

## **Behind Closed Doors**

Excerpt from 44' Audio Drama

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**SCENE 1: INT: BACK CORRIDORS OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF ART**

SFX: TWO PAIRS OF FOOTSTEPS; ONE IRREGULAR, LIGHTER, ONE SOLID, REGULAR.

GUARD: Miss? Can I help you Miss?

YVETTE: Ms. Uh – yes. Uh – no. I have a piece of paper –

GUARD: The entrance to the galleries is back out where you’ve come and round the front.

YVETTE: Yes – I know. I’m an artist.

GUARD: Lots of those here, love.

YVETTE: I’m a judge.

GUARD: What are we? An episode of Mr Benn? The entrance is back...

YVETTE: I’m looking for Room 13.5

GUARD: Platform 9 and three-quarters?

YVETTE: No – 13 and -

GUARD: The prize panel.

YVETTE: Yes

GUARD: Last year’s winner?

YVETTE: Yes

GUARD: Down the corridor; take a left by the Dendritic Representation of Pain (2015), and a right by the Inverted Oak Tree Representing Death (2020).

YVETTE: They’re my works -

GUARD: Yeah



YVETTE: They're not here. Are they?

GUARD: No. You'll need to be around another 200 yrs for that.

YVETTE: Am I on the right floor?

GUARD: Oh yeah

YVETTE: And the right wing?

GUARD: Oh yeah

YVETTE: OK, so if that's 10.8 –

GUARD: It's right here. You're in the right place. We just took the numbers off.

YVETTE: But how...

GUARD: ...were you supposed to find it? Dumb luck.



**SCENE 2: INT: JUDGING PANEL ROOM IN THE RA**

**SFX:** SOUND OF COFFEE BEING POURED, SOFT CLANK OF CUPS

**MARK:** I was desperate for a wazz – and those troughs looked just like pissoirs. All men in a monastery, eh, what harm could there be?

**LOTTIE:** Milk?

**MARK:** Black as it comes. Oh – are we allowed to say that now?

**SEAMUS:** Ancient communal washing basins, actually. Very sacred secular –

**SFX:** COFFEE CUP, WITH SAUCER, BEING PUT DOWN ON THE TABLE

**MARK:** So I'm standing there – ahhhh – the relief - and a monk passes by; not a flicker.

**SEAMUS:** The Philistines were the first serious challenge to the people - self-defined as - the Israelites

**MARK:** They've got bugger all to do with me pissing in your sink

**SEAMUS:** After wandering in the desert for 40 years,

**MARK:** This story's going to take 40 years

**SEAMUS:** the Israelites settled and were ruled by Judges.

**LOTTIE:** OK. OK. How about we all settle and 'rule like Judges'?

**MARK:** Who ordered the coffee? I haven't tasted coffee like this since 1989.

**SEAMUS:** It's only when the Philistines come along – that they decided they needed a King: Saul.



MARK: Save it for the Booker Seamus.

SEAMUS: Saul is killed by the Philistines.

LOTTIE: Ooo look: biscuits.

SFX: RUSTLING OF BISCUIT WRAPPER

SEAMUS: David becomes the new king.

LOTTIE: All butter? Not very Vegan-uary.

SFX: GUARD OPENS THE DOOR.

SEAMUS: David defeats the Philistines, unites Judah and Israel  
and sets up the capital of Jerusalem.

MARK: I only get out of bed for Oat Crunch

LOTTIE: Seamus – what's your point?

SEAMUS: We have a new judge.

LOTTIE: Ah! Yvette. Good of you to join us.

YVETTE: Sorry I'm late - I had trouble –

LOTTIE: Biscuit?

GUARD: Don't mind if I do. Got any Oat Crunch? I'll be back for  
lock up.

SFX: CLOSING DOOR.



**SCENE 3: NEWS BULLETIN**

REPORTER: It seems that every year controversy erupts from the Joshua Art Prize. Works nominated or awarded the prize spark outrage with the public. So what's new? The controversy this year has a different flavour. Rather than the public being outraged, it's the art community itself.

SFX: LAYERED SPOKEN TWEETS, VOX POPS

VOX 1: It's a total sell out. The judges have totally shafted us.

VOX 2: It's what everyone thinks contemporary art is – a con – something a five year old could make.

VOX 3: Blue Peter would have been proud. It's 'sticky-backed plastic' galore – it's only missing an empty washing up bottle.

VOX 4: Should have known. 'The Establishment' are alive and kicking and can never be trusted. This was the one area where proper art was celebrated – and they've made it into a joke. Shame on the judges. Shame on them.

VOX: 5: This is the 'Hallmark' of a new low in the cultural life of the UK.

VOX 6: #Hallmark of Shame.

VOX 7: #Hallmark of Shame.



**SCENE 4: INT: JUDGING PANEL ROOM IN THE RA**

LOTTIE: So we've got 4 on our long list – just 9 more to go.

YVETTE: I'm only 3 minutes late – how did you manage that?

MARK: The power of the 'Oat Crunch' and obscenely bad coffee

LOTTIE: Today we need to get to a long list of 13

YVETTE: OK despite all that - I'd just like to say this is a massive honour -

MARK: Yawn

YVETTE: You what?

MARK: Honoured, Grateful. That's what you say when you've won. You're on the other side of the fence now love.

YVETTE: And who are you? Actually – who are any of you?

LOTTIE: We all know each other.

YVETTE: I don't know you. Who are you?

LOTTIE: Mark?

MARK: I'm Mark Grayson. Founder, CEO and Executive Chairman of Grayson Global Media.

LOTTIE: You don't have to sound like you're on Zoom Mark.

MARK: OK then: I'm the big dog. Listen to me. Do not deviate. Do not pass Go. Do not collect £200.

LOTTIE: - with the usual subtlety. Seamus?

SEAMUS: I'm Seamus Loughlin. Architect. We've just opened the Secular Monastery in Arnhem

MARK: With open pissoirs



SEAMUS: And I have a book coming out shortly on Modern Secular Sacred buildings.

LOTTIE: And I'm Lottie Wolfson. Chair of this panel. Seasoned board member of the Arts Council, Institute of Contemporary Arts, NED for the Eastbourne Towner, Bristol Arnolfini and who are they... oh yes, V&A Dundee. It's worth me restating the rules, in case 'anyone's' unfamiliar with the process.

YVETTE: Thank you Ms Wolfson. I'm –

LOTTIE: We know who you are. We know everyone. We start with a long long-list of 25. Then we publish a long list of 13. Then a short list of 3. Then we announce a winner. No unofficial contact with the candidates. No bribes to be taken. Chatham House rules. What happens behind closed doors, stays behind closed doors. Clear?

MARK: Crystal.

YVETTE: So how does the process work?

LOTTIE: [whispers] I think I've just told you

YVETTE: Do we have criteria? Do we vote?

LOTTIE: No. The decisions are unanimous.

YVETTE: How do we decide?

LOTTIE: We judge the work.

YVETTE: Yes – but how?

LOTTIE: This is getting a bit existential

YVETTE: Are there criteria?



LOTTIE: We're experienced judges; appointed by the prize board.

MARK: Are you on that too Lottie?

LOTTIE: No – my sister is. Yvette – if you're not sure

YVETTE: Doesn't that leave the process massively open to unconscious bias? And even worse – conscious bias?

LOTTIE: I suggest just sitting in and seeing how we proceed. You'll get the hang of it. Don't feel any pressure to participate early doors.

YVETTE: Who are the nominees?

SFX: A PAPER DOSSIER IS THROWN ACROSS A DESK.

LOTTIE: 'NB' they're only nominees when they're nominated.

YVETTE: So what are they now?

MARK: Self-important navel gazers? 'Wetters'...

LOTTIE: Mark – put a sock in it. He's joking. This is a serious business. Very serious.

SEAMUS: Deadly serious I'd say. Deadly.

YVETTE: And how do we get from 13 to 3?

LOTTIE: Next session

YVETTE: When's that?

LOTTIE: 3 weeks time. After that, studio visits. You'll remember from last year, you would have been visited.

YVETTE: I wasn't visited.

LOTTIE: You were.



YVETTE: I wasn't. First I heard of it was my mum calling me up, saying she seen I'd won it on the Daily Mail sidebar of shame. She'd never been so proud.

MARK: We wanted your pics for a painkiller ad.

YVETTE: No chance.

MARK: You wouldn't give us the rights apparently.

YVETTE: My work's not about 'killing' pain

MARK: You missed out big time. Who wants 'ow' when they can have a little white pill instead? You sell well to stressed ABC1s with migraines. Under-privileged, anti-establishment, 'not afraid to talk about what hurts'. You could have won a cash prize.

YVETTE: I literally did.

MARK: Pish. I mean real money. Once we'd tweaked it a bit, created a 'new work out of copyright' – it was one of the top 5 most successful campaigns of last year.

SEAMUS: Damning with faint praise if I ever heard it

LOTTIE: People! 9 more to go! We don't want to be here all day

YVETTE: How long are we here for?

LOTTIE: Til Steve chucks us out. After dark, we're a security risk to 'The Art'. Ha!



## **SCENE 5: NEWS BULLETIN**

**REPORTER:** The Joshua Prize controversy deepened last night, as previous winner and judge Yvette Somerland released secretly taped recordings of the judging panel discussions.

Somerland posted the recordings, made on her personal smartphone, on her gallery's website, commenting that she felt "compelled" to expose the "lack of due process and care" she had witnessed during the Joshua Prize judging process, adding that she had been personally "shocked" and felt "betrayed" by the outcome.

But criticism has been levelled at Somerland herself for breaking the rules of the jury by taping and releasing what happened 'behind closed doors'. In doing so, she has betrayed the other judges and disrupted the process herself.

Somerland won last year's prize for her sculptures of exposed tree roots. Some are now asking: what does she stand to gain from exposing the Joshua Prize judging process?

Prices for Somerland's work sky-rocketed last year after winning the prize. Some have suggested these prices may be under pressure as the art community revolts against this year's judgement.



**SCENE 6: INT: JUDGING PANEL ROOM IN THE RA**

SFX: DOOR CLOSING

MARK: That took longer than usual

LOTTIE: That'll be the vat of 'undrinkable' coffee you've managed to down – leaving none for the rest of us

SEAMUS: You're really quite obsessed with piss aren't you Mark?

MARK: Better than being full of it Seamus. Or piss-poor. Or -

LOTTIE: NEXT! Number 15: Nathan Wells, painter. Creates small works in oils; subjects are usually household objects.

SFX: SOUND OF TEA BEING POURED

LOTTIE: That's my Oolong! Hands off!

SEAMUS: There's something Boccaccian about it ...

MARK: Dull as dishwater. Next!

YVETTE: Focaccian?-

LOTTIE: In your folios, page 19,

SEAMUS: ...in The Decameron

MARK: Had lunch with him last week.

YVETTE: What's posh bread got to do with /

MARK: /the price of bread these days.

LOTTIE: "Wells work ties together the mundane with the universal.

SEAMUS: 'The human comedy' as opposed to Dante's 'divine'

LOTTIE: Dishcloths invoke spiritual beings;



SEAMUS: told in the vernacular

LOTTIE: provoking the viewer

SEAMUS: stories of everyday objects and speech.

LOTTIE: to consider

SEAMUS: the extraordinary in the everyday.

LOTTIE: the extraordinary in the everyday.

YVETTE: That's an IKEA ad

MARK: My lot did that.

YVETTE: Can we talk about the actual work?! The brushwork is beautiful.

MARK: What - this?!

YVETTE: The palette is really subtle

MARK: Dull

YVETTE: No – not dull. I think the colour range is hauntingly

MARK: Dull

YVETTE: (EXHALES)

LOTTIE: So: bin?

YVETTE: No – it's good.

SEAMUS: An ode on a dishcloth

YVETTE: Are you in or out?

SEAMUS: Lottie?

LOTTIE: Seamus? We're long-listing – it really doesn't matter at this stage. Keep it in, rule it out...



YVETTE: Yes, but we're judging. We have to judge – something

LOTTIE: Yvette, this really works if you just trust in the process –  
okay?

YVETTE: (EXHALES) What is it about the middle-classes and  
olive oil?