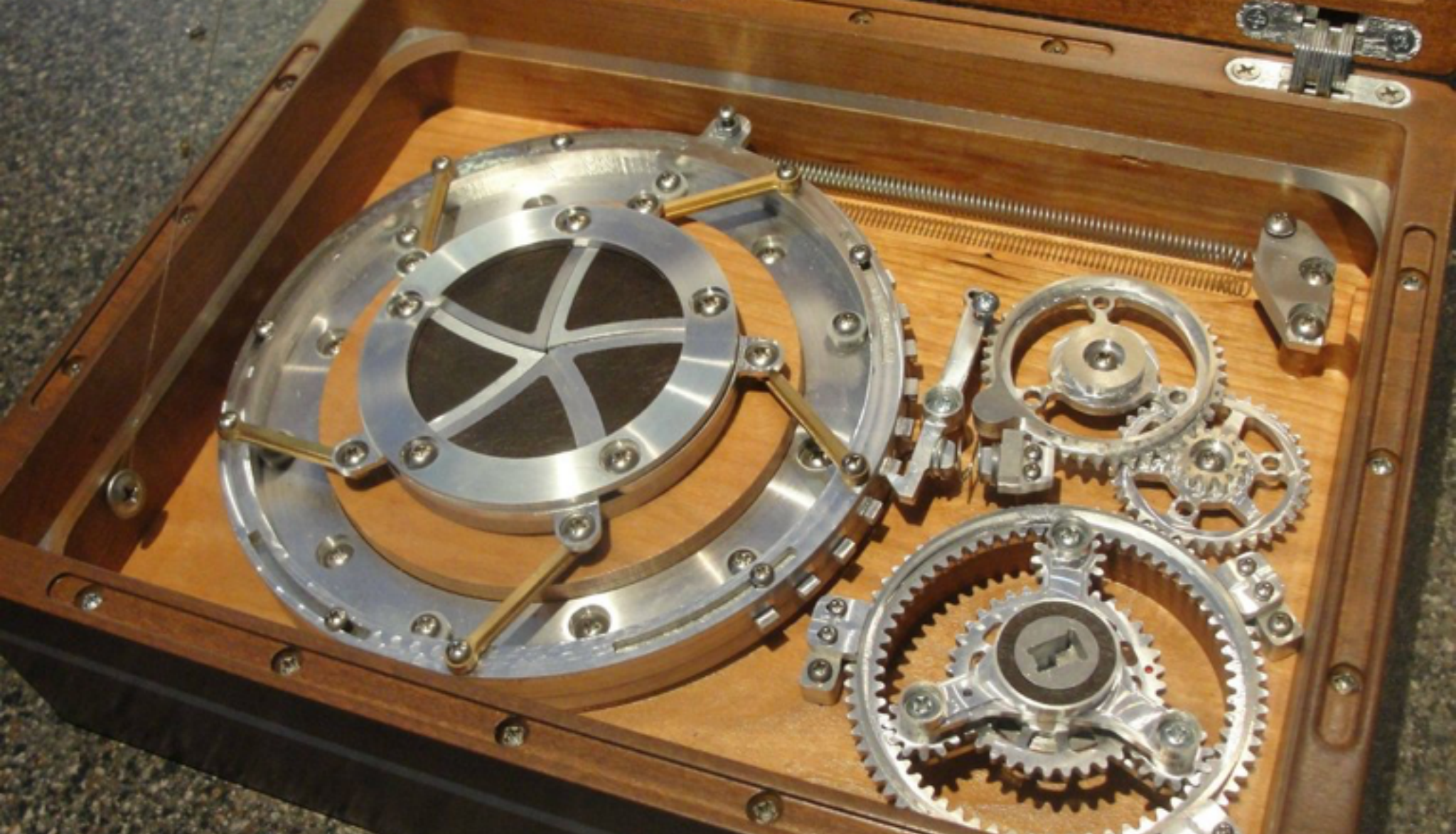
It's hard for him to remember all of the details. Things jumble. Lose their focus.

Sometimes he feels like he is losing his mind. Like none of it ever happened. And that right now he is not at home, but rather somewhere else more sterile and unforgiving. Against his will.

But then he smiles. And it all comes flooding back.

You believe him. His stories seem real. And maybe they are. But then again...

He would have to be really old for this to be true.



HOW IT WILL WORK

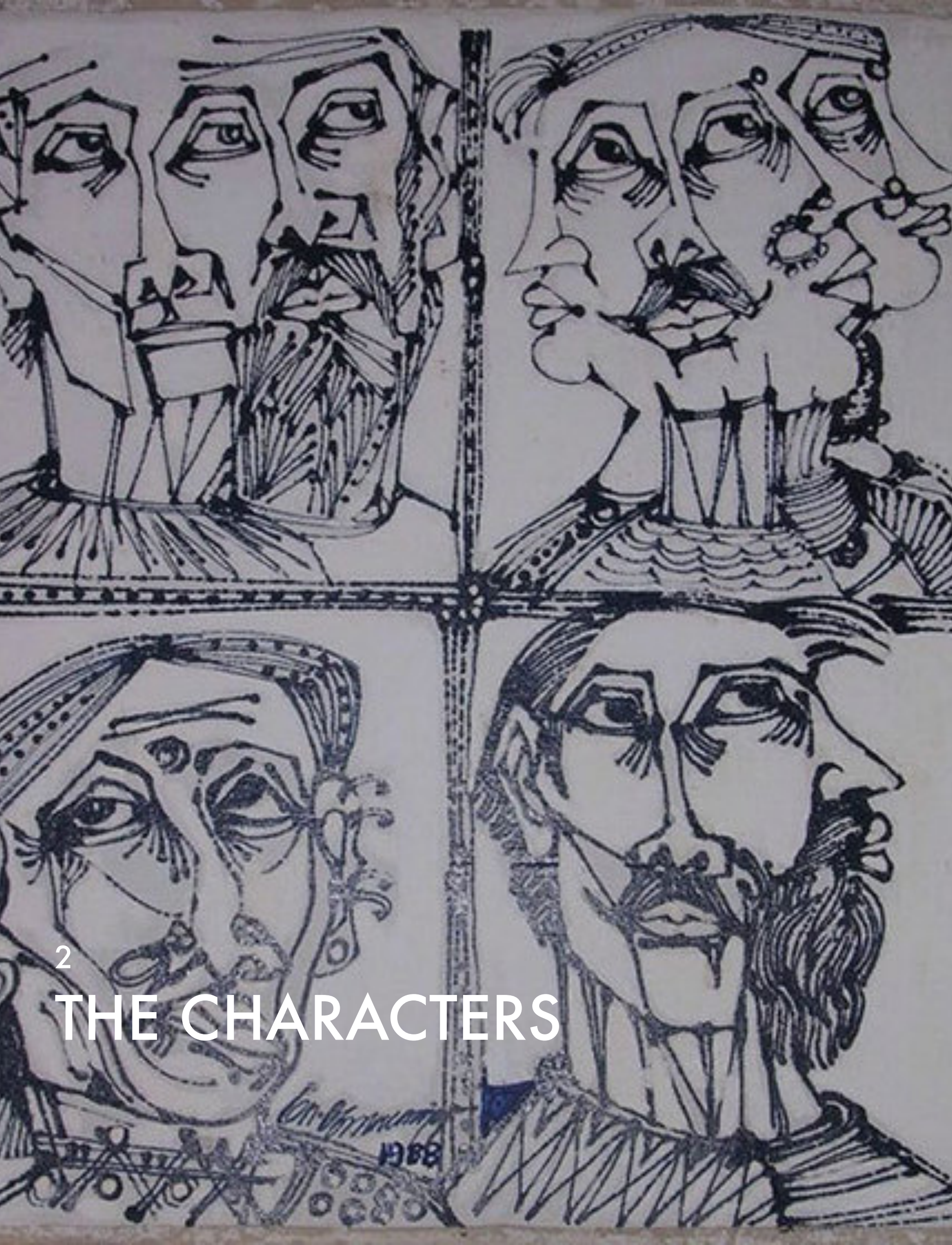
Your job is to tell Will's story.

THE BOX is an experiment in randomly generated narrative. Given a collection of characters and settings from which to choose, writers will create fragments- small scenes and snippets that will then be put together randomly and performed each night. The hope is that a story will emerge- one that is dark, mysterious, and moving.

THE BOX is the repository of these fragments. At the end of the third night, it will be empty, and Will's story will be done.

An elderly Will sitting on his stoop will narrate our journey, providing some connective tissue between pieces. Each scene will have been rehearsed and fully designed.

There are a million different stories in the box. In the end, we will hear just one.



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THE CHARACTERS



YOUNG WILL

Will is the everyman.

He often knows what is right, but sometimes doesn't speak up.

He has a deep sense of empathy for those around him and a terribly awkward way of communicating it.

He fears being lost in the crowd. But he just wants to belong.

He has returned from the war early and has been on the road ever since. But don't ask him why. Something happened overseas that he doesn't want to share.

People may be looking for him...and he might be looking for someone.



THE LITTLE GIRL WITH A FLOWER IN HER HAIR

She is a free soul with a dark heart.

Her greatest fear is being punished for doing wrong. She wants to get to heaven, but she's been told she's not going.

Her father owns the fish cannery. Her mother passed away when she was just a baby. No one knows why.

She likes to spend time by herself in the forest.

The forest likes to spend time with her.



THE OLD SEA CAPTAIN

He doesn't like being told what to do.

An authentic life is what he's after. He's afraid of being trapped in small spaces. And having nothing to do.

Sometimes he finds himself walking when he doesn't have anywhere to go. This scares him.

He's an explorer. He's convinced there's a tool for everything.

He owns one jacket. It was his father's.

He's never had a son. But there was one boy who used to work on his ship whom he treated like one. But then that boy grew up and abandoned him to start a cannery.



MOLLY

Molly is a suffragette.

She bristles at condescension. She will hike her dress up when she damn well pleases.

She believes the world can be improved. But only against its will.

She has a recurring dream that someone is holding her. Sometimes it's a nightmare.

Keep your powder dry, her father would tell her.

She has a thing for birds.



THE CANNERY OWNER

He calls his daughter “my little dragonfly.”

He likes the cans of mackerel to all face the same way- label out.

He often walks the cannery floor, inspecting the women’s uniforms. Always look your best, even if no one will see you. He smiles at them when they look up.

A mother for his daughter. That would tame the little dragonfly.



THE FORTUNE TELLER

She keeps the room dark so that the glow of the orb is more dramatic.

A healer, a shaman. Sometimes she feels like she's playing with fire.

One day, someone will ask her what she is waiting to hear. She wakes up every day hoping that today isn't that day.

There are things buried in this town. She's beginning to forget where.



CHICKEN DAVE

“You only live once!” Dave says. To absolutely everyone he meets.

People call him Chicken Dave because he has a lot of chickens. And his name is Dave.

Being joyful is what’s natural to him. He loves to play harmless tricks on people. He wants the world to lighten up a bit, for god’s sake.

April 2nd is his favorite day of the year. Because NO ONE expects it THEN.

He tends to ask too many questions. Sometimes that gets him into trouble.

He loves to sing to his chickens. He whistles when something surprises him. He loves to sleep.

He’s very patriotic. That’s why he had joined the army. He’s retired now but wishes he could still fight. He doesn’t take kindly to deserters.

He has a war medal. But “Dave”’s not the name on it.



ELEANOR

She works in the cannery. Two shifts sometimes.

She never smiles at the the owner when he walks the cannery floor. Sometimes she wonders if that's why he does it.

She likes the sound of the ocean. She has a phonograph record of waves that she plays when she goes to sleep, exhausted from a days work.

Someone will take me out of here, she thinks. And they'll think it was their idea.

She owns a gun.



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SETTING & TIME

**A SMALL NEW
ENGLAND FISHING
VILLAGE AND
SURROUNDING
ENVIRONS. 1917.**

Out in the world...

The U.S. is at war with Germany.

Woodrow Wilson is in his second term.

The first jazz records start hitting the shelves.

The Russian Revolution is underway.

Jeannette Rankin is in her first term as the 1st woman member of the House of Representatives.

Race riots break out in Illinois, Missouri, Texas.

Jay Edgar Hoover is in his first job at the department of justice.

A silent parade of 10,000 marches down 5th ave, to protest lynching.

Suffragists picket the White House. 20,000 women march in a suffrage parade in New York.

The 18th amendment authorizing prohibition of alcohol is sent to the states for ratification.

But much of that seems very far away, for our story unfolds in the following locations...



THE SEA



A SMALL COPSE OF PINES

A SEASIDE CLIFF

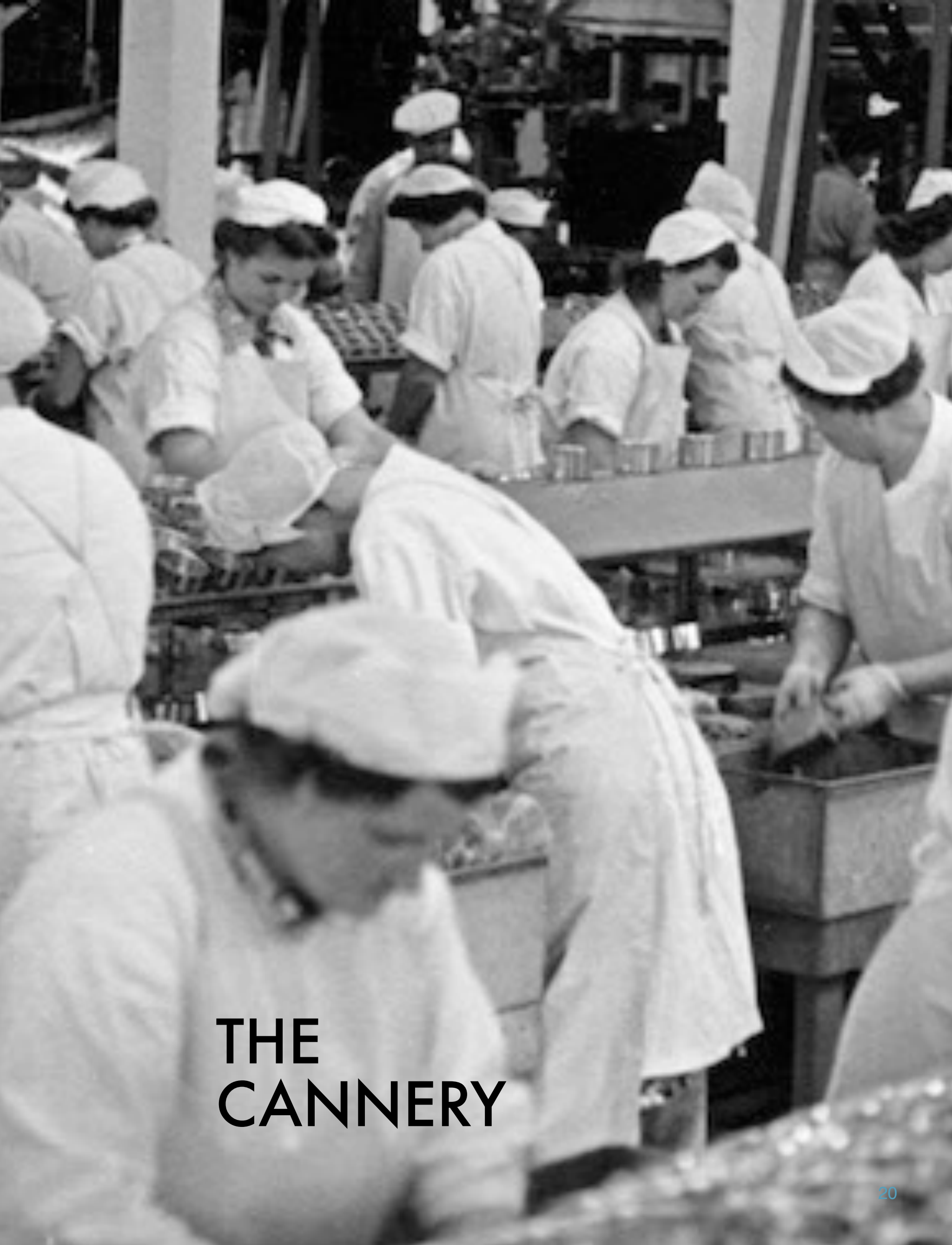




A CHICKEN FARM



A TOWN HALL



THE CANNERY

A CHURCH



OR SOMEWHERE ELSE...



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SUBMISSION RULES & GUIDELINES

DATES:

Writer submission deadline: Friday, June 12th

Performances: Saturday nights @ 11pm, July 11th, 18th, & 25th

SUBMISSION RULES:

- 1) Pieces can be no longer than 5 pages.
- 2) Writers cannot submit more than 5 pieces.
- 3) The character Young Will must have a “presence” in each piece. Most often this will mean that he appears in the piece, but he could also simply be referred to by name, or be in a story told, or maybe there is simply the suggestion of the promise of him. Or not.
- 4) Writers are limited to using only the characters described in this manual. They may use alternate settings (that would occur within this world) but are encouraged to primarily use the ones listed. You can write anything from a monologue to a scene utilizing the full ensemble.
- 5) Each piece should have a title.
- 6) Submissions must be emailed as a **word document** (.doc or .docx) to thebox@sacredfools.org.

GENERAL GUIDELINES:

- 1) These are not stand alone plays- they are fragments of a larger story. They do not need to have a beginning, middle or end, or resolve in any way. They should make us want to see the next fragment.
- 2) You will not know what piece will be seen before or after. Have fun with that. The goal is to make them all feel a part of the same play. So hint at the menace to come in the next piece, or the secrets that were buried in the last one. But don't get so specific that the narrative will contradict itself.
- 3) The actors will rehearse every piece, but will be on book for the performance. So feel free to use dense or poetic language- memorizing will not be required. THE BOX is about story and words. The focus will be on language, so feel free to revel in it.

- 5) The tone is dark- this is a ghost story in a way. But there can be moments of hilarity and absurdity as well.
- 6) Don't feel constrained by the character descriptions. People often do or say contradictory things- follow your inspiration. Similarly, the pictures are just meant to give you a sense of them. While the genders will remain the same, the actors who play these characters might look very different.
- 7) The scenes will be fully designed but light and sound will be primarily atmospheric- try to be sparing in your use of design.