

THE BOX: LOS ANGELES

A **FILM NOIR** NARRATIVE EXPERIMENT IN LATE NIGHT THEATER



PRODUCED & CREATED BY PADRAIC DUFFY & HANS GELPKE

LOS ANGELES, 1942

The World is at war.

President Roosevelt orders all U.S. aliens to register with the government.

U.S. Auto factories switch from commercial to war production.

Roosevelt signs an executive order creating a series of internment camps for Japanese Americans.

The implementation of Hitler's final solution begins as the first transport of Jews arrives at Auschwitz and Birnkenau.

Tensions between Mexican Americans and whites are running high in Los Angeles as the Sleepy Lagoon Murder case results in the conviction of nine young Mexican Americans for murder. The Zoot Suit Riots would erupt the following year.

Jackie Robinson requests a tryout with the Chicago White Sox.

The U.S. begins food rationing.

The Battle of Los Angeles begins when a rumored enemy attack and subsequent anti-aircraft artillery barrage lights up the sky. While the government later attributed the chaos to a weather balloon, some conspiracy theorists believe it was due to an alien invasion.

Bing Crosby records Irving Berlin's *White Christmas*

Anne Frank receives a diary as a birthday present and begins to write.

Walt Disney's *Bambi* appears in theaters.

Yet, much of this seems far away, for our story begins in a much more intimate setting...

THE PREMISE



ANA HAD GONE FOR A WALK.

She had been walking along the river to gather her thoughts. It was overcast and cold. An earlier light rain had made the river gently rise. Trash was wrapped around weeds in the ankle deep water. She had been crying. From laughter, or maybe sadness.

She had bent down to pick something up. And then... They found her there, hours later, the water quietly moving around her still body.

Someone knows what happened. Her family? Her friends? Her lover?

The police are searching for answers. They want to know what happened to Ana on that overcast day at the LA River.

She does too.



WHAT HAPPENED TO ANA?

It's your job to create the pieces of this Film Noir puzzle.

THE BOX is an experiment in randomly generated narrative. Given a collection of characters and locations from which to choose, writers will create fragments- small scenes and snippets that will then be put together randomly and performed each night.

For THE BOX: LOS ANGELES, there will be three distinct storylines, each centered on a different character in Ana's life. Writers will choose which storyline to write for. By the end, the box will be empty, and hopefully a story will have emerged- one that is dark, mysterious, and moving.

Ana will help guide us through this narrative, 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.

But before we begin, there are some documents you might want to take a look at...



THE DOCUMENTS

Office of the Los Angeles County Coroner's Office
Hall of Justice
211 W. Temple in
Los Angeles, California
room 100

REPORT OF INVESTIGATION BY COUNTY MEDICAL EXAMINER

DECEDENT ANA MARIA MARQUEZ RACE HISPANIC SEX F AGE 19
First Name Middle Name Last Name

HOME ADDRESS 3625 SYCAMORE ST. M W S D OCCUPATION: ACTRESS

TYPE OF DEATH: Violent ☐ Casualty ☐ Suicide ☐ Suddenly when in apparent health ☐ Found Dead ☒
In Prison ☐ Suspicious, unusual or unnatural ☐ Cremation ☐

Comment THERE WAS AN UNKNOWN DELAY IN BODY BEING RECEIVED BY CORONERS

If Motor Vehicle Accident Check One: Driver ☐ Passenger ☐ Pedestrian ☐ Unknown ☐

Notification by [REDACTED] Address [REDACTED]

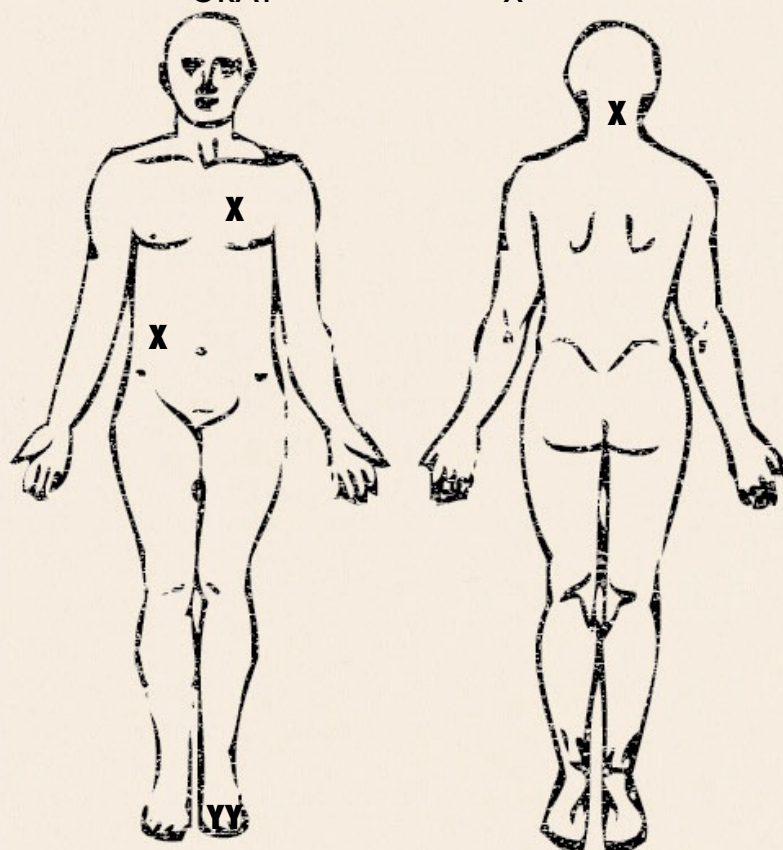
Investigating Agency LAPD

Description of Body Clothed ☐ Unclothed ☐ Partly Clothed ☐

Eyes BROWN Hair BROWN Mustache Beard
Weight 130 Length 5'7" Body Temp 60 Date and Time 3/15/42 10:42AM
Pounds Feet Inches Fahrenheit
Rigor: Yes ☒ No ☐ Lysed ☐ Liver Color GRAY Fixed ☒ Non-Fixed ☐

Marks and Wounds
SEVERAL DERMAL ABRASIONS CAN BE FOUND AT POINTS MARKED WITH "X". SEVERE INFLAMMATION AROUND THE EYES AND MOUTH. TWO BROKEN TOES MARKED WITH A "Y". THERE IS ALSO A CURIOUS MARK FOUND ON THE LOWER ABDOMEN SHAPED LIKE A SPIDER WEB. UPON EXAMINATION, IT HAS BEEN DETERMINED NOT TO BE A TATTOO, BUT RATHER A [REDACTED] A SMALL BRACELET HAD BEEN REMOVED FROM THE VICTIM'S LEFT WRIST. A MAN IDENTIFYING HIMSELF AS [REDACTED] HAD CLAIMED IT, SAYING IT WAS NOT HERS, BUT NOT HIS EITHER. HE TOUCHED HER FACE BEFORE I COULD STOP HIM. HE WISHED TO BE ANONYMOUS. BUT I FELT IT NECESSARY TO DOCUMENT THIS ACTION IN MY REPORT.

FOUND ON THE PERSON: A LETTER ON YELLOW LINED PAPER AND ONE PAGE OF WHAT APPEARS TO BE A PLAY OR MOVIE SCRIPT. BOTH ITEMS TURNED OVER TO LAPD.



PROBABLE CAUSE OF DEATH	MANNER OF DEATH	DISPOSITION OF CASE
UNKNOWN. BUT SHE DID NOT DROWN.	(check one only) Accident <input type="checkbox"/> Natural <input type="checkbox"/> Suicide <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Homicide <input type="checkbox"/> Pending <input type="checkbox"/>	1. Not a medical examiner case <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Autopsy requested Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Autopsy ordered Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Pathologist <u>DR. FULLER</u>

I hereby declare that after receiving notice of the death described herein I took charge of the body and made inquiries regarding the cause of death [REDACTED] and that the information contained herein regarding such death is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

3/15/42

LOS ANGELES

Date

Place of Investigation

Signature of County Medical Examiner

Querida María:

Father Lin says he can get this letter to you. Mija, estoy muy preocupada. You have not called for several weeks. I hope you will be able to write back soon. We miss you.

I think about what you showed me before you left-- I think about it almost every day. It worries me. Quizas tu piensas que esto es bueno. I do not.

once you are done with your movie, you will come back, at least for a little while? Tu hermano would like to see you. He is angry. He says he will bring you back himself if you don't come pronto.

te quiero muchísimo,

mama

P.S. you never told me what the movie was about. What part do you play? Your brother says that it has something to do with amor y oscuridad. ¿Eso que significa?

--But then lenora picks up a handful of sand and finds something in it. A small pebble? A shell? A small box? She stares at it. she looks out at the horizon, but sees only distant white caps and swooping gulls.

LENORA

why did you follow me?

THE MAN

I didn't . I just knew you would be here.

He asks her something with his eyes.

LENORA

It's the sun. I like to see it move over the sky until the shadows of the rocks, and the palm trees, and of me all slowly, quietly sharpen and then are gone.

THE MAN

Most people like the shade. You're an odd duck, Lenora.

LENORA

You were here earlier.

He doesn't respond. Then he smiles.

THE MAN

You don't miss much.

LENORA

You. I miss you.

INT. FOSTERS HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Foster is reading a paper. Millie enters, upset.

FOSTER

What's the matter?

MILLIE

It's your brother. He won't leave me be. He has telephoned yet again.

FOSTER

I will have a word with him. But first,

(MORE)



4

THE CHARACTERS



ANA MARQUEZ

19 YEARS OLD.
MEXICAN AMERICAN.
ASPIRING ACTRESS.

She suffers a recurring dream in which her friends follow her along the beach only to quietly vanish when she turns around.

Her brother makes her carry things in her purse she hopes to never use.

Older men terrify her. This started when she was a child. Her mother made sure of it.

She wants to be in movies because she feels like she has always been in them.

When Evelyn holds her, she feels grown up.

She's trying to make peace with the fact she is dead.



CHARLIE BROADY

42 YEARS OLD.
AFRICAN AMERICAN.
POLICE DETECTIVE.

He has never named his gun. Figures he'll do it at the end.

He loves to eat with people and drink alone.

Did he know the victim? Sometimes he feels like he did. Maybe he just dreamed it.

He is so tired. Waking and sleeping have become a quiet mess. He often wonders which state he's in.

A black and white portrait of a man with short, dark hair, wearing round-rimmed glasses and a dark, high-collared jacket. He is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

FATHER LIN

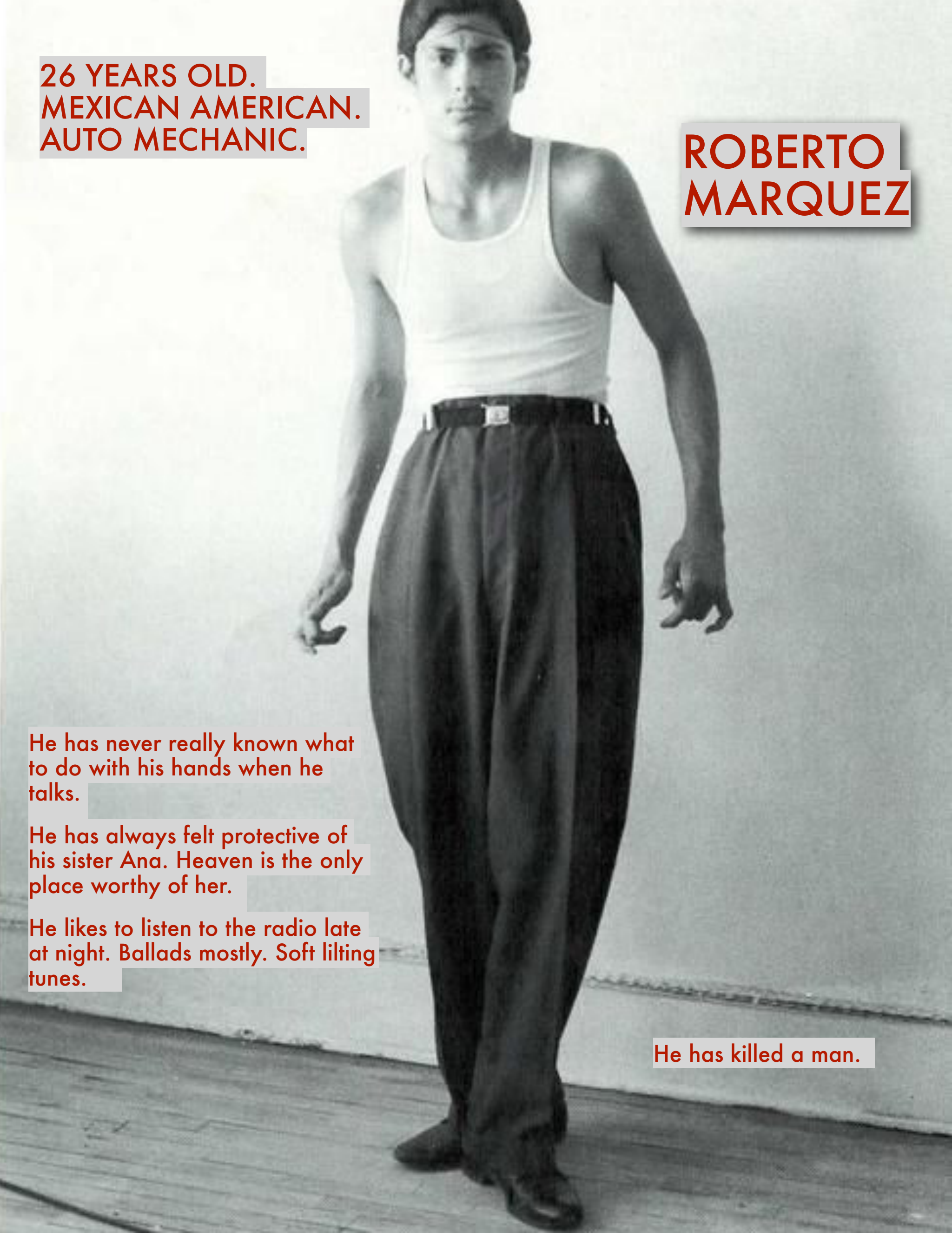
30 YEARS OLD.
CHINESE AMERICAN.
CATHOLIC PRIEST.

He loves boats. He plans on buying one
some day.

He has a junk drawer in his rectory. It is
labeled "Junk Drawer."

When Ana comes to church, his heart
skips.

He has tried to commit suicide twice.

A black and white photograph of a young man, Roberto Marquez, standing against a light-colored wall. He is wearing a white tank top and dark, pleated trousers with a dark belt. He is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The background is a plain wall with a wooden floor at the bottom.

26 YEARS OLD.
MEXICAN AMERICAN.
AUTO MECHANIC.

ROBERTO
MARQUEZ

He has never really known what to do with his hands when he talks.

He has always felt protective of his sister Ana. Heaven is the only place worthy of her.

He likes to listen to the radio late at night. Ballads mostly. Soft lilting tunes.

He has killed a man.



62 YEARS OLD.
CAUCASIAN.
B MOVIE STUDIO HEAD,

MORTON
HIGHSMITH

He thinks of himself as a fair man.

He likes to bet. On horses and on people.

He likes making movies because he likes making things permanent. So many things aren't.

His son was murdered. They never caught who did it.

Morton has his suspicions.



EVELYN
LORRY

23 YEARS OLD.
CAUCASIAN.
ACTRESS.

She likes nursing little birds in shoeboxes back to health. She realizes that's a metaphor.

What she has with Ana she's told no one. But she wants someone to know.

She feels like she can be herself around Ana. That scares her.

She has no criminal record. But that's only because of a very nice detective.

A black and white photograph of a woman, Rosa Garcia, in a boxing ring. She is wearing a white tank top and has her hair in braids. She is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. Her hands are wrapped in white boxing gloves. The background shows the ropes of the boxing ring and some blurred lights.

ROSA GARCIA

**31 YEARS OLD.
MEXICAN AMERICAN.
BOXER.**

Her favorite time in the gym is after a hard workout, when she can just sit in silence and feel the sweat drip off her nose onto the floor.

She wants to be kissed. She'll punch you if you try.

She grew up around the Marquez kids. Thinks of them as family, in a way. But she's always been on her own.

She likes to hear herself breathe.

Someone sends her money every month in a small unmarked envelope. She does not know who it is.



HELEN SCOTT

40 YEARS OLD.
CAUCASIAN.
REPORTER.

Usually her trade is the gossip rags.
Although in person she is a woman of few
words.

For once she wants to find the truth.

Her husband is cheating on her.

She carries candy in her purse. And she
doesn't eat candy.

On one bright summer day, she kissed
Det. Broady.

She's decided this will be her last
assignment.

JOSEFINA MARQUEZ



54 YEARS OLD.
MEXICAN AMERICAN.
NANNY.

Josefina should be the movie star. She has her Oscar speech memorized. She knows she'll never give it.

She will hold a grudge forever. Always behind a smile.

One day her husband drowned in the bathtub. She wasn't home at the time. At least that's what she told the police.

Other people's kids don't know how lucky they are.

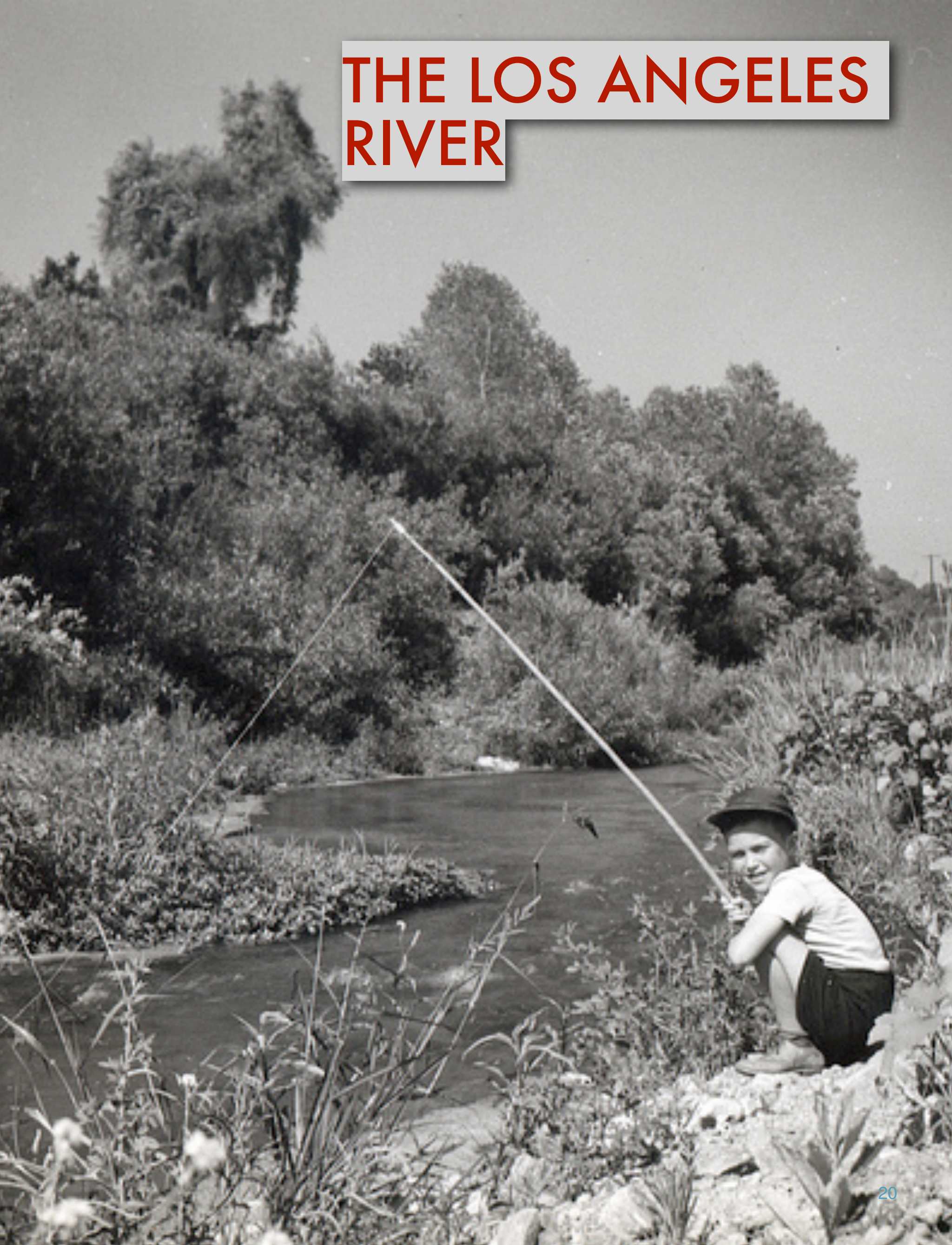
She used to work for Morton Highsmith. It did not end well.

Her son Roberto is now the man of the house. And sometimes men do bad things.

THE LOCATIONS



THE LOS ANGELES RIVER



A POLICE STATION

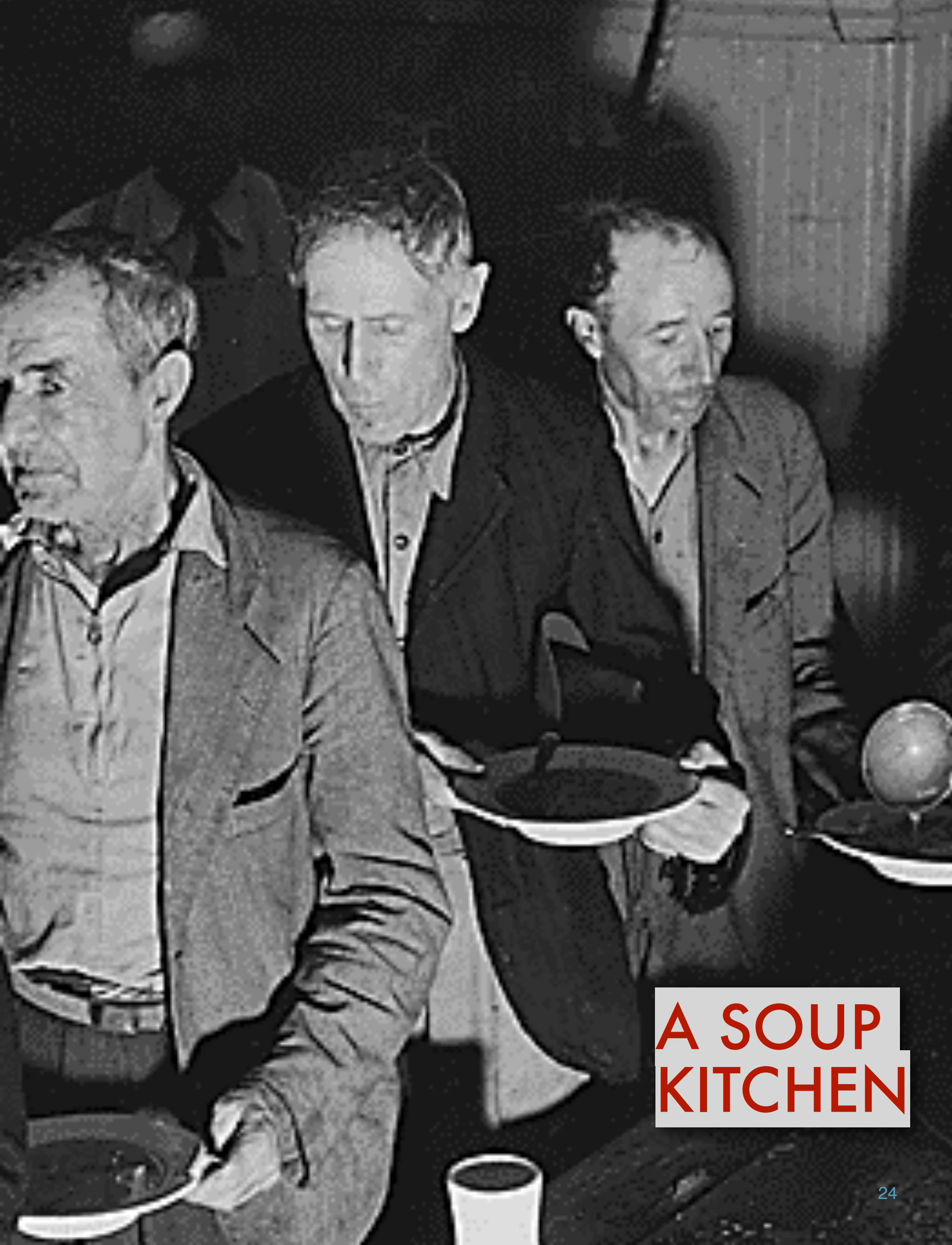




A BOXING GYM

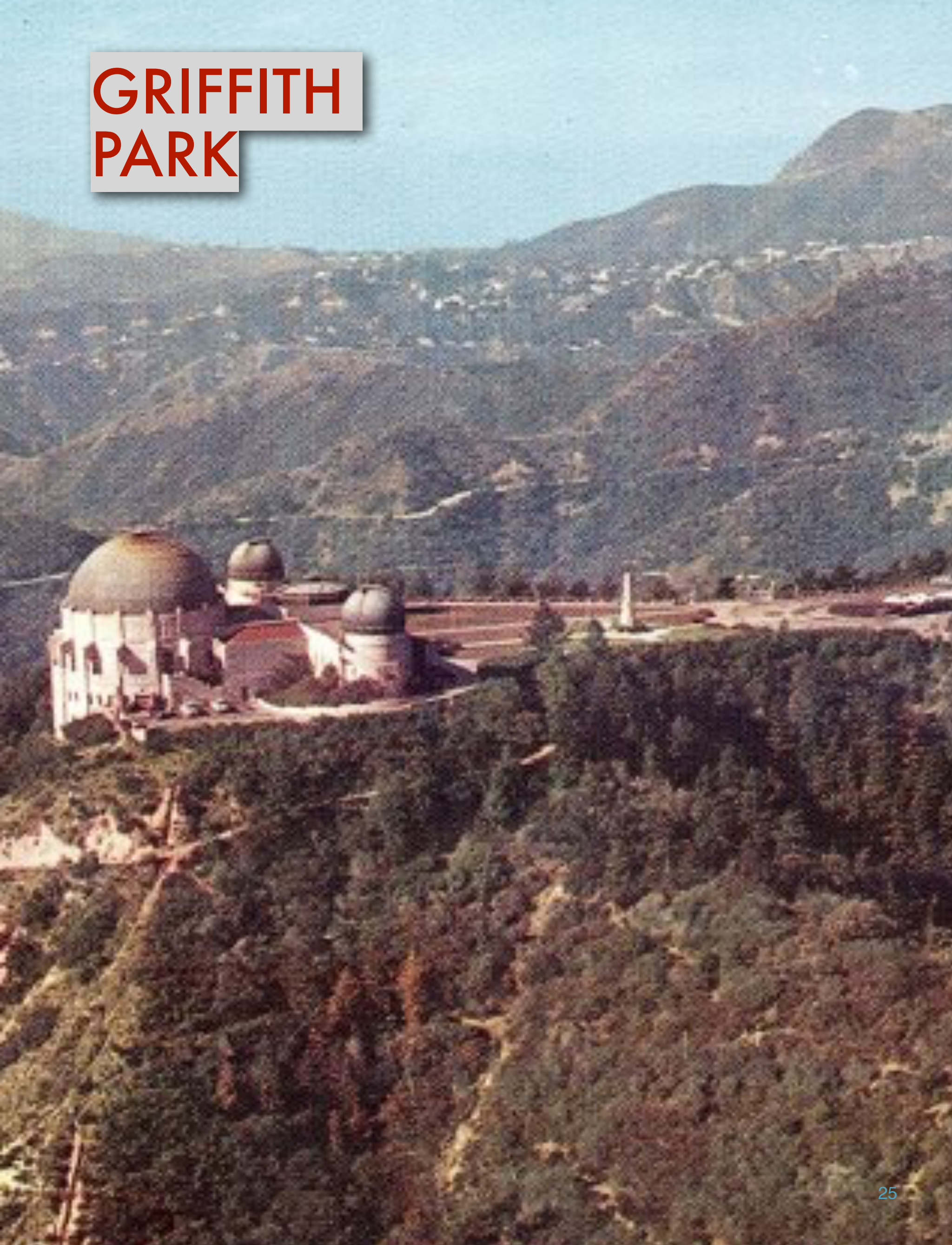
THE SANTA MONICA PIER





A SOUP KITCHEN

GRIFFITH PARK





A STUDIO SOUND STAGE



ANA'S CHILDHOOD HOME

The background of the image is a wooden surface with a vertical grain. A large, dark, stylized logo consisting of the letters 'L' and 'C' is positioned on the right side. Several white horizontal bars of varying lengths are placed across the wood grain, some overlapping the 'LC' logo. A white rectangular box with a thin black border is located in the lower-left quadrant, containing red text.

SUBMISSION RULES & GUIDELINES

DATES:

Writer submission deadline: January 17

Performances: March 3-25, Fridays & Saturdays @11pm

STRUCTURE:

The Box: Los Angeles will take place over four weekends.

There are three storylines, all circling around the same tragic murder. Each storyline follows different characters as they unravel what has happened:

Storyline A: The Detective (Charlie Broady)

Storyline B: The Mother (Josefina Marquez)

Storyline C: The Boxer (Rosa Garcia)

Each weekend will be devoted to a different storyline. A certain amount of pieces from that storyline will be randomly selected and performed Friday, and this process will be repeated Saturday. A piece could appear in both nights—they are not removed from contention after the first night.

On the final weekend, a conclusion. The pieces not yet seen will be performed: the Friday performance will include all of the pieces not yet seen on a Friday, and the Saturday performance will include all of the pieces not yet seen on a Saturday.

Additional material will also be unveiled that last weekend.

SUBMISSION RULES:

- 1) **Pieces can be no longer than 5 pages.**
- 2) **Writers cannot submit more than 5 pieces**, and no writer will have more than one piece in The Box.
- 3) **Writers must select a Storyline and include the central character in a compelling way.** This may mean that they appear in the scene, are referred to by name, or are simply in a story told. Or perhaps it just impacts their life or journey in some way.
- 4) **Writers may submit for multiple Storylines**, as long as the total amount of pieces submitted does not exceed 5.
- 5) **Writers are limited to the characters and locations mentioned in this manual.**

- 6) **Please include a title for the piece, a character breakdown, and let us know which storyline it is a part of.**
- 7) **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, a middle, or end, or resolve in any way. You can create a piece with no dialogue, or a scene with a song or dance number. You can write a quarter page monologue or a 5 page piece involving the entire ensemble. Your fragment can have a dark narrative twist or be a simple moment of poetry or character. Whatever your piece ends up being-- it should make us want to see the next fragment.
- 2) **All of the characters in the Box can and should appear in all of the storylines.** So while each storyline is centered on one character, don't feel shy about including the others.
- 3) **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. You can also have fun with time-- fragments can take place as flashbacks, flash forwards, or montages.
- 4) **Feel free to use dense or poetic language.** The actors will rehearse every piece, but will be on book during the performance, so 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) **This is not a campy genre spoof.** While you should absolutely feel free to dive deep into and explore the **Film Noir style**, and while there definitely can (and should!) be moments of hilarity and absurdity in the Box, the general tone is dark and serious. The danger is very real. This is a ghost story.
- 6) **Don't feel constrained by the character quirks.** People often do or say contradictory things—follow your inspiration. However, please adhere to the gender and ethnicity of the characters as noted.
- 7) **Try to be sparing in your use of design.** The scenes will be fully designed, but light and sound will be primarily atmospheric.