

THE CALLIOPE BOX

Written by

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FADE IN:

1 INT. BOX - NIGHT 1

The discordant notes of a playful CALLIOPE TUNE fills the air.

Helen (20s) is serene, asleep, eyes closed. She's beautiful, but something is wrong. She stirs, winces, then slowly opens her eyes. After a moment of sleepy confusion, her eyes widen in terror.

She sits upright, frantic and scared.

She's in a standing, wooden box with multiple glass panels. A single light illuminates the box from its ceiling.

HELEN

Hello?

Her voice reverberates off the glass. No one answers.

She stands up and looks around, then down toward her feet.

She's dressed, but barefoot. She takes a deep breath, clearly afraid.

Helen pushes against one of the glass panels. It's solid. She peers through the glass, but it's too dark. She cups her hands around her eyes and presses her face against the glass.

2 INT. GARAGE - SAME 2

Helen peers through the glass into the enveloping darkness.

HELEN

Help!

Her voice sounds muffled, almost quiet behind the thick walls of glass and wood.

3 INT. BOX - SAME 3

Helen stands up and bangs on the glass. It holds. She pounds harder and screams louder.

Helen stops screaming and calms herself. She thinks. Then begins searching the box, running her fingers along its tight-fitting panels and edges.

At the top of the box, near a speaker, she finds a control panel. She presses a button... the calliope music stops. She freezes, listening intently. SILENCE.

Continuing her search, she finds what looks to be a SMALL LENS in the ceiling of the box. She strains to get a closer look.

4 INT. BOX (CCTV CAMERA POV) - SAME 4

A grainy, black and white view of Helen staring into the lens. TIMECODE runs along the bottom of the image.

5 INT. BOX - SAME 5

Helen moves to the floor, pounding on the boards and desperately looking for a way out.

Suddenly, from outside the box, a door swings open, throwing light across Helen's terrified face. Helen backs away, pushing herself as far into the back wall of the box as possible. She watches with widened eyes.

After a beat, a HULKING FORM (LES), lumbers around to the front of the box. He wears overalls and a TOOL BELT, heavy with a variety of TOOLS, including an ominous HAMMER. He moves the same way he speaks: slowly, deliberately, and with a distinct tinge of menace. Les stops in front of the box, facing Helen.

Helen holds her breath and stares. She eyes the hammer and trembles.

LES

Do you like the box I built for  
you? I take pride in my  
craftsmanship. I see you figured  
out the music settings.

Helen furrows her brow and continues to stare but says nothing.

LES (CONT'D)

(beat)  
You hungry?

Les lifts up a BOWL, with a SLICED ORANGE, peel and all.

Helen shakes her head "no".

Les lowers the bowl and reaches for a PADLOCK on the front of the door.

LES (CONT'D)  
I'm coming in.

Helen springs to life. Scrambling through her pockets she retrieves her KEYS AND KEY CHAIN, containing a small, pathetic POCKET KNIFE. She struggles, opens the knife and aims it defensively at the door.

HELEN  
Stay away from me!

LES  
Is that the best you can find?

Les puts down the bowl. Deliberately, he raises up a METAL CONTROL BOX with a BUTTON, and waves it to show Helen what he's about to do.

LES (CONT'D)  
Behave.

Les presses the button.

Suddenly, through a plastic tube at the top of the box, GAS sprays into the tiny space.

Helen SCREAMS, but is quickly engulfed by the CLOUD OF GAS. She closes her mouth tightly and tries to hold her breath. She shakes her head "no" and presses her palms against the glass... then collapses, unconscious.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

6 INT. BOX - LATER

6

The nightmarish calliope music is back.

Helen is asleep with her head against the side of the box, her brown hair mussed, the result of her having slid part way down in her sleep. Her eyes burst open.

Again, she sits upright. She turns her attention to the seat next to her: the bowl with the sliced orange sits by her side.

Helen, remembering, suddenly jumps to her feet and pulls out her pockets. They're empty. The keys and knife are gone. She lowers her head.

Then slams her fist against the music controls, silencing the calliope music.

7 INT. BOX (CCTV CAMERA POV) - LATER 7

Helen sits, cradling her legs, and stares into the darkness. After a beat, she picks up the bowl.

8 INT. BOX - SAME 8

Helen sniffs the orange. She doesn't trust it, but she's starving. She picks up a slice and nibbles at it, eating slowly.

As she bites away at the small piece of orange, the peel falls to the floor.

Helen bends down and picks up the piece of peel. She holds it and studies it for a moment, thinking.

Suddenly, from outside the box, the door to the house once again opens, throwing light across Helen's face.

She jumps again to her feet, steeling herself for the worst, as...

Les lumbers to the front of the box, his hammer swinging from his tool belt. Again, he stops in front of the box, facing Helen who watches in terror as he speaks.

LES

I want you to understand something.  
I'm not going to let you go.

Les let's this sink in.

LES (CONT'D)

You can't escape. I've done this before. The sooner you accept this, the easier it will be for you. You can eat when I feed you, but when I tire of you... and I will tire of you... I'm going to kill you.

Helen is shaking, but says nothing, glaring instead.

LES (CONT'D)

Do you understand?

Helen stammers fearfully as she speaks.

HELEN

Now I remember you. You're the contractor I hired to do the tiles in my bathroom last summer.

(MORE)

HELEN (CONT'D)  
 You're... Frank... Franklin, right?  
 I was good to you, remember? Why?

Les paces, enjoying himself as he talks. Helen watches in terror as Les speaks.

LES  
 Yeah, that's right. You were very nice. But Franklin is just one of my names. I have lots. In Minnesota, I went by Nick. The papers called me The Toolmaster of Brainerd, if you can believe it. I've been called The Widowmaker, The Brooklyn Smasher... The After Midnight Maniac! In Phoenix, they simply dubbed me The Dumpster Dumper. YUP. I've been doing this a long time.

Les stops. Helen tenses. Les leans his face close to the glass.

LES (CONT'D)  
 But I'll tell you a secret.

Helen recoils.

LES (CONT'D)  
 (whispering)  
 My real name is Les Bootley.  
 Shhhhh!

Les hits the button, and laughs maniacally.

Helen screams and flails about as the box once again fills with gas.

Fade to black.

9	INT. BOX (CCTV CAMERA POV) - LATER	9
	Helen is unconscious, splayed out in the box. She slowly stirs and comes to.	
10	INT. BOX - SAME	10
	Helen takes a deep breath, then wipes tear streaks from her face. She turns to look at something on the seat next to her. She frowns.	

On the seat beside her, next to a bowl of fresh orange slices, is a small stack of PHOTOS.

Helen holds up the photos, shaking as she flips through them.

The photos are of multiple FEMALE VICTIMS, bloodied, bludgeoned or otherwise terrorized.

Helen throws down the photos and jumps to her feet, determined. She picks up the orange and eats the flesh, hurriedly. She takes the remaining pieces of orange peel and stuffs them into the gas tube at the top of the box. Satisfied, she sits back down and continues to eat the orange.

11 INT. BOX - LATER

11

The bowl, now empty of orange but full of peel, sits on the seat beside Helen.

From outside the box, the door to the house opens, throwing light across the bowl of peels. Helen is startled and sits up.

Les lumbers to the front of the box, his hammer swinging at his hip. He stops and faces Helen, who sits submissively and waits. He holds up a bowl with a fresh orange.

LES

I'm coming in. Do I have to gas you?

HELEN

I'll behave.

Les squints his eyes, not sure if he should trust her. Helen lowers her gaze. She breathes deeply and slowly, as Les unlocks the padlock.

He puts his hand on the handle of the hammer, then opens the door.

LES

Hands where I can see them.

Helen raises her hands while keeping her gaze low.

Les steps into the box to swap bowls... just close enough so that...

Helen grabs the hammer!

Les falls backward and slams the door!

Les scrambles to his feet and holds up the metal control box.

LES (CONT'D)  
Now you're gonna get it!

Les slams the button.

Nothing happens. No gas. The orange peels jammed in the tube are doing the trick!

Helen smiles and raises the hammer. She strikes the glass, shattering it!

12 INT. GARAGE - SAME 12

Helen bursts out of the box. Les cowers in fear.

Helen steps her bare feet onto the garage floor, now sprinkled in broken glass.

Helen smashes the hammer onto Les's head, killing him. She drives the hammer down a few more times to be sure. Flecks of blood spatter against the sliced orange, the photos, etc.

Breathless, Helen heads for the door to the house, but stumbles and falls over Les's body.

She crawls up the steps and opens the door, anticipatory. The door swings open and reveals...

13 INT. KITCHEN - SAME 13

A FAMILY sits at the kitchen table, preparing for dinner. Les's WIFE, SON, DAUGHTER IN LAW and GRANDDAUGHTER all turn their heads in unison and look slowly and deliberately at Helen.

Les's Wife stands up, wordlessly. She raises a MEAT TENDERIZER like a hammer.

Calliope music takes us into credits.

FADE OUT.