

Mystery Box
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FADE IN ON:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

POV CAMERA

Blackness, flecked with static. A "record" icon flashes - demon red.

The image rolls as the camera boots. Finally, the picture focuses.

On STEVE (14), hunched over a desk. Excited and acne plagued, his eager face fills the frame.

STEVE
Peeps, this is the moment we've been waiting for!

He smiles at the camera; gives his digital audience a closeup of an Invisalign retainer. Which needed a brushing two weeks ago.

An awkward pause, meant to be dramatic.

Steve reaches for something off-screen. Over-extending, he slips half out of frame. Yells to:

STEVE
Collin! Stop fucking around. Where'd the package go?

Steve groans. Pivots the camera left, towards:

COLLIN (15). Glasses bigger than his skinny face, Collin examines a large, dented BOX. So engrossed he doesn't acknowledge the camera.

Steve jumps to his feet. Grabs the box from Collin...

COLLIN
Hey. I was reading!

And sits back down. Steve positions the box carefully, gives his audience a well-framed view.

STEVE
Behold. The Mystery Box.

Steve drops his voice low, for maximum effect.

STEVE

You guys know what a Mystery Box is, right? It's Ebay meets Cracker Jacks. Inside, there's always a surprise. You bid on auctions, and buy them on the Dark Web. The winner gets a box just like this, with something in it. That something could be anything. Shrunken heads. Dildos...

(snorts)

Really, anything at all. That's what's so mysterious. The seller never tells you what! I ordered this beauty two weeks ago. Shipping kept getting delayed. But finally, it's arrived. Collin's gonna help with the unboxing.

Collin shuffles to the desk. Hovering over Steve's shoulder, he waves timidly at the lens.

COLLIN

Hi, guys. I'm Collin. I'll be Steve's assistant tonight.

Steve flashes the camera a mischievous grin.

STEVE

Collin's a winner, isn't he? Be glad there's no nudity involved.

Collin blushes, and peers down at the box. In the camera's light, his glasses flare.

COLLIN

They left it on the porch. Who delivers at 11PM?

STEVE

Not Fed-Ex. Maybe a messenger? Let's just hope it's worth the wait.

COLLIN

And the investment. Otherwise, we paid \$200 bitcoin for a broken mess of shit.

Evil glee spreads across Steve's face. He holds up...

An EXACTO KNIFE.

STEVE

Who thinks I should teach Collin here some manners? If you upvote, I'll cut him for interrupting. He's really ruining the mystery vibe!

Steve mock-slashes at Collin, who playfully punches Steve's arm. After horseplay subsides, Steve sobers.

STEVE

But on with the show. Enough!

He gingerly picks up the box, tilts it side to side.

STEVE

Whatever's in here's heavy. They've packed it extra tight.

Putting the box down, Steve poses with the Exacto - ready to cut.

STEVE

It's just like cutting a birthday cake.
What the present gonna be this time?

SLASH. The packing tape splits like butter.

But the blade sticks: hits something rigid underneath.

Steve wiggles it out and rips the box open with Collin's help. Exposing...

Styrofoam packaging underneath. Collin touches it.

COLLIN

Yow. Cold!

Steve arches a dramatic eyebrow at the camera.

STEVE

Hmmm. Perhaps... it's alcohol?

Collin eagerly digs fingers between the box and foam. But he can't get a grip on the lid. It's wedged in too tight.

Steve swats him away, pries with the Exacto.

Styrofoam CRACKS. The blade slips. Slashes Steve's palm.

STEVE

Shit!!

Chaotic fumbling as Steve searches for anything to stem the bleeding. Printer paper? Nah. No good.

Collin tosses Steve a box of TISSUES.

COLLIN

Here. Fuck knows why you keep this by the couch.

STEVE

Jerk.

But he wads tissue up against the cut, staunches the worse of the flow.

Now visibly flustered, Steve returns his focus to the box. The Styrofoam lid's cracked in two.

STEVE

OK. Lets get this show back on the road.

Removing one half of the lid, Steve peeks inside. Frowns.

STEVE

It's dark. But I see something... red.

COLLIN

You bled into the package. Duh.

STEVE

No, that's not it.

Steve lifts the second half of the lid off. In unison, the teens lean over the box.

VAPOR PUFFS from the contents, fogs up Collin's glasses.

COLLIN

I can't see!

Blind as a bat, Collin cleans his glasses with his shirt. Steve reaches an arm in...

STEVE

Yow! That burns!

He recoils - tosses a DRY ICE pack across the desk. Speakers and trinkets tumble in its wake.

Steve sucks his blistered finger.

STEVE

Refrigerated contents? They should've warned us before.

COLLIN

Then it wouldn't be a mystery.

STEVE

I've taken two hits for this team. You wanna find out what's inside?

COLLIN
(shrugs)
Sure. Third time's the charm.

Waving off lingering mist, Collin stares into the box.

COLLIN
Oh. My. God.

STEVE
What?

COLLIN
You gotta be frikkin' kidding me.

STEVE
Stop dicking around. Whatever it is, pull
it out.

Wincing, Collin reaches in and extracts...

The bottom lid of the Styrofoam packing. On top of that:

A BLOODY TONGUE!!

The two teens gag at the grisly excavation. Collin holds
the Styrofoam "platter" at arm's length.

COLLIN
Body parts?!? We're accessories to
murder!

Steve stifles vomit. Tries to maintain calm.

STEVE
Don't jump to conclusions. Maybe it's
from a museum?

COLLIN
A "museum"? It's fresh and bleeding, man!

STEVE
Gimme that!

Steve grabs the Styrofoam. The tongue slip-slides, almost
falls off. Steve adjusts the angle, fast.

STEVE
Don't be such a pussy. This could, uh, be
from a cow. You know - some butcher sent
it as a joke. It's too big to be human,
right?

COLLIN

Do you know what size a severed human
tongue looks like? I sure as fuck don't!

Steve puts down the Styrofoam. As the two teens gawk, the
bloody tongue fills the camera frame.

A horrified Steve points towards the unseen side of the
tongue, facing him.

STEVE

What's that?

COLLIN

A vein? Gross.

STEVE

Looks like stitches to me. Like someone
sliced it open, then sewed it up.

Careful to *only* touch the Styrofoam, Steve rotates the
tongue 180. In the camera, the incision looms larger than
life. Yup, that's stitches for sure.

STEVE

I'll bet you fifty bitcoin there's stuff
inside.

Collin turns even paler than normal. Steve plays with the
Exacto knife. Ponders.

STEVE

Well, we've gone this far. May as well
find out!

Steve whirls the tongue 180 again, slashes at stitches.
Sticks a finger in the hole, feels around.

COLLIN

Ewwwwwwwww.

Steve's eyes widen. He grabs something, pulls it out.

A gore covered THUMB DRIVE!!! The teen gulps, holds the
drive up to the camera.

STEVE

The mystery deepens.

COLLIN

For you, maybe. I'm out!

Collins turns to leave. Steve grabs his arm, holds tight.

With his free hand, Steve nabs the box of tissues. Wiping the thumb drive clean, he stares into the lens.

STEVE

You know I gotta do this, folks. Let's plug this into my desktop, and find out what this is about...

COLLIN

Are you crazy? What if it has a virus - or worse?

Collin struggles against his friend's grip.

Steve swivels the camera towards the desktop monitor. His pimply face now half-framed.

STEVE

No-one look away. Ready? 3, 2, 1...

The monitor rolls, spits static. Then flashes to black, followed by text:

"You opened the box, didn't you? Prepare for your reward. But first, a warning..."

A series of lightning fast IMAGES zip by. They hint at being grotesque. If they were slow enough to absorb.

Collin whacks Steve on the head, breaks loose.

COLLIN

Keep my half of bitcoin. This isn't worth the risk. I'm gone!

Collin races towards the exit, out of frame.

New text solidifies onscreen. "Whatever happens, keep the door closed."

Offscreen, Collin SCREAMS. GURGLES. Then... silence.

A freaked out Steve swivels towards something no-one else can see.

STEVE

Oh God.

Something whips him off the chair. Blood spatters. The camera cracks.

And transmission ends... mercifully.

FINAL FADE OUT: