

Bad Reception

written by

Eleanna Santorinaïou

santorinaïou.e@gmail.com
07831731763

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DESERTED ROAD - DAY

1

It is a grey, foggy day. The narrow road in the middle interrupts the monotony of rocky fields. Muddy puddles are scattered in the landscape.

In the far background, big fat chimneys spit thick smoke into the atmosphere. The silence is deafening.

From afar, a black dot comes closer, the sound of the ENGINE fades in.

GPS VOICE

You have arrived at your
destination. Your destination is
on your left.

A BLACK INFINITY parks 100 away from a telephone booth. The GPS continues.

GUY a man in his mid 30s steps out of the vehicle. He wears a slick grey tuxedo and a dark grey tie, which he uses to clean the mud from the side mirror. As he cleans it, his shirt gets pulled up, to reveal a barcode tattoo on the back of his right wrist.

The voice of the GPS blends with the BEEP sound indicating that the door is open and the lights are still on.

Guy closes the door and walks a few steps away from the car.

He goes back to the car. He tries to put the address on the GBS.

GPS VOICE

You have arrived at your
destination. Your destination is
on your left.

He turns the lights and engine off. On the back seat, a bizarre sock puppet animal is buckled in, next to it there is a pacifier. He takes out of his pocket a transparent rectangular device.

When he touches it, bright colours appear that cover the entire surface.

(CONTINUED)

GUY

Hipa find "Smith's" location VF4
7UE.

No response.

GUY

Hello Hipa...

He shakes the phone up and down. Still no response.

GUY

Come on...Hipa. Hipa!

He tries to make a phone call. Impossible. The phone makes a BIP sound and hangs up. Guy checks his smart watch on his left wrist. Numbers appear.

He gets out of the car, phone in one hand and watch on the other. He tries to ring again with no better luck.

Unwillingly he walks a few steps in every direction. He fails to make the phone calls. He walks in the fields.

GUY

(from afar)

Hipa find "Smith's" location.

Yet again no response. He goes back in the car. He buckles and presses a button. The engine produces a muffled sound but it doesn't start.

GPS VOICE

Car's battery low. Re-charge.

Car's battery low. Re-charge.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DESERTED ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

2

The car's bonnet is open. A solar panel lays on the top of the car. The lack of sun causes Guy to sigh heavily, he will have to stay there for a while.

He sits a few feet away from the car and fiddles with a pebble which falls from his hands and rolls.

Guy follows the moving rock and with the corner of his eye, he notices an old, rusty and dirty Phone Booth. He jumps up and runs towards it. Suddenly he stops and checks his pockets for coins. Nothing.

He runs back to the car and pockets all the coins he could find. He bounces back to the Phone Booth.

EXT. PHONE BOOTH - MOMENTS LATER

Guy examines the Phone Booth. He gets in. The door SHRIEKS and closes behind him causing a THUMP as if someone locked it. Guy unconcerned, lifts the hone, the typical BEEP SOUND. Guy inserts the coins and dials.

INT. PHONE BOOTH - CONTINUES

He hears the familiar TONE and smiles with satisfaction.

Before the person on the other end has a chance to answer the phone, a bizarre, CRUMBLING NOISE that comes from the phone booth, catches Guy's attention.

Guy tries to recognise the sound but the voice of the receptionist from the other end, traps his attention.

STELLA

(intro phone)

Pests & Beasts Control, Reception
101 speaking. How can I help?

GUY

Employee 50087778 Client is Mr.
Smith. I was on the way to the
appointment and I've gotten
myself horribly lost and...

He gets interrupted as the entire phone booth but the floor, begins to move and immerses some centimetres into the ground.

Guy tried to open the door but it's locked. He hangs up and fetches for his mobile from his pocket. He taps the devise and the screen appears. He dials 999 but the phone doesn't work. Still no reception. He tries 112 and still nothing.

Guy pushes the door with all his strength. The booth rattles. He looks at booth's phone. He sighs and reaches his pocket to grab a few more coins. He dials 999.

The phone booth trembles and gets one centimetre into the ground. Guy without hanging up, tries once more to open the door, but he only manages to harm his elbow.

GUY

Shit!

ANNA
(over phone)
Emergency! Which service?

GUY
(into phone)
Hi. Hello, I'm trapped... In a
phone
cubical..booth..how do you call
it?..Yeah...I don't know.
Ummm...Fire Brigade?No, Police.

ANNA
(over phone)
Ok. Sir, connecting you with
the Police department.

INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

5

Kevin, a worker at the police department, sits on his desk and eats a banana. He wears a dark blue uniform that resembles a tracksuit. The phone rings.

KEVIN
(into phone)
Police. What is the emergency?

Guy speaks fast from the other end. The crumbling noise the phone booth generates blends with his screams creating a muffle sound.

KEVIN
(into phone)
Sir I need you to calm down. Tell
me where are you?

GUY
(over phone)
In a freaking phone booth. That
sinks. Can't get out.

Kevin puts the banana down. He looks at the screen that writes "Scripted" on the top.

KEVIN
(into phone)
I need you to repeat this for me
sir?

INT. PHONE BOOTH - CONTINUES

6

The phone booth has immersed in the ground 2 more centimetres. Guy's head can touch now the ceiling. He still tries to open the door.

GUY

(into phone)

I am inside a Phone Booth...a phone box! The door doesn't open. And for some reason it's immersing into the ground.

KEVIN

(over phone)

Right. I am terribly sorry sir this seems to me as a Fire brigade affair. Would you like me to connect you?

GUY

(into phone)

Why do you think that I wouldn't?

The CRUMBLING SOUND begins, the phone booth sinks some centimeters in the ground.

Guy pushes and kicks the door and drops the phone.

FIRE OFFICER

(over phone)

Fire Brigade. How can I help?

Guy grabs the phone.

GUY

(into phone)

Hi. I am trapped inside a phone booth, which every other minute immerses into the ground. Location VF4 7UE.

CRUMBLING SOUND

GUY

(into phone)

No, of course I've tried to get out. Clearly the door doesn't open.

The CRUMBLING SOUND get stronger.

INT. FIRE DEPARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

7

The FIRE OFFICER wears a dark blue uniform similar to the police officer's from before. He types the notes, the screen says "Scripted" as the policeman's.

GUY

(over phone)

You have to come now. Please...

The fire officer reads from the screen.

FIRE OFFICER

(over phone)

Would you happen to know your exact address sir?

GUY

(over phone)

No....Wait hung on. I do.

INT. PHONE BOOTH - CONTINUES

8

Guy ducks in a very uncomfortable position in order to fit. He doesn't wear the necktie anymore. He grabs his phone and taps it.

GUY

(into phone)

VF4 7UE, 4th district south, A5.
Come and get me Yeah?...This is your duty! You can't...Ok...Ok...Link me with the Local Authorities.

BEAT.

GUY

(into phone)

Hello?! Anybody?

INT. LOCAL AUTHORITIES OFFICE - CONTINUES

9

A young lady, LISA sits in an office. She wears a dark blue shirt and matching skirt. She has a scarf around her neck that shows different kinds of birds. She reads from the screen.

LISA

(into phone)

I am very sorry to hear that sir.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

(cont'd)

I am afraid we won't be able to help you. You should call the Capital Hospital. Do you have a pen?

Beat. Screams and noise come out the phone. Lise closes the document screen.

LISA

(into phone)

Please hold. I am connecting you.

EXT. PHONE BOOTH - MOMENTS LATER

10

Guy from afar, looks like a human ball. Three quarters of the phone booth is now under the ground. His coat is on the floor. His cheeks are red.

GUY

Hello? Hello?

INT. CAPITAL HOSPITAL/ RECEPTION - CONTINUES

11

Bonnie, a nurse, sits in front of a desk. She wears a light blue uniform. She holds the thick phone and eats chips.

BOONIE

(into phone)

Barcode number and insurance number please, sir... No without the insurance number you cannot book appointment, sir.

INT. PHONE BOOTH - CONTINUES

12

Guy bangs his hand on the wall.

GUY

(over phone)

I need to get out before I come to you. YOU NEED TO GET ME OUT. I don't think I have enough time...Hello? Hello?

AUTOMATED MESSAGE

"Please insert coins. Please insert coins"

Guy grabs the phone and tries to smash the transparent walls. He tries hard and for a long time. The Phone Booth

(CONTINUED)

moves slightly from side to side.

CENSOR TONE beeps, a bright light spreads covering everything. A distorted male's voice sings "Hush Little Baby"

INT. GUY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)

13

The song continues and blends with distant giggles.

A grey living room with minimal decoration and furniture. Guy, boxers and white shirt, squats down and extends his arms. LIZZIE(18 months), white onesie and bottle, a happy baby girl, giggles and runs towards him.

She also has a barcode in the right arm. She hugs Guy who tickles her. GIGGLES.

Behind them, a small framed photograph with vivid, colours of a little boy, facing the other way and fishing. A mans hand lays on the little boy's shoulder.

The colours of the photo get brighter and spread around, the room. The giggles and distorted song become louder until the entire room turns bright white.

EXT. POND IN WOODS - DAY (FLASHBACK #2)

14

The image sharpens. The vibrant greens of the trees and yellow flowers create a very peaceful scenery.

No sound. Only the dreamy distant voice of the young boy.

YOUNG BOY

Look daddy, I am almost catching
a fish.

The boy jumps from joy. His right hand has a barcode like Guy. A man pats the boy on his shoulder. The boy turns his head and stares at the camera. He drifts away, as the image desaturates.

INT. PHONE BOOTH - MOMENT LATER (BACK TO PRESENT)

Guy ducks further down.

GUY

(into phone)
I think I am dying...

INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

15

A man in a blue uniform, ROGER, stands over a desk.

ROGER

That's an exaggeration sir. Call
the information pages.

MONTAGE OF PEOPLE SAYING INTO THE PHONE "CALL SOMEBODY
ELSE".

EXT. PHONE BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

16

The phone booth is pushed inside the ground, as if a
giant pushed it like a pin on a board.

Only 40 centimetres are above the surface. Guy doesn't
stand out of the rest of the mass, anymore.

INT. PHONE BOOTH - CONTINUES

17

GUY

(into phone)

I just need someone to get me out
of here. Please... I am
dying...Yes I'll hold.

AUTOMATED MESSAGE

"Please insert coins. Please
insert coins"

Guy bangs the phone into the ground. he checks his
pockets for more coins. The surface moves and rattles. it
gets more sucked into the ground. Guy sobs.

He detects in the corner of the phone booth a 20p coin. He
inserts the coin and dials a number. The phone rings 3
times and goes to voice mail.

The crumbling sound begins again.

VOICEMAIL

(baby Lizzie's giggles on
the background)

The user "Emma" 300 is
unavailable. Please leave a
message. BIP.

Guy sobs quietly. He doesn't fight it anymore.

(CONTINUED)

GUY
(into phone)
Hush little baby, don't say a
word daddy's gonna buy you a
mocking bird...

As Guy sings the CRUMBLING SOUND gets louder, until it evolves into a THUMB.

EXT. PHONE BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

18

The entire phone booth immerses into the ground. Seconds later, it pops, back to its original place. No Guy inside. A "brand new", old looking phone booth.

INT. 999 OFFICES - CONTINUOUS

19

A young gentle lady, Moira, has taken the place of Anna the operator, from before.

MOIRA
(into phone)
Emergency! Which service?

As Moira talks, the Fire Officer comes and offers her a banana. Anna the Female Operator, takes a seat next to Moira. Another woman dressed the same as Moira sits next to Anna.

Tracking back, it is revealed that the space is infinite. Like a gigantic parking lot filled with desks from side to side. All the people who have talked to Guy before, are seated scattered at the same area and receive phone calls.

Their voices echo as they all try to connect the callers with other departments.

EXT. PHONE BOOTH - MOMENTS LATER

20

The landscape is exactly the same as it was before Guy's arrival. The only indication that he was there is the INFINITY CAR with the open doors and bonnet.

THE END.