

The West Wing Weekly
1.04: "Five Votes Down"

JOSH: There's no question in terms of Winnie-the-Pooh characters, Toby is Eeyore.

[West Wing Episode 1.04 excerpt]

TOBY: There's literally no one in the world that I don't hate right now.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: [Eeyore voice] Ohhh.

[Intro Music]

JOSH: Hi, you're listening to The West Wing Weekly. My name is Joshua Malina.

HRISHI: And I'm Hrishikesh Hirway. This episode is sponsored by Squarespace. We use Squarespace for our website: thewestwingweekly.com.

JOSH: And you can get started on your own website in minutes by going to squarespace.com/westwing.

HRISHI: Today we're talking about Episode 4 of Season 1 of *The West Wing*. It's called "Five Votes Down." The Netflix synopsis is: "The staff has 72 hours to rescue a gun control bill that needs five more votes in Congress to pass." We start off in this ballroom where President Bartlet's giving a speech about gun control, and we come in on him telling a story about President Harry Truman.

[West Wing Episode 1.04 excerpt]

BARTLET: And then one night he went in and set the briefcase down and he said, "Bess, why do you suppose it is only sons of bitches know how to lick a stamp?"

[laughter and applause]

[end excerpt]

JOSH: In the foreground, Leo is taking a call. They're five votes down on a bill they're trying to get passed. And we're getting -- even though it's in the background -- our first glimpse of Bartlet, his public persona. He's giving a rousing speech and he's kind of killing it. And we're getting little snippets: "Kids are dead" --

[West Wing Episode 1.04 excerpt]

BARTLET: I've got a neighbor whose friend is dead, whose husband is dead, whose mother is dead, kids are dead!

[end excerpt]

JOSH: It's a high-stakes topic, but I think it's sort of later on that massive and epic walk-and-talk that we actually discover, specifically, that it's a gun control bill, although maybe we've surmised that earlier?

HRISHI: I guess it depends on how closely you're paying attention to his speech through the parts that are coming through the screen while Leo and Toby are talking.

JOSH: It's worth noting here, as an older gentleman, I watch *The West Wing* [laughing] always with the close captioning on. So I was able to read the sort of snippets of the speech that's going on in the background. He's standing in front of a banner that reads "Practical Idealism," which would have made a good title for the episode because it really does inform the subsequent plot and what the administration is willing to do -- or sacrifice -- by way of idealism,

in order to practically get something accomplished. In any event, the scene from the ballroom leads into the mother of all walk-and-talks.

HRISHI: Epic.

JOSH: It's incredible. I think I watched it five times just to fully take in all the detail and how far they travel and how intricate the choreography is.

HRISHI: And it goes on for three minutes. How long does something like that take to film? How many times does it take to get something like that right?

JOSH: I actually looked up somewhere and I think I read that it took thirteen takes and that would be multiple hours and...

HRISHI: Would it be multiple days?

JOSH: No. I don't think so. I think you're in trouble if you've written a 3-minute section to the script that takes multiple days to shoot, you're in big, big trouble. Generally, you've got eight or nine working days to shoot a one-hour drama. Aaron's scripts tend to come in long. You know, you'd look just at the thickness of the script and you'd say, "Wow, we're going to have to speak pretty quickly just to get this all on film." So . . . this, I'm sure, was a massive undertaking. But I'm guessing it took, you know, third of a day, or half a day. And what an incredible piece of filmmaking.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: It's got what looks like hundreds of background. It leaves the ballroom, it --

HRISHI: Shot on location.

JOSH: On location, shot at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles. So, I, that was the other thing that hit me -- and I bet it did when you watched it -- sort of the shades of the RFK assassination.

HRISHI: Huh.

JOSH: It really made me think of Bobby Kennedy.

HRISHI: I didn't think of that.

JOSH: And of course, it's important to bear in mind that the whole thing is lit beautifully, and that the cameraman is spending [laughing] much of the time walking backwards.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: I think the shot starts behind them, so he's moving forward, and then he kind of do-si-dos with the main group that we're watching. And then for the rest of the piece -- the single take -- the guy is walking backwards holding a heavy Steadicam apparatus. So I made sure to look up: Dave Chameides -- C-H-A-M-E-I-D-E-S -- was the cameraman and hats off to that guy. What a shot.

HRISHI: And how about Thomas Del Ruth?

JOSH: Yeah, Thomas Del Ruth. He's the...he was the director of photography. So, the fact that the shot works is also, in large part, due to his work. Physically, it is grueling, but I think also it's an opportunity to do something -- especially back then -- you didn't see on TV too often. But even this, among walk-and-talks in general, this one really stands out for its ambition and its incredible execution. I know as an actor, these things are fraught with anxiety. Because if you're the person in a three-minute walk-and-talk who has the last line and you garble your words -- "All right, back to one" -- [laughing] I mean the whole thing is unusable. Right? You blow the last line of a walk-and-talk and you are an absolute goat. And everybody has to go back to one. So those things were always very high pressure.

HRISHI: Well knowing that, that makes my favorite line of the whole thing -- which is C.J.'s last line -- that much sweeter, when she turns to the, to the fangirls who are yelling at Josh and she says back to them:

[West Wing Episode 1.04 excerpt]

C.J.: It helps not to know him.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: That's a great little button and then right into the credits. One of the things I love about this centerpiece of the beginning of this episode is that it doesn't feel showy. It's one of those examples where the camerawork amplifies everything. You're seeing this team work almost like as a single organism. This is a team that is clicking. And in that way, it's a lovely reflection of a cast that works together the way a one-hour drama does. The hours are so insane. I think Richard Schiff once pointed out to me that we spent more time together than people spend with their families. So, these guys also -- I know, I came on midway, but -- they had a similar dynamic going on among them. And there...any chance to give each other grief would be jumped on. So they carried that into their onscreen relationships very nicely.

[West Wing Episode 1.04 excerpt]

BARTLET: You know what, Toby?

TOBY: Sir.

BARTLET: You're what my mother calls a pain in the ass.

TOBY: Well, that's what my mother calls it, too, Sir.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Most of the staff is one their way back to the Roosevelt Room to have a 1- or 2-in-the-morning meeting about this five votes down situation.

HRISHI: They think that they've got it. You know, they have their whip count, and then they realize some people have jumped ship. And all of a sudden they have a last-minute scramble. They have 72 hours to try and turn it around and win the vote.

JOSH: Leo mentions in the Roosevelt Room, in this late-night meet, the Minority Whip. But we never see him in this episode and my understanding of what the whip does is this is his bread and butter, right? He's the legislative enforcer. He's the guy who tries to make sure this kind of situation doesn't develop, and if it does, I would think he -- or she -- would be on it, getting people back in line. But it's handled by Josh and Leo and this core group. And do you think that's a -- is that a slight cheat? Wouldn't you expect to see the Whip getting involved in what our staff members eventually do in this episode?

HRISHI: Well, everything that I know about politics, really I, I only know from watching TV shows, unfortunately. So my only point of comparison is Frank Underwood in House of Cards. He plays the Whip in the first season.

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: And we see him whip the votes.

JOSH: We see Josh Lyman playing the kind of hardball that Frank would as Whip.

HRISHI: Yes, we are once again comparing one TV show to another TV show instead of real life. But yeah, that's what's happening. And it's also another example of Josh Lyman being like Rahm Emanuel, another enforcer in the White House.

JOSH: Leo's got a great line in there where he says:

[West Wing Episode 1.04 excerpt]

LEO: There are two things in the world you never wanna let people see how you make 'em: laws and sausages.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Although to be fair, I don't think that that's Leo's line. I think that was Otto von Bismarck in like the 1800s or something.

JOSH: Yeah, I guess Aaron felt it was in public domain by that point.

HRISHI: By that point, yeah. [laughing]

JOSH: You don't have to throw credit to Otto.

HRISHI: Shout-out to Prussia.

JOSH: Now also later in this scene, it comes up, and we see Mandy, at least, being good at her job.

HRISHI: Yeah, I think this is her first substantive contribution.

[West Wing Episode 1.04 excerpt]

MANDY: That's good.

LEO: Financial disclosure it is.

MANDY: No, I mean, that's good.

JOSH: She's right.

MANDY: C.J., feed them human interest, not just "Look, we're disclosing assets." I mean, people will really get a kick out of reading about how much money you guys have, especially when they find out you don't have any.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Maybe it'll work as a little bit of a smokescreen distraction from what's going on with Prop. 802.

HRISHI: There are three storylines really that are happening: trying to win back the votes --

JOSH: That's our A-plot.

HRISHI: Yeah, you've got the financial disclosure stuff, which is maybe the C-plot, and then the B-plot is Leo and his marriage.

JOSH: Right. In a show where there's such little real estate given to the personal lives of these characters, it really lands when we are given a little peek into their private lives. I almost jumped back when I saw Leo pulling up to his house. You know, it was almost jarring. Wait a minute, we're not in an office, we're not at the White House, we're not at an event. This is his house. One of the things that hit me -- I hate to take a shot at Margaret, but she is ultimately so helpful to Leo when it turns out he's forgotten his wife's anniversary. She helps him set up this whole dinner... night. Why wasn't she there to remind him [laughing] that that day was his wife's anniversary?

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: Margaret, played by NiCole Robinson. Margaret, you dropped the ball. All this could have been avoided if you'd just told him, "Hey, Leo, remember: today's your anniversary."

HRISHI: Although you get the sense that him forgetting the anniversary is hardly an exceptional moment. Or like this is not the thing that actually causes the rift.

JOSH: Mm-hmm.

HRISHI: This is just the last piece of something that's been building for years.

JOSH: Yeah, absolutely. You can see even when he's -- his wife is greeting him on the staircase -- "Where've you been?" and "It's late." She has almost a wry smile on her face for much of that scene. And you can read in that the number of times that similar things have happened. It's a really, it's a nice piece of acting in a very small amount of screen time.

HRISHI: And that's Sara Botsford who plays Jenny McGarry.

JOSH: They did a good job, John Spencer and she, bringing that relationship and filling it up in a small amount of screen time.

HRISHI: I was thinking about what Dulé had said about the dialogue as music. And there's this really beautiful moment -- I love the cadence of it, and the melody of it -- where Leo and Jenny are talking and he says:

[West Wing Episode 1.04 excerpt]

LEO: For me?

JENNY: Yeah.

LEO: From you?

JENNY: Yeah.

LEO: For what?

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: The music of the -- his delivery is so beautiful. It's like this:

[edited West Wing Episode 1.04 excerpt]

[music playing]

LEO: For me?

LEO: From you?

LEO: For what?

[end excerpt]

JOSH: I wanted to point out Toby's assistant, Carol, pops in, played by Melissa Fitzgerald. And it's worth noting that after her seven seasons on *The West Wing*, she has gone on to become the senior director of a great organization called Justice for Vets. This is yet another one of those great examples of someone -- I think in part being inspired by the show *The West Wing*, and in this case, actually one of the actresses on it -- and who has gone on to a life in public service and in pursuit of politics at its best. Justice for Vets is an organization that's devoted to creating a network of veterans' treatment courts that will help transform the way that veterans are handled in the criminal justice system, and it's doing great things. And if you do want to check it out: justiceforvets.org. A little shout-out to Melissa Fitzgerald, who was fantastic on the show and is doing wonderful things in real life now.

HRISHI: And there's a great piece on Melissa Fitzgerald that just came out in The Washington Post. I'll link to it on the website. But...I'm going to correct you on one thing there, though, Josh, because she's actually C.J.'s assistant.

JOSH: Is she? This is where this -- this is [laughing] where I defer to your super-fandom. I can't keep track of who's helping who. I thought she -- my take --

[HRISHI laughing]

JOSH: -- was that she's -- oh, is she? Maybe she's assistant to...the press...department? Was she C.J.'s personal --

HRISHI: She's C.J.'s assistant, but C.J., as the Press Secretary, she's part of the communications department.

JOSH: Well, as is Toby. So, isn't she assistant to --

HRISHI: He's the Director of Communications.

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: And under Toby is Sam --

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: -- and C.J., and under C.J. is Carol. So he is ultimately -- he's really her, Carol's, boss's boss. So technically she does work for him, but, but really her title is Assistant to the Press Secretary.

JOSH: You had to call me out publicly for that?

[HRISHI laughing]

JOSH: Really? You couldn't have let that slip by? Man.

HRISHI: Well, he has a different assistant.

JOSH: You're a stickler. I'm mean, don't get me wrong. If you hadn't, somebody would have on our website.

HRISHI: [laughing] Exactly. But I misspoke, too. I called Leo's daughter Mallory McGarry instead of Mallory O'Brien.

JOSH: We did get lightly spanked for that. I want to give a [crosstalk] shout out to the person who did it, but I've blocked her name.

HRISHI: [crosstalk] Yeah.

[HRISHI laughing]

JOSH: But she was right. So keep those corrections coming, people.

HRISHI: Okay, I want to talk about the moment when Josh puts on his sunglasses.

JOSH: So his scene with Katzenmoyer.

HRISHI: Yes, exactly. To me, this is -- Josh Lyman has kind of a David Caruso moment.

[JOSH laughing]

HRISHI: He puts on his shades and adopts a little bit of a George W. Bush twang.

[West Wing Episode 1.04 excerpt]

JOSH: President Bartlet's a good man. He's got a good heart. He doesn't hold a grudge. That's what he pays me for.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: To me, it's all leavened by the fact that as he walks off, you might notice that his tie is tucked into his pants.

[HRISHI laughing]

JOSH: And folks, go back and do a rewatch. His tie is tucked into his pants. Now, I'm gonna guess this is as a result of the fact that they clearly filmed this scene on a very windy day, although I'm guessing it was alternately gusty and less so. Because if you watch closely, on

Josh's -- Brad's -- side of the scene, it's clearly blowing hard. There's a lot of wind; his hair's all over the place. But when you're watching the Congressman -- when you're watching Katzenmoyer -- there doesn't seem to be any wind at all. [laughing] And this happens sometimes, you know. You film one actor's side of the scene and then the others. And maybe it was still when they filmed Katzenmoyer, not so much when they filmed Josh. And, then I think at some point, Brad, in another grotesque example of a poor decision, tucked his tie into his pants.

HRISHI: I will definitely post a screenshot of that on our Facebook and Twitter. So besides the initial epic walk-and-talk, there's another walk-and-talk later on that I really love that happens when they're back in the West Wing.

JOSH: Is this with Sam and Josh?

HRISHI: Yes.

[West Wing Episode 1.04 excerpt]

SAM: Where you going?

JOSH: Where you going?

SAM: I was following you.

JOSH: I was following you. [pause] Alright. Don't tell anyone this happened, okay?

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: They're only four episodes in, but they already are -- are kind of self-parodying a little bit.

JOSH: Right, he's trying to beat MADtv to the punch. They'll get to it eventually, but he got there first. He's aware.

HRISHI: So poor Leo is having a really -- he's having a rough time in this episode. I mean, he's gotta make a really hard -- an impossible call, maybe -- right?

[West Wing Episode 1.04 excerpt]

JENNY: It's not more important than your marriage.

LEO: It is more important than my marriage right now. These few years, while I'm doing this, yes, it's more important than my marriage.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: That -- that line lands.

HRISHI: Yeah. I don't think either of them are wrong, right? They're both completely justified.

JOSH: Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. I mean, he tries to buy it back a little bit by saying, you know, "for these next few years." But that's a rough thing to articulate to your spouse --

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: -- you come in second. The guy has pledged himself to public service and that's where she just knows nothing's going to change.

HRISHI: It's a beautiful rendition of a theme that we've seen in the past -- and we'll see in shows in the future -- which is people who are really excellent at their job, but their personal life is kind of a shambles.

JOSH: And I can, again, draw a direct line from *The West Wing* to *Scandal* and Olivia Pope, who's quite good at her job, but whose personal life [laughing] is, is utter shambles.

HRISHI: Yeah, or Leslie Knope, who's amazing at her government job and is so dedicated to it, but has no clue about romance or courting or having a personal life outside of work.

JOSH: That's right.

HRISHI: So that, that part is really brutal. I feel like that. And then, just like when you think that at least Leo's got -- got it down on the job side, he goes and he speaks to Mark Richardson, and

--

JOSH: That also does not go well for him.

HRISHI: No, he really...he really blows it. When he tries to lecture Mark Richardson, the look of utter, like, disbelief and indignation from the Congressman is so palpable.

JOSH: Very nicely played by Thom Barry.

[West Wing Episode 1.04 excerpt]

RICHARDSON: Please don't tell me how to be a leader of black men. You look like an idiot.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: It reminded me of a moment in *Sports Night* when Dan Rydell says to Isaac -- he makes a comment about Rosa Parks.

JOSH: Mm-hmm.

HRISHI: And Isaac says:

[Sports Night Episode 1.02 excerpt]

ISAAC: You know I love you, don't you?

DAN: Yeah.

ISAAC: And because I love you I can say this: no rich, young, white guy has ever gotten anywhere with me comparing himself to Rosa Parks.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: [laughing] Yeah, you're right, very similar moment.

HRISHI: A character's being so strident with their self-righteousness, and so, like, bent on their mission that they forget who they're speaking to and they end up looking like a jackass.

JOSH: Right. It's another nice moment of Aaron's writing being self-aware, because he is occasionally criticized for being on a soapbox or being preachy. And here he's writing Leo that way and then immediately punishing him for it. Which actually brought me back to that banner in front of which Bartlet stood at the beginning and "practical idealism." I think we've sort of come -- or I did, as a viewer -- over the course of this episode to assume that this 802 is a really good piece of legislation and we want to see it passed. And Richardson dressing down both Leo and this piece of legislation makes us realize that, in fact, probably what 802 represents is glacial progress in the "right direction," and we realize that the Bartlet administration really is practicing "practical idealism" and it's sort of putting to a side, maybe, a bill that really has teeth, in order to accomplish just the tiniest inch forward that maybe will lead them in the future to passing something that has some real effect.

HRISHI: Wow, so your take on the phrase "practical idealism" means that it's -- the practical part of it means that it's necessarily compromised.

JOSH: Well, I think in execution in this episode, yeah, that maybe not be the intent. But to me, I thought back immediately to that when I watched this scene. Richardson, not willing to compromise his idealism for something that, in practice, is not going to have much effect on the

street. And the Bartlet administration sort of capitulating to the fact that they've got to sort of back off what they want to accomplish in order to accomplish anything, and that maybe that'll be a step toward something a bit more significant in the future.

HRISHI: Right, Leo is essentially arguing for him to be more practical.

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: And Richardson is asking him to be more idealistic.

JOSH: Yeah, that's how I took it. Leo wants to do anything other than have to go to Hoynes to talk to Tillinghouse.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: So he sees if he can flip Richardson and just meets a brick wall.

HRISHI: This is now our second interaction between Hoynes and Leo, and this time it goes very differently from the first time. Hoynes, who had seemed kind of really like a villain the first time we encountered him -- being dismissive to C.J., calling the President "your pal" -- this time he's really much more conciliatory and, you know, immediately he has this empathy; he can sense that something is wrong when Leo comes into his office.

JOSH: Right, Leo just looks stricken and he picks up on it immediately.

HRISHI: And he offers him water. I mean, he just, he's just like a great guy for him. And he -- and he's -- he's like I'll deliver, I'll deliver this guy, don't worry about it, it's in the bag. And then there's this reveal that both Leo and Hoynes are recovering alcoholics.

[West Wing Episode 1.04 excerpt]

HOYNES: When was the last time you went to a meeting?

LEO: A.A.? What meeting could I possibly go to?

HOYNES: Mine.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: There must be politicians and judges and people of note that are dealing with issues of alcoholism, and where do you go, if you're somebody high-profile, to have an A.A. meeting? And I think I read somewhere that Aaron said, "I don't even really know if there was such a meeting in the White House, but it seemed to me that there probably must be."

HRISHI: Yeah, I -- I bought it.

JOSH: And I know John Spencer, may he rest in peace, dealt with issues of alcoholism and he's spoken publicly about it, and that he was interested to discover that this was a backstory that he shared with Leo McGarry, and he has said that he didn't feel like he was acting at that point -- this storyline was really very true and personal to him.

HRISHI: But then it turns out that Hoynes' selflessness is not selfless at all.

JOSH: Well, not entirely, I'm going to say. I'm going to say this is a creation of a complex character --

HRISHI: Yes, okay, you're right.

JOSH: And I think at the end of the episode, you don't think "this guy's a villain" or "this guy's a hero," and you realize he's actually a complex, sort of layered, human being, because while I think some of his reaching out to Leo, he had -- probably, at that point, already -- an ulterior motive. It's also, I think, there's a certain genuineness to it. And in fact, we are going to see Leo

-- at the end of the episode -- go to a meeting. But you're right, it turns out that as far as the politics that are being played, Hoynes has an endgame and he ends up soaking up, really, the great credit for getting 802 passed. And we've come to learn that 802, in the end, an opportunity for some good optics and some positive coverage of the President, rather than maybe a really great piece of legislation.

HRISHI: So maybe there is actually very little idealism to their practical idealism.

[West Wing Episode 1.04 excerpt]

LEO: We got what we deserved. It was hubris, and we got what we deserved. 'Night, everyone.'

[end excerpt]

JOSH: And then the whole episode gets a bit somber again, as we get a final scene where Leo makes his way down to that meeting in the basement, in a nondescript hallway with secret servicemen standing outside. And he says he wants to go into the card game, which is code for this A.A. meeting. And I loved the final image, which is the door is opened and you just see a very simple coffee pot on the table, which says "A.A. meeting."

HRISHI: Exactly.

JOSH: And it kind of just took my breath away. It was just a very simple, great image, as Leo makes his way in. Nice piece of art direction at that moment.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Or set decorating.

HRISHI: Right, right, that no matter where an A.A. meeting takes place, even if it's in the OEOB, you know, that's where the anonymous part comes in and there's going to be things that are going to be the same, no matter what.

JOSH: People in a room.

[ad break]

HRISHI: So we saw the President in the cold open -- the amazing walk-and-talk scene -- but we haven't seen him throughout the whole episode until he shows up again at the end. And one thing that they plant in that early scene -- and then gets called back -- is that he needs these back pills.

[West Wing Episode 1.04 excerpt]

CHARLIE: The First Lady called at 8:40, Sir. She wished you luck and told me to tell you to take your back medicine.

BARTLET: My back is fine.

CHARLIE: I have it here, Sir.

BARTLET: Those damn things make me goofy.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And despite his issues with them, when we see him again, he has taken them -- to great effect.

[West Wing Episode 1.04 excerpt]

BARTLET: Well, I like to roll up my sleeves and, you know, [pause] get involved.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: It's a very funny scene.

HRISHI: It's the first time we really see the President being incredibly un-presidential.

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: There's just a pause, and they cut to the rest of the staff and they just are looking at him [laughing] --

JOSH: Reaction shots, yeah.

HRISHI: Some deep comic relief.

JOSH: Yeah. He's feeling Sam's thigh.

[HRISHI laughing]

JOSH: He's really, really getting into people's names.

[West Wing Episode 1.04 excerpt]

BARTLET: Toby's a nice name, don't you think?

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: So he's just doing a comedy routine in this, Martin Sheen.

JOSH: Yeah, absolutely. It's a very, very funny scene, but it does not take you out. This is one of the things where I think that Aaron's writing works so well in *The West Wing* that it's got the space for very serious moments and for incredible, you know -- even slapstick-y -- levity and, at least I watching, don't really bump on the transition from one to the other.

HRISHI: Space is, I feel like, a great term, too, because one thing that I love about this scene -- and that I love about a lot of *West Wing* moments to come later -- is, despite the reputation for how rapid-fire the dialogue is, there are moments -- really effective moments -- and this scene is an example of that -- where nobody is talking, where people are just sort of all in a room and there are these long, awkward pauses, and they really milk them, and then they feel so foreign because you're used to every second being taken up by a lot of information. And here, [laughing] it's just everything slows down and everybody's thrown off, and I think you're supposed to feel that because there's just these gaps of silence where the President just trails off.

JOSH: That's right. You don't usually see that on this show which is so dialogue-heavy.

[West Wing Episode 1.04 excerpt]

C.J.: Mr. President, did you by any chance take your back pills?

BARTLET: I don't mind telling you, C.J., I was in a little pain there.

LEO: Which did you take, Sir, the Vicodin or the Percocet?

BARTLET: [pause] I wasn't s'posed to take 'em both?

[end excerpt]

JOSH: And it turns out specifically [laughing], that when you combine Vicodin and Percocet, it has the effect of taking "molly," or Ecstasy. [laughing]

HRISHI: Really?

JOSH: Well, this is my interpretation.

HRISHI: [laughing] Oh, you're saying based on Martin's performance.

JOSH: Yes, exactly. I don't know --

[HRISHI laughing]

JOSH: I don't have great –

[HRISHI laughing]

JOSH: -- experience with the combining of those two particular pharmaceuticals but it seems to make you -- it makes you want to hug people –

[HRISHI laughing]

JOSH: -- love people. It's a little bit like Bartlet has just come back from a rave.

HRISHI: Wait, Josh. Have you dropped molly?

JOSH: [laughing] Let's discuss this off-mic.

HRISHI: [laughing] This is great. [laughing]

[JOSH laughing]

HRISHI: This is great. Okay.

[HRISHI laughing]

[music]

JOSH: And that's it for our episode. Thanks so much for listening. We hope you'll join us next time.

HRISHI: We'll be joined by Eli Attie, who was Vice President Gore's chief speechwriter before then becoming a writer for *The West Wing*. In the meantime, you can catch Josh on Thursdays on ABC's *Scandal*.

JOSH: And you can check out Hrishi's other podcast, Song Exploder.

HRISHI: If you have comments or questions, you can discuss this episode with us and with other listeners at thewestwingweekly.com or on our Facebook page, facebook.com/thewestwingweekly.

JOSH: You can also find us on Twitter @joshmalina and @hrishihirway.

HRISHI: Ok.

JOSH: Ok.

HRISHI: What's next?

[Outro Music]