

The Box Inside the Box

By Marilyn Reeves

It arrived at last – the Thingamajig I ordered last November. It was a great relief to know that it had finally come, but I was darned if I could remember what it was or why I had ordered it in the first place. But there it was, sitting outside my door. A good-sized box, about two feet long by eighteen inches wide and eighteen inches high.

I dragged the box inside and managed to lift it up to set it down on one of my kitchen chairs. Then I got out my trusty old box cutter and searched for the most logical place to start.

I made my first slit down the middle seam and then on either side of the top, and pried the flaps open in order to view the Thingamajig inside.

Inside was another box. A Styrofoam box, so snugly fitted to the inside of the outside box I couldn't slide my fingers in between the two in order to lift it out. I tried turning the outside box upside down and giving it a hard shake, hoping the inside box would simply slide out onto the floor. No, it wouldn't come out. That would have been too easy. Well, what to do? I thought about trying to gnaw away at the Styrofoam with my knife, but decided I really didn't want little chips and flakes of that fluffy white stuff floating all around my apartment. So, the only other option was to cut open one of the sides of the outside box in order to get at my prize.

Easier said than done. My old box cutter blade had seen better days, and I about wore myself out trying to saw all the way down the edges of that thick cardboard – first one side and then the other. But finally, with both the top and one side of the outside box open, I managed to pull out the inside box. Then, amid a great deal of teeth-jittering screeching – worse than nails on a blackboard – I managed to wriggle off the Styrofoam lid.

Inside was another box. This one displayed a picture of its contents and a bright yellow label that said "Thingamajig." The Thingamajig turned out to be a three-dimensional wooden puzzle.

But why did I buy it in the first place? Who was I planning to give it to? To this day, I simply can't recall. It's a puzzle. But to me, the biggest puzzle of all had been how to get the inside box out of the outside box, in order to get to the other box with the Thingamajig inside.