

The West Wing Weekly
1:11: "Lord John Marbury"
Guests: William Duffy and Peter James Smith

[Intro Music]

HRISHI: You're listening to the West Wing Weekly. I'm Hrishikesh Hirway.

JOSH: And I'm Joshua Malina. And we're here to discuss Season 1 Episode 11 of *The West Wing* titled Lord John Marbury. The story is by Patrick Caddell and Lawrence O'Donnell. The teleplay is by Aaron Sorkin and Patrick Caddell. And it was directed by Kevin Rodney Sullivan.

HRISHI: Here's the NBC synopsis. "The Kashmir border powder keg becomes more explosive when the Indian army invades Pakistani-held territory, making the threat of a nuclear confrontation frighteningly real to President Bartlet, who calls in Lord Marbury, an eccentric British diplomat with ties to both warring nations - and a weakness for booze. An angry Josh is subpoenaed to testify as the investigation into substance abuse among White House staffers grinds on towards its inevitable target: chief of staff Leo McGarry. Mandy floats a trial balloon among the staff to test their reaction to her notion of representing a liberal Republican. The President is surprised when Charlie asks him if he can date his willing daughter Zoey."

JOSH: I think angry Josh was the incredibly unpopular app sequel to Angry Birds.

[HRISHI laughs]

JOSH: No one bought it. Ok today, we're joined - this is exciting - by two very special guests. The actors who played Ed and Larry.

HRISHI: And do you know which is which?

JOSH: I believe I do. William Duffy, which ends with the "e" sound played Larry.

HRISHI: Ahh.

JOSH: And Peter James Smith, which rhymes with Ed, played Ed.

HRISHI: [Laughs] Ah, that's a great mnemonic device.

JOSH: That's how I, yeah.

WILLIAM: Good morning.

WILLIAM: It's really good, good morning guys.

JOSH: Thanks for joining us. You know, you are clearly fan favorites. A lot of people through Twitter and our website reached out and demanded that we have you. Maybe before we dive in, we should unpack the Ed and Larry of it all. Can you guys tell us how you each became part of the show?

WILLIAM: I actually originally auditioned for Sam Seaborn. And, I was in the room when I saw [laughs] that Rob was there. He actually, I don't know if he was auditioning, but he had walked out of the room. And I'm like "uh, I'm, I'm in trouble".

JOSH: Haha.

WILLIAM: I auditioned well. I mean the room, I to this day I've never seen that many people in an audition room.

JOSH: Huh.

WILLIAM: Including Tommy Schlamme, Aaron, John Wells was there, John Levi obviously was reading. Kevin Scott, all the assistants, all the other writers. I mean, it looked like my parole hearing.

JOSH: That's intimidating.

WILLIAM: Yeah. It was.

JOSH: And did Aaron read with you?

WILLIAM: No. Aaron did not read with me. He greeted me immediately as I walked in the door. You and I had worked together with Aaron on *A Few Good Men*.

JOSH: We were in the national tour of *A Few Good Men* together.

WILLIAM: Correct.

JOSH: Is that right?

WILLIAM: Well, we starred in 25 years ago...

JOSH: 1991?

WILLIAM: '91 we started rehearsals. So then we started the tour in '92.

JOSH: How fun was the tour?

WILLIAM: It was ridiculous. It's still one of the highlights of my career.

JOSH: Me too! We played, what's the names of some cities? We played Baltimore... San Francisco.

WILLIAM: San Francisco... Memphis... Chicago... Saint Paul.

JOSH: Yes, somewhere in Michigan. Grand Rapids.

WILLIAM: When we were doing the show though, that was when Aaron was doing the movie. And so we would actually be testing scenes from the movie in the play. Cause he changed a few things on us.

JOSH: I don't remember that.

WILLIAM: It was a great cast though. I mean, if you think about the tour.

JOSH: Of the tour?

WILLIAM: In that tour.

JOSH: It was fantastic.

WILLIAM: Michael O'Keefe. Ken Marino.

JOSH: Boo.

WILLIAM: Josh Malina.

JOSH: He's good. What happened [cross talk] to him?

WILLIAM: [cross talk] He's very good. Is he still alive?

HRISHI: I think you tweeted a picture of the cast.

WILLIAM: I did at one point.

HRISHI: It was amazing.

WILLIAM: Yeah.

HRISHI: I had no idea that all of you guys were in it.

JOSH: Noah Emmerich.

HRISHI: Yeah, Noah Emmerich.

JOSH: Dear, dear friend. Star of *The Americans*.

WILLIAM: Ron Asha was in it. He was also in the *West Wing* for a while. I mean it was just a great, great cast. I mean, Alyson Reed. Sowers.

JOSH: I have such great memories. Oh the drinking, oh the acting.

WILLIAM: Yeah.

JOSH: Played a lot of poker backstage.

WILLIAM: We did.

JOSH: It was a highlight for me.

WILLIAM: Josh took a lot of money from me.

JOSH: I think I made more playing cards than I did on the tour.

[WILLIAM and HRISHI laugh]

JOSH: So you got the job on *West Wing*.

WILLIAM: Yeah, I mean, I obviously didn't get the Sam Seaborn one. But then Aaron called me and said, "do you mind coming in for another role?" And I said "yeah" cause I want to do anything that Aaron does. And that's when I came in to read for the role of Larry. Actually, they had me read for Ed and Larry because I know I read with two people. And we had to switch each time, which was even harder. Aaron said "read Ed, now read Larry." And so I went in and just read for that. And got that part. And the rest is history.

[HRISHI laughs]

JOSH: So Duffy knew Aaron already.

WILLIAM: Yeah.

JOSH: How did you get the job Peter?

PETER: A few weeks before the auditions, I had worked on *ER*, the same casting people did *ER* that did *West Wing*. So I'm assuming I was just fresh in their mind. So, I had the script, the page, for the audition for Ed and Larry. And I was specifically coming in for Ed. And there were three lines. And my little cocky actor self was like "that third line, the way I'm gonna deliver it, it's gonna get me that job."

[HRISHI laughs]

PETER: So I walked in the room. It's a huge room of people.

WILLIAM: Oh, it's huge.

PETER: I didn't know Aaron at the time. I didn't know what he looked like. I didn't know who he was. I thought it was a casting assistant reading with me.

JOSH: Oh, he did read with you?

PETER: Yeah. I didn't know. And I only got two of my lines out when Aaron said "thank you."

JOSH: Wow!

[PETER laughs]

HRISHI: You didn't get to deliver the showstopper?

PETER: I didn't. And I was new to town and I was still kind of like, not afraid of anybody. And so I went, "I have another line."

JOSH: Ohhh, hahaha.

PETER: And he said.

JOSH: Also you didn't realize it the was the guy who wrote it.

PETER: I didn't.

[JOSH laughs]

PETER: And he said "I've seen enough." And I kind of did this like, attitudinal about face and went "thanks a lot" and left the room.

JOSH: Really?

PETER: Yes. And I got it [laughs].

JOSH: Oh. That guy's got fire.

HRISHI: Yeah, they admired his pluck.

JOSH: That guy's got pluck. Exactly.

PETER: Pluck, that's right.

[West Wing Episode 1.11 excerpt]

SAM: I admire your pluck.

MANDY: I'm sorry, what part of me do you admire?

SAM: Your pluck, your gumption.

MANDY: Thank you.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: I've had many auditions for smaller roles and I've played many smaller roles and I find it difficult...

PETER: Uh-huh.

JOSH: ...when you've got two lines or three lines. I've done, you know, movies where I've had a couple of lines. And you just spend - I remember I do - hours!

PETER: Hours!

JOSH: Talking through every possible way to say these couple [HRISHI laughs] cause you want to get the most mileage you can out of something. I find it actually puts me on edge when I have less to do.

WILLIAM: I agree with you on that. I'll do it in drunk, I'll do it in every accent, just to see if I can find something.

JOSH: Yeah.

WILLIAM: It is, I agree with you on that.

JOSH: One of the reasons I always love when you guys are on the show and I feel like it pops when you guys are on, is because I believe you had a life before you walked in front of the camera, and that when you exit, your lives continue. You guys have a relationship, you guys just really fill the moments very well.

PETER: And some of the fan fiction out there also fills those moments too.

WILLIAM: Absolutely.

JOSH: I assume you guys are all over each other in the fan fiction. I mean that's what I always wanted to see so.

[ALL laugh]

WILLIAM: Actually, Aaron helped that a bit. There was one interview, I think, where somebody asked him "why are there no gay characters on the West Wing?" And he said, "how do you know there aren't?" Just leaving it there. And that's all he said. And.... I think people basically assumed...

JOSH: Fandom went nuts.

WILLIAM: Went nuts.

JOSH: Bert and Ernie.

HRISHI: The Twilight series is actually based on erotic fan fiction of Ed and Larry.

[JOSH laughs]

PETER: Oh.

HRISHI: And everybody was like, are you team Ed? Are you team Larry?

WILLIAM: That's it. That's right.

JOSH: So, so, Led I guess would be your name for sure.

WILLIAM: Yeah, that's our name.

JOSH: Let's lay some Led.

WILLIAM: Yeah. Yeah.

[Laughter]

JOSH: Alright, moving on. Let me ask you this. So when you got the job, would you know how many a season, how many episodes, or would you get a call "are you free next Wednesday" - would it be last minute type of thing?

PETER: Oh yeah, yeah, definitely would be a last minute kind of thing. Yeah.

WILLIAM: Yeah, the pilot was like April of '99. And I got the call - I was in Hawaii with my then girlfriend - that it was picked up. They had like a contract. It was a contract as far as when we worked but there was no guarantee of how many episodes we would work. And so at that point I'm like "Ok, I guess I'm kinda recurring on the show. That would be great." But it wasn't until actually this episode, when I read this script, that I went "I think we're going to be around for a little bit." You know the first few episodes, you know, he and I were in the pilot. We had a nice part in the pilot. Then we had little bits in...

PETER: And not together, between the pilot and this episode. We were kinda separated.

WILLIAM: Yeah, we were in the second episode together. And then he did the Short List and we came in with this Lord John Marbury episode. That was the point I went, we now are established because we are now working with everybody. It was the first episode where they list us with both our names.

HRISHI: Ed and Larry.

WILLIAM: Ed and Larry. Yeah, because even though I was called Larry in the pilot, they still had me listed as Staffer Larry whatever, or just sometimes Congressional Aide. And they had Ed listed as Ed. But not until this episode they put both Ed and Larry for Peter and myself.

HRISHI: Did your characters have titles?

WILLIAM: Not really, but I mean, from what we were doing, and I talked to a few people when we were in Washington filming. They said you're sorta like a senior staff advisor.

HRISHI: Right.

PETER: So we were on the same level administratively as like the main cast. We just weren't on screen as much.

WILLIAM: Or paid as much [laughs]

JOSH: Peter, you brought the *West Wing* book. Is that what it's called?

PETER: Yes, it's called The Official Companion: The West Wing.

JOSH: I feel like we should enter into the record we have some words of Aaron's about Ed and Larry. Do you mind reading that?

PETER: I do not. Let's see. "There are the people the President likes to talk to. Ed and Larry are two people these people like to talk to. The reason why you want Eds and Larrys out there is because you don't want it to seem like the only people working at the White House are the stars of our show. You want to constantly remind the audience it's a much bigger world. And our camera is just focused on this right now." I want to mention, you said you were in Hawaii when you heard about the...

WILLIAM: Yeah.

PETER: The show was getting picked up. I had kind of fed up with L.A. and I had left town. I was living in Washington D.C. at the time. And so when I got the call that the show was going to come back and I was going to recur, I came back. But before I did, I cold called the White House and said "Hi, my name is Peter James Smith, I'm going to be on a new show on NBC in

the fall called *The West Wing*. Could I come get a tour?" [PETER laughs].

JOSH: That's awesome.

PETER: And I did.

JOSH: Nice.

PETER: Yeah. It was.

HRISHI: Did you get any special treatment?

PETER: Well, it was an after hours tour. So they could show me the Oval Office when no one was there. It was great. One guy showed me around and the next day, I got taken to lunch in the mess by the Visitor Office Head. And one of the funniest things is, when they do the Easter egg hunt at the White House, they have these wooden eggs that celebrities have signed, that people find, that kids find, I guess. And they had me sign a couple of eggs.

[Laughter]

JOSH: That's awesome.

PETER: And I was like, "they're going to be very disappointed when they find this egg."

[Laughter]

PETER: I remember Neil Patrick Harris had an egg there. And the women's Olympic volleyball team had eggs in there.

JOSH: That's fantastic!

PETER: Yes, it's really cool.

JOSH: It's a great...

WILLIAM: The cache *The West Wing* held was just amazing.

JOSH: Right.

WILLIAM: The celebrities and the names, and that would just show up on our set were kinda weird. There was one time Yo-Yo Ma showed up on the set. And, I'm like, "Wow! That's Yo-Yo Ma!" And he's going around and he's shaking people's hands. And he comes to us. And I'm like, "He knows who we are". He goes, "I love you guys!" And he shakes hands. And I shake kinda firm. I was taught to shake a firm handshake.

HRISHI: Oh, no.

WILLIAM: And so...

JOSH: Oh you crushed his bow hand.

WILLIAM: This is what happens. He basically puts his out and I shake his hand. And I hear...
[cracking sound].

[Laughter]

WILLIAM: And I'm like, "oh, my God!" And he looked at me. I looked at him. And I'm like, uh-oh. And he said, "Nice to meet you" and he walked and never shook anybody's hand after that. Nobody got a handshake after that.

JOSH: Oh my God!

HRISHI: Ohhh!

JOSH: That is hilarious.

WILLIAM: It was, it was his, the bow hand. But I'm like, oh my God!

JOSH: Did you go over and smash his cello after that?

WILLIAM: I know!

[Laughter]

JOSH: I guess you didn't need this anymore. Bang, bang, crunch.

WILLIAM: We had, it was great to have some people show up like that. That was crazy.

JOSH: When did you guys know you were part of a meteoric hit?

WILLIAM: I don't know. It's definitely the first season, I mean cause I'd worked with Aaron before and I'm just a huge fan of his writing. And - even *Sports Night* that you were on - I was like a huge fan of that.

JOSH: What do you mean "even *Sports Night*?"

WILLIAM: I mean...

JOSH: How dare you?

[Laughter]

WILLIAM: I think *Sports Night* is one of the most underrated shows ever. I mean it was.

JOSH: Yeah, yeah.

WILLIAM: No, I mean that. I've always been a fan and I, I knew the show was probably going to go anyway because Aaron had told me what the cost of the set was from *American President* that they put on the pilot. I said "Oh, they gotta amortize this. So, it's gonna go." But I think you know about half way through the first season, it was like this is really something special how much momentum this was actually gaining.

HRISHI: Which is basically where we're at right now.

WILLIAM: Yeah.

HRISHI: Basically halfway through.

JOSH: Look at you. Good segue, Hrishu.

HRISHI: You're welcome.

JOSH: Should we get to the episode?

PETER: Sure.

JOSH: Duffy and Peter, did you guys re-watch it for the podcast?

WILLIAM: I did.

PETER: Yes.

JOSH: What do you think of the episode?

PETER: I liked it.

WILLIAM: I love this episode.

PETER: Yeah.

JOSH: Although I enjoy the fact that the show exists largely in the commonplace going on of the White House, I also like the ones where things get urgent. And it's been since A Proportional Response that things have been this kind of high stakes stuff. And I like that sense of gravity to the entire episode.

HRISHI: I also thought you would like it Josh because this one, again, really only has two stories. I mean there are other sort of sub-stories but they all tie in to one or the other.

JOSH: That's true. I like going deep into how the White House and the various staff members deal with this impending and unfolding crisis.

HRISHI: It's also a huge episode in terms of cast. Between the military and the people in the situation room and the ambassadors that come through. There's just a ton of faces besides our regular cast members in this episode. John Amos comes back.

JOSH: Yes. Anything that happens in the Situation Room and has John Amos, I'm all for.

[West Wing Episode 1.11 excerpt]

FITZWALLACE: "Sir, already intense fighting has occurred between Indian troops and Pakistani garrisons. The ceasefire line has been breached in two thrusts. With five divisions invading the area north of Kargil and a two-corps sized force that's crossed west into Azad."

[end excerpt]

JOSH: It's a very different Bartlet in the Situation Room from a Proportional Response.

HRISHI: Yes.

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Guy's got his sea legs under him for sure because he's on top of things, and rather than being led around he's leading this meeting and he's not particularly happy with the support he is getting.

HRISHI: There is one really strange shot with the CIA director in the foreground.

JOSH: I loved it. It was very cinematic, but it also specifically felt to me - and it gets name-checked later - it felt like a shot from *Dr. Strangelove*.

HRISHI: Haha.

JOSH: I know exactly the shot you're talking about. He's in the foreground, he's really lit, and you're getting a big profile shot as beyond him we're seeing Bartlet.

HRISHI: And usually that kind of shot might happen, but the person in the foreground will be rack focused out. And it's on the President or something but here you could see both of them. It felt strangely artificial and the composition was completely different.

JOSH: I have the feeling it was kind of a visual shout out to *Strangelove*.

HRISHI: That would be great. I hope that's right. Otherwise it's just weird.

[Laughter]

JOSH: One of the major secondary parallel plots is how C.J. as the Press Secretary is treated as news is filtering to the rest of the staff about this Indian incursion into Kashmir. They intentionally leave her out of the loop. The Press Secretary!

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: And she takes it, and I think, rightfully so, as a real shot to her credibility with the press corp. and a sign of their lack of confidence in her as the Press Secretary.

HRISHI: Yeah, and throughout the series already so far, it feels like they've built up the staff as a family. And so for one member of the family to be left out, that's got to be hurtful. The professional credibility, that's an understandable concern for her. But then I think personally, you just have to feel, like 'oh, so I have some secondary status to everybody else that's in the room?'

JOSH: Um-hmm. And later Toby essentially communicates to her that one, I guess she's taking a little bit of a hit because of her relationship about Danny.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: And two, he really does question her ability to do her job well because he's not so sure she could omit important information when being grilled by the press.

[West Wing Episode 1.11 excerpt]

TOBY: There is a concern that you're too friendly with the press.

C.J.: Really.

TOBY: We know it's important that you have a friendly relationship with them-

C.J.: It's important for all of us.

TOBY: I don't disagree.

C.J.: Does this have to do with Danny Concannon?

TOBY: People see you with Danny.

C.J.: This is outrageous.

TOBY: It is this one time, and if we erred, it's on the side of trying -

C.J.: You sent me in there uninformed so that I'd lie to the press.

TOBY: We sent you in there uninformed because we thought there was a chance you couldn't.

C.J.: Ok. I have all this work to do.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: It's insulting.

HRISHI: Yeah, it keeps coming back to that question that you had of like 'how does Danny just get to keep coming back?'. And the next episode they answer it, well, oh my staff doesn't mind. But then, it turns out there are negative ramifications to it too.

JOSH: In addition to this whole thing going on, it does seem like she makes a misstep when she is questioned. One of the reporters says "I have a source in the Pentagon and I've heard about this incursion and 300,000 troops." and rather than pausing, or considering there is something going on that she doesn't know about, she really plays it off.

[West Wing Episode 1.11 excerpt]

BRUCE: I've got a source at the Pentagon who says in the last few hours there's been massive troop movement on the Kashmir border.

C.J.: In the last few hours?

BRUCE: Yeah.

C.J.: I think you need to get a new source at the Pentagon, Bruce.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: So she actually does make a little misstep, right?

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: It's a little bit on her.

HRISHI: Rather than being a little more circumspect about it.

JOSH: Yeah, let me look into that.

HRISHI: Yeah.

PETER: I heard at the time it was based on something that had happened to the real Press Secretary, Deedee Meyers.

HRISHI: That's right, about a bombing run in Iraq.

WILLIAM: Which just shows, I mean, that was in '99. So there really was no internet. I mean, that would almost never happen now.

JOSH: Well that's also gonna, the internet aspect of it leads into your scene too.

PETER: Yeah. Exactly.

JOSH: Because, you guys, and this made me laugh. You guys got me. I think I laughed out loud. I wished there was a shorter way to say that.

[Laughter]

HRISHI: Maybe the internet will come up with something.

JOSH: See now that we have it, yes. You guys are giving a briefing.

[West Wing Episode 1.11 excerpt]

LARRY: India's population stands at roughly one billion. 82% are Hindus, 11% are Muslim.

ED: They're mostly poor, but nearly as bad off as Pakistanis.

LARRY: Yes, whose average per capita income is \$400.

ED: They are, however, better educated. Their literacy rate is 48%.

LARRY: And they're healthier. Average lifespan is 57.7 years.

ED: The average rainfall...

TOBY: What the hell kind of briefing is this?

LARRY: Toby, if we could just have another hour to prepare...

TOBY: Where'd you get this stuff?

LARRY: I swear to God, the Encyclopaedia Britannica.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: I was thinking, why are these guys selling it so hard? You're really like putting on a show. This doesn't seem a normal briefing. Then of course, I got my answer because you guys don't really know what you're talking about and just pulled some stuff from the Encyclopaedia Britannica. And I had to immediately look up when was Wikipedia invented? And this was just a year or two out from when Wikipedia would've made your jobs a lot easier. So talk about that scene if you will.

WILLIAM: Well I mean, this episode meant a lot to me because it was kind of establishing who Ed and Larry were. And I thought, this was gonna establish who we were and kind of be, as Toby, I think, refers to at one point later on, the Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. It was a big scene for us. I mean, we really worked hard. I do remember us going back and forth, making sure we had the dialogue right, the stats right etc, etc... This established who we were or who we weren't going to be, so to speak.

JOSH: Did you guys like each other right away? You guys have good chemistry.

PETER: Yeah. Yeah.

WILLIAM: Oh, yeah.

JOSH: I'm not trying to insinuate anything. Is there some reason why you shouldn't? You're both lovely people.

WILLIAM: We really are.

[Laughter]

JOSH: You guys hit it off right away...

HRISHI: Did you guys hang out and work on your backstory?

WILLIAM: Not as much.

PETER: Fan fiction did that for us.

WILLIAM: Yeah, the fan fiction did that. Yeah. I had my own backstory with what I was and this and that. And I'm sure Peter did the same thing.

PETER: No.

WILLIAM: No, Peter did not do the same thing. Alright.

JOSH: I don't do backstory either.

WILLIAM: I do. I do. It's one of my things to just give me that moment before coming in or where I'm going.

JOSH: Ok. Give us a little Larry backstory.

WILLIAM: I took some stuff from my own life. Basically I moved around a lot which I did in real life. I was a lawyer who always wanted to be a bit more. So I was always trying to be a little bit more. But just didn't have... When you're an actor, you can't play dumb, so to speak. You play trying to be smart. So that's kind of what I was trying to do with Larry, trying to be smart. Just not doing it well. [Laughter] And so...

JOSH: That's interesting.

WILLIAM: That's kinda where I was, that was my back story. I'm was always trying to be better and better and move up. I mean, I auditioned for Sam Seaborn. I didn't get Sam Seaborn. But I was always thinking, how do I get to be Sam Seaborn? As Larry.

JOSH: Huh, that's interesting. That's good.

WILLIAM: So, yeah.

JOSH: So now I think one of the reasons why I'm inveterate avoider of creating a backstory is because I came up in the Aaron Sorkin school. And Aaron would tell you - and this is not a criticism of you -

WILLIAM: No.

JOSH: Every actor has their own process and technique. But I remember - maybe you were there - the opening night party for the tour of *A Few Good Men*.

WILLIAM: Uh-huh.

JOSH: We opened at Hartford and we were all sitting around, having a beer, and a laugh, and I think the performance went well, and everybody's feeling good. And Scott Sowers who played Colonel Jessup said "Oh, oh dude, you want hear Colonel Jessup's favorite joke?" And he started, and Aaron said, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, hang on. If Colonel Jessup had a favorite joke, it would be written into the play."

[Laughter]

HRISHI: Wow.

WILLIAM: Yeah, yeah.

JOSH: It actually was a weird moment and, this didn't surprise me because I know Aaron's take, and it's very sort of, there's a Mamet book that's called *True and False: Heresy and Common Sense for the Actor*, it's a book that I really like. And I think at one point, Mamet says creating a backstory is a little bit of like flapping your arms when you are on a plane to keep the plane aloft.

[Laughter]

JOSH: So Mamet and Sorkin come from the same school where the character is the person who says these things that are on the paper. That are in the script. And that's who the character is. And if there is anything more you need to know, it will be in the script. It's hardcore and it's a valid point of view. But of course, also most actors bridle under that kind of stricture. Well, they say, there is something I'm bringing to it, and it's their thought process is in my head and their thoughts that I have in there as back story that I have built up that is actually an interesting clash of acting schools of thought.

WILLIAM: Yeah.

HRISHI: It's like with the Constitution. Are you an originalist? Or are you going to interpret the document? You're an originalist.

JOSH: Nice parallel. That is true. And after talking with Richard Schiff, he is definitely more of a Duffy actor for sure.

HRISHI: Sure, yeah.

JOSH: And Peter and I are I guess on the other side of things. To me, my process is figuring out who the guy is based on all the things that he says and does that are in the script. So to me, it's all of vary textual and I also think might be partially because I'm Jewish. I'm a man of the book.

[Laughter].

JOSH: I have great respect for the text. I don't create a backstory for the Torah - I look at it as is.

HRISHI: Aren't there Talmudic scholars who spend their whole life trying to interpret the Torah?

JOSH: That's all they do.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: But they're not writing a lot of backstory. Here's really what happened to King David: the early years. It's more.

PETER: But what was King David's favorite joke?

JOSH: If he had one, it would have been in the Torah.

[Laughter]

HRISHI: That's funny.

JOSH: But I think I'm more Talmudic. They call it 'pilpul', I think is the term for this endless, endless turning over and interpretation of the text, but to me it all goes back to the text. It all goes back to what this guy is saying. So, I'm not inclined to decide 'this is what this guy did in high school' and 'here is where he went to college' if it isn't in the text itself.

WILLIAM: Oh, I didn't go to that far back.

HRISHI: Back to the plot?

[Laughter]

JOSH: Sure. Is this a good time to do Gail's goldfish bowl?

PETER: Oh yeah, I looked at it because of what you guys talked about on the podcast. Was there anything symbolic in this episode?

JOSH: Yes. I paused and looked. First of all, there is a website that has canonized every time there is something special in there. So I use that as guidance, and then I freeze framed. And there's army stuff in there. There is definitely marshal, I think, it's like army vehicles with camo, maybe Jeeps.

PETER: And it was Blanche and Steve who did the props, right? They were in charge of props.

WILLIAM: Yeah.

JOSH: Good for you for the shout out.

WILLIAM: Props to the props.

JOSH: Ok. What else have we got?

HRISHI: One thing in the early on - Toby says a line to Sam that I did not understand. He's talking to him about the fact that they are missing an Ambassador in Pakistan. And he says...

[West Wing Episode 1.11 excerpt]

TOBY: What are you hocking me for?

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Ah, "what are you hocking me for?". This is a Yiddishism. Hocking is like giving somebody grief and just nattering at them about something. "What are you hocking me for?"

HRISHI: Alright.

JOSH: Yeah.

HRISHI: I see.

JOSH: Ah, that is so cute Hrish.

[Laughter]

WILLIAM: I learned something today on the podcast.

HRISHI: Because I was like 'hawk'? Like somebody who was pro-war? It didn't make sense to me.

JOSH: Well if you had the closed captions on you would see that it was spelled H-O-C-K-I-N-G.

HRISHI: I went back and turned on the closed captions.

JOSH: And you were even more confused?

HRISHI: I was more confused because...

JOSH: That's not even a word.

HRISHI: Then there are other things later on in the episode where closed caption doesn't quite match up with what is being said. So then I was like, is this somebody taking some liberties or they don't understand what is being said either? Alright.

JOSH: That's very funny.

HRISHI: So it's accurately transcribed in the closed captioning?

JOSH: Yes, indeed, yeah, indeed it was.

HRISHI: We get the return of the President Bartlet's hybrid take of Pakistan.

JOSH: Oh, I was trying to listen for it. Yeah.

HRISHI: Everyone else says "Pack-i-stan." Except for the Ambassadors from Pakistan and India and Lord Marbury himself. But all of the Americans say "Pack-i-stan." But the President says "Pahk-i-stahn." Again.

[West Wing Episode 1.11 excerpt]

PRESIDENT BARTLET: "Pakistan."

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Pahk-i-stahn.

WILLIAM: Pahk-i-stahn. Hmm. What did we say? Did we say "Pack-i-stan."?

HRISHI: You said "Pack-i-stan."

WILLIAM: Ah. We said "Pack-i-stan"

HRISHI: We have really the 'A' story and the 'B' story. Right, this incursion into Kashmir...

JOSH: 'A' story.

HRISHI: And then you have Josh being subpoenaed.

JOSH: C.J. story.

HRISHI: C.J. story is the other major thing but it's related to the other incursion thing. Here's my take on this. Both plots are actually about the same thing. Which is about two groups that probably share more in common than, you know, they have more in common than... how do I say this...?

JOSH: There's more that unites them than separates them?

HRISHI: Yes, exactly. And in one case, it's religion. And in the other it's partisanship. But they're both sort of veering towards mutually assured self-destruction. Because they're playing this game of chicken. And there are things in the dialogue about India, that if you just replace some of the language, it could be about the other plot. So, at the end, there is a DOD advisor that says.

[West Wing Episode 1.11 excerpt]

DOD advisor: At various times, both countries have displayed an incoherent decision-making system. You cannot predict what will happen in a crisis.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: If you just switch countries for parties, it still works. There is this moment of violence for the first time onscreen we have violence, which is Josh grabbing Claypool.

[West Wing Episode 1.11 excerpt]

CLAYPOOL: "I would think that you would be concerned with your own reputations. And the notion of you standing up for a man so egregiously unqualified..."

SAM: "Listen... JOSH!"

[end excerpt]

JOSH: My takeaway was - wouldn't want Josh defending me in a fight.

WILLIAM: Yeah, yeah.

HRISHI: As he gets his hands slapped away immediately.

JOSH: Yeah, yeah. Just, God bless you Brad Whitford. I was like, the other guy would have

pounded him into the floor. If it really erupted into fisticuffs.

[Laughter]

HRISHI: But a red line was crossed.

JOSH: Absolutely.

HRISHI: These red lines were being crossed on both sides. We were talking about Mandy's line in Enemies where she says to Josh "you're fighting the wrong fight." The reason that kinda gets called back here is because she is trying to get Sam to back her up on taking on Mike Brace, who is a Republican, as a client.

[West Wing Episode 1.11 excerpt]

MANDY: Sam, he's moderate-to-liberal, he's good on education, he's good on women's rights...

SAM: And he's a Republican.

MANDY: He came to me.

SAM: That's understandable.

MANDY: He sought me out.

SAM: You're very good. We'd come to you too.

MANDY: Yes.

SAM: In fact, we did.

MANDY: Yes. And I'm coming to you now.

SAM: To get me to help you convince Josh and Toby to let you work for a Republican.

MANDY: Yes.

SAM: [sitting down at his desk] This is just my lucky day.

MANDY: Sam, I think you are the one senior guy here who is more interested in getting things done than beating the other...

SAM: That's not true, Mandy. Josh and Toby are just as committed...

MANDY: Not lately.

SAM: I disagree.

MANDY: The banking bill, the land-use rider, assault weapons? You like Mike Brace.

SAM: Mandy.

MANDY: I know.

SAM: This is going to be an impossible sell.

MANDY: It shouldn't be.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And again, it's this thing that separates her from the team and I think people are going to be like, "Ugh, Mandy." you know. But in both cases, I actually think she is on the side of good, or you know right here. She's really the equivalent of peacemaker.

JOSH: She is looking for common ground.

HRISHI: Yeah, exactly. And she is trying to get Sam to appeal to everybody's sort of better reason as opposed to this idea of just trying to fight for the sake of winning. And she gets nowhere and at the end, Sam recoils and he's like.

[West Wing Episode 1.11 excerpt]

SAM: You're a political consultant. Your job isn't to end the fight, it's to win it! Now you can work for us or you can work for them, but you can't do both.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: That's a very good point.

HRISHI: So I suspect that people are going to say "Oh, Mandy's, she's once again getting in the way of our team." But actually, I think she's once again really trying to do the right thing.

JOSH: As I watched, I found her annoying. But you're bringing me to your side on this. I felt like she seems to be focused on this self-serving...

HRISHI: Yes.

JOSH: ...I'm trying to book another client over here. And the rest of them are trying to deal with possible nuclear conflagration developing in the rest of the world.

HRISHI: Which is totally understandable.

JOSH: But yeah, but on the merits of her argument, I see what you are saying.

HRISHI: Yeah. And I wonder if that was intentional. I think this must have been, right, that these two plot lines are happening at the same time.

JOSH: I think so. You articulated it very well. I couldn't unpack it the way you just did. But I wrote "macro and micro world affairs reflected in personal relationships."

HRISHI: Yeah.

WILLIAM: Yeah.

HRISHI: There is one part to that that felt like a parallel. Like I really noted the way the Indian Ambassador kind of saunters into the Oval Office. Like again, there's this potential nuclear crisis happening and he gets invited in and he has this jaunty walk - he's chipper - as he comes into shake the President's hand.

[West Wing Episode 1.11 excerpt]

INDIAN AMBASSADOR: Mr. President.

PRESIDENT BARTLET: Mr. Ambassador.

INDIAN AMBASSADOR: You look well, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT BARTLET: I was looking a lot better before your country breached about fourteen cease-fire conditions without so much as a phone call, so let's sit down and talk. Charlie, please close the door.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Then as he talks to him about how India will not be dictated to. And it reminded me of Josh in the deposition. Both of them are just cocky in a way that doesn't feel appropriate for the situation.

JOSH: Brad does a good job. That really does just drop away from him when he realizes that he doesn't hold all the cards.

WILLIAM: Yeah.

JOSH: And that the other side – even if it's illegally obtained - has that information on Leo and the gravity of the situation hits him. And you can see it in his face and his posture. It's a good scene.

HRISHI: Would you guys come to the set just for the day that you guys were shooting?

WILLIAM: We did table reads. Yeah, yeah.

HRISHI: So you knew the whole context of the episode was before it...?

WILLIAM: Yeah.

HRISHI: Would you usually do everything in a day or would it take a couple of days besides, for the actual shooting?

WILLIAM: It would depend on the episode.

HRISHI: For this one, do you remember?

WILLIAM: For this one, it was just the one day. It was just the one scene itself. I was on the set a couple of times. I got to meet Roger. Our scene wasn't with Roger but I was back on the set because I was doing some voice work on the lot. For us, it was either, you know, one day, two days a week depending on the episode itself but this one was one day.

JOSH: So was Roger Rees at the table read?

PETER: I don't remember.

WILLIAM: I don't recall that. I'm gonna say no.

PETER: I think we would have remembered.

JOSH: Yeah, he's a very important figure to me. I didn't know him personally - and he passed away last year I believe - but meant a lot to me. I got lucky in 1982. My mom and dad had tickets to go to see Nicholas Nickleby on Broadway. And then my dad had to go out of town for work and my mom asked me if I wanted to go. Eight and half hours and we went in one day. You could see it on two days, but we went one day with a dinner break. This epic theatrical...

WILLIAM: Charles Dickens...

JOSH: ...version of Nicholas Nickleby. I was already a theater kid and I loved going to the theater and loved acting. But it was an unbelievable - it was eight and half hours. Every second was riveting. When it ended, I just wanted it to go on. His performance was fantastic. He obviously played Nicholas Nickleby and so he has always been sort of this towering figure to me that helped show me what theater could be and how it could make you feel. And I wish I had gotten the chance to interact with him. He was pretty great in this episode.

WILLIAM: He really is.

PETER: Agreed.

WILLIAM: He was probably one of the bigger Sorkin characters in a sense. Like just you know, just the bigness in which he acts.

JOSH: Right.

WILLIAM: Almost theatrical but still enough for TV.

JOSH: I do think it's a character that could have been played badly very easily.

WILLIAM: Absolutely.

HRISHI: Yeah. And physically too, when he first walks into the Oval Office he leads with his hand in this...

WILLIAM: Yeah.

HRISHI: ...way that's comical and amazing.

JOSH: That's exactly what I thought when I watched that. I was like, there's something brilliant about the way he's shaking the President's hand. That I'm getting already, I'm getting the character.

PETER: Yeah. Immediately.

JOSH: Just physicality.

WILLIAM: He had backstory... oh no.

[Laughter]

HRISHI: We do get his backstory in this. Another thing I noted, was that there was a pretty extreme exposition that happens when C.J. is just on the phone with somebody. We don't know who she is, she's just like, here's some exposition guys, and here's who this character is.

[West Wing Episode 1.11 excerpt]

C.J.: His name is Lord John Marbury. He is the hereditary Earl of Sherbourne, he is the great, great grandson of a former Viceroy and for thirteen years served as the Queen's Minister to either India or Pakistan. Lord Marbury is here to counsel the President, and if you think this is all starting to sound like a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta, I don't blame you a bit.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: There's a lot of exposition in *West Wing*. Often that has to be shared. And Aaron, I would say, generally does a very good job of getting it in in a way that is dramatic. I remember in college, I was writing like a sketch show and there was a whole lot of exposition that had to set up a sketch we were doing, and so we just had the mother yell to the kid, "Honey, have you sang the exposition song?" [Laughter]. And she would just come in and sing everything that you needed to know. [Laughter] So I give Aaron credit for never resorting to that.

HRISHI: Yeah, this was the closest to the exposition song that he has probably gotten to.

JOSH: It was close.

WILLIAM: Yeah.

JOSH: Borderline.

WILLIAM: Yeah.

PETER: And a Gilbert and Sullivan reference at the end.

HRISHI: That's right.

JOSH: I wrote that down too. Was it the first of what will be I think several Gilbert and Sullivan references.

WILLIAM: There's a lot of musical theater stuff in Aaron's...

JOSH: Aaron majored in Musical Theater at Syracuse.

WILLIAM: Yeah, yeah. I'll tell the story really quick because I noticed that. And I was fortunate enough to interview Aaron for a couple hours for a benefit for my theater company, Ensemble Studio Theater (L.A. project). I said, "We sit at our table reads - and I know you're a musical theater major from Syracuse - and I listened to your...." cause Dulé actually brought this up a little bit when you interviewed Dulé... "You write musically. Because you actually will sit in the table read, and as we are reading, you will actually look like a conductor. Your hands will be moving like a conductor a little bit." And he goes, "Yeah, you're right." And so he writes everything in music and so I think that's why you see so many references to musical theater. I mean it is a symphony. He writes a symphony. When you watch these *West Wings*, especially the walk and talks.

JOSH: And the guy is definitely going to write the book for a musical one of these days.

WILLIAM: He was supposed to.

JOSH: He's like Evel Knievel. He keeps driving to the top of the ramp. And then, going "No, I don't quite feel ready", because he was supposed to write...

WILLIAM: *The Flaming Lips*.

JOSH: *The Flaming Lips*. [cross talk] Right, exactly.

HRISHI: Wait. What? [cross talk] What is, what is that?

JOSH: [cross talk] He was supposed to... *Yoshimi and the Robots*?

HRISHI: *Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots*. Yeah.

JOSH: And he was going to collaborate with them on a Broadway or a stage musical off that.

HRISHI: Wow!

JOSH: That I would like to have seen. And then I think *Houdini* was [cross talk] another musical that he was.

WILLIAM: [cross talk] I think so, right.

JOSH: Going to write the book for. And for whatever reason. I can't speak for him, it doesn't quite happen. But...

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: But the guy has got a success musical in him for sure.

WILLIAM: For sure.

JOSH: Yeah. Maybe it will be the *West Wing* musical.

HRISHI: I wanted to take back one thing I said about the C.J. scene about exposition. It's not that it is completely useless. It sets up some amazing acting from Allison Janney when she then has to turn and address Toby when he comes in the room. She puts down the phone. Look, Carol comes in.

[West Wing Episode 1.11 excerpt]

[Carol and Toby appear in the doorway].

CAROL: C.J.?

C.J.: *[into the phone]* Thank you. *[to Carol]* Yes.

CAROL: Toby's here.

C.J.: Ok.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And then she puts down the phone. And like she completely changes her demeanor as she turns around. She like, kind of does a physical shift. It's fantastic.

WILLIAM: Yeah.

JOSH: It is a great scene. Melissa Fitz has a funny line too. Something about the 'h'.

[West Wing Episode 1.11 excerpt]

CAROL: *They put the 'h' in the wrong place?*

C.J.: *Hey, I'm happy when they use an 'h' at all.*

CAROL: *We'll fix it.*

TOBY: *[arrives]* Hey, Carol.

CAROL: *[leaving]* We're fixing the 'h.'

TOBY: Ok.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: This is another episode with a lot of, like the last episode, a lot of 'ok' again, more than twenty uses of the word 'ok.'

WILLIAM: Ok.

HRISHI: Leo says it four times in one exchange with the President when he is asking him if he has a racial problem when the idea of Charlie dating Zoey. He gives him four "ok"s in response when he confronts him.

[West Wing Episode 1.11 excerpt]

LEO: *You got a racial problem?*

PRESIDENT BARTLET: *A racial problem?*

LEO: *It's ok to admit it.*

PRESIDENT BARTLET: *I don't!*

LEO: Ok.

PRESIDENT BARTLET: *I don't have a racial problem.*

LEO: Ok.

PRESIDENT BARTLET: *I'm Spencer Tracy at the end of 'Guess Who's Coming to Dinner.'*

LEO: Ok.

PRESIDENT BARTLET: *Racial problem!*

LEO: *I'm just saying...*

PRESIDENT BARTLET: *My problem is not that she's white, he's black, it's that she's a girl and he's not. To say nothing of he's older than she is.*

LEO: *She's 19. He's 21.*

PRESIDENT BARTLET: *Yeah, but a guy learns a lot in those two years.*

LEO: Ok.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Well, let's talk about that little mini, mini sub-plot. I liked that it was made explicit that Leo actually brings up, is it a black/white thing?

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: And that then Bartlet...realizes that if that's in the air...President Bartlet.

HRISHI: Thank you.

JOSH: Wow. I'm getting a look from across the room. [Laughter] And then President, oh, that's what...it's gonna be that now for three years. But in true President Bartlet fashion... [HRISHI laughs] he bristles a little bit. Now of course it's not that, but Leo having raised it, President Bartlet wants to make sure that that's not how Charlie took it. And he sits him down and says...

[West Wing Episode 1.11 excerpt]

PRESIDENT BARTLET: *Say, listen. My hesitation about your going out with Zoey before, you know, it's not cos you're black.*

CHARLIE: *[sits] I didn't think it was.*

PRESIDENT BARTLET: *It's not.*

CHARLIE: *I thought it was because I'm a guy.*

PRESIDENT BARTLET: *It is.*

CHARLIE: *I understand.*

PRESIDENT BARTLET: *Still, I want you to go out with her if that's what you both want to do.*

CHARLIE: *I'd like to.*

PRESIDENT BARTLET: *That's fine.*

CHARLIE: *Thank you, sir.*

PRESIDENT BARTLET: *Just remember these two things: She's nineteen years old, and the*

82nd Airborne works for me.

CHARLIE: Yes sir.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: I liked how that was all dealt with.

HRISHI: There's a great example here of art imitating life and then life imitating art again. Which is that the guy who is running the subpoena, Claypool, is inspired by a real guy named Larry Klayman, who was this guy who sued all kinds of people including the Clinton administration a lot. And he had an organization called Justice Watch. And so here, that guy's name is Larry Klayman. This is Harry Claypool. And his organization is called Freedom Watch. Well, after this aired, a few years later, Larry Klayman went and copyrighted the name Freedom Watch and now is the head of an organization called Freedom Watch.

JOSH: Get outta here!

WILLIAM: Wow!

JOSH: I think really to come full circle, he needs to sue Aaron.

[HRISHI laughs]

WILLIAM: Right.

HRISHI: Right, or subpoena him at least.

JOSH: Yes, at the very least.

WILLIAM: I think things like that would always happen in our story lines. I'm sure when you joined and Peter would back me on this. We'd be sitting at a table read and they had written this obviously weeks before. But what we're talking about in the table read might be actually be happening in the real world. Or, what's happened at the table read, we're now shooting and by the time we're shooting it, it's actually now happening in the real world. Or we would shoot it and it would air, and then that's now actually happening in the real world.

HRISHI: And I believe that actually happened with this episode too. That there was an India/Pakistan conflict that came two weeks after this episode came out.

WILLIAM: Yeah. Good advisors.

JOSH: My single favorite moment of this episode was when President Bartlet turns to Leo and says....

[West Wing Episode 1.11 excerpt]

PRESIDENT BARTLET: He wants to go out with Zoey.

Leo starts to smile.

PRESIDENT BARTLET: Shut up!

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: My favorite too.

WILLIAM: Yeah.

JOSH: This sounds like a Three Stooges' moment.

HRISHI: Yes. Yeah.

JOSH: He's like Mo there. 'Shut up!'

WILLIAM: 'Shut up!'

HRISHI: Oh, I laughed really hard at that.

WILLIAM: Later, Leo says "I've known him for forty years." You know you see that comradery even though there's a President.

JOSH: There's a lot of good stuff going on in this show in general and in this episode in particular. Moments where you learn about people's relationships, even though there isn't a spotlight and it's maybe not even in the dialogue. For instance, there's a moment...where I believe C.J., Toby, and Josh pull Leo into a room to say to say this is bad and the thing about the pills is about to go, and Margaret steps in behind him and she's part of that. And at first...

WILLIAM: Yeah.

JOSH: I thought that "Margaret's going to be part of this meeting?" And it's just a very subtle way of telling us a little about the relationship between Margaret and Leo.

WILLIAM: Yeah.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: She's welcome there. And yes, she knows about it already. And you can see in her face that this isn't a revelation to her. She knows about it.

HRISHI: There's even a part where they ask Leo, "Does your family know?" And he says, "Yes." And as he says yes, you can see in the background Margaret is nodding. She's already, she knows -

JOSH: She knows that they know.

HRISHI: She knows that they know.

PETER: And I'm going to say that that isn't necessarily scripted. I think NiCole brought that to the scene.

JOSH: Uh-huh. The acting is so good on this show. Person to person to person. The guest cast. The recurring cast. The regular cast. The acting is very high level. We talked earlier with Richard about the luxury of being able to rehearse quite a bit before putting this stuff on film. And that's probably something that happened, you know, Margaret's there during rehearsal. They probably discussed, is she going to go into the room? Is she not? I'm sure it did come from the actors and their desire to create this relationship between two characters, that they decided yes, she would be in there.

PETER: And then from what I've heard about how TV works in general, then, when the writer sees that, they're like "Oh." That informs what they would write later on.

JOSH: Aaron specifically is such a sponge. And really, really watches the end result, and then, I think he takes what the actors are giving him and runs with it.

HRISHI: Yeah, Melissa Fitzgerald told us - she read for two parts. But they were already cast.

So she knew she wasn't going to be up for either of those. And she ended up getting, you know, she had one line I think, in the pilot. But she was saying that there's this importance that was placed on, that every single actor on the show had the ability to knock it out of the park.

WILLIAM: Hmm.

HRISHI: Even if they only have one line. And so they wanted to see that range and that depth. That's why they had her read these other parts.

PETER: Ah.

JOSH: So kudos to NiCole Robinson for the very subtle, beautiful, silent piece of acting.

HRISHI: So there's one thing that I wanted to ask you guys about, which is that Toby/C.J. thing. Toby comes to her and says...

[West Wing Episode 1.11 excerpt]

TOBY: I feel that I didn't have the opportunity to properly articulate my argument.

C.J.: Either I'm a trusted member of the communications staff or I'm not Toby. What was your argument?

TOBY: That was my argument.

C.J.: That wasn't your argument.

TOBY: [sitting on the couch] It was my argument a little while ago, when I was arguing in my head.

C.J.: Are you apologizing?

TOBY: Yes.

[long pause]

C.J.: Well?

TOBY: What?

C.J.: Apologize!

TOBY: I'm sorry!

C.J.: God!

TOBY: I was trying to do it nicer than that.

C.J.: [sitting next to him on the couch] Whose idea was it?

TOBY: Mine.

C.J.: You were the one who said "India's invaded Pakistan, let's not tell C.J.?"

TOBY: I didn't say it like that.

C.J.: Well, how'd you say it?

TOBY: I said it nicer.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: I didn't quite know what to make of that because as far as I could tell, and I went and

watched the scene again, it wasn't Toby's idea. It seemed like Leo kind of made the call on the fly, and the President gives him this nod of like, you know, agreement, like, yes, we're going to leave C.J. out of this. And Toby actually seems conflicted about it. You know. Leo says "I'll brief her in the morning." And Toby says "" Yeah" like he's going along with it. But then when she comes back to him and she says "Who's idea was it?" And he says "Mine." And I wasn't sure if that was an example of him sort of not passing the buck?

JOSH: I think maybe that is what that was.

WILLIAM: Yeah.

PETER: I think so.

JOSH: Rather than having her be mad at everyone.

HRISHI: Exactly.

JOSH: Let it be me.

WILLIAM: Yeah.

JOSH: And let's work it this out.

HRISHI: Yes. Cause he's the one who was actually the least ok with her being left out. And it wasn't made explicit, and I liked that it wasn't made explicit. That felt like it said a lot about their relationship, and him as sort of like head of the department. I don't know. I liked that.

JOSH: And that moment...in the Oval, when they tell her it's a full lid. It felt boy's clubby.

HRISHI: Absolutely.

[West Wing Episode 1.11 excerpt]

C.J.: [enters] Good evening.

PRESIDENT BARTLET: Hello.

C.J.: I'm sorry. Charlie and Mrs. Landingham stepped away. Should I go back and wait in the...

LEO: Uh, no, we were just breaking up.

C.J.: Can I tell the room there's a full lid?

LEO: Yeah. [looks at President Bartlet, who nods]

C.J.: Ok. I'll send 'em home.

PRESIDENT BARTLET: Thanks, C.J.

C.J.: Thank you, Mr. President. [exits]

LEO: [to Toby] I'll brief her in the morning.

TOBY: Yeah.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: It's like the boys are going to stay here and discuss what's really going on and we're just, not really going to tell you about it. Talk to you later.

HRISHI: Yeah. Yeah. People might perceive misogyny on this show, and wanna somehow

attribute it to Aaron as opposed to the fabric of the plot. But here, I think that is absolutely part of the plot, you know, that you have all these guys in the room and she's like the girl who comes in and they shut her out.

PETER: I can only imagine it's the fabric of the real D.C. too.

HRISHI: Right. As you said, it was inspired by a real thing that happened to Deedee Meyers. There is one thing though that I will criticize a little bit, or cringe a little bit, which is when they're talking about the lasciviousness of Lord John Marbury.

[West Wing Episode 1.11 excerpt]

PRESIDENT BARTLET: He's colorful, Leo.

LEO: You're really gonna let him loose in the White House, where there's liquor and women?

PRESIDENT BARTLET: We can hide the women. But the man deserves a drink.

LEO: Sir...

[end excerpt]

JOSH: That ties in. And then there are four mentions of a dungeon that President Bartlet wishes he had.

HRISHI: This idea

JOSH: It's a little rough. Hide the women.

HRISHI: Exactly. Like he has these two vices and they are both about consuming things. That there's this tacit acceptance of the idea that women are meant to be consumed. And this guy is smart enough or whatever, capable enough, that he gets a pass.

PETER: There's something else about the Lord John Marbury thing that I thought of is how it would play today, that three white men are talking about something happening in Pakistan and India.

HRISHI: Yes.

PETER: So, that was interesting.

JOSH: Right. Let's bring in our expert. This British guy.

[Laughter]

JOSH: This British fob who...

HRISHI: Yeah, I was thinking [cross talk] about that.

JOSH: [cross talk] Spent some time.

HRISHI: But I think that they set up well enough with the idea that they don't yet have an Ambassador, that they don't have a guy over there for Pakistan. Cause I'm like, man, they couldn't get somebody who actually knows something, they have to bring, they have to import a foreigner. But the foreigner also happens to be another white guy.

[Laughter]

JOSH: Roger Rees is actually Welsh. Is that correct?

WILLIAM: I'll look that up in the Encyclopaedia Britannica.

[Laughter]

JOSH: I believe he is. I'll just throw that in there. Even before he comes on screen, we're just ready for this guy who's just a character who is big and he's dissolute. And then he comes and Roger Rees absolutely delivers on it. It's even better than you thought was coming. And then of course he does this classic thing where you also find that he also has a seriousness of mind and a mastery of the information and there is more to him.

[West Wing Episode 1.11 excerpt]

LORD MARBURY: Happily ensconced in the cocoon of your Cold War victory, you are woefully ignorant of the powerful historical agents in Asia. The global triumph of the economic free market has created an illusory assumption that the world is drawing itself closer together. Your Congress has been pathetically inept at halting the proliferation of nuclear weapons in this region, and your intelligence gathering is... weak. India and Pakistan have fought three wars in the half-century since they have gained their independence, with God knows how many skirmishes in between. It is about religion.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: You can get why President Bartlet might want him to stick around for a little while. It's a great little turn at the end.

HRISHI: Yeah. And he's really the first person to I think we've seen to discomfit Leo. It's the first time he's been thrown off his game, even in the face of like this incredible controversy that's about to bare down on him. He's you know, [cross talk] armored up for that.

JOSH: [cross talk] He's miffed.

WILLIAM: Yeah. He is.

JOSH: "He thinks I'm the butler!"

HRISHI: And I think that also is part of the reason why I think the President likes him too.

JOSH: Yeah, I think so too actually. It takes the piss out of Leo a bit. That's classic Sorkin-ism, is not being able to remember people's names.

WILLIAM: Hence our two characters.

JOSH: [Laughs] Well, I think also, that's interesting. Let's get back to you guys. I don't think Aaron Sorkin necessarily wanted people to know which one of you is Ed and which one of you is Larry. Is that right?

PETER: I kinda remember it being inspired by, people actually on *West Wing* bulletin boards not knowing which was Ed and Larry.

WILLIAM: Right.

PETER: And he kind of ran with it from then.

JOSH: Yeah, he had fun with it.

WILLIAM: Yeah. Seriously, I think Aaron got screwed up a few times. Cause he said to me, 'Oh, we gotta switch lines. I'm sorry.' Cause he did say to me one time, "Oh, I thought you were Ed." [Laughter] So it was, it was just fun that way. I mean...

JOSH: I was joking around saying it was just turn my whole world upside down to see you alone without Duffy. To see Ed without Larry. But, so he just needed one of you that day. It wasn't...

WILLIAM: That was for the Short List, you were talking about...

JOSH: Short List. Right. It's not that you were doing something else that day.

WILLIAM: I actually was doing something else that day.

JOSH: Oh. So, that's what I wanted to know. What were you doing? What was better than *The West Wing*?

WILLIAM: No, I was doing some voice work that day. And to be honest, again, it wasn't until Lord John Marbury that I said, ok I think we're actually going to be on this show. Because the pilot was great, the next couple of episodes, we just had very little stuff to do. And I'm like, I don't know if this is actually going to happen or not and I wasn't too sure where the show was going to go cause nothing had really aired yet. And I thought the show would go a little bit, but I said, you know I have a voice job. So I did that. And I don't know if I would have been in the episode or not.

PETER: I did get that call last minute. I do remember that.

WILLIAM: Yeah.

HRISHI: I wanted to ask you guys about the day of shooting again. So you've already done the table read, I just wanted to know what the mechanics are for when you guys do your scene. It's so...quick and snappy and your guy's chemistry and rhythm is so good, and I'm just wondering, is that something that you guys, you know, it's not like you've done eleven episodes at this point to have the practice of that. But it feels of a piece with everything else that's happening on screen.

WILLIAM: You know after you come out of hair and makeup, there's a rehearsal. That's when we maybe meet the director for the first time, who's directing that episode That might be ones that we know because they've directed others. But we meet, and we've already said hello to the cast regulars who we know, but that's when we meet the director really for the first time. And so, he gives us an idea of what we want blocking wise. And then we just go off, get in our final touches, then come back and we shoot it.

JOSH: I know Aaron, Aaron is not around. He's in a room somewhere desperately [cross talk] trying to churn out the next episode.

WILLIAM: [cross talk] Aaron, very rarely. Aaron is rarely around. He's up in the booth listening because there will be times when somebody has a question about a line. I don't know if you've talked about this before with your listeners, but, you do Aaron's words the way Aaron's words are written. And there's no subst...and that we, I'm sure you even know, we had some problems with some people who come on the show and not know that that's what they have to do. They just ad-lib or whatever and there is no ad-libbing when you do Sorkin. So, every once in a while, there was a question about some writing by anybody. He might come down and give his two

cents.

HRISHI: Mm-hmm.

WILLIAM: Or just tell you what you're going to do. He's brilliant at what he does. So...

HRISHI: So, when you guys are on a show like this and you're recurring characters, but you're not in every episode, is it hard to, I guess, schedule the rest of your life around that? You're kind of 'on call'. You said you got the call last minute sometimes. Was that hard to just sorta I guess be a working actor when you know you're going to be needed sometimes but...

PETER: It's kinda the deal for working actors in L.A.

WILLIAM: For me, it's like, you know, it wasn't until this episode that I started thinking ok, I may actually start coming back a little bit. You know we sat there in that Roosevelt Room with those, you know, three main characters. It seemed like we were gonna work with others at that time. There was a quote you read from Aaron from that book. But Aaron had said "Ed and Larry represents about 20-30 people in the real West Wing."

HRISHI: Right.

WILLIAM: You can't have that many characters. So that gave me another clue that we were probably gonna recur a little bit more.

HRISHI: But did it mess things up for you being on call?

WILLIAM: Oh, yeah. For me it did.

PETER: As one learns, as they've lived in this town long enough, in this industry you just have to live your life.

WILLIAM: Yeah.

PETER: In Bartlet's third State of The Union, I got a job that conflicted. And everyone leaves the Oval Office to go to the cars outside. And I start with the group and by the time we're at the end of the group, I'm not in the group anymore because I was off shooting somewhere else that was a different day.

[Laughter]

JOSH: That's funny.

HRISHI: A little continuity error to look for.

JOSH: Yeah, yeah.

WILLIAM: But it happens all the time.

PETER: What happened to Ed? We've lost Ed!

HRISHI: The motorcade has left him behind.

[Laughter]

WILLIAM: Ah, but, no, it happens a lot. Your personal life. I mean, I was married at that time, but it screwed up a lot of anniversaries and stuff like that. We would run over in shooting and it was crazy. But that's what it does, it happens.

HRISHI: I didn't think about that. I don't think we talked about that. That the Leo's sort of divorce

story...

JOSH: Reflected.

HRISHI: Yeah, that that could be a parallel from actually working on a TV show.

PETER: Mm-hmm.

JOSH: They own you. They really do.

PETER: They do.

JOSH: It's very hard to get to the dentist. [Laughter] I've cancelled a lot of dental appointments.

WILLIAM: The key is to plan things cause that means you'll work.

PETER: Yeah that's true.

WILLIAM: Book a plane ticket anywhere, and you'll end up having to shoot that day. That's the new rule I go by.

[Laughter]

HRISHI: There's one thing about the episode that we haven't talked about yet that I wanted to bring up. I wanted to point out about the dating of this episode compared to where we are now.

WILLIAM: Mm-hmm.

HRISHI: Where Lord John Marbury says:

[West Wing Episode 1.11 excerpt]

LORD MARBURY: Not since the Protestant-Catholic wars in the 16th century has Western society known anything remotely comparable to the subcontinent's religious malevolence.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And I feel like that's such old news now. For us, even being on the other side of the world from it, the idea of like, eternal religious conflict, is part of our everyday news cycle.

JOSH: Right, we don't have to go back a few hundred years.

HRISHI: Yeah, exactly.

JOSH: To find a parallel.

HRISHI: Even though Sunni/Shiite conflict is already, at this point of the making of the episode, whatever, 1300 years old, it wasn't part of the language of American society the way it is now.

JOSH: How about the very, very, very last moment - I love the attention to detail - I love that President Bartlet tosses the lighter to Lord John and it's even under the closing credits that we hear the cigarette thing.

[West Wing Episode 1.11 excerpt]

Bartlet turns to him expectantly. Marbury takes a cigarette from his pocket.

MARBURY: [cont.] -- I shall require a light.

Marbury catches the lighter Bartlet has tossed him, smiles, and lights his cigarette.

DISSOLVE TO: END TITLES.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END

[end excerpt]

JOSH: For some reason, I loved that. I can't even really articulate why.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: But I loved hearing that little audio continuation of this scene under the credits.

HRISHI: Yeah. That happens a few times. That little post-lap, of you know, sound overlapping with the fade to black. It's really great.

JOSH: We need a word for that. The 'flentl'. I'm just tossing that out. That's called the flentl. I have a nephew, you know how when a show, like a sitcom, comes back after the final credits and there's a last little funny moment.

WILLIAM: Right.

JOSH: He calls that the wa-zing.

HRISHI: Uh-huh.

JOSH: So I'm gonna say a little audio moment under the beginning of the final credits will be the flentl.

WILLIAM: The flentl. Alright.

JOSH: I can tell you're gonna like that as much as when I toss out a cheese to accompany a big block of cheese day.

HRISHI: Yes. Yeah.

(Peter, William, and Hrishu laugh)

JOSH: Look for other flentls people. Right?

PETER: Well, you wouldn't look for a flentl.

JOSH: No, I guess you would listen for one.

WILLIAM: Listen for a flentl.

JOSH: That's a very good point.

WILLIAM: Yeah.

HRISHI: But then, you know, with our watching on Netflix, where there aren't broadcast commercials anymore, then you get immediately jarred into the cheery chipper end music again. And sometimes it, you know, you don't get to bask in that moment as much as you would like to. [cross talk] Into the flentl.

JOSH: [cross talk] This goes back to the oath we asked people to take. Also not to do the auto start of the next episode.

PETER: I turned mine off.

JOSH: You did? Good man.

HRISHI: Yes! But then you get

[short burst of end credit music]

HRISHI: No matter how heavy the episode was.

JOSH: Yeah, right. It is, it is jarring.

WILLIAM: I love that. I hadn't heard that in so long, that opening credit music. And when I heard it I was like "Oh, my God!". Brought back so many memories. Just...

JOSH: It is awfully good.

WILLIAM: Just the swell of the music [cross talk] just brought me back.

HRISHI: [cross talk] Oh yeah. Well no, the intro music I have no complaints about. It's the outro music....

JOSH: Ruins a perfectly good flentl.

[Laughter]

PETER: Exactly.

JOSH: Do people still name check you from *West Wing*?

WILLIAM: Yeah, I was actually over at the Grove last week going down the escalator. And somebody was coming up the escalator the other way and goes "*West Wing!!!*" I'm like, "Yeah".

JOSH: Do you just go down and up, down and up until someone recognizes you?

WILLIAM: That's it.

[Laughter]

HRISHI: Do you guys still, do you guys ever get booked together, first off, post-*West Wing*?

PETER: For this podcast.

JOSH: Oh yeah, that's right. You guys, we gotta put together some sort of *West Wing* convention. I think there's some ancillary money [cross talk] that we're not...

PETER: [cross talk] I think it needs to be called Sor-Con.

JOSH: Sor-Con! Nice, that's so much better than my idea to do [cross talk] Scott Caan.

WILLIAM: [cross talk] Flentl. Scott Caan?

JOSH: Just convention built around Scott Caan [cross talk] and his career.

WILLIAM: [cross talk] I see.

PETER: Oh!

JOSH: Or James Caan. Maybe older people would come too. What are you guys up to now? Anything you want to promote? Or talk about?

PETER: Oh, gosh. I guess the two things I have in the can that haven't aired yet is an episode of *Secrets and Lies* on ABC.

WILLIAM: Nice!

PETER: And *West World*. Where I got to work with Anthony Hopkins which was awesome!

JOSH: Was Sir Anthony, is he Sir Anthony? Must be, right?

HRISHI: He's Tony, right?

PETER: Oh actually, he did introduce himself as Tony. That's true.

JOSH: Nice! Did you crush his hand?

PETER: I didn't.

JOSH: Ok. [laughs]

WILLIAM: I only do that.

JOSH: Did you work with him?

PETER: Yeah.

JOSH: Oh, dude!

PETER: Yeah. I did.

JOSH: Awesome.

WILLIAM: Nice.

JOSH: Bucket list. *Secrets and Lies*. What did you do on that? When's that?

PETER: Oh, I'm like a banker guy. And I don't know if they have an air date yet.

JOSH: Fair enough. And did you just complete a play?

PETER: I understudied a play.

JOSH: So how was that? I always found it very nerve wracking to understudy. How was the experience for you?

PETER: Oh well, first of all, we like pay checks. And you know, a week at that level of theater pays as much as a whole run at a 99 seat theater. So, that was an easy decision. And it was a good time, I mean, I got to hang out backstage with the other understudies for 24 hours a week.

JOSH: You did not go on?

PETER: I did not go on. I learned cribbage backstage.

JOSH: Nice.

PETER: So if anyone plays cribbage, I'm looking for partners.

JOSH: My sister is way into it but I've never learned.

WILLIAM: Yeah.

JOSH: I'm more a poker guy.

WILLIAM: You got paid to learn cribbage.

PETER: Yeah.

WILLIAM: Look at that.

JOSH: And what about you Duffy? What are you up too?

WILLIAM: Actually, I just had an episode of the finale of *NCIS* that just aired - I was in that.

JOSH: Nice.

WILLIAM: That's really a nice set.

JOSH: Did you get to work with Michael Weatherly?

WILLIAM: I didn't. I was with Mark Harmon and the other gang.

JOSH: When you saw Michael Weatherly, did you yell "quitter!"?

PETER: Quitter!

WILLIAM: That was a lot of fun. That's a great set. But actually speaking of one act, I actually have a one act play we're doing at a festival. I'm going to do one of those - I haven't done a play in a while - with Ensemble Studio Theater out here in LA. That will be all of July.

JOSH: Awesome. What's that called?

WILLIAM: It's called *The Mediator*. It's a 15-20 minute piece. It's part of a one-act festival we're doing over the entire month of July.

JOSH: Fantastic. Break a leg.

WILLIAM: Thank you. [cross talk] Thank you.

JOSH: [cross talk] I'll have to come see it.

WILLIAM: Yeah, definitely come see it. It's a nice little fun comedy. I solve cases between people with their dog problems.

JOSH: Oh, you are the mediator.

WILLIAM: I am the Mediator.

PETER: Nice.

JOSH: William Duffy is... [in unison with WILLIAM]... *The Mediator*. [HRISHI laughs]

JOSH: Get paid to learn cribbage.

WILLIAM: This summer on NBC.

PETER: Ask me how.

WILLIAM: Ask me how. What are you doing?

JOSH: I've got nothing. *Scandal* is done for now. I have this podcast for the next three years and change.

WILLIAM: Nice.

JOSH: Hrishi asked me the other day. He said "did you feel misled about how much work it would take to do this?". I said, "Misled? I was scammed!"

[Laughter]

JOSH: Because you said it would essentially be no work whatsoever. And it's taking over my entire life.

WILLIAM: You gotta love it though.

JOSH: I am actually. I am enjoying the process of doing it. I don't see my friends or old friends,

really ever. Like seeing you two guys. It's been years, and years, and years.

WILLIAM: Yeah.

JOSH: It's a delight to see you guys.

WILLIAM: We did like the PSA walk and talks.

JOSH: That's true. Occasionally somebody comes up with some sort of mini *West Wing* [cross talk] reunion.

PETER: [cross talk] Are you going to see the ATX people?

JOSH: And I am going to see a few at ATX, which I'm really looking forward too.

HRISHI: Hopefully we'll see you guys a lot too, as we move through the seasons.

JOSH: Yeah, you guys will come back right?

PETER: [cross talk] Yes.

WILLIAM: [cross talk] Definitely.

HRISHI: Ok. Thank you guys so much for talking to us.

PETER: Absolutely.

JOSH: This was a lot of fun.

WILLIAM: It was definitely our pleasure.

HRISHI: And thanks to all of you for listening. We hope you'll join us next time. In the meantime, if you have comments or questions, you can discuss this episode with us on our Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/thewestwingweekly>. Or on our website, www.TheWestWingWeekly.com. Or you can hit us up on Twitter. You can hit up any of us. I'm @HrishiHirway. Josh is @JoshMalina. Peter is at...

PETER: @PJSActor

HRISHI: And William Duffy is @WILLIAMDUFFY_?

WILLIAM: Yeah, it's underscore because I couldn't get the William Duffy.

HRISHI: Ok.

JOSH: Ok.

PETER AND WILLIAM: What's next?

[Outro Music]

JOSH: This is the flentl.

[Laughter]