

The West Wing Weekly  
2.20: "The Fall's Gonna Kill You"  
Guests: Marlee Matlin and Jack Jason

[Intro Music]

JOSH: You're listening to The West Wing Weekly. I'm Joshua Malina.

HRISHI: And sometimes like to call you "Hot Pants."

JOSH: Wow. This is going well already.

HRISHI: And joining Joshua "Hot Pants" Malina, I'm Hrishikesh Hirway. I do love when the President calls the First Lady-

[West Wing Episode 2.20 excerpt]

*PRESIDENT BARTLET: Hot Pants.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: It's a classic line. Yep.

HRISHI: I might change your name in our bio to Joshua "Hot Pants" Malina.

JOSH: Bring it.

HRISHI: Today we're talking about episode twenty of season two-man, episode twenty, we're almost at the end.

JOSH: Wow.

HRISHI: Of season two. This episode is called "The Fall's Gonna Kill You." Later in the episode, we're going to be joined by Marlee Matlin, who plays Joey Lucas, along with her interpreter, Jack Jason.

JOSH: The teleplay is by Aaron Sorkin. The story is by Pat Caddell. This episode was directed by Chris Misiano. He is an Emmy winner for *The West Wing*, and a D.G.A. winner for *The West Wing*. Alright. Synopsis.

HRISHI: Ok, here we go.

JOSH: By the way, there are still people who would like a hrynopsis.

HRISHI: Well, didn't get enough love for that.

JOSH: Huh, fair enough. Oh yeah, that's right- it was supposed to happen over at Song Exploder.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: People, if you want your hrynopsis, we need to see more five star reviews from Song Exploder.

HRISHI: Yeah, I don't think that many people mind the *TV Guide* synopsis and so, here now, is the synopsis from *TV Guide*.

JOSH: Alright...

HRISHI: "White House Counsel Oliver Babish menacingly questions C.J. and Abbey about the

President's MS cover-up." "Menacingly" seems like a weird choice there-- I would have left it out, but I'm maybe more Raymond Carver about my synopses- [cross talk] like, that's too editorial.

JOSH: [cross talk] Well I was- it's funny, I already bumped on that and was noting, like, let's discuss this, because that's not even just substantively my take on the episode.

HRISHI: Right, yeah.

JOSH: In fact, everybody who's questioned by him, and we'll discuss this at greater length post-synopsis, but everybody he questions is remarkably defensive and adversarial when I think all he's clearly trying to do is to help them [cross talk] with his questions and tease out the information that he needs.

HRISHI: [cross talk] Yeah, he's doing his job.

JOSH: Yeah, exactly. It's one of the things that struck me in the episode but the *TV Guide* person was not as sharp as we.

HRISHI: I'm gonna make a little adjustment here to the text, then.

JOSH: Oooh.

HRISHI: White House Counsel Oliver Babish pointedly and poignantly questions C.J. and Abbey about the President's MS cover-up.

JOSH: Look at this, it's a "semi-hrynopsis."

HRISHI: And Josh enlists Joey Lucas to take a hush-hush poll on it. Meanwhile, new estimates project a smaller-than-expected budget surplus, and that cheers staffers. And a Chinese satellite has fallen out of its orbit and is hurtling to Earth at two thousand miles per hour, and no one's concerned but Donna.

JOSH: Ok.

HRISHI: Let's start with the end of this, that last subplot, the Chinese satellite.

[West Wing Episode 2.20 excerpt]

*DONNA. It said a Chinese satellite has fallen out of its orbital flight plan. The last detection the Thirtieth had placed it in what they call a Degrading Orbital Path, and it's now dropped off their radar, Suggesting it's begun a rapid fall towards the Earth's atmosphere.*

*CHARLIE: Cool.*

*DONNA. No it's not! What's the matter with you people?*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: I love this episode-think this is a great episode. But that subplot was my least favorite in it.

JOSH: I expected you to say that, but I'm gonna tell you why it landed palpably with me.

HRISHI: Ah. So would you say you were struck by the gravity of the situation?

JOSH: "Gravity of the Situation", a fantastic song by Vic Chesnutt, may he rest in peace.

["Gravity of the Situation" excerpt]

JOSH: Wow, we've really gone off course. Much like the Chinese satellite. [cross talk] Eyy, we're back.

HRISHI: [cross talk] Segue. Very smooth.

JOSH: I, as a young thirteen-year-old, just barely bar mitzvahed Josh, at Camp Greylock in Pittsfield, Mass., fantastic place, normally loved my summers there- but that summer, Skylab, the first U.S. space station, was going to fall from the sky. In fact, did fall from the sky, and there was a lot of build-up. It was a huge thing, there was merchandise around Skylab falling, and some people were panicking, but most people were kind of having fun with it, and people were calculating the odds of someone getting hit, and I felt the weight of this impending hurtling object and the however remote possibility that it was going to land on my family while I was at camp.

HRISHI: So you basically were living in *Wet Hot American Summer*.

JOSH: Oh, I guess that's right, isn't it! Yeah. That's true!

[Wet Hot American Summer excerpt]

*Earlier today, I saw what I thought was possibly a planet. Also possibly a meteor, in the evening sky. I now believe that object was none other than a renegade piece of Skylab, the NASA space station, and it's heading right for the camp.*

*We have no way of pinpointing exactly where it's going to land, it could kill us all*

*Jesus!*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: I actually completely forgot about that. Yeah, lived it. And I remember- and this is actually always the thing that point to when I say that I've never been carefree. Given that was thirteen years old. And I mean, I was legitimately concerned. And I mean, I wasn't- I'm not dumb, I understood that it was a very, very small chance. It's kind of the same, I see it in my son. My son is a fantastic skateboarder, Avi, and being in Los Angeles, boy, I'm always thinking, boy, he'd probably be a great surfer. And he's like, "Forget it, I'm not getting in the water." And whenever I ask him why, he's like, "Sharks."

HRISHI: That's reasonable.

JOSH: Avi, the chances of getting bit by a shark- he goes "No, you don't understand. I get that it's a very, very, very small chance of being attacked by a shark when you're surfing. But there's no chance when you're skating." So, I see in him the same sort of odds-be-damned occasional sense of worry. The counselors couldn't talk me out of my fear. It's going to land somewhere, my parents are somewhere. It could land on my parents. And I was significantly stressed out about it. So I identified with Donna in this episode. That's all we got.

HRISHI: When I was in college and somehow the idea of climbing a mountain came up. Someone was going to climb a mountain, and I was like, "I would never, ever, ever, ever do that." And it was for similar reasons. They were like, "Why not?" I was like, "Because you could fall."

JOSH: Right!

HRISHI: They were like, "Yeah, but..." And I was like, "And I could never fall if I don't do that."

JOSH: There you go. Well, we're very similar

HRISHI: I totally am with you.

JOSH: Maybe that's why we like to stay indoors and talk to each other.

HRISHI: Exactly. You know, there's this really beautiful metaphor, I think, that's constructed with the tobacco industry, and it feels so dramatic when the guy says:

[West Wing Episode 2.20 excerpt]

*CONNELLY. These people perpetrated a fraud against the public.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: It's such a Trojan horse when he comes in and they're talking about the tobacco lawsuit and you feel like, "Ok, this is not part of our A plot, some other thing is going on." And then when he leaves, he does this last line, and Josh's face really reflects, I think, us as the audience, our reaction of like, "Oh God, right, they're-"

JOSH: Absolutely agree with you, and I think in both instances, with this Chinese satellite and with the tobacco situation, I was disappointed that both metaphors were called out explicitly later in the episode.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: Like, that scene with Brad, great, we got it. But then later, Brad kind of says:

[West Wing Episode 2.20 excerpt]

*JOSH: This assistant AG Martin Connelly, when he left my office this morning, he turned and said, "They perpetrated a fraud against the public." And, the look on his face when he said it...they want to get these people.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Eh, we didn't need that explicit ribbon tie-up.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: And there's also a moment where Donna says something about the satellite to Abbey:

[West Wing Episode 2.20 excerpt]

*DONNA: I'm fine, but there's a giant object hurtling its way toward us at a devastating velocity.*

*ABBEY: Tell me about it.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: We got the whole "sky is falling" thing already when C.J. kind of gets the memo and says, "Oh, the sky is falling." So there's even a second explicit- so I agree with you: we got it already.

HRISHI: Yeah. The tobacco one, I think because of the way that it's snuck in, I thought, into the Superficial part of the plot about the lawsuit and having to fund it, there's enough meat to that part that it doesn't feel only metaphorical. It feels like a significant dramatic thing that might happen in the White House. But then everything about the satellite, it's presented in a way that feels like hokey or jokey, so I didn't mind when they really tie it together, where he's like, "They want to get these people," and Josh does that speech to Leo, I'm like-ok, great, it informs his character's decisions and his feelings on-screen, that he's making that explicit connection because that's actually what's happening for him. But then Donna's thing to Abbey is like a throwaway joke line and she's like, "Tell me about it." And then on top of it, it felt like gilding the lily when the title of the episode is "The Fall's Gonna Kill You" and that's already, again, a reference to *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*.

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: Like, you've got Butch Cassidy, you've got the satellite, you've got- at least one of these is unnecessary.

JOSH: Yeah, perhaps I think also the tobacco thing, that little trail of breadcrumbs started the episode before.

HRISHI: That's right!

JOSH: So that, to me, the payoff really hit me like, "Ohhh."

HRISH: Yeah.

JOSH: I wonder, did he know he was going there, or did he discover- was that a happy discovery that Aaron made?

HRISH: Yeah.

JOSH: So that one, yeah, landed more for me than something that was planted in this episode to pay off, or not, in this episode.

HRISHI: Yeah. One thing that I really loved about the Butch Cassidy thing, when C.J., at the end of the episode, quotes Paul Newman in the movie- she doesn't quote him, but she's talking about that part- it almost feels like she actually quotes his laugh. She gives off this big laugh and in the movie, he also laughs very similarly, he laughs really, really hard.

[Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid excerpt]

*BUTCH: [Laughs] Are you Crazy? The fall will probably kill you.*

[end excerpt]

[West Wing Episode 2.20 excerpt]

*C.J.: [Laughs] It's the fall that's gonna kill ya!*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: So it almost felt like she was quoting the reaction as well as the line.

JOSH: And of course there's also- it's a nice hat tip from Aaron to William Goldman.

HRISH: Yes.

*JOSH: Who wrote the screenplay of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid and was an early mentor of Aaron's-*

HRISH: Yeah.

JOSH: And somebody that I know certainly Aaron looks up to. So, I like that stuff, I like that...

HRISHI: Yeah. I didn't get, even the introduction of the satellite subplot, Ed and Larry come in and they're reading the facts, and they're laughing about it.

[West Wing Episode 2.20 excerpt]

*DONNA. No. What's so funny?*

*LARRY. Ed just got a fax from...[laughing]...I'm sorry, Ed just got a fax from a man named Byron Talmadge. He's the Associate Administrator for NASA's Office of Space Cadets.*

*ED: Flight.*

*LARRY: Office of Space Flight.*

*ED: The OSF.*

*DONNA: What'd the fax say?*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And I guess the joke is that Donna's concerned and nobody else is, but it definitely wasn't communicated enough to me why they shouldn't be concerned. Like, why are Ed and Larry laughing about the facts?

JOSH: No, I thought that was a little odd, too. Although, it was like a "Garbo laughs" moment for me. I wrote down, "Ed giggles".

HRISHI: I also thought that Ed and Larry did seem to live up to our *Twilight* fan fiction. They did kind of seem like a cute gay couple in that scene.

JOSH: They're just so perfect together. If they only would just see what's right in front of their faces.

HRISHI: I know! And that was where I was like- Oh, these guys are laughing at this thing that nobody else finds funny because they have their little inside couple-y jokes.

JOSH: Yeah. They need to have their Avatar" see you" moment.

[Avatar excerpt]

*JAKE: I see you.*

NEYTIRI: *I see you.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Then go off and wrap tentacles somewhere off-screen.

HRISHI: Speaking of other cute- possibly gay- duos, we get a shoutout to Batman and Robin.

JOSH: Yes, yes. That's a funny little back and forth between Toby and Sam.

[West Wing Episode 2.20 excerpt]

TOBY: *We're Batman and Robin.*

SAM *Which one is which?*

TOBY: *Look at me, Sam. Am I Robin?*

SAM. *I'm not Robin.*

TOBY: *Yes you are.*

SAM: *Ok. Well, let's move off this.*

TOBY: *You bet, little friend.*

SAM: *Listen.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: I loved that part.

JOSH: I like that, and the slight competitiveness over who's Robin.

HRISHI: I love when we get "Chipper Toby."

JOSH: Yes

HRISHI: "Chipper Toby" cracks me up.

JOSH: Yeah, that is true. And let me, I don't really know the- what are they, DC Comics?

HRISH: Yeah.

JOSH: I don't know any comic universe very well, but is Robin Batman's ward?

HRISH: Yes.

JOSH: Oh. So I knew he was played by Burt Ward, and the whole thing just confused me.

HRISH: Yeah.

JOSH: So Robin actually in the story is Bruce Wayne's ward?

HRISHI: Yeah. Like Bruce Wayne, he is an orphan, and then he gets taken in by Bruce Wayne.

JOSH: Hmm. It's very *Pirates of Penzance*, actually. But that's a musical, so let's move on. I don't want to offend you.

HRISHI: It's very *Lego Batman*, too.

JOSH: *Lego Batman 2* is already out?

HRISHI: Ah, I knew it as I was saying it that you were going to use it against me. *Lego Batman* really tells the story of maybe non-canonical, but definitely tells the story of Batman and Robin.

JOSH: Have you seen it?

HRISHI: I have.

JOSH: Wow. You spurn the entire genre of musical theater, but you race out to see the *Lego Batman* movie.

HRISHI: I will take Lego movies over musical movies.

JOSH: Mmm... I didn't love *The Lego Movie*, the first one.

HRISHI: I'm just gonna go past that.

JOSH: Alright.

HRISHI: Everything is not awesome, is all I'll say.

JOSH: Yeah, fair enough. That's a song, you know.

HRISHI: I know, I know.

JOSH: Do people know, by the way-do listeners know what a good musician you are? Do people know the work of The One AM Radio? You don't ever talk about it. [cross talk] I'm a huge fan...

HRISHI: [cross talk] I talked about it when we were with Richard Schiff. I talked about credible threats.

JOSH: I was nodding off at that point.

HRISHI: Speaking of Will Arnett, who plays Lego Batman

JOSH: Were We? Oh, does he?

HRISHI: Yep, there's a- when-I can't hear the word "beets" or somebody ask about "beets" without thinking of *Arrested Development* and a scene where they're talking about "beads" and Will Arnett mishears them and thinks they're talking about "bees" and then for the rest of the episode keeps making "bee" references- he's like:

[Arrested Development Episode 1.22 Excerpt]

LINDSAY: *Beads.*

GOB.: *Bees?!*

LINDSAY: *Beads!*

GOB.: *Beads?!*

MICHAEL *Gob's not on board.*

GOB: *Well, I'll start my own business. How hard can it be? Bzzz! We'll see who brings in more honey. [Buzzes]*

MICHAEL: *He's thinking about bees again.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: it's great. Wow, I wasn't thinking that that was going to be a segue that would come so smoothly.



JOSH: That was nice.

HRISHI: Thanks, *Lego Batman*. It was the segue we needed, not the segue that we deserved.

JOSH: So true.

HRISHI: So, the people who Sam meets with in his section of the episode is the Progressive Caucus, and I found an interesting thing in an article in Newsweek; apparently this part of the episode came through Lawrence O'Donnell, who was approached by Oakland Congresswoman Barbara Lee, who was a member of the Congressional Progressive Caucus. They were trying to get this idea of giving a three hundred dollar tax credit to working class people, and it wasn't getting any traction. She thought maybe they could shine a light on their proposal if it got a mention in *The West Wing*.

[West Wing Episode 2.20 excerpt]

*SAM: What I wanted to mention was Jane Gentry and Richard Will say you guys want a line in the Chicago draft.*

*HENRY: "Jet planes and swimming pools."*

*SAM: Yeah, that our opponents want to help the rich pay for "bigger swimming pools and faster private jets."*

*HELEN: Yeah, hit em hard.*

*SAM: Well, we are hitting them hard, but I'm not gonna use the line.*

*HENRY: Why not?*

*SAM: First of all, it's bad writing.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: It's funny that I think their intention was to probably get some kind of thing like, "Isn't this great?" but actually the substance of the episode around this part of it is really kind of arguing- not arguing against them, but arguing with them, certainly.

JOSH: Oh yeah, I'm sure she wasn't psyched when she finally saw this episode, the woman who pitched this.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: And it is an incredibly lame line about "larger swimming pools and faster jets" that they- it is bad writing. I like that that's really what's kind of sticking in his Craw. Also it's- the whole thing is weird. They seem to think this is really playing some hardball and it's such a kind of lame line.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: And then to get the little bit of Aaron, writing Sam, saying something obnoxious when he talks about it being "like something a high school girl would write."

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: And then making it an issue- the whole thing is kind of ugly. It's interesting, I mean he's dealing with it, but there's also later on when Sam tells Toby:

[West Wing Episode 2.20 excerpt]

*SAM: Well, I met with some of the staffers for Americans for Tax Justice and the Progressive Caucus.*

*TOBY: And you think you may have offended them?*

*SAM: Yeah. And girls, possibly.*

*TOBY: Were you right?*

*SAM. Yeah.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: But he really wasn't. It really was not the way he- there's a way to make the point he was trying to make without gender entering into it.

HRISHI: Yeah, I mean he could have just said, "This sounds like it was written by a high school student."

JOSH: Exactly. It clearly was important to Sam that it sounded to him like a high school girl wrote it.

HRISH: Yeah.

JOSH: I mean, he had many opportunities to backpedal but Aaron writing it is aware of that too, so I mean it's guess illustrative of Sam's character.

HRISHI: I think there's also something to be said about the depiction of a very real kind of guy who is feminist enough to stand up for the ERA with fire and passion, but also can still casually say things that are super sexist and think that he's ok-like his public formal position is 'A' but then these little minor asides reveal something else and I think that that's so accurate.

JOSH: Yeah, Sure. It's human. It's real.

HRISHI: Yeah, exactly. I love that it's not like Sam gets it right all the time or anybody gets it right all the time, but they also don't get it wrong all the time either.

JOSH: Right. And that there isn't a full resolution or it's not nicely wrapped up.

HRISH: Yes.

JOSH: He's kind of called on his misstep but he still goes down swinging with it. He still doesn't really think he said anything wrong.

HRISHI: I think it's also interesting that his- I don't know how much of this is due to the Pat Caddell "story by" of it all, but he really articulates this argument against the Progressive Caucus in a way that sounds like a Fox democrat might, you know, where it's like, "I agree with you fundamentally about your need for the tax cuts to benefit the people who need the most, but let me spend a paragraph speaking in a way that could be interpreted as a defense of the one percent."

[West Wing Episode 2.20 excerpt]

*SAM. Henry, last fall, every time your boss got on the stump and said, "It's time for the rich to pay their fair share," I hid under a couch and changed my name. I left Gage Whitney making four hundred thousand a year, which means I paid twenty-seven times the national average in income tax. I paid my fair share, and the fair share of twenty-six other people. And I'm happy to,*

*'cause that's the only way it's gonna work, and it's in my best interest that everybody be able to go to schools, and drive on roads, but I don't get twenty-seven votes on Election Day. The fire department doesn't come to my house twenty-seven times faster, and the water doesn't come out of my faucet twenty-seven times hotter. The top one percent of wage earners in this country pay for twenty-two percent of this country. Let's not call them names while they're doing it, is all I'm saying.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: What do you think about that?

JOSH: One, I thought he was being obnoxious, on a personal character note. It's like, don't start quoting your own salary. Just already, it's kind of got my back up. I also suspected- it was- I meant to look this up- I thought he probably underestimated the percentage of the tax burden that the top one percent carries by a lot, I think.

HRISHI: Right, nowadays it's actually forty-six percent.

JOSH: Yeah, I had that feeling without even looking it up, I was pretty confident that it was far greater.

HRISHI: I'm quoting Ben Casselman from FiveThirtyEight here, who's the chief economics writer over there.

JOSH: And a friend of the podcast.

HRISHI: And a friend of the podcast, and he was friendly enough to answer a couple questions for me about this. He said that the reason why it's now forty-six percent as opposed to twenty-two percent is partly because of changes in the tax code, but it's mostly because of rising inequality, and the rich account for a larger share of total income than they used to. I was asking him if there was something that seemed perpetually off about the argument because Sam says that he pays his fair share and the fair share of twenty six other people. Sam is right, we have a progressive tax system, and so the more you make, the more you pay in income tax.

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: At least, that's the way it's supposed to work. But, as you get into the very, very upper reaches- the people within the one percent, the .1 percent, the .001 percent, their effective tax rate goes down. I mean, this is a very small portion, but I know people like to point to the Mitt Romney example, where he actually ended up paying a lower effective tax rate than his [cross talk] secretary, yeah.

JOSH: [cross talk] Right, than somebody- his secretary.

HRISHI: So I was wondering if he was being kind of fast and loose with the facts about that. But Ben said, no.

JOSH: Yeah, ultimately felt like his take on it is self-laudatory, which is that this isn't fair, and I'm paying an unfair amount of tax, but that's ok with me if the right stuff's gonna be done with it.

HRISHI: Yeah, I mean, I think that the disconnect is the language around "fair share." Like everything that he says is right, in terms of like in this situation he's paying more than the national average, he's paying twenty-seven times more, but does that actually constitute a "fair

share," because if we're talking about "fair," than we have to include all these other systemic things that he's been able to take advantage of.

JOSH: Right, there's plenty of unfairness in how he got to where he is, that's, you know, systemic unfairness that he's not mentioning. He's sort of just framing it as if he should deserve twenty-seven times the services that the government provides, and it's a false argument.

HRISHI: Right. I'll just read a little bit from what Ben emailed me. He said that Sam is right on the facts, but whether you're compelled by his argument is another question entirely. He said that the central question posed by Sam's speech, "What do we mean by fair share?" is ultimately a values question more than it is an economics one.

JOSH: Yeah. Very well put. Early in the episode a Trump-ai-yi-yi moment for me, when they're discussing potentially trying to get some sense of what the public's reaction is going to be to the situation with Bartlet's MS, and Josh says:

[West Wing Episode 2.20 excerpt]

*JOSH: All public opinion's shaped by the reaction of the press, but the fundamental...*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: It sort of landed with me, because I'm thinking it just points exactly to why Trump and his administration is so intent on delegitimizing most of the press.

HRISHI: Right, so that they can control that narrative.

JOSH: Right, exactly, and because a lot of the press about his first five or six weeks is so negative and so he has to delegitimize it because it's going to affect public reaction.

HRISHI: Right. There's something similar in this episode- similar to how autism was raised in the "Stackhouse Filibuster" episode, and how for a lot of people it was the first time that they'd really heard that being addressed on TV. I think for a lot of people MS was similar in this part of *The West Wing*. When the President talks about the symptoms of it, and the fact that there's no cure, and even when he corrects Toby that it is not fatal, these were facts that are being sewn into the plot of the show, so it doesn't feel like it's didactic or expository, and so we kind of take it, but it let a lot of people learn about MS in this really informative way.

JOSH: Yeah. I wanted to give a shout-out and an h/t to the closed captioning people this episode. In this episode, the "all rights" are all right.

HRISHI: Oh, good. That's my favorite Mark Ruffalo movie.

JOSH: Yeah, that's good. Annette Bening was good in that, too.

HRISHI: Yeah, she was all right.

JOSH: Yeah. All right.

HRISHI: We talked recently about how the episodes have been giving us a nice sense of continuity calling back moments from the first season and previous episodes, and it keeps going with this one. We get a callback to the "arboreal stop," from the pilot:

[West Wing Episode 2.20 excerpt]

*C.J.: If that was March of last year, then that was his fourth physical, then there were a couple*

*times during the campaign, and after the shooting.*

*OLIVER: Yeah.*

*C.J. And the time he rode his bicycle into a tree.*

*OLIVER: When he sprained his ankle.*

*C.J. Yeah.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Am I wrong, or did it cast that back in the light as potentially MS related?

HRISHI: Oh, oh, oh. No.

JOSH: Definitely not?

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Or maybe is that just something that occurred to me?

HRISHI: Or maybe it's just something that didn't occur to me.

JOSH: Probably the first thing. Given our track records, it's probably that I'm wrong. There's a line in the Oliver-C.J. questioning scene that made me bark out loud, made me laugh really hard.

[West Wing Episode 2.20 excerpt]

*OLIVER: In my entire life, I've never found anything charming.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Something about both that line and Oliver Platt's delivery of it that really made me laugh. It also makes you maybe also realize why he's a quadruple divorcé.

HRISHI: Right. Their dialogue reminded me of- in Judo, where every hold and every potential throw has a counter, and every counter has a counter, and so you know, you watch experts go and nobody can land anything because they're just grappling and it just like, it's this cool, elegant dance.

[West Wing Episode 2.20 excerpt]

*OLIVER: Three months.*

*C.J. Three months, so why should I trust you?*

*OLIVER: I don't care if you trust me or not.*

*C.J.: Imagine my shock.*

*OLIVER: I've got better things to do with my imagination.*

*C.J.: I think this is going really well so far, Oliver. It's almost hard to believe that four different women have sued you for divorce.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: That's great writing.

HRISHI: It's so good.

JOSH: So let me ask, just why are they so adversarial and so defensive? Why do they have their backs up so badly when this guy is asking maybe some- I mean, he is asking uncomfortable questions, but it's in a process meant to help them or put them in the best possible situation moving forward. Abbey and C.J. are so combative with him.

HRISHI: He's pointing out their wrongdoing in a way that they're defensive about, because they didn't even know that they were engaged in wrongdoing. It turns out by no action of their own, they're suddenly-

JOSH: Well, this is more true of C.J. than of Abbey.

HRISHI: Sure.

JOSH: I mean, Abbey has been involved in deception.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: I think C.J.'s trying to figure out to what extent she might actually be culpable, but she seems to be largely in a situation where she's been out of the loop and maybe put at risk. You know, were I she, I would really want to pick Oliver Babish's mind about where I stand and what the story is. I don't think I would see him as the enemy. I'd go, I'd say, "Talk to me. I'm going to tell you everything, and help me out here."

HRISHI: Yeah. Well, I will say that "were I she" is not actually right. It's pronounced, "Hrishi."

JOSH: Oh, I'm sorry. Oh, that's interesting. So I've been saying that wrong all this time?

HRISHI: Yeah. At least in that one moment.

JOSH: Well, I was just saying it her way.

HRISHI: corrects "Hirway."

JOSH: Oh.

[Frank Sinatra "My Way" excerpt]

JOSH: [sung] "I did it "Hirway".

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: But no, you're right. I think with C.J., Oliver's like a proxy for the outside world and he gets the brunt of her defensiveness unfairly, but with Abbey- and I think that's a problem, too, is that C.J. does know, like part of it is that C.J. is a little bit in the same boat as Abbey, as we find out at the end. She saw the injection that Abbey gave the President, and she did not ask more, she didn't investigate, and she [cross talk] has always had that in her-

JOSH: [cross talk] Well that was smart of her.

HRISHI: Right, but she's always had that in her head and so she says, "Is there anything else I need to know?" because she isn't as completely innocent as she is trying to present herself, even to Oliver Babish.

JOSH: No, but what she's guilty of is protecting herself, and it might be effective. Because, you know, could have been a B12 shot? I didn't ask. I wasn't told, I didn't know. You can fault me for maybe not following up on stuff. In other words, to me, I feel like she was effectively self-protective.

HRISHI: Right. But it is also another log on the fire of "was this a conspiracy?" Because, maybe she had some duty, as an American citizen, or however you want to put it, to inform the public of the true nature of the President's health. And if she knowingly chose not to, then-

JOSH: I think that's what you learn from Jay Carney- number one rule, don't lie. And you can't lie about what you don't know. And I have the feeling this is something that happens often, with maybe with a "wink wink" and a "nudge nudge", but the Press Secretary gets sent out with not the entire full story, so that he or she can tell the truth, as they know it.

HRISH: Yeah.

JOSH: I guess what I'm saying is, you know, when I watch this episode, I think Abbey's in some real danger, and C.J., much less so. Maybe you can criticize C.J. for how she's done her job.

HRISHI: Oh, absolutely. Yeah, no, for sure. C.J. witnessed the First Lady giving the president a shot. The First Lady is the one who actually gave him the shot.

JOSH: Right. And Abbey is also- it's one of the things I enjoy about these episodes, and this one specifically- but in this group of episodes, is we're seeing some of these exceptional, high-performing people at their worst. I mean, Abbey flails, in this scene:

[West Wing Episode 2.20 excerpt]

*ABBEY: It was a form. It asked for, among other things, the family's medical history. It was left blank. It was a form- it was one of many forms. I signed it without reading it.*

*OLIVER: Was anyone else in the room when you signed it?*

*ABBEY: Oh, it was over a year ago. I really don't remember.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: I like seeing them kind of at their worst, and rocked back.

HRISHI: Yeah, and Oliver's incredulity at her reaction:

[West Wing Episode 2.20 excerpt]

*ABBEY: Yes.*

*OLIVER: "Have you been practicing medicine for twenty-six years?"*

*ABBEY: Yes.*

*OLIVER: "Are you not able to recognize a standard medical history form when it is put in front of your face?"*

*ABBEY: I didn't read it!*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: He's absolutely doing his job.

JOSH: That's right.

HRISHI: And he is dismantling her in a way that really he needs to be doing.

JOSH: Yeah.

HRISHI: Let me switch to something else-I had one thought about Joey Lucas. So, when Josh

tells her about the President's condition, she takes it with some concern and some understanding, I feel like...

[West Wing Episode 2.20 excerpt]

*JOEY: Josh?*

*JOSH: Yeah.*

*JOEY How is the President?*

*JOSH: He's fine. He's fine. I'll tell him you asked.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: I was trying to think about how different her reaction was from all of the staffers. She seemed relatively unfazed to me, and I thought maybe she seems relatively unfazed because she has some experience battling public perception of her own- not MS, but being deaf. She says, back in season one, you know:

[West Wing Episode 1.14 Excerpt]

*JOEY [KENNY]: I mean, it's not exactly like there's a seller's market for deaf campaign managers.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: She has some kernel of something she brings to it that these other characters don't, because she might understand the instinct to wanna cover up certain facts about your health, or, I don't know.

JOSH: Yeah, that's an interesting question. There are a couple moments in this episode that I thought were kind of neat little "West Wing-y" tropes that are turned on their head:

[West Wing Episode 2.20 excerpt]

*TOBY: Cause we need to know what to do next.*

*LEO: We know what to do next.*

*TOBY: No, we don't know which is the more insurmountable problem - the perception that...*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Normally, "What's next?" to us- I mean it's our tagline because it's inspiring, and it's Bartlet, "Ok, we're done with one thing, what do we move on to?" Usually that's an inspiring and great moment. Here it's turned on it's head. And then I thought the same thing when Joey is writing to- you know, they're having that conversation, and she's lipreading, but occasionally in order to communicate something to Josh she'll write it down on a napkin, and instead of "Let Bartlet be Bartlet," the classic image that we can all imagine- you know we can all [cross talk] picture that image of the napkin.

HRISHI: [cross talk] Whoa, that is good! Right!

JOSH: Here it's bad news and scribbled words, and it's gotta be immediately stuffed into a water glass, and I thought just kind of a [cross talk] cute little moment's turned sour.

HRISHI: [cross talk] That is great. Boom. A-plus on that!



JOSH: Thank you. All right.

HRISHI: That was really good. The napkin, writing on the napkin. Another thing I wanted to mention, when C.J.'s talking to Oliver, she says, at one point, "With reporters, I don't choose my words that carefully," which is obviously garbagel

JOSH: I wrote the same thing.

HRISHI: Like, that is the part when I realized that she is a little bit flailing.

JOSH: She's scrambling, absolutely. I thought the same thing. Completely untrue. I had- one tiny little thing I noticed: So, the character Martin, assistant AG Martin, comes into Josh's office to have that conversation and noticed his bag, he's got his briefcase very visibly either on his lap or on Josh's desk, and it's weathered. It's just a piece of good prop work, where it looks like a briefcase that this guy has carried for nine years. Not like something that the prop department bought yesterday, and-

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: I love little details like that. My wife, Melissa, was a costumer for years, and we'll watch something and she'll point out and say, "That's brand new, that shirt. That's not a shirt that that character has worn for three years," and those little details really make the world realer.

HRISHI: I think, also, just something about his casting, it's an actor named Lee Wilkof. He has kind of a Willy Loman quality to him with the briefcase and his trenchcoat, and-

JOSH: Completely agree.

HRISHI: And just the defeated kind of aspect, and I love that you pointed out the briefcase being weathered, because it really goes with this idea that these lawyers on the government side are living a very different existence than the lawyers in the private sector, who are working for Big Tobacco.

JOSH: Right, the budget is ten to one on this whole situation, and you can see in this guy that he's part of what's gonna be a losing team, and that they're tilting against windmills.

HRISHI: Yeah. A little thing I love:

[West Wing Episode 2.20 excerpt]

*LEO: Do a job.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: That's just like a weird Sorkinism, I think?

JOSH: Yes, it's very Aaron.

HRISHI: Like, a good job? A bad? Just, do a job. I had written, before Josh could say that Dale Bracket sounds like a fictional TV detective, I had written down that it sounded like a ridiculous name for someone who's supposed to be handsome. It sounds like a TV newscaster that had been 3D printed.

JOSH: Oh, that's good. That's really good. I liked the little moment, too, there's something so intimate about the moment where Joey raises Josh's chin-

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: So they can communicate.

HRISHI: It gives you a sense of what could've been between these guys.

JOSH: Yeah, why doesn't he ask her out? Dude!

HRISHI: I think he lost his chance. There was a little weird other thing that C.J. says. She says:

[West Wing Season 2.20 excerpt]

*C.J.: I'll tell you what else. One in forty American men wear women's clothing, and we've had well over forty presidents.*

*OLIVER: Yeah.*

*C.J.: I'm just saying...*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And I was trying to figure that out, like, there is she being imprecise? is she just being- is she just exaggerating? Because they have *not* had well over forty presidents. In 2001, at least America in real life, had only had forty-two presidents.

JOSH: Two, yeah.

HRISHI: Well over forty- again, just because we talk about precision of language here, implies to me like-

JOSH: She's off her game.

HRISH: Yeah.

JOSH: I like the last scene between Josh and C.J. I want it like that- I love when we get D.C. exterior, when we just breath into the real world of D.C.

HRISHI: Oh, Batman and Robin again?

JOSH: No, Josh and C.J. in the- at the end. Oh, I missed something. DC. Ok! Maybe we are done. Oh, sometimes I "marvel" at you. Even worse. Ok, that's all I got. Oh, balls.

HRISHI: [laughing] Ok, let's take a quick break, and when we come back, we're going to speak to Marlee Matlin and her interpreter, Jack Jason.

[ad break]

JOSH: Joining us now, we have Marlee Matlin, Oscar winner and Golden Globe winner, as well as a multi-Emmy nominee. We know and love her as Joey Lucas on *The West Wing*.

HRISHI: And joining us along with Marlee is Jack Jason, who's been her interpreter for over thirty years. They're also producing partners. And you'll hear Jack's voice interpreting for Marlee, as well as speaking for himself. You guys want to tell us what happened just now when you first came into the studio?

JOSH: Ok, yeah, why not tell it now, maybe it'll explain why I'm slightly off for the next- for the entire interview.

**Transcriber's Note: Marlee Matlin, interpreted by Jack Jason, will be indicated in the transcript as MARLEE [JACK]. Marlee, speaking for herself, will be indicated as MARLEE. Jack, speaking for himself, will be indicated as JACK.**

MARLEE [JACK]: Well, so what happened is that, first of all, I've always been, you know, one to want to do this podcast, and we've been planning this for a long time, I don't know what took you so long to ask me, but anyway, all is forgiven, but the way it worked out is- it's a little bit of payback here, is what we're doing, because obviously when I got here- well it all started because, knowing that we're both friends of Brad Whitford, and-

JOSH: BOO.

MARLEE [JACK]: I spent- and I spent some time with Brad recently on the campaign, and he told the story of how you love to put out these practical jokes on all these unsuspecting people. So I thought, well, I'd love to be able to catch you before you get me, so what I did is that when we walked in here today, on this beautiful day, in this beautiful little recording studio, and I saw the microphone here, and the two of you, of course, lovely men sitting here getting ready to record, I said to Jack in sign language, "Why is there a microphone here?" And they are of course looking, and not knowing what's going on, and we're communicating in sign language, and nobody understands, and, "Why do I have a microphone here? I'm not- I'm deaf!" And Jack goes, "Well, I didn't know!" And he goes, "Well I told you!" And we went back and forth and it got so, I mean, so vicious in our sign language and poor- the two of you just sat there looking completely-

JOSH: We didn't say a word.

MARLEE [JACK]: Like somebody, like you took the candy out of the drugstore and you just got busted. You didn't know what was going on, and so I threw my glasses on the couch and then said to Jack in sign language, "Please leave." And so Jack left the room, left me here, and the both of you just looked at me and I said, "You know what, I'll go do this interview myself," and then when I went out to get Jack you guys were like in a flop sweat because we played this practical joke on you!

JOSH: You got us horribly- as soon as you left, Hrishi turned to me and said, "I thought you emailed Jack about the microphones!" I said, "I did I could swear you told me to have two microphones!"

HRISHI: It was the perfect thing to use as a prank because it was something that we were- we didn't know, we were like, "Should we have four microphones or three microphones? What is..."

JOSH: All I can say is two things: One, my revenge will not be swift, but it will be terrible.

MARLEE: Oh, God.

JOSH: It may happen years from now, but it will be bad. And two, it makes me laugh, people are always asking why the *West Wing* cast is so mean to me. Because in all our group interviews they're always taking shots at me, I'm always the butt of the joke. People then do horrible things like you did to me earlier, and most of them seem to have forgotten that I do have it coming. That and more coming to me.

MARLEE: Oh, my God. So, be afraid!

JACK: Yeah, be afraid.

JOSH: Be afraid.

HRISHI: Could we start actually maybe before *The West Wing*, way before- how did you two

first start working together?

MARLEE [JACK]: Jack and I?

HRISH: Yes.

MARLEE [JACK]: You saw that argument that we had? That's basically our history. No, actually we met thirty-one years ago...twenty...wait, I'm only twenty-eight though, that doesn't make sense...

JOSH: The math doesn't work!

MARLEE [JACK]: Uh, no. I won't flatter myself. But anyway, we met in New York City right after completed principal photography on *Children of a Lesser God*, and I needed an interpreter in New York, where my old boyfriend at the time- he was doing an interview in his apartment that he didn't want anyone to know that we were dating at the time, so he wanted me to leave the apartment, you know that kind of that old Hollywood way of dealing with things, so he asked me to leave the place, and so he wanted me to go around New York City, but I wasn't from New York, I was from Chicago, and so

MARLEE: Go Cubs!

MARLEE [JACK]: So, go Cubs. So, Jack was well, there's a whole story about Jack, and how he got there in the first place if you wanna- you'll give me back the mike, Jack, when you're done?

JACK: Yes, I will.

MARLEE: Tell them the story!

JACK: Tell them the story. Ok, now this is Jack speaking, so I don't want you to think that Marlee is schizophrenic and has two different voices. So, I was a Ph.D. student at NYU working in the office, and there are a lot of deaf students at NYU, and somebody from- can I say the name of your old boyfriend?

MARLEE: Sure.

JACK. William Hurt's old assistant-

[cross talk]

JACK: Anyway, so William Hurt's assistant called around New York City to look for interpreters for Marlee, and they directed him to NYU where we have a lot of students, because specifically the original plan was to go to England with Bill Hurt for the premiere of *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, and Bill wanted Marlee to- and he hates to be called Bill, by the way, so.

[cross talk, all saying "Bill", laughing]

JACK: So anyway, so he wanted Marlee to have an interpreter, and so they had heard that NYU had programs for students in England for the summer, and where do they get their interpreters? So they called the office- the woman who answered the phone knew that I did a lot of interpreting on Broadway, did Broadway shows for side work, and she said, "Here, get the phone, they need an interpreter." So, a job. Because when you're a Ph.D. student, you're not supposed to work outside of the university, but I did. So I took the phone, and he said, "We need an interpreter for somebody in England; where do we find an interpreter?" I said, "Bring your own, because it's BSL, it's British Sign Language, it's different than American Sign

Language." To make a long story short- "sign language isn't international" Marlee said So, just so you know that- so, except signs like this, well, dirty signs. "And [expletive deleted] you, yeah" Marlee said.

MARLEE: Bleep!

JACK: Anyway, So-bleep- so he said, "Oh, but Mr. Hurt would prefer a woman," and I thought, "What does he care, he's a six-foot-two goyishe guy, I'm a five-foot-two Jew, what does he care?" No, he wants a woman. So I sent them the name of three women who I knew were out of town. They called, couldn't get any reply, they called me back-

JOSH: Very clever

JACK: They said, "Ok, fine." But then it happened that they didn't end up going. Then, the next thing that happened is that Bill had to do this interview for *Esquire*, didn't want the press to know that him thirty-five, her nineteen were dating, that's- and he was very, very

JOSH: I would want everyone to know.

JACK: Yes.

[all laughing]

MARLEE: There you go!

JACK: So then, but I didn't know this until after the fact, and then I said, "Ok, fine, I'll go do it." So I was a very poor student at the time, I had no suit, I thought I had to be dressed up so I had a sweater and little tie- Marlee keeps making fun of me, to this day, how I was dressed- and went up to 333 Central Park West, and waited (I was there like a half an hour early) and then Marlee and Bill come out of their car, and she looks at me and at this time Marlee was not the respectable mother of four that she is now. She was like a cigarette-smoking, nineteen-year-old, you know, whatever substances she was using at the time kind of girl, and said, "You? Ok." He went upstairs, we got in a limousine, it was the first time I had ever been in a limousine, and we rode and the first question she goes is, "Do you party?" and I go, "No," and then she said- what was the second question? "Are you Jewish?" And I said, "Yes." And she said, "Are you gay?" And I said, "No." And then [cross talk] she said "Ok."

MARLEE: [cross talk] Didn't matter, didn't matter.

JACK. It didn't matter, and then she goes-

JOSH: These are the first three questions that Marlee asked me as well, when I met her!

JACK: And then we were like, "Ok," and she was, "I need to go shopping," and I go, well where's she going to go shopping? I mean she's probably a rich movie star, I thought at the time. So We took her to the-

MARLEE: Well, maybe I was!

JACK: Yeah, maybe you were. So then we went to the Trump Tower, first because I thought that was- you know that was the height, in the eighties, of fashion, and she was like, "Ugh, no, no, no, too gold."

MARLEE: [cross talk] You're not fooling me.

JOSH: [cross talk] Nice.

JACK: Marlee had very good, she really could see the future very well. "No. No, no, no, no, no Trump Tower." Then we went to Bloomingdale's, and she said, "No, too much," "cause it was too visually stimulating. Went to Macy's, we became friends because she loved Macy's, and ever since then, you know

MARLEE: He's been stuck with me.

JACK: And as Marlee said, "He's been stuck with me." So that- I didn't mean to make that a long story, but that's the case.

JOSH: No, that's an excellent story, and have you ever gotten into the kind of fight that you just enacted?

JACK: You know, you just saw that we- that is actually sort of based on a fight we had once, when Marlee was doing- I can't remember- you know, a good relationship is when you can't remember what you were fighting about.

JOSH: That's right, mmhmm.

JACK. So we had a fight, I left, her publicist said, "Get back in there!" I said, "No, I'm not," and she said, "Get back in there!" And I was using, improperly, my role as an interpreter, but I had deaf parents, so I was used to doing that. So, I said, no and he goes, "Get in there!" So I got in there, and we sat down and it was this woman and she started interviewing and the first question she asked Marlee was "So," just like your question, which was, "So, you and Jack have been working together a long time and you have such a good relationship, how is that you guys get along so well, and I thought, "[expletive deleted], how am going to do this with a straight face, I'm so mad at her," and she said, and I had to say it, "Oh, you know, when you work with somebody sometimes you get in fights, and sometimes you have disagreements, but at the end of the day, Jack is a good person." And I'm saying this, and I'm realizing she's apologizing to me, through me, and I have to say it [cross talk] to myself.

MARLEE: [cross talk] Out of his mouth.

JACK: So I don't even get the pleasure of her saying it to me. I have to say it to myself. And when I'm done with that word, she raises one eyebrow like, "Ok, this is it, and I'm in control." And that was it

JOSH: That is a very specific kind of passive aggressiveness.

JACK. It was very weird, and very messed up, and yet it was- it made for the best story, so...

JOSH: Speaking of Bill Hurt, and *Children of a Lesser God*, there's a weird synchronicity in "18th and Potomac". John Rubinstein is in that episode, you guys don't work together, but I saw John Rubinstein in the Bill Hurt role in the original Broadway production in 1980.

MARLEE [JACK]: And Aaron Sorkin was a huge fan of *Children of a Lesser God*, and he told me that when he hired me on the show. So-

HRISHI: Let's get to that story. How did-

JOSH: Marlee's origin story, on *The West Wing*.

MARLEE [JACK]: It starts with you! You know it's based on you.

JOSH: I- he has suggested so.

MARLEE [JACK]: Because of your role on *Sports Night*, because the letter that you wrote to your deaf sister off screen-

[Sports Night Episode 1.07 excerpt]

*JEREMY: I just want to write a quick letter to my sister Louise. She's a sophomore at Amherst.*

*DAN: You write letters?*

*JEREMY: I write to Louise.*

*CASEY: That's nice. I haven't written a letter in years. I do everything by phone now.*

*JEREMY: My sister can't hear.*

[end excerpt]

MARLEE [JACK]: We never actually saw the deaf sister, right? We never did.

JOSH: No.

MARLEE [JACK]: But I said to Aaron, in a roundabout way, I want that role, because you and I would be playing brother and sister, and there's always another time, anyway, so, if you'll have me. So, I had Jack call Aaron's office and say to him, "I'm a huge fan, and would love to play the deaf sister," and he goes, "You know what, let's meet for lunch instead." So we met for lunch, we had Chinese food in Beverly Hills.

HRISHI: Was that the first time you were meeting?

MARLEE [JACK]: Yeah, it was the first time in person, we had never met before. I mean, usually, people don't call back like him. He said, "Yeah, let's go ahead and let's have a lunch." And we had a lovely lunch, and he kept staring at me and said, "You know what, I'll never forget the deaf sister, but let's not focus on that right now. I'm working on another show."

JACK: And then what happened was- is that when, this is Jack speaking-

MARLEE: [cross talk] He speaks a lot.

MARLEE [JACK]: [cross talk] Jack speaks a lot.

JACK: When *The West Wing* premiered, Marlee sent a note to Aaron again, saying, "Say hi to my friend Rob Lowe, and by the way..." Whatever, and then like in a week, because Marlee's first episode on *The West Wing* was episode number what?

HRISHI: Fourteen.

JACK: Fourteen, and so they had already been shooting by the time it was on. Probably they were into episode eight, and he sent pages like right away, and then it went from there, and the rest is history.

JOSH: That's fantastic.

MARLEE [JACK]: I think I was pregnant twice during the filming of the show.

JACK: What's the episode called, "Something Something Hours in L.A.", what episode?

HRISHI: Twenty.

JOSH: Twenty.

JACK: "Twenty Hours," that was Marlee's second child, and then later when there was a third child, and then

MARLEE: And then I kept going...

JOSH: I love that story but it makes me a little sad, because, I could've worked with you. I got to know you a little bit through *West Wing*, but I've never gotten [cross talk] to actually work with...

JACK: [cross talk] But did you think, and this is Jack, did you think when they asked you to write a letter to your deaf sister, did you ever think, why is she deaf? And why am I writing a letter? And did it occur to you when you were doing the show?

JOSH: Yeah, I think it had occurred to me that he would revisit it. I thought there would be more of a-

JACK: But you never thought in the first place, "Oh, why is my sister deaf?" You never-

MARLEE [JACK]: Why was the character deaf? Did they ever tell you, or did you ever ask?

JOSH: No, there's never any discussion of it.

HRISHI: But you, in general, don't like to dwell on backstory.

JOSH: I think I assumed that we'd meet her, but it would've been nice to work together because we're both Jewish and straight and like to party.

[all laughing]

MARLEE: Yeah.

MARLEE [JACK]: I'm sitting here leaning over to the microphone, and I'm deaf, and I'm thinking why is a deaf woman leaning over to the microphone anyway?

JOSH: Just don't fight anymore. I hate it when you guys fight.

MARLEE [JACK]: We did a good job, huh, we really-

JOSH: It was really, really well done, I wish there were some sort of surveillance-

MARLEE [JACK]: If for those of you listening out there, it was just priceless. The looks on both of their faces, one of you guys had to change your shirt, 'cause you were sweating so much afterwards.

JOSH: As I should be. And, I'm rarely completely speechless, [cross talk] but that was one of those moments.

MARLEE: [cross talk] I know, I know.

JOSH: I was thinking, "Even if I wanted to say something, I'm not sure how to jump into this conversation." I don't know how to defuse the situation. I'm gonna let it play itself out.

HRISHI: One more thing you can blame on Brad. I mean like, he should be part of the revenge package.

JOSH: Yeah, probably.

HRISHI: So, we are now towards the end of season two. Had Joey Lucas for you changed in



terms of your sense of the character at this point?

MARLEE [JACK]: Well, first of all, if you recall, when we first met Joey, I was a campaign manager and working on a campaign, and, first of all, thinking about the fact that I was deaf, and a woman, working on a campaign, you know, I was smart, the character that I was playing was smart. I knew politics, I knew that kind of stuff, and so we played out that first episode, and then when Aaron revisited the character and decided to turn me into a pollster, that really, mean, elevated the stakes. Aaron created a story where it wasn't about *being* deaf, it just happened that she *was* deaf, so he got it. He just happened to make her deaf, and she had a great job. So being a pollster, I thought- great! You know, for me, I mean, one thing that intimidated about the job for me was memorizing all those numbers. All the numbers that I had to throw out, so I had to ask Aaron, I said, "Do you mind if I just, you know, throw out numbers?" And he goes, "No, you have to do it exact. Same way they speak it, you have to sign it." So I couldn't get away with faking, or just you know, making up little signs. And he said, "No, you have to be specific." And of course, he's the one who wrote it, he wants me to make sure that do it exactly in sign language the way you would speak it. So, it really, I mean it was really, as an actor, for me, it gave me the confidence to be able to carry that kind of role, not just sort of fake it or, I mean, any role that you get you should respect the role, but to play this as a very strong woman who happened to be deaf, who had a bit of mischievousness in her, and working in the White House, and in fact, you know, as a result of the show, there was a woman who worked in the Obama administration as the receptionist at the White House, who was deaf, and you know she goes back to my character saying that was the influence, that was the reason she's there.

JOSH: Isn't that incredible?

HRISHI: So great.

MARLEE [JACK]: So Aaron Sorkin, I mean, is one-of-a-kind, really. He's one-of-a-kind along with somebody like David Kelly, and Ilene Chaiken, plus a couple of others, who really understood, I mean listen- Michael Seitzman in *Code Black*, a show that I just recently- didn't really dwell on the fact that I was deaf and made it about deaf problems- he just said, "Look, let's just make a storyline that's interesting and happens to have a deaf character in it. Why not?"

HRISHI: Well like that your instinct was to fake the numbers, but that would still leave Bill O'Brien with the role of having to actually still memorize the real numbers.

JOSH: [cross talk] That's his problem.

MARLEE [JACK]: [cross talk] You know I thought the- You know, funny, I said to Bill, I would say, "Bill, you have to- you can't speak ahead of me, first of all. There's no way you can speak ahead of me, because that wouldn't be right." I mean, people would watch, and think, "Oh, wait a minute. He knows the lines, he's speaking ahead of her." A person who is interpreting can't anticipate, particularly- oh, Well, Jack does sometimes but-anyway, and that's scary to me, because Jack likes to talk- anyway, so-

JACK: You get paid for saying that, right?

MARLEE [JACK]: Yes, I do. Anyway, so-

MARLEE: Today's a free day.

MARLEE [JACK]: Today's a free day, yeah. Uh, so Bill O'Brien and I would sit down and rehearse the lines and the numbers, and sometimes I would look and say my lines, and just before we would shoot we would make sure to run these lines.

JACK: And then to go back one step, as Jack speaking, I would have to teach him first to sign because Bill could sign, but of course he didn't know a lot of these signs, so I would teach him first, he would rehearse with the video, then I would throw him over to Marlee and then they would do that, and then I would have to watch at the video village to make sure that Bill was signing it and so for Marlee it was like- Bill O'Brien was one of the most enjoyable people to work with. Really. He- you had to be exact, and the cast and the- just the back and forth between the characters went so quickly, and keeping up with the speed, and you know, having to watch the interpreter, watch him translate, and watching the conversation, and you never want dead air, especially in television, so I mean- but they made it work. They made it work. And so, either you had good editors, or Bill was good, or it was both.

JOSH: We spoke to Bill in an earlier episode of the podcast, you guys heard it?

MARLEE [JACK]: Yeah.

JOSH: So obviously he spoke very highly

JACK: [cross talk] No, Marlee didn't hear it, she's deaf.

JOSH: [cross talk] Oh. Oh that's right, I forget.

MARLEE: Don't insult me.

JOSH: Don't do this- I can't- I couldn't survive another round of this.

[all laughing]

HRISHI: Bill O'Brien, who plays Kenny Thurman-

JOSH: Right. He spoke very highly of you both, and did give Jack a tremendous amount of credit for his role in helping rehearse...

JACK: Well they- Aaron asked Marlee, you know, "Can Jack do this?" and Marlee said no. And it wouldn't make sense, because they would look at us, and say, "Oh, there's Jack and Marlee," as opposed to "There's Joey Lucas."

MARLEE: They do!

JACK: They still do, but they say, "There's Joey Lucas and Kenny Thurman."

JOSH: I also want to say to the listeners that we are in the middle of a transcription process of every episode of the podcast, so that deaf fans of *The West Wing* can enjoy the podcast as well and it's happening- it's a crowd sourced endeavor and listeners that are volunteering are offering to take on one episode and transcribe them, which is fantastic, and then as soon as we've really caught up, we will put them all out.

MARLEE: Thank you.

HRISHI: When Bill was on our show last season, he told us this story of how he auditioned for the role of Kenny, and coming into the room and how intimidating it was to audition with you and

with Aaron and-

MARLEE [JACK]: Oh, I remember. Oh, I remember. Oh, now I do. Yeah, there was- John Levey was there, Aaron was there, a lot of people, and a lot of interpreters that I knew were coming in to play the role, and I had to sit there, and Bill was great. Bill wasn't the most adept signer, but he was the one who could pick up the role very quickly.

JOSH: He's a good actor.

MARLEE [JACK]: It was very crucial. And he made Aaron laugh. And that was the way he did it, yeah, so.

JOSH: Did they ask you your opinion of whom they should cast?

MARLEE [JACK]: Yeah, they did, they did.

HRISHI: That's what I was wondering. Were you in the room, Jack, as well?

JACK: I was there to interpret for Aaron and what they were saying, but it was Marlee's and Aaron's and the casting department's decision, so, I don't get a lot of voice...no, I'm just kidding.

MARLEE: You wish.

JACK: "You wish", Marlee goes.

JOSH: Because you like to talk.

HRISHI: At that time you didn't yet realize that you would have to also work with this person so closely?

JACK: I figured when we saw, when Marlee and I saw Bill, and I asked Bill, I said, "Could you learn?" Because he had a background, you had to ask him- Bill had a deaf girlfriend, Marlee said, and so he picked up sign language and they had a son together, and they raised and they did sign language, and he worked for Deaf West Theater, too, at the same time. He worked as the assistant to the executive director of Deaf West Theater, and was the programmer, I guess what his title was, and he is- we really miss him, now he's working in Washington, D.C., working I think for the NEA or something like that.

JOSH: NEA, that's right. That's another nice little synchronicity, you recently were on Broadway in the Deaf West production of *Spring Awakening*.

MARLEE [JACK]: That's right, yeah. It was awesome, it was awesome. It was scary as [expletive deleted], but it was awesome.

JOSH: Must have been

MARLEE [JACK]: Well, yeah, I mean-It was a good experience for me, I mean, I don't think I'll do stage again. I don't think I will.

JOSH: How come?

MARLEE [JACK]: I'm saying that today because I have to take it one day at a time, but it's basically because- well one thing, I'm a mom of four, and being away from my kids for five months was really hard, and I missed half of the year of them growing up. My son was going into his freshman year of high school. We're a big soccer family, I missed half of that. I missed a lot of things, and when I got home, I had to get caught up- and I'm still, it's a year later, I'm still

catching up.

JOSH: Yeah, no, I believe that. Same thing happened to me, I started having kids, and then all of the sudden I thought, "I can't do theater anymore, what, I'm going to work at bedtime every day? And- or go away and do a play?" It's difficult.

HRISHI: So I have a question about the mechanics of how you would work through the scripts. There are moments in the show where sometimes you'll switch from signing to speaking, usually for- sometimes for like dramatic effect, or for comic effect, and I was wondering how those moments were chosen. Was that in the script, or was that something that you decided?

MARLEE [JACK]: Actually what I would do first is I would read the script and see how many days I would be working [cross talk] 'cause that's always a thing an actor does, I mean, you know, I'm being honest!

JOSH:[ cross talk] Of course, that's always the first thing.

MARLEE [JACK]: And, you know, how many numbers I had to memorize. And you know, I had these giant monologues, but I would read the script and then I would read my lines, and I would look through it and a lot of times there weren't things that I would be comfortable saying as much as I wish I could say them, or speak them well. For that kind of role, I want to be very, very clear about what I would say, so, acting and speaking is a lot different for me than acting and signing, because I have too much going on in my head when I'm processing a character, so if I have to think about my speech and making sure I'm clear or not, it's too much for me, and yet, you are right, if the moment felt right, if it was a powerful moment that the audience would come away with something, then I would speak, and I would speak with Aaron and I would say, "Do you mind changing this?" Or make a slight- a different word choice, and he would say, "Absolutely." And he was always accommodating in that respect, but at first, it's funny, he would say, you know, "Why don't you say it first, let me hear it first."

JOSH: Sounds like Aaron.

MARLEE [JACK]: And I would say it and then if he agreed- most of the time he would agree with me, and then he would think of a different word and he'd come up with a new one right away on the spot. Yeah, that's a very good question though, because that's the process I went through.

HRISHI: But so that was really your instinct as to pick those moments.

MARLEE [JACK]: Well actually it was both Aaron- I mean Aaron had his- in every project that I'm doing, it's something that I work with the director or producer. I don't make the final decision, because it's their words, it's their project, it's not my words. So you have to work together, it's a collaboration, obviously.

MARLEE: Cast and crew.

MARLEE [JACK]: I mean, cast and crew, everybody. It's a group effort.

JOSH: How about, I had a question, when you're in the moment, shooting take after take, like any actor, you're also-

MARLEE [JACK]: Or fifteen.

JOSH: You're right, sure, or on *The West Wing*, take after take after take, and you are a terrific

actor, and you seem very much in the moment, and in multiple takes sometimes an actor will give you something different, or you're feeling something different, and, was it difficult for you then to modulate your performance and then Bill had to modulate his?

MARLEE [JACK]: Oh, I see, because of the signing. Yes, I would think- you saw the joke that we pulled on you, the two of us when I was talking, [cross talk] you know, where I was having this fake fight with Jack.

JOSH: [cross talk] Yes, I remember that. I recall that.

MARLEE: How could I forget?

MARLEE [JACK]: But you could see how fast I was, and sometimes what I would do is, I would just change the speed and then it would depend on Bill to modulate his delivery. So he would see that. A lot of times, a good director will come up to me and say, "Can you do something a completely different way?" in terms of the facial expressions that I use, or the speed of my delivery with my hands, and a good director would see that, and Bill was aware of changing it too, he picked it up as well. I was always communicating with Bill, and Bill would get it, and that's the benefit you get from somebody who knows sign language. And at the same time, I mean, I would often watch him- while I'm acting- watch him as he's interpreting, like I do with Jack, and- I'm always watching, monitoring Jack. They become used to it, and I get used to it. Because as someone who acts, I have to be concerned about that. I have be concerned how I'm portrayed.

HRISHI: One thing that we thought was very interesting, and we asked Bill about, was the idea of having a male interpreter for a female character. Having a male voice representing Joey Lucas- of course, leads to that great, hilarious opening scene in "Take This Sabbath Day," and the confusion [cross talk] over the name Joey

MARLEE: [cross talk] And the name Joey.

MARLEE [JACK]: And the name Joey, yes.

MARLEE: Right.

HRISHI: When have you ever had or worked with for over a long period of time, a female interpreter, and do you have feelings about that idea of the gender switch between you and then the external voice of your interpreter.

MARLEE [JACK]: It's a very good question. When I'm working on a show, a television show, or I'm doing an interview, like this, any sort of question/answers, even in business situations or business meetings, I prefer to use a male voice, because... I mean, first, they have to adapt quickly. You have to understand that you're sitting here talking to a deaf person and you're listening to somebody. They know that when you have a male voice, that it is me speaking, because it is clear the roles of who we are playing. A deaf woman and a male interpreter. If had a female voice, they might associate that voice with me. Now if I go to a doctor and I'm talking to somebody, I'll bring a female interpreter with me. Or if I go to school and go to a PTA meeting or an IEP meeting or something of that sort, then I'll bring a female interpreter. They know me, they're familiar with me, and so forth. But, it's easier for the audience to separate the roles- maybe disconcerting at first- does it bother you? I mean, is it easy for you to understand obviously, clearly?

JOSH: Absolutely.

HRISHI: Well, I've watched *The West Wing* so much that I'm used to it.

MARLEE [JACK]: Maybe I should start smoking fifteen packs a day and speak for myself, and then I'll sound like a guy.

JACK: But I think I heard somewhere, and this is Jack speaking, I think I heard somewhere that in many interpreting situations they prefer to have opposite genders when you have an interpreter, because you can identify the message and not identify the person as the voice. Marlee did a film once where they decided to do voice-overs for the whole film. We asked them to subtitle it, and they said no. They wanted it voiced over. Nowadays, subtitling is no big deal. Back then... And they gave Marlee a female voice, and the female voice had their own acting choices, that may not have necessarily been Marlee's acting choices. If it was a male interpreter, or a male voice, you could forgive the acting choices, because you know she's acting [cross talk] that person.

MARLEE: [cross talk) A male wouldn't do that...

JACK: So, a guy wouldn't take on that responsibility as much as a woman would, and it sounds bad to say.

JOSH: That makes sense.

JACK: And plus, when Marlee goes into a meeting, and she has a guy speaking for her, I think it gives her- it's like she's playing both male and female and it gives her a little bit more- I don't know, gets-, from my observation, because I can look outside myself while I'm interpreting, find people give her a little bit more respect, especially in Hollywood where women...

MARLEE: Like *Celebrity Apprentice*.

MARLEE [JACK]: Even like on *Celebrity Apprentice*, where Trump sort of gave me the respect that I deserved as a woman, because somehow he viewed the male voice and he's- something like that, it was just odd like that.

HRISHI: That completely makes sense.

MARLEE [JACK]: Marlee says, I'm very particular. And I want to make sure- a lot of interpreters can't interpret for me. They're either- maybe I intimidate them, or because I sign so fast, but I'm always, always very conscious and very aware of their presence and making sure that I'm presented in a way that's clear, and I don't know, you know, even little vocal tics like "uhhs" and "you knows" and things that interpreters do...

JACK: And the opposite, which is that there's some interpreters who will- if Marlee is, if somebody is speaking, and I would be signing what they're saying to Marlee, for example, I'll give you an example, just say something and I'll interpret this, and this is how they'll sign it. Go ahead, just say something.

JOSH: Oh. Hey, it's great to be here. What an utter delight.

JACK: [whispers, mimicking Josh] You'll hear them whispering, and as an interpreter-

MARLEE: That doesn't bother me.

JACK: That doesn't bother Marlee, but it drives me as an interpreter- to hear somebody else

interpreting and doing that. There's all these little tricks as sign language interpreters who have a big job.

MARLEE: It's not easy.

JACK: No. Even I can't interpret- I mean if I had to interpret for somebody, I couldn't do that simultaneously. I'm not trained. I can give you a summary, but to do it simultaneously, the way that interpreters do, is amazing. It's so hard. And so then, Bill had to play that. He had to play somebody who had been doing what I'd been doing, as an actor. So that's why you gotta give props to Bill O'Brien, because he played an interpreter.

MARLEE: Yeah, poor Bill O'Brien.

JACK: Poor Bill O'Brien. I mean he would always think, I hope she knows her lines, because I don't know my lines- or vice versa.

JOSH: Yeah, he also was in the midst of a walk-and-talk like the rest of you on many occasions.

MARLEE [JACK]: Mmmm. Yeah, that was hard because the camera's following-you know, I mean we're sitting across from each other, we're not sitting together because then my head would be playing ping pong, so sometimes the directors would get it, but Tommy Schlamme would get it, where he would know how a deaf person would have to work together, that they have to look at each other, and that the head turning would be too distracting. So, we had to work on cameras, and a lot of that...

HRISHI: You mentioned "uhhs" and "you knows," which really don't appear in *The West Wing* so much, but you also mentioned precision, and I was wondering how that translates to sign language. The equivalent of somebody slurring their speech, or being inarticulate, or having poor diction.

MARLEE [JACK]: I signed exactly what was written. Exactly. And as you mentioned, there's no "uhhs" or "umms" or "you knows" written there, so I would never put those into my sign language.

HRISHI: But is there an equivalent-

MARLEE: But there is a...

MARLEE [JACK]: There is a physical representation of those things. Like this, that's like "uhh", "umm", I hate that, I really hate that, it's a wiggling of the fingers, like this, or this sign means "oh ok, umm, uh" or "you know, umm, uhuhuh" and, of course I would never do that, my character wouldn't represent herself that way.

MARLEE: There's no time to do that.

MARLEE [JACK]: And there's no time to do that either

HRISHI: In terms of the delivery of the precision of the language, is that something that physically you would have to practice the signing equivalent of-

MARLEE [JACK]: Oh, I had to work on it so hard, I had to work on it so hard. I remember at the time, we would be working in-you have to do it in what's called Signed English- let me see if I can explain it, there's a lot of information here. I'm thinking about my role. The person I played was not someone who signed American Sign Language. She wouldn't be in the White House signing

ASL to the team, because she is precise, as a pollster. She has to be- she wants to be interpreted exactly as the facts tell her to, that they would understand. So, does that make sense?

HRISHI: I'm not sure follow the difference.

MARLEE [JACK]: For example, if a person is speaking about statistics, and talking about exact language, in American Sign Language you can take that information and present it with the same equivalency, but it has a different structure, so it takes time for an interpreter to process it. It may be even an eighth of a second, but it takes time. And that gives them leeway to make choices of words to use to translate. If the word is not the same word that they wanted, then it's a whole different story. Information. So there are deaf professionals who choose to communicate in what is called a signed representation of English, and it's the interpreter's responsibility to express that exact representation of English. Other people who are deaf who have both English and ASL fluency will sign it in ASL, American Sign Language, which has a different structure and different vocabulary, but it's up to the interpreter to choose those words, if the situation allows that leeway. Joey Lucas-

MARLEE: No way, no way.

MARLEE [JACK]: Wouldn't want that leeway. It's Joey's job to present exact information, exactly it is, plus, Aaron Sorkin wants the script, and would want the audience to see sign language in the English order that it is. It's the same argument that happens with theater, some people who go to theater and see interpreted theater want to see American Sign Language, exactly what's being said, as opposed to what they're talking about. So some deaf people go, "I don't want to go to theater and see ASL," which is their right, and other deaf people say, "I don't want to see signed English, it's not my language, I want to see American Sign Language," and it can be a conflict. It's an interesting thing. It happens whenever you're talking about two different languages, but for *The West Wing*, there's no way that I would have done American Sign Language, there's just no way I would have done it, because the interpreter would have been given too much leeway to- I mean his job is to interpret exactly what I'm saying, and if I did ASL, that would give him too much leeway.

HRISHI: That's amazing, I had no idea that that's not ASL on *The West Wing*.

MARLEE [JACK]: It's using ASL concepts but in English word order.

HRISHI: Right.

JACK. So it's like saying, I can speak Chinese, using Chinese words, but in English order. Which we know Chinese is not, same with French, and a lot of languages say "car blue," same thing in ASL, that kind of idea of word choices. Time. There's no past tense in ASL, except for the beginning of the sentence, and then everything else after that is past tense. So if she decides to put something in the past tense, and she did ASL, I'd be like, "Oh, which word?" I have to choose it.

MARLEE [JACK]: And to do that on *The West Wing*, it wouldn't have worked, at all. So, it would have taken too much time. It would have just fallen apart. Because it just moves too fast, everything has to move quickly, information has to be processed quickly. And she's a statistician, and she's-



MARLEE: Right. It would not work.

MARLEE [JACK]: It wouldn't work.

JOSH: Although, she would have been happy to make up the numbers.

MARLEE: I would have loved that.

JOSH: The rest to be precise and the numbers made up.

MARLEE: See? Jack talks a lot.

HRISHI: So with all these complicated dynamics between the words and the camera and the actual performance, do you have a favorite scene that you ever did in *The West Wing*, and was there a most difficult scene?

MARLEE [JACK]: My favorite scene is clearly the opening when I first meet Josh and I say:

[West Wing Episode 2.20 excerpt]

*JOEY: You idiot! I'm Joey Lucas!*

[end excerpt]

MARLEE [JACK]: And I speak it out, and he's like:

[West Wing Episode 2.20 excerpt]

*JOSH: You're Joey Lucas?*

[end excerpt]

MARLEE [JACK]: The toughest scenes, as I mentioned, are the ones where I had to throw out a whole group of numbers. I remember surprising Josh Lyman at the hotel, when he comes to the hotel to look for me, and I have the towel on my head, and he thinks that maybe there's something gonna happen with them then, I thought so too, that something was going to happen, I was really excited, but it ended up that I was already taken. And I would have loved to have seen that relationship between Josh and Joey grow. But a difficult scene that Aaron did a good job with was when we all had to shoot in Washington, D.C., and I think there wasn't the budget to fly Bill to D.C., so they asked are there interpreters who we could use in New York, because it was a short two lines for what was his name, of the interpreter?

MARLEE: Jon Wolfe

JACK: Jon Wolfe Nelson, but he played a character...

HRISHI: Dale Bracket?

JACK: That's right, yeah. So, we had to find an interpreter to come in from New York City to Washington, D.C. where we shot at Reagan International Airport to play Marlee's replacement interpreter, and then Marlee had to play the scene with Brad, without an interpreter. And Marlee first said, "What?" but Aaron wrote it in, and it was difficult for Marlee to understand, and she even lifts his chin, and now Marlee's saying:

MARLEE [JACK]: I mean, the struggle and the conflict of being able to communicate without an interpreter, Aaron built into the scene, and we took it for granted most times that oh yes, Joey has an interpreter. Now we're actually having a conversation between two people, and maybe

where two people who have a crush on each other, and maybe you know there's no interpreter there to help us communicate. And it became very, very authentic and challenging and I liked that scene, even though it was difficult.

MARLEE: It makes me think of

MARLEE [JACK]: It reminded me of some of the dates that I've been on sometimes.

HRISHI: I love that that's the reason why Kenny wasn't there, and it actually became part of the plot.

MARLEE: It became brilliant.

MARLEE [JACK]: Yeah, and it became brilliant- it became brilliantly written because Aaron came up with a solution just like that.

HRISHI: He even manages to work in some of Josh Lyman's jealousy about it, saying:

[West Wing Episode 2.20 excerpt]

*JOSH: Pretty good-looking for an interpreter, wouldn't you say?*

[end excerpt]

MARLEE [JACK]: Exactly, exactly.

JOSH: How about, I was going to ask one more thing- Marlee is, you're very politically active-

MARLEE: Not really.

JOSH: No? I get that impression?

[cross talk]

MARLEE [JACK]: I have a lot to say, but I kind of gotten a little gunshy because I don't feel like dealing with the haters and I know that that sounds a little pretentious, but I have a lot to say right now about what's going on in our government. I'm a proud democrat, and just really am saddened to see the state of affairs and what has come as a result and how things can be sort of thrown out of kilter, yet, I can't say that I'm that well-versed, where I could, you know, listen to the radio in the car and hear everything that you guys can hear, and, you know, listen to the news in the background, and having the time to actually read every morning when you get up to see what's going on in the news is a little difficult, but you know I'm a mom of four, and I'm not saying I'm looking for excuses, but to be able to get involved in politics and to be as well-versed is something I'd like to be able to be, but I'm not, so I've sort of stepped back a little bit, and yet really am concerned about what's going on.

HRISHI: Did being on *The West Wing* affect your sense of engagement?

MARLEE [JACK]: No, no, no, I was involved in politics. When I first moved here to Los Angeles in 1987, I got involved with a group of people called Young Artists United, that was with Jane Fonda, Rob Lowe, Patrick Lippert, Sarah Jessica Parker, David Oliver, a lot of young people getting together to get people to- Emilio Estevez-getting people to register to vote, and going out there and getting people to register. And that was great, that was an awesome experience for me, and I began to understand about politics, so that's where it actually started, was way back then. And then, don't forget, there's a whole issue of deaf politics that I had to be aware of too

because of being so well-known.

MARLEE: There's family politics.

MARLEE [JACK]: And then there's family politics- there's politics on all sorts of politics, I mean you know-

MARLEE: School politics.

MARLEE [JACK]: School politics, it's just too much politics in my life altogether,

JOSH: Soccer politics...

MARLEE: There you go. Go Soccer.

JOSH: That's fantastic. You guys also work as producing partners, is that correct?

MARLEE [JACK]: We do, we do.

JOSH: Anything in the cooker you want to talk about?

MARLEE [JACK]: Well we have three or four projects as we speak, and waiting for the green light on them. There's television shows, reality shows, mini-series, and if there's anything else you want to add to our plate, we'd be happy to [cross talk] take it under consideration.

JOSH: [cross talk] I'm thinking as we talk...

MARLEE: Ok, but I don't know if I want to work with you...I'm scared.

HRISHI: After all this, this is how we got started here!

JOSH: [cross talk] After the way you've abused me today, you owe me some sort of job!

MARLEE: [cross talk] Do you regret it?

JACK: [cross talk] No, I don't regret it, no, no, not at all! I don't regret it at all!

MARLEE: [cross talk] Ok. All right.

JACK: That's actually the first time we've actually played that kind of prank. Well, I've played pranks on Marlee, but we've never played it together on somebody else like that, so that was fun.

HIRISH: Well done.

JOSH: But the way some of the issues you're raising are making me think-

JACK: This is Jack speaking, I could see you guys looking at each other, going, "What the hell is going on?", and-

JOSH: I wanted to push a button and fall through the floor.

MARLEE [JACK]: And that's the kind of stuff that you don't see, that we would love to put into a show like that. To play on people's expectations of what a person who is deaf or who has a disability, and play with humor. And a lot of people misunderstand me and they think that I'm silent and mute and a little, you know, plaster saint or whatever you want to call it, and I'm completely the opposite, and thank you for letting me show that side of me.

JOSH: A lot of people don't realize how scary and mean you are. I think we've gone a long way toward informing people.

MARLEE [JACK]: That was just so fun.

JACK: I would love Marlee to say- this is me, Jack, thinking, I want to hear you say again, "You idiot, I'm Joey--"

MARLEE: "I'm Joey Lucas, you idiot"

HRISHI: Awesome. Well thank you guys, so much.

JOSH: This was fantastic, except for the beginning part.

HRISHI: That was so much fun. Definitely worth it.

MARLEE: I love it.

HRISHI: And that's it for this episode. Thanks so much for joining us, and we hope you'll join us next time. Until then, if you want to discuss this episode with us or with other West Wing Weekly listeners, you can leave a comment for us on our website. As always, it's [thewestwingweekly.com](http://thewestwingweekly.com) or our Facebook page, [facebook.com/thewestwingweekly](https://facebook.com/thewestwingweekly).

JOSH: You can follow us on Twitter- I'm @JoshMalina, Hrishi's "@WereISheHerWay".

[laughter]

JOSH: And the show is @WestWingWeekly.

HRISHI: Our guest, Marlee Matlin is @MarleeMatlin and Jack Jason is on Twitter @655Jack.

JOSH: If you want to be part of the project of transcribing every episode of our podcast, hit us up at [memos@thewestwingweekly.com](mailto:memos@thewestwingweekly.com).

HRISHI: There's also a group on Facebook for West Wing Weekly transcribers, and you can join that.

JOSH: And if you transcribe an episode, I'll take a really long time to do it, but I will eventually send you a West Wing Weekly lapel pin.

HRISHI: Speaking of merch, we have got some news. We're bringing back our t-shirt, The Signal, and we're bringing back our sweatshirt and hoodie, The West Wing Weekly University, but we have one new piece of merch that we're introducing: A t-shirt that simply says, "Ok. Ok. What's next?" It's the sign-off.

JOSH: Classic, simple, sleek, eloquent.

HRISHI: Much like us, it's minimalist and to-the-point. It's Helvetica, it is printed on a black t-shirt, a tri-blend cotton shirt, so if you have The Signal, you know how soft and comfortable those shirts feel. Same thing, but in black, with the writing in white. So check out all of these at [thewestwingweekly.com/merch](http://thewestwingweekly.com/merch).

JOSH: The West Wing Weekly is a proud member of Radiotopia.

HRISHI: From PRX, a curated network of extraordinary, cutting-edge podcasts made possible by MailChimp and The Knight Foundation. Our show is produced by me, Hrishikesh Hirway, and Joshua "Hot Pants" Malina, with help from Zach McNeese and Margaret Miller.

JOSH: Ok.

HRISHI: Ok.

MARLEE: What's next?

[Outro Music]