



THE BOX by Sherri Turner.

[This text is read aloud at the beginning of this video:]

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The Box by Sherri Turner.

"Come on, Julie! You can't keep us in suspense. What's in the box?"

Julie hugged it to her chest and smiled. "It's private."

"But we never have secrets. You can tell us."

"I'm not keeping a secret," she said. "It's just private. It's not the same thing."

They moved away, grumbling, and Julie placed the box on the corner of her desk and returned to her work.

She'd never understood this need to know all and to tell all. She knew all about her colleagues' love lives, their husbands' habits and their finances. She had no choice but to know. Each morning was the same.

"You'll never guess..."

"I've got to tell you..."

"You won't believe..."

It was like a competition for who could be the most revealing.

Julie's colleagues said she was old-fashioned and that may have been true, but not everything old was bad, Julie thought. Like manners and a bit of decorum and privacy.

The box was about the same size as a shoebox, but plain black and shiny, with a rounded lid and curved edges. Julie had it in a bag when she came back from shopping at lunchtime but left it by her desk when she went to the coffee machine. When she returned, they already had it out. Their rudeness was rewarded with the frustration of the box being locked.

They had been badgering her for half an hour already and Julie knew it wouldn't stop there. She left for a meeting but, on her return, she found one of them trying to pick the lock with a bent paperclip.

"Why won't you tell us?" the culprit asked.

"Why do you need to know?" Julie retorted, crossly.

She didn't want to tell the others about it. She wanted it to stay all hers, her private pleasure. As she left for the day, Julie could sense them eyeing the bag and wondering, but she knew they'd have forgotten about it by the next day. Somebody else would have secrets to share.



When Julie got home, she placed the box on her dressing table and thought about how much everyone had wanted to know what was in it. They had been so desperate for her to tell them but she just couldn't. She really couldn't – because she had absolutely no idea.

The man in the antique shop was selling it cheap because the key was lost. Julie just liked the box itself: the shine, the shape and the feel of it. The fact that it had no key was a bonus for her, the thing that made it special and unusual in these days where nothing is private. So Julie didn't know what was in it. And she rather liked that, the not knowing something for a change. The box could keep its own secrets.