

REMOVING THE RED

A short drama for television

by

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REMOVING THE RED

Synopsis

‘REMOVING THE RED’ is an experimental drama (30-45 minutes) based around a Red Telephone Box situated in a mining village in Northern England. It covers the years 1950–1990 and touches on events in the life of one woman from the age of twelve to the age of fifty – events that are common to the woman and the Phone Box.

All scenes are played in or around the box culminating in its removal in the late eighties and its relocation in the garden of a country house. A kind of Forsyte Saga in miniature, a soap in twelve scenes, a drama which is sometimes humorous, sometimes sentimental and sometimes tragic. The phone box gets to see (or hear about) all types of personal problems and social change, eventually itself becoming a potent symbol of changing political realities.

The red telephone box has often been taken as a symbol of conservative continuity and its demise has been mourned by right-wingers such as Roger Scruton and Peregrine Worsthorne. Yet it is also a symbol of public service, of the welfare state and socialism. Its removal coincides with attempts to eradicate all three notions in Britain.

The scenes break down as follows:-

- | | |
|------|---|
| 1950 | The twelve year old ANNIE nervously uses the new phone box for the first time. She calls her friend JOE Sugden, the butcher’s son. |
| 1953 | Coronation Day. ANNIE and girlfriend squeeze into the box and compare notes on boys. At the end JOE asks ANNIE to partner him in the three legged race. |
| 1956 | Eighteen year old ANNIE calls up JOE who is doing National Service and about to embark for Suez. They are engaged to be married but ANNIE is lonely. That evening she has a quick kiss in the phone box with a miner called GEORGE. |
| 1959 | A tramp curls up in the phone box for the night. “You’ve never had it so good!” screams the headline of the newspaper he uses as a sheet. |
| 1962 | ANNIE carrying a baby jumps a long queue outside the phone box. She has to ring JOE (now a regular in the army). It is the day of the Cuban Missile Crisis, “K v K”. But the phone goes dead. |
| 1966 | ANNIE is back from Germany to help Mum cope with Dad’s death. She receives a call from JOE who reverses charges to the box. They talk and talk. Two lads queuing get impatient. JOE gets jealous. |

- 1970 A small girl asks the operator for a Belfast number. This is ANNIE'S daughter KAREN secretly calling her dad JOE. ANNIE suddenly appears and grabs the scrap of paper with the number on it. She slaps KAREN. KAREN cries and complains that her dad's never there and when he is there's only arguing. ANNIE softens and cuddles KAREN.
- 1974 Election year. A no-hoper Tory candidate stops to phone his election agent. He is lost. It's late at night. As he leaves the box ANNIE appears with a bruised face and a cut lip. She phones the police. Her husband has beaten her up. KAREN cowers on the phone box floor. In frustration at the lack of sympathy from the police ANNIE slams the receiver down. The whole apparatus crashes to the ground. A man's footsteps approach. It is GEORGE the friendly miner from her youth.
- 1977 It is Jubilee Day. As in '53 the box is decorated with Union Jacks. Inside are KAREN and her BOYFRIEND. Both in punk gear and drunk, scrawling graffiti on the walls. ANNIE arrives and is furious that they are 'abusing' the phone box. KAREN reproaches her mum for leaving JOE and living with GEORGE.
- 1982 ANNIE discovers MRS SUGDEN (JOE's mum) crying in the phone box. Her phone is out of order and she has just received the news of JOE's death in the Falklands. The two women commiserate.
- 1984 ANNIE is phoning a number which is engaged. Suddenly a young guy bursts into the box. He is a miner escaping from the police who are 'clearing the streets' of pickets. The two chat about KAREN's success at art school in London until running feet approach and truncheons start smashing the glass of the phone box. ANNIE holds onto the young man until she is 'accidentally' hit by a truncheon and falls unconscious.
- 1988 ANNIE watches as drills dig up the phone box. An all white VW Gti roars up. KAREN now a successful designer steps out with her photographer BOYFRIEND. The latter offers to buy ANNIE a box for her birthday (she is fifty that day). The box is loaded onto a lorry where a line of boxes are already sitting chained together like prisoners. They are driven off as ANNIE watches.
- 1990 The Phone box sits newly painted in a country garden. A man sits in a wicker chair inside and makes a call on his radio phone. Titles roll.

REMOVING THE RED - FINAL DRAFT

1. EXT. VILLAGE - DAY (1988)

Close ups of drills digging into a concrete slab. The action is violent, noisy. Pull out to reveal a telephone box being dug up. We are in a village, judging by the trees and fields, but off to the right the still wheels of a coalmine's lifting gear are just visible. It is a dull overcast day. Parked in the background is a yellow British Telecom van with a MAN talking into a walkie-talkie beside it. Beyond a large modern filling station, A GROUP OF CHILDREN has gathered to watch, one wears a walkman. They are mesmerised by the drilling and as a dust cloud forms around the doomed box we mix through to...

2. EXT. VILLAGE TELEPHONE BOX - DUSK EARLY SUMMER (1950).

(Black & White - style note 'Brief Encounter')

The telephone box sits alone at dusk, its interior lit. The van is replaced by a Morris 8 parked in the background. The image is in black & white. It is dusk. The filling station has disappeared. Lifting wheels of the mine are silhouetted against the sunset. They turn slowly. Evening shadows lie across the road. In the distance a YOUNG GIRL approaches.

She is wearing a cotton dress, white socks and grey cardigan with buttons undone. Her hair is tied to one side with a bow. She walks briskly, occasionally skipping as if to change step to some unheard rhythm in her head.

As she nears the phone box we see her more clearly. She has a pretty unmade up face with freckles. Her nose is running. She clutches something in her left hand and looks around before entering the box.

Inside the GIRL wipes her nose with her sleeve and picks up the receiver. She moves a finger along some instructions. The GIRL unclenches her right hand and slots in four large pennies above a silver button marked A. She dials a three figure number. A strange noise and then a voice interrupts.

OPERATOR

Hello. Operator here.

The GIRL looks at the receiver and bites her top lip.

GIRL

Hello? That Joe's mam?

OPERATOR

No, love. Mrs Marlow - the Operator.

GIRL

What's that?

OPERATOR

What's what?

GIRL

Operator? Not used telephone before, see.

OPERATOR

Operator's here to help, love. What number you after?

GIRL

502, I think. Sugden's. You know -
butcher's shop in High Street.

OPERATOR

202 love. Hang on. I'll put you through.

The GIRL wipes the glass. A POLICEMAN rides by on a bicycle. A hooter sounds at the mine. The GIRL inspects interior of phone box and makes a face at herself in the silver framed mirror. The phone rings. A BOY's voice answers. It has just broken and still squeaks.

BOY's voice

Hello. Sugden's here.

OPERATOR

That Joe? There's a call for you. And Joe?
Ask your dad to put a bit of steak aside
for Friday will you - I've saved coupons.

The GIRL peers through the glass at some SMALL BOYS watching her from behind a bush.

OPERATOR (*continuing*)

You're through, love. Just press
button A.

The GIRL has difficulty pressing button A. Eventually it depresses with a clattering of coins. She opens her mouth to speak, but is overcome by nerves.

BOY'S VOICE
Hello? Who's that?

GIRL
Annie.

BOY'S VOICE
Annie Cliff? What you doin' on our phone?

GIRL
I'm in phone box.

BOY'S VOICE
What phone box?

GIRL
On Pit Lane.

BOY'S VOICE
Oh. What you doin' there?

GIRL
Ringin' you.

BOY'S VOICE
Oh.

Silence. ANNIE opens her mouth to speak but is interrupted.

BOY'S VOICE
Best go. Helpin' dad sort rations.

The receiver is replaced. A dialling tone returns.

ANNIE
Joe? Joe? I wanted to say... I wanted to
say how good you were in band last week.

She puts the receiver down and wipes her nose again. A tear
rolls down her cheek.

She pushes open the door and walks off, pulling at her
cardigan sleeve. The TWO SMALL BOYS appear, nip into the
box and press button 'B' to see if any money comes out.

FADE TO BLACK

3. EXT/INT PHONEBOX - BRIGHT SUMMER'S DAY (2nd JUNE 1953).

Still in B&W we see the phone box in MCU decorated with bunting and union jacks. Off screen we hear brass bands, shouting and screaming. Suddenly ANNIE (now fifteen) and another GIRL run up to the phone box from behind camera. They are dressed in best frocks and have red, white and blue ribbons in their hair, though two of ANNIE's are undone.

They are giggling fit to burst and only just manage to get the door open.

Inside, they laugh and the 2nd GIRL keeps wiping her lips.

ANNIE

Did he? Tell us Janet? Did he?

JANET nods.

ANNIE

On mouth? George?

JANET nods. They giggle again. ANNIE peers through glass.

ANNIE

Watch out, here he comes...

Both girls turn and pretend to be phoning. After a moment, JANET nudges ANNIE, who looks over her shoulder.

ANNIE

You're alright. He's gone past.

JANET looks disappointed.

JANET

What?

She slams receiver down and pushes her way out of the door. ANNIE stays in the box, turning the dial aimlessly.

ANNIE

I wish someone'd kiss me.

She sobs. Door to phone box creaks open off screen. A ray of sunshine falls onto tear-stained side of ANNIE's face.

YOUNG MAN'S VOICE

Annie? Annie Cliff?

ANNIE turns slowly towards camera.

ANNIE
Joe? Joe Sugden?

YOUNG MAN'S VOICE
What's up?

ANNIE wipes her eyes and smiles

ANNIE
Coronations make me cry. That's all.

She smiles and then looks down.

JOE'S VOICE (OFF)
I were wondering if you fancied...
entering three legged race wi'me

ANNIE nods.

ANNIE
I'll just put me ribbons right.

The door creaks to as we move in on ANNIE's smiling face in the mirror above the phone.

'GOD SAVE THE QUEEN' played by brass band in the distance.

FADE TO BLACK.

4. EXT/INT. PHONEBOX - DAY (5th NOVEMBER 1956)
(*B & W - style note Ealing Comedy*).

Medium shot of box from angle looking back down street. FOUR BOYS run up towards the box. The eldest two go inside while the others, shivering in shorts, keep 'lookout' by the door.

Inside, one of the boys gives the other chewing gum. They chew, take the gum out of their mouths and stick it up inside the black coin box beneath Button B.

The BOYS have almost finished when one of the lookouts shouts a warning.

We see ANNIE (now aged 18) striding towards the box. She wears a gabardine mac belted tight and buttoned high to keep out the chill. Her hair is fashionably styled - swept back with curls on her collar - face made up. On her feet she has high heels. BOYS outside whistle as she arrives at the box to wait. She laughs and makes to cuff them around the ears.

The BOYS inside put the receiver down as if finishing a call and hold the door open for ANNIE. The BOYS pretend to walk off down the road whistling, but in fact hide behind a wall.

ANNIE puts her pennies in, dials a number, presses button A.

ANNIE

(With pride)

Trooper Sugden, please.

She inspects her varnished nails and blows dust out of a corner of the window frame.

ANNIE *(continuing)*

JOE? It's ANNIE... When you going?
Tomorrow? Gosh. Will it be hot - in
Egypt? ... JOE! Really! Me in a bikini?
JOE! I know you do. But do you love me?
Me, JOE - not me bum! And will you marry
me? Promise? (KISS DOWN PHONE) Wish you
were here, job down pit and that. I know,
but you wouldn't get shot at would you?
What? (SARCASTICALLY) National blinkin'
Service. Aye, I know you enjoy it, but
... well, it gets lonely here...

There is a bang on the door and a middle aged woman's face peers in and points at her dog, 'He's sick!' she mouths

ANNIE *(continuing)*

Best go now love. Mrs Grant's outside.
Look after yourself. Love you. Bye.

MRS GRANT enters with a SMALL BOY and an even smaller black faced terrier on a lead. The dog barks.

ANNIE

Got the whooping cough has he, Mrs Grant?

ANNIE laughs and runs off down the road.

Mrs Grant's call is unsuccessful. She presses Button B but nothing comes out. She bangs the coin box - to no avail.

MRS GRANT
Bloody Tories.

The dog barks in agreement.

LITTLE BOY
Language, mother!

EXT. PHONEBOX - LATER THAT EVENING.

Sound of fireworks. The box is illuminated by showers of light. The BOYS appear. Same two as before go inside and remove chewing gum from coin box.

They are about to press Button B when the door flies open and a TEDDY BOY got up for jiving indicates they should hop it. Behind him, a GIRL keeps her face covered.

As the adults squeeze in the box we recognise ANNIE dressed for jiving - white blouse, flared skirt and hair in a pony tail. With a practiced twist the MAN undoes the light bulb and jams his foot against the door.

ANNIE shivers.

ANNIE
Just a kiss, George. I am engaged.

They start to kiss and as his hand, tattooed across the knuckles with the word 'LOVE', moves up her stocking to the suspender she pushes against Button B. All the pennies held back by the chewing gum pour out. The BOYS faces, visible in the background outside, watch in frustration and excitement.

FADE UP BILL HAILEY - FADE TO BLACK

5. EXT. PHONEBOX - NIGHT (OCTOBER 1959).
(Colour - style note, Hammer Horror)

Fog swirls around the box, a friendly sight in the darkness. A train passes, whistling, puffing. A cat screeches. Wind blows. Footsteps approach, someone with a limp.

A TRAMP appears out of the fog and shuffles towards the phone box. A newspaper blows up from the gutter. The TRAMP grabs it and pulls open the door of the phone box. He sniffs, turning up his nose at the smell and then lays out the newspaper on the dirty concrete floor of the box.

"YOU'VE NEVER HAD IT SO GOOD" screams the paper's headline.

The TRAMP removes his boots, reaches up to unscrew light bulb - a safety cover stops him. He shrugs his shoulders and lies down in a ball on the paper. The cat howls.

FADE UP EDDIE CALVERT 'OH MEIN PAPA' - FADE TO BLACK

6. EXT. PHONEBOX - EARLY MORNING (OCTOBER 26th 1962).
(*Style note - 'Sat Night, Sun Morning'*)

Blue sky, not much wind. We see ANNIE (now aged 24) running at speed down the road towards the phone box. Her hair is in curlers, she is wearing stretch pants and a blouse. In one hand, she is holding a paper - in the other, clutched to her breast, a baby. There is a long queue outside the box and when a plane from the local flying club passes overhead, everyone looks up nervously at the sky.

ANNIE arrives at end of the queue and starts persuading people to let her move up.

CU as she argues with MRS GRANT, whose terrier is wrapped in a blanket under her arm.

ANNIE

But I've got to ring him, Mrs G.

MRS GRANT

I've got to ring vet. Coalface isn't well.

ANNIE

There's going to be a war, Mrs Grant!

ANNIE shows MRS GRANT headline in the Daily Mirror: K VERSUS K - CUBAN SHOWDOWN TODAY. Coalface tries to eat the paper.

MRS GRANT

If there's going to be a war, I'm not having Coalface sick. And if your husband hadn't signed up, he'd be safe as houses now - down pit. Bombs won't get 'em there.

In desperation, ANNIE runs to the head of the queue and pulls open the door interrupting a MAN on the phone.

We recognise Teddy boy, GEORGE, from 1956, by the tattoo on his hand. He is now dressed in an NCB donkey jacket.

GEORGE

And 2/6 each way on Mac the Knife...

ANNIE looks down embarrassed.

ANNIE

Sorry, George.

GEORGE puts his hand over the mouthpiece.

GEORGE

What's up, love?

ANNIE

I've got to ring Joe. Urgent like.

GEORGE mutters into the phone, puts the receiver down and holds the door open for ANNIE. Their eyes meet.

GEORGE

Why've you come back?

ANNIE nods down at the baby.

ANNIE

Mam's helping. Joe's too busy wi' tanks.

GEORGE smiles at the baby. ANNIE smiles at GEORGE and goes into the box.

She plonks her baby on the coin box and dials the operator.

OPERATOR

(Impersonally)

Operator service.

ANNIE

I want a Dorset number. Bovington
Camp 559...

ANNIE blows at the dust in the window frame and bites an unvarnished fingernail. A low flying plane swoops overhead. ANNIE ducks, the baby starts to cry.

OPERATOR

That number's unobtainable.

ANNIE

Unobtainable? But I've got to speak to me husband. Try again, please.

Another pause. ANNIE comforts the baby and sticks a dummy in its mouth. She lights a cigarette and looks at a heart and arrow sign above the mirror - scratched and faded, but still legible: JANET/GEORGE 1956. She smiles.

OPERATOR

I'm sorry. Number's not available today.

ANNIE starts to cry.

OPERATOR

Sorry, love. Army camp, in't it?

ANNIE nods into the phone, still sobbing.

OPERATOR

Lines got to be kept clear see? I'll...

But the line goes dead. ANNIE bashes the receiver. The baby ejects its dummy and cries again. Annie taps on the rest, but the phone is dead. She stubs out her cigarette, grabs the baby and pushes open the door.

ANNIE

(Shouting)

Phone's gone dead.

People crowd round the box.

GEORGE

Ruskies must've dropped bomb on Barnsley.

A siren goes off. All but MRS GRANT run off home. She enters the box to check the phone for herself.

MRS GRANT

Bloody Tories

FADE UP BOB DYLAN 'TALKING WORLD WAR THREE BLUES'

FADE TO BLACK.

7. INT/EXT. PHONE BOX - LATE AFTERNOON (AUGUST 1966).

Close up of a hand tapping out numbers on the receiver rest. We tilt up to reveal a BOY of seventeen in an anorak with a mod haircut. He waits for the number to connect. It is engaged. He slams the receiver down and goes outside.

Two scooters are parked beside the box with a transistor blaring from one of them. A SECOND BOY sits astride it and swigs a bottle of beer. He hands bottle to the FIRST BOY.

ANNIE (now aged 28) approaches. She is heavily made up, has a bouffant hair style and wears a mini skirt and high heels. She is smoking and swaying slightly as though she might have been drinking. She seems to look tougher, less fragile than in previous scenes and is starting to show her age.

The BOYS watch. They catcall in a half hearted manner. She ignores them, apart from a desultory waggle of the hips, and goes into the box stubbing out her cigarette on the way.

Inside, ANNIE doesn't dial but looks at her watch. She also holds her nose and repositions her feet whilst tracing a finger across a crack in one of the panes. The FIRST BOY opens the door.

FIRST BOY

You gonna use it or what...?

ANNIE

I'm waiting on a call.

FIRST BOY

I can see that.

ANNIE

A *private* call...

FIRST BOY

On a public phone?

The phone rings. ANNIE leans across and pulls the door shut nearly catching the BOY's hand. She lights up a second cigarette. The dead match sizzles on the damp floor.

ANNIE coughs on the smoke and snatches up the receiver.

ANNIE

Hello?

OPERATOR'S VOICE

(With German accent)

Frickley 582?

ANNIE

Yes.

OPERATOR'S VOICE

Will you pay charges for a call from
Paderborn, West Germany?

ANNIE

Yes. Joe? Hello, love. Fine. Karen's fine.
Mum and Dad too. I took them your present

She leans against the phone box window so that her skirt is pressed against the glass. She draws on her cigarette.

Mam's bearing up, putting on brave face
and that. Glad I came back though. She
needs someone about the house. Stops her
brooding. Aye. I've put flowers on grave -
from all of us. Poor old dad.

She turns to wipe away a tear and comes face to face with the FIRST BOY smooching against the window. She mouths 'Piss off' and returns to her call.

ANNIE

Anyway, good to talk to you love - and for
free. *(She laughs)*. So long as they don't
cop us. Who do you suppose gets bill?

She laughs and coughs.

Door opens and the FIRST BOY leans in.

LAD

Look, love, I've an important call to
make.

ANNIE blows smoke in his face. He retreats.

ANNIE

Just some lads getting impatient. No, Joe,
just some lads. Who? I don't know...

She peers through glass. The SECOND BOY is opening another
beer. The FIRST BOY taps his watch. She blows him a kiss.

Mrs Grant's son, Tony - one of them.
Don't be daft, Joe, he's only sixteen.
(GETTING ANGRY) Joe! That's better. Now
give us a kiss - nice and slow. Mm!

Outside, a queue has formed behind the boys as the sound of
kissing down the phone mingles with the music from their
transistor. The second BOY plays guitar Who style.

FADE UP THE WHO 'TALKING ABOUT MY GENERATION'

FADE TO BLACK.

8. EXT/INT. PHONEBOX - DAY (MAY 1970).

(Style note - acid/psychedelic films with fisheye lens etc)

Phone box in extreme wide shot. LONG HAIREY YOUTH in flared
jeans closes back doors of dark green telephone van. He
climbs in and drives off. Young GIRL, 8 years old, with a
band round her hair and a long flowered skirt waits outside
along with small terrier, who is tethered to a fence. In her
right hand the GIRL is clutching a crumpled scrap of paper.

MRS GRANT comes out and holds the door open.

MRS GRANT

Hello, Karen. Granny's phone broke?

KAREN nods.

MRS GRANT

It's what happens once Tories get back
(nodding towards interior of the box),
you should see what they've done in there!

KAREN looks into the box.

MRS GRANT

(continuing)

How is your mum?

KAREN

Alright.

MRS GRANT

(Picking up dog)

Gormley's not well, you know

KAREN

Oh.

MRS GRANT

Keeps passing wind - and sneezing

KAREN

Oh

The dog sneezes. KAREN darts inside the box.

She is confronted by a new grey steel button-less coin box. She reads the instructions and then dials 100.

OPERATOR

Number please.

KAREN

(reading from scrap of paper)

Belfast 543216.

OPERATOR

You can dial that yourself now - STD.

The code is: 0232

KAREN

Thank you.

She presses down the rest, carefully places a 2p on the silver coin plate and starts to dial. The phone rings and is answered. The GIRL pushes in her 2p.

MAN'S VOICE

(Crisp, military)

Belfast Barracks. Blidworth speaking.

KAREN

I want to speak to me dad.

VOICE

Who is this?

KAREN

Karen. Karen Sugden. I'm in a phone box ...

VOICE

I see - well...

KAREN

I've only got 2p - so, could you be quick?

At that moment, the door to the box flies open.

ANNIE'S VOICE

That's where you are.

KAREN slams down the receiver.

ANNIE looms large in the doorway.

ANNIE

What's wrong with Gran's phone?

KAREN shrugs her shoulders and starts to screw up the bit of paper in her hand. ANNIE grabs it from her. She reads the number and then hits KAREN on the face.

ANNIE

How dare you! Where'd you get this?

KAREN is crying.

KAREN

I just wanted to talk to him. Oh, mum, why can't we be with him?

ANNIE

(Voice softening)

I've told you, love. Army don't allow it. Anyway you'd hate barracks.

KAREN

He might get killed. Soldiers get shot all the time. I've seen it - on the telly.

ANNIE kneels down to comfort KAREN

KAREN *(continuing)*

And when he is home, you two just argue - shout and that. Oh, mum!

KAREN buries her face in her mother's shoulder.

ANNIE

It'll be alright, love. I promise.
Come on now, dry those eyes.

ANNIE gets a hanky from her sleeve and dries KAREN'S eyes.

FADE UP PINK FLOYD 'UMMAGUMMA'

FADE TO BLACK

9. INT/EXT. PHONEBOX - DAWN (28th FEBRUARY 1974)
(*Style note - early Ken Loach.*)

Though it is dark the box is not lit and the lights of a new petrol station in the background are extinguished. The wheel of the mine is still. Snow lies on the surrounding ground. A placard on a stick is propped against the box.

Headlights of car approach and we read 'Official NUM picket' on the placard. A MAN in an NCB jacket appears out of the box and picks it up. Car door slams. The DRIVER, in a smart blue overcoat, approaches the box. He shouts to the MAN.

DRIVER

(*Well spoken*)

Working is it?

The MAN nods and walks off with his placard.

The driver dials an operator. Under his overcoat, which he has unbuttoned to get at his wallet, he wears a smart suit and tie. He holds a plastic card in front of him.

DRIVER

I'd like to make a credit card call.
4432 6544 3249 7566 (*he ignites a lighter
and looks at the dial*) Frickley 582...
Barnsley 3216... Thank you.

As he waits to be connected, the DRIVER gets out a blue rosette and pins it on the lapel of his overcoat.

DRIVER

Hello? Dearne Valley Conservatives? It's Frinton here. Miles Frinton, the M.P., yes Look I'm stuck in the back of beyond (*he ignites lighter*) at - Frickley - and I'm meant to be helping get the vote out for Lubbock, your candidate. Whether he stands a chance or not is irrelevant, but how the hell do I find your offices? Past pit, yes, 3rd left, over stream, sign for Rawmarsh...

We cut outside, approaching the box from the point of view of someone. Sound of a child's sobbing and the out of breath gasps of someone else. We get closer to the box, the DRIVER comes out and holds the door. The camera stops.

DRIVER

My God. You okay...?

Cut to shot of ANNIE (now aged 36) and KAREN aged 12.

ANNIE's face is covered in blood and her eye is swollen, her hair is short but uncombed.

KAREN is sobbing.

ANNIE

Aye, I'm alright. Just let us in box.

The DRIVER steps aside. ANNIE and KAREN enter the box.

DRIVER

If I can be of assistance - I've a car...

ANNIE

No, ta. Just bugger off. I'll be alright.

DRIVER shrugs his shoulders. The car starts and drives off.

ANNIE has a slip of paper in her hand. She dials a number and pushes in 10p. It won't go in. The phone box is full.

ANNIE

Hello? Is that refuge? Damn!

She tries the coin again but it just jams.

Hello? Hello?

She turns to KAREN

Karen? Karen! For Christ's sake, don't just stand there. Give us a 2p, quick!

KAREN starts to cry. ANNIE puts receiver down to hug KAREN.

Sorry, love. Look, I'll ring the police.

KAREN breaks away and runs off the way she came, stumbling through the semi darkness in her skimpy furry jacket, school skirt and platform heels. ANNIE calls after her.

Karen! Karen!

In desperation she dials 999.

ANNIE (*continuing*)
Police? I'm at Frickley 582 and hurry.

She tries to light a cigarette, but her lighter is blown out by the wind through a broken pane.

Hello? Police? Look me husband's been hitting me. He's in the army, on sick leave. I don't know - fatigue or summat (*she drags impatiently on the cigarette*) at me mother's house, she's in hospital. Yes, yes, we were arguing - about me working for election committee. Said it were none of my business. Said I were sleeping around... no... no... NO!
(*She bites on her lip to control herself*)
It weren't 'just a domestic dispute' - cause he kept hitting me that's why. Well? Can you help? Me? To the station? Don't be daft... You'll send someone in an hour? He'll kill me before then... He will.

She bursts into tears and as she slams the receiver back the whole coin box mechanism breaks off the wall and crashes to the ground. She slumps to the floor too. Running footsteps approach. KAREN pulls open the door.

KAREN
(*Very out of breath*)
Mam! Mam! A man's coming.
I think it's dad.

ANNIE lies sobbing on the floor. KAREN hands her 2p.

KAREN (*continuing*)
Here, look? I found this.

Sound of footsteps approaching. ANNIE pulls KAREN close to her. Legs appear behind the huddled figures on the floor.

MAN'S VOICE
Annie? You alright?

ANNIE looks up to see ex-Ted GEORGE, now in his 40's, coal dark face, grey hair. Pinned to his jacket is a red rosette.

ANNIE
George.

GEORGE helps her up. KAREN hides behind her mother.

Seen through the window of the phone box, the three walk off into the dawn. We pull focus back to a sign stuck on a cracked pane in the foreground: 'Phone boxes save lives'.

FADE UP ABBA 'WATERLOO'.

FADE TO BLACK.

10. EXT/INT. PHONE BOX - DAY (June 1977).
(*Style note - Derek Jarman?*)

Sunny day. Coloured buntings with union jacks stretch from phone box to nearby telegraph poles. The box has been freshly painted, windows mended. Sound of laughter, brass bands, children playing games. TWO PUNKS appear from behind camera, blocking their ears. They push into the phone box closing the door behind them. The girl is KAREN (now 15). She has bright orange hair, torn clothes and chains. Her BOYFRIEND looks similar though is more heavily made up.

BOYFRIEND
Makes yer sick.

KAREN opens the phone box door and screams down the street.

KAREN
Stuff the Jubilee! What about me?

BOYFRIEND pulls her back in, she pulls his head down and they kiss violently, her pushing him against the wall, ripping his t-shirt even more. Band strikes up 'God Save the Queen'. BOYFRIEND breaks away, pulls spray can from a back pocket and writes 'SEX' on the phone box wall. KAREN lights a cigarette and massages her BOYFRIEND's bottom.

Outside, we see ANNIE (aged 39) walking down the street. She is smartly dressed in a white blouse and calf length skirt. She calls for KAREN. KIDS point to the phone box. ANNIE breaks into a run, reaches the box and yanks open the door.

From inside, we see ANNIE's irate face. The BOYFRIEND swirls the paint spray round towards her like a gun.

ANNIE takes it out of his hand.

ANNIE

Don't mess up phone box love.
It's an old friend in village.

She turns to KAREN who has pressed her nose up against the glass to avoid her mother's gaze.

ANNIE (cont)

Karen! What's going off?

KAREN shrugs and spits tobacco onto the floor.

ANNIE (cont)

What about street party? What about
kids' fancy dress?

KAREN and BOYFRIEND snigger.

ANNIE (cont)

It's a lovely day. Folk having fun.
Why stay stuck in here?

KAREN

Calls to make.

ANNIE

There's a phone at home - and a telly and
settee for a kiss and cuddle. I'm
broadminded, you know. So's George.

KAREN spits. BOYFRIEND knocks his head against the wall.

ANNIE (cont)

What more do you want?

KAREN

Me dad. Joe bloody Sugden

ANNIE bites her lip, holding back tears with difficulty.

ANNIE

That's hurtful, Karen. You know Joe
and I had to separate.

KAREN

Don't fucking cry, mam. You always cry.

ANNIE turns and walks off down street towards the laughter
and music. The phone rings in the box.

The BOYFRIEND picks up the receiver and rips it from the
wall. KAREN's make-up smudges with tears.

The camera moves up and out of the phone box onto the Crown
insignia on the side of the roof.

FADE UP SEX PISTOLS 'GOD SAVE THE QUEEN'.

FADE TO BLACK

11. EXT/INT. PHONEBOX - DAY (JUNE 1982).

(Style note - TV series/soap)

We pull out from Crown insignia now peeling and wet - MUSIC
from previous scene merges into Elgar. Rain pours down. The
phone box is a forlorn sight with windows broken and a spray
painted slogan, 'Tories Out', slashed across its back wall.

We become aware of sobbing. The camera tracks round to the
front of the box and in towards the door and a broken pane.

Inside, a WOMAN IN HER SIXTIES holds the receiver and cries.
Water cascades down panes behind her and drums on the roof.

Outside a battered old mini draws up with ANNIE (now aged
44) at the wheel. She checks her hair (greying) in the
mirror and then looks through a file.

She climbs out and runs towards the phone box, protecting
the file under her C&A raincoat. She opens the door.

ANNIE

Mrs Sugden! Betty! What you doing here?

She puts her file on the empty directory holder, takes the receiver from MRS SUGDEN's hand and replaces it.

ANNIE (*continuing*)

Is your phone not working?

MRS SUGDEN

It's not that. (*Pause*) I didn't want them calling home. Geoff might have answered...

MRS SUGDEN sobs again.

ANNIE puts an arm round her.

ANNIE

What's happened, love?

MRS SUGDEN looks up warily.

MRS SUGDEN

Joe's dead. In Falklands. Sergeant Sugden doin' his duty - like he always did.

She starts to cry.

ANNIE

Oh, my God! No one told me.

MRS SUGDEN

Well, I knew you two didn't get on and seeing as what you're married to George now...

ANNIE

He's Karen's dad, Betty. And I did love him.

They embrace each other as the rain pours down and then ANNIE leads MRS SUGDEN across to the mini.

In the phone box, the file falls onto the wet floor. Pictures of exotic underwear from a catalogue fall out, along with a list of names to be contacted. They lie soaking up the rain - next to cigarette ends, a contraceptive box, and an old torn copy of the Sun with the headline 'GOTCHA'.

FADE UP POLICE 'MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE'

FADE TO BLACK

13. INT/EXT. PHONEBOX - NIGHT (LATE AUTUMN 1984)
(*Style note - political thriller*)

The phone box light flickers on and off. Sound of shouting and police sirens in background, blue lights flash in the distance, marching feet approach and then fade.

We become aware that ANNIE (now aged 46) is in the box. She is dialling and redialling a number that is engaged. Two thermoses are standing on the directory holder.

ANNIE stops trying to phone and pours herself some soup. There is now a new liquid crystal read out phone with a blue receiver installed.

The phone box door bursts open and a YOUTH with a crash helmet pushes in. He has been running and is out of breath.

YOUTH

Excuse us, love. Cops have gone mad
out there.

He jams the door shut behind him. ANNIE reopens the thermos and pours him a cup of soup. She hands it to him.

ANNIE

You're Mrs Grant's grandson, aren't you?

The YOUTH (18) nods. His face is white, his hands shaky.

YOUTH

Mark. Tony's son.

ANNIE

You carried coffin at funeral,
didn't you?

MARK nods

ANNIE (cont)

Grand woman, your Gran. Who's got
puppy?

MARK

(smiling)

Scargill? Me dad. Takes him on picket lines. Dog loves it.

They laugh. MARK relaxes a bit and sips at his soup.

MARK (cont)

How's Karen?

ANNIE

Fine. Finished at College now.

MARK

Staying in London, is she?

ANNIE nods, a look of sadness on her face.

Noise outside gets louder with the sound of running feet getting closer.

MARK looks over his shoulder and shivers.

ANNIE

Stay put, love. You'll be alright here.

She pats the phone box affectionately and blows dust from a corner as she did when a child. Then she dials again. This time the phone rings. But outside there is increased shouting and running, even horses hooves galloping. A vehicle screeches to a halt very close, causing a blue light to flash round the inside of the intermittently lit phone box. Doors slam, shouts of 'There's one of the bastards'.

MARK's fingers tighten on the silver door handle.

ANNIE looks out.

The phone is answered. A middle class voice says 'Hello, Cambridge Miners' Support Group'.

A crash of breaking glass from three sides as the phone box is attacked. ANNIE drops the phone and protectively leans across MARK trying to help him hold the door shut.

A boot comes through a bottom pane.

MARK starts to cry.

The door is yanked open and TWO BOILER-SUITED MEN in masks flail at MARK and ANNIE crouched on the floor. ANNIE holds onto MARK, refusing to let the men take him away.

A truncheon hits ANNIE's head and in slow motion her face slumps against the wall where the receiver is dangling.

WE FADE TO BLACK AND SILENCE. NO MUSIC.

14. EXT. PHONEBOX STREET - DAY (1988 AS AT START.)

The phone box - its innards removed - is hoisted up onto a truck where a row of other red boxes are chained together.

We pull back past yellow British Telecom van (ENGINEERS in smart designer overalls), on past the GROUP OF CHILDREN, to ANNIE (aged 50) standing in foreground watching the scene.

Her face is heavily made up, her hair stylishly permed, tinted in places, perhaps to cover greyness. She wears a leather trouser suit, expensive probably but unsuitable, dehumanising. Her eyes look tired, resigned, tranquilised.

A white Golf GTi hatchback draws up. A woman in a black mini-skirted suit and hat gets out and runs across to ANNIE.

Close to we recognise KAREN (now 28) carefully made up. In the background, an equally smartly dressed YOUNG MAN waves.

KAREN

Happy Birthday, Mum. How's it feel
to be fifty?

ANNIE shrugs and allows herself to be kissed by KAREN.

KAREN (cont)

George said we'd find you here.
Saying goodbye to an old friend,
he said.

ANNIE nods. KAREN's boyfriend, DAVID, joins them. He has a southern accent and wears designer clothes. He avidly takes photos of the scene.

DAVID

(*Pointing at the phone boxes*)
Fancy one on the patio, mother?

ANNIE

Don't be daft. It's a public phone.

DAVID

(Ignoring her reply)

We could buy you one, if you like -
for your birthday.

ANNIE

You've bought us quite enough.
Thanks, love.

KAREN

Come on Mum, let's go.

She takes her mother by the arm. DAVID stays behind taking a last picture of the boxes on the lorry, then slings the camera over his shoulder and walks off clicking his fingers.

Now we are up on the back of the lorry, inside the phone box, looking back through a cracked pane at ANNIE and KAREN getting into the car. ANNIE turns and waves as the lorry starts up and moves off.

The figures get smaller. The motionless winding wheels recede.

CUT TO:

Shot from above of telephone boxes chained together on back of lorry being driven down motorway.

FADE UP ANONYMOUS SYNTHESISER MUSIC - FADE TO BLACK

15. EXT. WELL TO DO GARDEN IN SOUTH ENGLAND - DAY (SUMMER 1990).

Titles roll over shot of the phone box in a garden with a large house in the background. The box is freshly painted, cracked windows mended with only a small hole in the side of the roof where the Crown used to be. A MAN in expensive casual clothes appears with a large gin and tonic in his hand. He surveys the garden and then goes to the phone box, opens the door and sits down on a wicker garden chair inside. He sips his drink and then reaches for a radio phone hanging on the back wall of the box and starts to dial.

T H E E N D