

The West Wing Weekly
3.04: "On the Day Before"
Guest: Janel Moloney

[Intro Music]

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

HRISHI: And I'm Hrishikesh Hirway [laughter].

JOSH: You wanted me to go first.

HRISHI: I asked for it. I like to see what's going to happen [laughter]. Today on The West Wing Weekly we're talking about season 3, episode 4, "On the Day Before." Coming up later in this episode, we will be joined once again by Janel Moloney.

JOSH: The teleplay is by Aaron Sorkin. The story is by Paul Redford...

HRISHI: ...and Nanda Chitre. You know how I know how to pronounce her name?

JOSH: Because you're Indian?

HRISHI: Not only that, I know her.

JOSH: You do?

HRISHI: She's actually a family friend.

JOSH: Is that right?

HRISHI: Yes. She was the former Deputy Press Secretary in the Clinton White House, and then she joined *The West Wing* staff for season 3.

JOSH: Any chance she'll talk to us?

HRISHI: Nope. She is not interested in being interviewed, but I did ask her what she did on this episode, and she said that her part in the story was that she had to research the bombing in Israel. The way she put it was that somebody came in and said, "There's going to be a bombing in Israel, and somebody needs to figure out how that's going to happen, to do some research on it." And she said, "I'll do it." She talked to people like the FBI Hollywood Liaison Office to find out about things like the C-4 explosives that would be used, things like that.

JOSH: Ah, ok. The teleplay is by Aaron Sorkin. The story is by Paul Redford and Nanda Chitre. Is that how you pronounce her name? Nanda Chitre.

HRISHI: You roll the "r" a little bit.

JOSH: The story is by Paul Redford and Nanda Chitre ["r" rolled]. It was directed by Chris Misiano and first aired on Halloween 2001.

HRISHI: Janel Moloney was nominated for an Emmy for this season based partly on this episode.

JOSH: Interesting. Do you know what the other episode was?

HRISHI: I don't know offhand, but I know that she didn't win because Stockard Channing won that year.

JOSH: Ah. Oh, well.

HRISHI: Stacking the decks. *The West Wing* was really running the tables.

JOSH: Yeah. She was terrific in this episode, but it doesn't strike me as her meatiest episode, Donna's.

HRISHI: I think that -- well, we can get into that later -- she had some great scenes here. I love the moment between her and Josh Lyman:

[West Wing Episode 3.04 excerpt]

DONNA: He's a Republican lawyer working for Ways and Means, but he was being transferred, and it turns out now he's on Government Oversight.

JOSH: You can't see him anymore.

DONNA: I know that.

JOSH: You can't see him anymore.

DONNA: I know that.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: There's a lot of subtext in that scene, and I thought it was all delivered really beautifully with all the nuance that it deserved. Here's a little synopsis: "The Bartlet Administration is beset from all sides in this episode. The Republican-controlled Congress might override President Bartlet's veto of the Estate Tax Bill, but not all Democrats can be counted on for support, #notalldemocrats..."

JOSH: I like it [laughter].

HRISHI: ...I wrote pause for laughter [laughter]. "C.J. goes up against an entertainment reporter. Charlie is faced with the choice of immunity or sticking with his team."

JOSH: Very good. Speaking of my laugh, I get a lot of flack for my laugh.

HRISHI: Who gives you flack for your laugh?

JOSH: A lot of listeners seem to think that I laugh like the Count on *Sesame Street*.

[Sesame Street excerpt]

COUNT VON COUNT: What is the Sesame Street number of the day? HA HA.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: I think that's a compliment.

JOSH: Well, yeah, I guess that's true. I'm not personally offended by that, but I think they mean it as a knock.

HRISHI: No?

JOSH: I laugh as if I'm literally saying, "H-A space H-A space H-A..."

HRISHI: It's good [laughter].

JOSH: I guess. It is what it is. What are you going to do? It's real.

HRISHI: It's a very literal laugh. You want a metaphorical laugh instead? What sound would be better than "Ha Ha Ha"?

JOSH: Yeah. I don't know.

HRISHI: I enjoy your laugh. I, in fact, would like to hear it more because it would mean that I was doing my job better.

JOSH: I prefer to say, "That was really funny."

HRISHI: That's what I get a lot from you.

JOSH: But that's me. That is I.

HRISHI: Most of the time, all I might get is literally, "Ha. That's funny."

JOSH: Yeah. I'm not sure why that is, but I prefer to say it.

HRISHI: But every now and then when I get the Count giggle from you, it feels truly satisfying.

JOSH: Well, ok.

HRISHI: So I like hearing it.

JOSH: Well, now I'm so self-conscious I'm neither going to laugh nor tell you that something is funny.

HRISHI: You're just going to sit silently on your side of the mic.

JOSH: Yeah.

HRISHI: Ok. Into this Josh and Donna thing.

JOSH: Oh, you're going right to it. Ok. Sure.

HRISHI: You know on the last episode, Eli was talking about how having one drink was the equivalent of a huge romantic moment on *The West Wing*, only on *The West Wing*. So, by that measure, Donna tying Josh's bowtie in this episode is basically a sex scene.

JOSH: It is a little bit. And I a little bit wanted to look away.

HRISHI: [Laughter] But that's what makes it so awful then when she has to tell him that she went on a date with Cliff. And not only did she go on a date with Cliff, she liked him enough to see him again, and it sounds like they spent the night together despite deciding that it was better not to.

[West Wing Episode 3.04 excerpt]

JOSH: Was it just that night?

Donna: Yeah, no, we got together the next night again; we shouldn't have.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: It's so much worse that there was some passion fueling them to get back together that was greater than the rational reasons not to get back together, not to see each other again.

JOSH: Hmm. Gotcha.

HRISHI: And she has to tell Josh all about this because of the tactical strategic reasons, what it might mean for the impending fight with Congressional Republicans. She's basically saying that I cheated on you. And I think the sex scene with the bowtie really sets up that conflict.

JOSH: Well, I guess so. I guess the personal aspect of it speaks to me more. I'm not sure I

really got the professional impact of it all. She can date whomever she wants to date. I mean they clearly framed it as this is a huge, oh no, you can't possibly have done this, but is it really that? The whole thing is treated with greater consequence than it probably would be, even to the point where he says, "Did any reporters see you?" No. I wanted her to say, "I'm the secretary of the Deputy Chief of Staff. Reporters just don't know who I am."

HRISHI: I don't know about that.

JOSH: The secretary of the Deputy Chief of Staff?

HRISHI: The assistant. If you're part of the Press Corps at the White House and you see the same people day in and day out, you're constantly trying to get information from sources you know, unnamed sources. I think that's often people who are below Presidential Appointee level.

JOSH: Ok. Perhaps you're right. To me it smacks of, we're all rock stars [laughter]. Every now and then I get a peek into Aaron creation of this world where we're just supposed to think that there are all these incredible reporters who would be following Donna. Maybe you're right. I suppose she's a potential source. So every day it would be so much so that he's worried that, "Did anyone see you?"

HRISHI: Well, more like if you're at a crowded bar in D.C., there are only so many places that everybody flocks to.

JOSH: Ok, I suppose so.

HRISHI: I think the transgression of her going out with this guy is worse than it would be at other times because they're particularly at a moment where they're trying to batten down the hatches, where they have to really be clear about who's with them and who's against them. In this episode we have both the Republicans coming for them with the override, and now they've even got Democrats who are getting in the way when they've got Buckland and Kimball, people who are supposed to be allies, potentially threatening them. You know there's a lot of *Godfather* in this episode I think, and this feels a little like she's going against the family.

JOSH: I guess so, but I guess I'm just reacting in a different way to exactly what you just articulated. Which is that we're not on the *Godfather*. I just went and had a drink with the guy. So I do agree with you. I do think it is like that: You went against the family [Brandoesque voice].

HRISHI: But she clearly had more than just one drink with the guy.

JOSH: That is true, she admits to it, but I mean, I'm dating someone, we live in D.C., and no I didn't talk about anything private. I'm just the secretary of the Deputy Chief of Staff after all.

HRISHI: But then I feel like you're ignoring the very real, these guys are work-boyfriend and girlfriend, and so she has really kind of cheated on him.

JOSH: Right. So that even bothered me more. I was like, hey you're only supposed to have an inappropriate relationship with one person and that's me, sister.

HRISHI: Exactly. I think that's totally right.

JOSH: I guess that is what it is. I don't love that whole thing.

HRISHI: And then he kind of throws on some professional stuff because he can't say in that context, "Why do you like somebody else? You're supposed to be in love with me just like I'm in

love with you. You don't see me going around...”

JOSH: Very good point. I think you're bringing into relief what bugs me about it all, which is, there's no subtext anymore. You can't write a scene where the subtext is, we really like each other. That cat is out of the bag from a couple of seasons ago. I think maybe it's too late to have this, oh, I think, wait a minute, I'm sensing something bubbling underneath what they're saying to each other. I think they might like each other. It's just like WE GET IT.

HRISHI: Yeah.

[Hercules: The Legendary Journeys excerpt]

HERCULES: DIS - AP - POINTED!!

[end excerpt]

JOSH: It think that's what it is.

HRISHI: Ok. Another Josh and Donna moment that I like, and I think maybe you'll like this one more, is every time she comes in to interrupt his meeting with Buckland to try and buy some time on the floor, he gives her these crazy arcane rules about Congress and how it works and what they can do to stall for time.

[West Wing Episode 3.04 excerpt]

DONNA: Sam needs more time.

JOSH: Alright. Tell him to have a Democratic call for a journal vote. If a member calls for a journal vote, the full House has to approve the previous day's floor activity.

DONNA: Ok.

JOSH: After that he can have a member try to attach an amendment to the override vote.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: It made me feel like he'd be a really annoying person to play Catan with.

JOSH: Ha. That is funny.

HRISHI: Nailed it. Feeling good about that one. Or even better, Cones of Dunshire from *Parks and Recreation*.

[Parks and Recreation Episode 6.08 excerpt]

BEN: You forgot about the essence of the game: it's about the cones. Move my abbot to the ocean hex which brings my brinksman to the devil's lair and pushes, my farmer, yes my humble farmer, directly into the central cone.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Have you watched *Parks and Recreation* yet?

JOSH: I love it. I watch it every day.

HRISHI: You still haven't watched it?

JOSH: No. Watching it all the time with my wife and son.

HRISHI: Really? I can't tell if you're joking or not.

JOSH: Then I'm doing just what I set out to do. The fact is that we're watching it all the time. I love it. You can sign in under my account at Netflix, then look at what we've been doing.

HRISHI: Have you by chance gotten to season 4 episode 18, "Live Ammo"?

JOSH: No.

HRISHI: Can I give you a spoiler for season 4?

JOSH: Please.

HRISHI: In that episode...

JOSH: ...Brad Whitford

HRISHI: Yes. He plays Councilman Pillner. Did you know that?

JOSH: I knew that he was guesting and that you would ruin my day with it, with an anecdote about it.

HRISHI: In the episode, on his desk there is a napkin that's framed and it says "Pillner for Pawnee."

JOSH: I think I have seen that image. That is funny too.

HRISHI: [Laughter] Well done, *Parks and Rec* writers. You got a good "That is funny" from Josh.

JOSH: Have we talked on mic about the fact that you don't like *The Office*?

HRISHI: I love *The Office*.

JOSH: That's a lie though.

HRISHI: I love the British *Office*.

JOSH: You don't like the American *Office*, which is very different from *Parks and Rec*, but I love them both.

HRISHI: Yeah. I love *Parks and Rec*.

JOSH: I'm surprised that you don't love *The Office*, and I invite our listeners to weigh in on that.

HRISHI: I think I've coined a new acronym for how you react to funny things: TIFOL.

JOSH: TIFOL? Ok.

HRISHI: That is funny out loud.

JOSH: That's good. I like it.

HRISHI: That is funny. I literally just TIFOL'd.

JOSH: Someone else pointed out that I agree with you a lot. Somebody wants to put together a supercut of my saying, "You're right" and "I agree" and "Well said." And I think that person is correct. I don't remember her name, but good bust.

HRISHI: See.

JOSH: I agree with her too.

HRISHI: Exactly. It's not just me. You're just very agreeable.

JOSH: Yeah. Which is not -- I don't think it is -- the general consensus.

HRISHI: You laugh easily.

JOSH: Who says I'm not agreeable?

HRISHI: You walk softly. You walk around.

JOSH: What was that all about? Walk softly and carry a big stick?

[West Wing Episode 3.04 excerpt]

C.J.: Walk softly and do something else.

CAROL: Carry a big stick?

C.J.: Yeah. Walk softly, walk around.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: That was weird but funny. I TIFOL'd. One thing you were saying, I like actually, I like the "how it works" of *The West Wing*. Possibly because I bring a shallow depth of knowledge to the show, to my viewership, so I liked all those ways to buy time in Congress, on the floor. And I even like the cold open of the clerk who's going to bring the bill up to the president to be signed and I liked seeing...

[Hamilton: An American Musical excerpt]

BURR: [Sung] How the sausage gets made.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Very nice. There you go. There's a little name thing there. The clerk is named Dolan. And Michael Dolan is a terrific actor -- and now a teacher as well -- who played PFC Louden Downey in the original Broadway production of *A Few Good Men*. I also like that only on *The West Wing* would somebody name checking the chemical formula for table salt being like an act out.

[West Wing Episode 3.04 excerpt]

C.J.: And the chemical abbreviation for table salt is NaCl.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: And go to credits off of that. That is just hilarious. And it works because it's *The West Wing*.

HRISHI: The thing that's funny is that -- sorry, I'm so sorry. I apologize in advance. The thing is that it's such an elemental kind of understanding of a chemical formula. It's not particularly nerdy. So even to say "it's *The West Wing*" so this is where you can get away with a really nerdy zinger like that, it's not even that nerdy. Any 12-year-old knows that.

JOSH: That's true and I'm sad that the closed captioning people didn't bother to ask, is it big N, little a, big C, little I?

HRISHI: It's all caps?

JOSH: Yes.

HRISHI: That would mean something else.

JOSH: Would it actually?

HRISHI: Nah, it would mean nothing. There is no chemical symbol that's just the letter "A."

JOSH: It could refer to the North American Coding Laboratories of Mentor, Ohio.

HRISHI: True [laughter].

JOSH: Some good guest appearances even in small roles. Did your *Sports Night* antennae fire as you watched?

HRISHI: You know, I think maybe I was distracted by my *Lost* antennae. But now I'm thinking is it Congressman Kimball?

JOSH: Nope. Smaller role.

HRISHI: Ok, no. Tell me.

JOSH: Well, we've seen Reporter Mark, Tim Davis-Reed, many times before. He's there, but Jeff Mooring, who played Dave -- who was the technician or really the director of the show within the show, on *Sports Night* -- he plays another reporter: Reporter Phil.

[West Wing Episode 3.04 excerpt]

PHIL: C.J.

C.J.: Phil.

PHIL: Did the president urge the Chairman to hand over Abdul Mujeeb?

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: But we've seen him on the show before.

JOSH: Ok. Well then I hadn't noticed it before. Never mind.

HRISHI: Oh, wait. You know what, no, you're right. This is his first appearance.

JOSH: Ok. How dare you?

HRISHI: He shows up in a few good episodes, and so I thought that we'd seen him before. I just wasn't ...

JOSH: Ok. And did you notice how I immediately rolled over? I always just defer to your cudgel of greater knowledge that you beat me with so frequently. So finally I was right.

HRISHI: Don't make fun of the big hammer, I mean the big cudgel.

JOSH: Let me ask you this. So now I'm trying to figure out who from *Lost*. Was that Jorge Garcia playing the female reporter?

HRISHI: That's right. Yeah. He went super-method.

JOSH: I didn't notice at first. Who's from *Lost*?

HRISHI: The actor who plays Governor Buckland.

JOSH: Kevin Tighe. I didn't remember that because I go so far back that I know him from the show *Emergency!*, a 1970s show.

[Emergency! Theme song siren excerpt]

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Mm, I don't know it.

JOSH: It's well before your time. It didn't really have the staying power of other shows from my childhood, but yeah he was one of the regulars on *Emergency!*. Very, very good actor. One of those "Hey, it's that guy" guys.

HRISHI: Yeah, it took me a second to remember where I knew him from, but then some quick Googling reminded me.

JOSH: No offense to Kevin, but if I were casting the guy whose incredible health and vitality and athleticism is making Bartlet look meek, I don't know that he would be my first choice.

HRISHI: That's what I like about it. He's an older gentleman but still held up as a great athlete.

JOSH: Alright. Why do you have to disagree with everything?

HRISHI: Sorry. Sorry [laughter].

JOSH: I guess that makes for a better podcast.

HRISHI: Don't think of it as me disagreeing with you. Think of it as me agreeing with the show.

JOSH: There you go. Fair enough.

HRISHI: I don't believe there have been any major politicians who have been Heisman winners, though.

JOSH: Oh, is that mentioned in his resume?

[West Wing Episode 3.04 excerpt]

JOSH: You're a Heisman trophy-winning football player, a U.S. Olympian. You still run the New York Marathon...

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Closest I could think of was Gerald Ford.

JOSH: Who fell down a flight of stairs.

HRISHI: Who was a football star.

JOSH: Yes, he was.

HRISHI: But I thought that was a neat detail. But I did also feel like padding the stats a little bit.

JOSH: It's a detail I didn't even notice.

HRISHI: What else don't you remember from the episode [laughter]?

JOSH: I made a little list of things I didn't pick up on, but it's blank.

HRISHI: Oh, wow. Ok.

JOSH: How about the situation room?

HRISHI: Did you catch the reference to the incident in Bekaa?

JOSH: Is that a reference to Rebecca De Mornay from *Risky Business*?

[Laughter]

HRISHI: Yeah. Duh.

JOSH: The Bekaa Valley. I don't know.

HRISHI: Yes, I think that's what it is they're talking about. Something that happened in Lebanon, that is, the suicide bomber.

[West Wing Episode 3.04 excerpt]

LEO: It was an isolated incident.

PRESIDENT BARTLET: Retaliation for Bekaa?

LEO: Yeah.

PRESIDENT BARTLET: If that's the case, I want to hear it from Arafat's mouth. I want to hear it from him: a denunciation of violence. I want to see security cooperation with the Israelis.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: This is really one of only two times that we get a contemporary figure name-checked. We had a brief name-check of Osama bin Laden in season 2, from Nancy, and here Arafat. I mean they reference Hamas which is like ok, sure, fair enough.

JOSH: Well, I thought that was odd. The blame seems to lie with the fictional Palestine Freedom Front, but then the Israelis strike against the newspaper of Hamas. I thought it was interesting that they mix the fictional. I wondered why we got the real Arafat name-check and Hamas name-check but...

HRISHI: ...not the PLO?

JOSH: Right, but not the PLO, nor Hamas being responsible for the bombing. I don't know. It's just an interesting mix and match of the fictional and the real. I wonder what the thinking was behind it. I also wonder, did it strike you that, I don't know, coming so soon on the heels... Oh, of course, this was filmed before "Isaac and Ishmael." Because it felt like maybe a little too much preponderance of Middle Eastern terrorism, and it seemed like an unfortunate choice. Although I realize now it really wasn't a choice in the chronology of when these were written and filmed.

HRISHI: Right. I just remembered another contemporary name-check which is Gaddafi.

JOSH: Yes. There seems to be a niche. Or we are maybe sensing a pattern.

HRISHI: I read something interesting which was that even though this was before 9/11, apparently after the table read of this episode, they walked out and there was news that there had been a suicide bomber in Israel, and an American had been killed in the attack. They had just come out from the table read.

JOSH: Wow. That's an amazing story, but it almost makes me surprised that they didn't decide to rewrite. I feel like there's an intentional almost staying away from ripped from the headlines kind of TV making.

HRISHI: Right, but I think, even as we discovered in this podcast, there's no avoiding it. Even if you think you're completely clear, in the week that might go between finishing editing and airing, something might end up happening.

JOSH: Right. I just mean if that happened on the heels of the table read, they could have

rewritten. Interesting.

HRISHI: I'm going to go back to my *Godfather* analogy here. A very loose one.

[West Wing Episode 3.04 excerpt]

LEO: You know what? Bill Russell was getting eaten alive 'cause they could never get him to throw an elbow. He didn't want to do it. So Red Auerbach told him to do it one time, throw an elbow in a nationally televised game. You'll never have to do it again. You bet your ass they'll know the leak came from us. Toby, whatever's on the table in there, take it or leave it.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: It feels like the boss saying, "Alright you guys are off the leash. Go strike fear in the hearts of our enemies and reclaim our territory." And he's talking about Buckland, but inspires Sam to kneecap Congressman Kimball. Meanwhile, C.J. goes and takes out Sherri Wexler. It's also interesting that in that mode, the one thing that Leo was really talking about specifically was Buckland. And Josh, who you'd also think would be the person who would relish that most, directly disobeys Leo in this one instance. And he goes and strikes a more conciliatory tone.

JOSH: Indeed. Uncharacteristically.

HRISHI: Maybe it's because he's still reeling from getting spanked.

JOSH: His loss. Yeah, I think so.

HRISHI: The impetuosity over tobacco.

JOSH: Yeah. That makes sense to me.

HRISHI: And we were talking about -- with Eli too -- the previous episode. The Republicans are coming after them because they see that there's a weak administration, and they can try and get what they want. They can kind of push them around. But now in this episode, you see how even Democrats are coming in to try and get what they want.

JOSH: Sure. When there's a little blood in the water, sure, everybody comes circling.

HRISHI: Okay. Tell me about Erev Yom Kippur.

JOSH: Ah, want to get right to it. Ok, well, first of all, the title of this episode is "On the Day Before," and Erev Yom Kippur is not the day before Yom Kippur. Erev is Hebrew for "the night of." Jews, being Jews, have to do things differently, so the Jewish day begins in the evening because of the verses from Genesis that say, "and there was night and then there was day, the first day." That's how you say it in English.

HRISHI: How do you say it in Hebrew?

JOSH: Vayehi erev, vayehi boker yom hashishi.

JOSH: "And there was evening and there was morning" is the classic translation. Our days start in the evening, so you say "Good Shabbos" Friday night because Sabbath begins at sundown on Friday. So Erev Yom Kippur is when Yom Kippur starts, which is the evening that precedes the day of Yom Kippur. Again I'm no expert, I'm not a rabbi, I just play one on this podcast. I think the description of the day before Yom Kippur is right in spirit, if not in letter, because starting with Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year), there are 10 days leading up to Yom

Kippur (Aseret Yemei Teshuva), the ten days of repentance. During those days you are supposed to be addressing the wrongs you have done with the people in your life and trying to make things right.

[West Wing Episode 3.04 excerpt]

BARTLET: This guy at the dinner, he told me something I didn't know. On Yom Kippur, you ask forgiveness for sins against God. But on the day before Yom Kippur, you ask forgiveness for sins against people. Did you know that?

TOBY: Yeah. It's called, uh...I can't remember.

JOSH: It's Erev.

TOBY: Erev Yom Kippur.

BARTLET: You can't ask forgiveness of God until you've asked forgiveness of people on the day before.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: And then on the evening, Erev Yom Kippur, when Yom Kippur starts, the focus starts becoming between each person and God. So I don't know where he came up with this concept of the day before, particularly. There's a long period preceding Yom Kippur in which you're supposed to be focusing on getting things right with people before you start addressing the situation with God and the Big Sit Room.

HRISHI: Do you think that it was realistic that Toby could not remember the phrase Erev Yom Kippur when he's been shown to be a pretty faithfully practicing Jew who goes to Temple reliably on Saturdays?

JOSH: It seemed unlikely. I guess it was like the Jewish version of what they do on *The West Wing* all the time where they go "What?" and make you repeat things. I don't know. I'm not sure why. Most, more than casual, Jews would know Erev. Erev Christmas; that's what we call it in my family.

HRISHI: That's great.

JOSH: That's the night of the 24th.

HRISHI: And you go to parties on Erev New Year's?

JOSH: Sure.

HRISHI: I love the greater context of that moment in the episode when they're all sitting there in the Oval Office and they're trying to come up with essentially talking points for the President when he's about to go make this phone call.

[West Wing Episode 3.04 excerpt]

SAM: Though tragic, this tragedy further calls national attention to this alarming escalating conflict.

TOBY: Is there anything to, they went there in the spirit of peace?

C.J.: The spirit of peace, a soccer match, hope of Israeli and Palestinian children playing together.

JOSH: And studying together, discovering each other's worlds.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: The President ignores all of this stuff when he brings up Yom Kippur and then finally, at the end, he goes to make the call. The reason why he has ignored all these suggestions is because he's the only one in the room who's actually a parent.

[West Wing episode 3.04 excerpt]

PRESIDENT BARTLET: Mr. and Mrs. Levy, this is Jed Bartlet. I have three children. I really don't know what to say.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Right. I was struck in that scene by the incredible lameness of Sam's suggestions. The first being they didn't die in vain. Which I thought was just so... That's a tough sell.

HRISHI: And then, "though tragic, this tragedy."

JOSH: What? Like, dude!

HRISHI: I actually liked that at first it was like, whoa Sam is way off his game, and then I thought no, it shows...

JOSH: ...he's fumbling; they're fumbling badly.

HRISHI: ...how unmoored they are in a moment like that. He's supposed to be a brilliant speech writer but he, even he, is coming up empty on how to spin something this senseless.

JOSH: Yeah.

HRISHI: In the end I kind of liked it.

JOSH: Alright. Gosh.

HRISHI: [Laughter]

JOSH: He's trying so hard to like everything.

HRISHI: This is revenge for you not laughing out loud at my jokes.

JOSH: I just love to see Anna Deavere Smith, but she only shows up in times of crisis. We got a nice Sam scene with Nancy McNally way back when she finally handed over the information about what's his [expletive deleted].

HRISHI: Yeah [expletive deleted].

JOSH: You know what I mean.

HRISHI: Yeah, yeah. On "Somebody's Going to Emergency, Somebody's Going to What's His [expletive deleted]."

JOSH: Usually there really is a crisis unfolding and we see her in this... What?

HRISHI: You missed the last part of what I said [laughter].

JOSH: Oh sorry. #what. That was funny.

HRISHI: I said in the episode, "Somebody's Going to Emergency, Somebody's Going to What's His [expletive deleted]."

[Laughter from both HRISHI and JOSH]

JOSH: I'm sorry. That's good. That's the one. That's right. I did a little research on the Sit Room, which is to say that I read the Wikipedia entry on the Sit Room. Do you know the real name of the Situation Room? Have we discussed this before?

HRISHI: No we haven't.

JOSH: It's the John F. Kennedy Conference Room. It is a single conference room of over 5000 square feet and apparently...

HRISHI: Step up your production values there, *West Wing*.

JOSH: No kidding. Like, guys! It's more like an entire soundstage than it is the cramped little room we've been given. And I thought this was interesting: It was built in 1961 after the failure of the invasion of the Bay of Pigs because -- I guess part of the feeling was that -- the real-time communication and information exchange was one of the problems there...

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: ...and the lack of same, such that they wanted to build this NSC central place where all the tech would be and an ability to get the players into one room and relaying information to the appropriate people immediately.

HRISHI: It's almost crazy to think that there was ever a time that didn't happen.

JOSH: Right. Yes. Hey, how about we all get into one room? Good idea! What year is this? '61. Why didn't we think of this earlier? I don't know.

HRISHI: I would love a little comic subplot for Nancy.

JOSH: We won't get it will we?

HRISHI: She has some jokes.

JOSH: She's funny.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: What did you think of C.J.'s smackdown of the entertainment reporter, Sherri?

[West Wing Episode 3.04 excerpt]

C.J.: Sherri, can you tell us how many votes it takes to override a veto?

SHERRI: I'm sorry?

C.J.: How many votes does it take to override, Sherri?

SHERRI: A majority.

C.J.: Actually, it takes two thirds.

SHERRI: Yes, a two-thirds majority.

C.J.: Yeah, 290. And how many votes does it take to sustain? That should be easy. You just subtract 290 from the total number of members in the House, and add one. How many people sit in the House of Representatives, Sherri?

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: I thought, again, it was throwing an elbow literally on national TV. You know she made an example of her.

JOSH: In a harsh way though.

HRISHI: Pretty harsh.

JOSH: It was really harsh. I kind of thought that it was one of the scenes where... As mean as I am, I still felt I had to look through the crack in my hands.

HRISHI: Really?

JOSH: It was just so... I like doing it on Twitter, but on TV it just seems so mean, stupid, shaming people.

HRISHI: But didn't you kind of relish it a little bit?

JOSH: No, I didn't.

HRISHI: No? I liked it. I liked C.J.... As you said, C.J. got her groove back in the last episode, and so now, you know, she's like...

[West Wing Episode 3.04 excerpt]

C.J.: One more word out of your mouth and every local station in town but yours gets an exclusive with the President. Hunting season on me is over.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: To quote yet another TV show...

[The Wire excerpt]

OMAR: You come at the King, you best not miss.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Yeah, I guess so. I'm not criticizing it as a scene on *The West Wing*. In fact, I liked it a lot, but my reaction was different. I didn't have one of those moments like, Yes, kill her! Get her! I kind of felt like that was a little bit of a hollow victory. Do you feel great now? Yeah, she didn't know how many Congress people there are in the House.

HRISHI: But you didn't feel like C.J. has the right to defend herself? Because she went after C.J. making it sound like she is this shallow person who's going to change her clothes and is wardrobe conscious in the face of this tragedy?

JOSH: Well, yeah, right, but her response is: and you're stupid, rather than saying what she did privately to Sherri which is...

[West Wing Episode 3.04 excerpt]

C.J.: Look I changed my clothes because I didn't think it was appropriate to talk about the death of two teenagers while wearing a ball gown, and you knew that because you're stupid, but you're not stupid. You know what I'm saying.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Why didn't she say that on TV?

HRISHI: That's true. That is totally legit. I do wish that she had clarified the actual issue...

JOSH: Yeah.

HRISHI: ...from the podium.

JOSH: By the way, as I'm saying all this, I'm entirely guilty of doing exactly... I'll get into an issue thing with people on Twitter, and then I'll just just basically go, you're stupid. So I understand that there may be a sense of hypocrisy as I say this. But as a viewer of *The West Wing*, I thought, wow, all these great points you're making now, that's what you should have done in the room.

HRISHI: No, that's fine. *The West Wing* is aspirational. We want it to show us the right way.

JOSH: Exactly, that's right. You're right.

HRISHI: T-I-F-O-L.

JOSH: I also a little bit wished that reporter had been a man.

HRISHI: Yeah?

JOSH: A little bit.

HRISHI: It would have had a totally different dynamic.

JOSH: Indeed, it would have. I think there might have been value there.

HRISHI: It would have been interesting. I'm just recasting it in my head. What if it was Dan Bucatinsky?

JOSH: Emmy winner Dan Bucatinsky would have been good. He would have been good in the role.

HRISHI: Yeah. I loved Toby getting shut down by Charlie about the immunity. You know Charlie has gone through a few times saying that he can't talk to people, and then Toby goes to try to talk to him:

[West Wing Episode 3.04 excerpt]

CHARLIE: I can't talk about it.

TOBY: You didn't know what I was going to say.

CHARLIE: Immunity?

TOBY: Yeah.

CHARLIE: I can't talk about it.

TOBY: I could have been talking about a flu vaccine.

CHARLIE: That's immunization.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: His face and his body. It was so the powers of Richard Schiff being brought to bear in that moment of, what did I do? It's really sweet and funny.

JOSH: He is a good full body actor. His whole body is his face, Richard Schiff. I'm just realizing that from how you described it. It really is just the case. It all expresses whatever it is he is

feeling.

HRISHI: [Laughter] That is so good: "His whole body is his face."

JOSH: That was an interesting ongoing thing too. Obviously everybody is a little bit concerned for Charlie. I guess the concern stems from a fear that he can't afford proper representation.

HRISHI: He definitely can't afford it.

JOSH: Right. That's why they think that he should take the deal. Everybody tries to approach him essentially, and Leo is the one person who he'll actually talk to about it. It's an interesting relationship thing. He shuts everybody down: I'm not supposed to talk about it. I'm not supposed to talk about it. Then he actually talks about it with Leo and finishes by saying, "I'm not supposed to talk about it."

HRISHI: Right. It is wonderfully noble, the position that he is taking, but it does seem incredibly stupid.

JOSH: That's what I thought too. Again it's one of these things where we buy into: They're our guys. Of course this is his point of view, but I was a little bit screaming at the screen, "Take the deal!"

HRISHI: Yeah. Once again, I always like when there are moments of nothing happening, and it happens when they're waiting for the bill to arrive, when they're waiting for the clerk to show up.

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: They're just kind of idle for a second, and you get that sound effect of the ticking clock in the Oval Office. I always love when that comes in.

JOSH: Waiting for the next thing to happen to launch an activity. I did notice -- while we're still on Charlie -- that he dabbled in the casual atmosphere of sexual harassment that we sometimes pick up on in this work environment.

[West Wing Episode 3.04 excerpt]

C.J.: Ok, I'm going to change my clothes.

CHARLIE: I'll watch.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: I mean it's straight up sexual harassment.

JOSH: Yeah. Like dude, you too?

HRISHI: Yup, it was surprising that it would come from Charlie.

JOSH: Yes, I thought so. But it's like, wow, I guess that's how he sees all the other men acting. I'm going to do it too.

HRISHI: Maybe by now they all know each other well enough, and he knows where the boundaries are. And they've established their relationship, so he can make a joke like that?

JOSH: C.J., in my view, certainly didn't seem offended by it, I guess. Who am I to say. But...

HRISHI: There was an interesting interview with Sarah Palin talking about sexual harassment and Fox News. I don't know if you caught that...

JOSH: No.

HRISHI: ...where -- I might be going into the weeds here -- Jake Tapper asked her if she had ever experienced sexual harassment at Fox News.

[CNN interview with Jake Tapper excerpt]

SARAH PALIN: Corporate culture there obviously has to change. Women should not ever have to put up with any kind of intimidating work space. At the same time, if a woman believes that she is being intimidated and harassed, she needs to stand up and do something about it, not stick around for a paycheck for years and years and years and then after the fact complain about what she went through. As a strong woman, I say, you know, we should feel more empowered than that. And we should take a stand and get out of the place, or blow the whistle on it, on whoever is the perpetrator doing the bad stuff so that the culture will change.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: It's like that's...

JOSH: ...missing the whole point of the power structure of being harassed by a superior, particularly in your work environment.

HRISHI: Yeah, and to be like, oh don't be afraid of the consequences, sort of ignores what those consequences are. So I was just imagining, you know with C.J. here, it's a little different because she outranks Charlie by many, many steps. But if there were a moment where, like when Bruno says, "You've got a killer body" and she is a good sport, but part of the nature of this whole thing is that maybe she is actually super bothered by it and on the outside she's just playing ball.

JOSH: Yeah, right. That's why I say, to my eye, but you're right. Who knows what's going on inside or whether she finds it humiliating or whether the fact that this kind of thing goes on all the time is making it very uncomfortable for her to work.

HRISHI: I'm uncomfortable.

JOSH: As am I.

HRISHI: What about the reversal when they go from Kimball to Royce?

[West Wing Episode 3.04 excerpt]

SAM: What's on the table? Don't you... Grazing fees, farm nets, milk subsidies... What's on the table? Aren't they the same things a farm district Republican would want?

TOBY: Yeah.

SAM: Let's offer it to them.

TOBY: Offer it to who?

SAM: Republicans.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Interesting.

HRISHI: I really love Royce's impassioned plea for the middle:

[West Wing Episode 3.04 excerpt]

ROYCE: Let me tell you something. The idea of repealing the estate tax makes me embarrassed to be a Republican. We used to be about the sensible center, about fiscal discipline. A tax break for billionaires? Of course this thing should be vetoed! It was a Republican named Oliver Wendell Holmes who said, "Taxes are the price we pay for a civilized society."

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: It's brutal. It's a brutal articulation of, you know.

JOSH: He didn't sound to me in that scene like any House Republican I see these days.

HRISHI: Maybe that's what I think is interesting. Maybe it's because the people who get the most airtime and the people we are most familiar with are the people who make the most noise, and especially the most partisan noise. The centrists aren't really out there grabbing headlines so much because...

JOSH: There's no place for a centrist right now.

HRISHI: ...their statements aren't vitriolic enough to get someone's attention. It's all clamor for extreme positions and extreme statements. A nuanced position that can see the good and the bad in something and tries to accommodate both and strike some type of compromise is not sexy.

JOSH: This is true.

HRISHI: Except for us and our listeners.

JOSH: Hence, the popularity of *The West Wing*.

HRISHI: But I love that he poses a question:

[West Wing Episode 3.04 excerpt]

ROYCE: Do you even know who your friends are anymore?

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Yeah, that was a good moment.

HRISHI: That feels like the central question of the show in a lot of ways. Again with Josh and Donna and Cliff, and then with Buckland, Kimball, Royce.

JOSH: Why do you think Josh comes clean about the whole health thing when he's talking to Governor Buckland?

[West Wing episode 3.04 excerpt]

JOSH: We don't like your health. Every time we see a B-roll of you tossing a ball around at the local boys' club, it makes people think the president's got to campaign in an oxygen tent.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: I think it's because he does know who his friends are, and he is treating him as such.

JOSH: He's like, I'm going to bottom line it for you because we know each other better than to play this game.

HRISHI: Yeah. Exactly.

JOSH: I like it as that moment then.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: It's interesting. It's almost like he just takes a new tack somewhere midstream and just goes, ok look, here's what it is and let's actually talk.

HRISHI: And I think in some ways it's a corresponding move to Buckland sending out his entourage. You know, the woman who had the incendiary quotes. He's like, okay these guys are part of the machine. I'm going to send them out so we can be real with each other.

JOSH: That was my opening salvo, now let's just you and I discuss this for real.

HRISHI: Alright, let's take a quick break, and when we come back, we'll talk with Janel Moloney.

[Ad break]

HRISHI: We're very happy to have Janel Moloney joining us again. Janel, thanks for talking to us.

JOSH: Janel Moloney, who may have been nominated for two Emmy awards, but only remembers one of them.

JANEL: No. I remember two. I just didn't remember the particular year or what the episodes were or...

JOSH: Let me ask you about that. Would you put a lot of thought into which two episodes to submit for the Emmys?

JANEL: I'm sure I put a tremendous amount of thought into it, but it's not like I had 15 giant episodes to choose from, you know. I probably had a couple of really good Donna...

JOSH: ...Donna episodes.

HRISHI: This year was a crazy one because Stockard Channing eventually would win that year. You were nominated, and Mary Louise Parker, who has not yet shown up on the show but is coming soon. All three of you were nominated for outstanding supporting actress. I don't know how candid you feel that you can be about this, but does that get weird when you have three actresses all on the same show vying for the same award?

JANEL: I don't remember it being weird, mostly because Stockard Channing is Stockard Channing, and so you've got to give it up to Stockard Channing. It would be like if someone were in the same category with Allison right now. You would be like, Allison's going to win, and Allison should win because she's Allison. It was kind of the same thing with Mary Louise. I just love and think Mary Louise is a genius, so it made sense to me.

HRISHI: Okay, this was the first year that Allison wasn't nominated. Man! She better step up her game.

JANEL: Allison wasn't nominated?

HRISHI: No.

JANEL: I think Hrishi 's wrong, Josh.

JOSH: He isn't often. It's possible but unlikely.

HRISHI: Is it because she was nominated for lead actress, and I'm looking at supporting actress?

JOSH: Yes.

HRISHI: Got it.

JANEL: She never was supporting.

JOSH: Oh, Hrishi.

JANEL: She won every year.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JANEL: And she still wins. I think Allison gets nominated for an Emmy even when she's not on a show.

JOSH: When Allison wins an Emmy now, she, on the way out of the ceremony, throws it out.

JANEL: She totally drops it in the trash can, right?

JOSH: She's like, this is heavy and I don't need it.

JANEL: And I'm going to stand there and wait for that...

JOSH: I already have three of hers.

JANEL: ...and put it in my bag and run home. It's my only chance of winning an Emmy.

JOSH: Well, you got close to it.

JANEL: I watched the episode, you'll be happy to know. The last time I kind of didn't watch the episode. But I watched it, and I thought it was quite good.

HRISHI: And now you listen to the podcast, right? From Twitter I've seen you make comments that show you're actually listening.

JANEL: Yeah, I do occasionally, and what I felt watching this show was, man, they're so good, and they're so lucky, those people. And as I'm watching myself -- apparently that is me doing this amazing work -- and seeing all these amazing people, I'm... It's such a complicated show. I forget how complicated it was. There's nothing like it now where they are tackling all these different storylines. You still have these kind of funny story lines: the Allison thing about the guy sitting next to her and her being nervous about the guy, and then the thing about her clothes. You know, at the same time there's all this other... I just always forget how dense the shows are.

JOSH: Do you have memories of shooting this episode?

JANEL: Josh, do you have memories of your work? I kind of don't. I don't really remember the day.

JOSH: I have a feeling that when we get up to my stuff I'm going to say, duh, I don't remember that. It all kind of blurs together unless something went either particularly well or particularly badly, I think.

JANEL: I remember one thing which is kind of funny. I remember this moment I had with the hair

person, but I don't remember which hair person it was because we had a change at one point. But I remember me saying, "Well, I want my hair kind of falling out of a ponytail and a little messy because this is the end of the day." So I remember little weird details that are highly unsophisticated or interesting to anybody. Those are the little things I remember. Or sometimes I'll have an episode where I'm eating something, and I can remember a conversation where I'll say, "Hey can I eat this?" By this point though, I didn't have to ask. In the pilot or the whatever, I had to ask Tommy Schlamme, "Hey can I eat a yogurt?" because everyone was suspicious of anybody trying to do something to get extra attention or something. They didn't want anyone pulling focus or distracting anybody.

JOSH: That's true. For yogurt requests there's nothing suspicious. If you were to say "Can I eat one of those oversized turkey drumsticks that they serve at Disneyland?" that would be weird.

HRISHI: That's great though, the detail about the hair. That's really cool. I think the hair person was named Jeffrey. Is that right?

JANEL: Yeah. You're looking it up.

HRISHI: I'm looking it up, right.

JOSH: No. Hrishi remembers. He's committed everything to memory.

JANEL: You would remember.

JOSH: Well, that's interesting. Is that your style, to try to find little details and nuances and stuff like that?

JANEL: In general, yes. It's very much on display on this episode. I had to learn how to tie a tie, so I remember that. I was really struggling with tying a tie, so we did that a lot. I had to get a little chart. They gave me a little chart, and it showed me how to tie a tie. Now I would just pull up a YouTube video, but they just gave me a little chart, and I had to tie it several times. I wanted to be able to tie it really well without thinking about it. And that is one skill I've taken away from *The West Wing*. I can't remember anything about the politics or any of the details, but I can remember how to tie a bow tie.

JOSH: Onto someone else.

JANEL: Yes, onto someone else, of course. I don't really wear bow ties that often. Yeah, I tend to like to have a little something physical, a little grounding something for myself. I liked to try to mess myself up a little bit if I could, especially because everybody was so pristine in how we were put together in our suits. I just tried to choose because she was an assistant and would have looked a lot worse than that. I was wearing expensive dresses and expensive heels and expensive everything that those people in Washington do not have access to that. I don't think they have that much money, these assistants. But yeah, I try to do little things to ground myself as well as I could. There was a point where I was reading a newspaper and I thought, oh, that's adorable: Donna's reading a newspaper because she's smart. Yes, she is reading the newspaper. Now you would just have someone just tap on their phone, but there was something so charming about seeing a human being, especially a young woman, being interrupted reading. She had a moment, and she was reading the paper.

HRISHI: I remember last time when you were on, one of the most memorable things you'd said

was how you approached every scene with Brad, that you had just intrinsically understood that Donna was in love with Josh and that every interaction was going to be imbued with this sense of love for him whether or not it was ever explicitly mentioned or not. And that's informed how I watch the show ever since you said that. We were talking about how this moment where you're tying the bow tie for him is really the most intimate -- certainly the physical proximity of it -- that you guys have been so far.

[West Wing episode 3.04 excerpt]

JOSH: At the end of the night, you want to be able to pull it open, like Tony Bennett.

DONNA: You think the tie is the only thing standing between you and Tony Bennett?

JOSH: He's also shorter than I am.

[end excerpt]

JANEL: There's nothing very subtle about the look on my face. You know what I mean like, wow, she really really digs this guy. And they let us play with that. I remember very well feeling like I had the opportunity to be really close to him -- but I had a reason because I was tying his tie -- and that would be very fun for the audience to get to see us very close together doing this intimate thing. But it's innocent because I'm tying his tie.

JOSH: Even as Donna has already had a couple of dates with Cliff Calley.

JANEL: Yeah, that's right. You know, I don't think she really wanted to be dating that guy, but Josh was unavailable. So she was always trying to find other people to kind of satisfy her romantic self, but I think that her real heart was with Josh.

HRISHI: This guy just seems to be the most appropriate, and in some ways the most fitting, replacement. He's also a lawyer, he's a high-level operative. He just happens to be a Republican.

JANEL: Yeah, and I thought that was a great moment with Brad where he was like super pissed, right?

HRISHI: Yeah.

[West Wing Episode 3.04 excerpt]

DONNA: Look, when we got together the first time...

JOSH: You just thought he was with Ways and Means who I was battling on the estate tax.

DONNA: I'm sorry...

JOSH: Did any reporters see you?

DONNA: No.

JOSH: The second night?

DONNA: No.

JOSH: Alright. You can go home.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: It makes me think that it's almost a little way of sticking it to him. Not that you sought

Clifford Calley out, but as it played out, even knowing that he would be the perfect guy to annoy Brad, for Donna to be involved with.

JANEL: Yeah. I don't think he wanted her to be involved with anyone, probably consciously, but especially... It was just very personal. I thought he played it really beautifully in that moment. It was just very personal. That was a great scene; it was just so nicely written. He's her boss, but they also have this really very emotional connection, and she especially has a very emotional connection to him. He does to her, but he has to hide it a lot more. But you see that kind of brinkmanship that this whole episode is, all these little chess moves all over the place and everybody with their strategies, even Donna and Josh...

JOSH: ...on a personal level.

JANEL: Yeah.

HRISHI: That's a good point.

JANEL: On this level like, you try to mess with me to this reporter and I'm going to annihilate you. And everybody kind of wins; all of *The West Wing* people kind of win in the end.

HRISHI: Yeah. Was there ever a sense, when you guys would be playing these scenes, of having to scale back some of the emotional connection?

JANEL: That was the fun of it as an actor, having to dance this dance, and that was also what created the kind of engine as an actor where you... If you just let it all out, there's no skill in that. So keeping it in was this kind of obstacle where you couldn't show him and that's really what let stuff bubble up. Looking back, when I do look at the show, which is very, very, very, rarely... You guys asked me to do this, so I watched it but otherwise I would never watch the show.

JOSH: Because it's in pristine memory, or because it's not something you feel like doing?

JANEL: I just can't handle seeing it. I just can't. I couldn't sit down and watch the whole show. I'm just not going to do that.

JOSH: So what's the emotional soup you're diving into there?

JANEL: I think it's youth and my small waist and beautiful skin. I'm just... I can't do it. There's a huge vanity part of it that's too rough to look back at. Also, it's just such a nice memory to hold. It's kind of nice to remember it not too dynamically in the present because it was hard enough. I think I talked about this last time. It's hard enough to get over being on *The West Wing*. Sometimes when something's great, you have to take some time to get over it too. This was -- at least for me and maybe other people are better adjusted or they were in different parts of their careers -- my career. I was a hostess in a restaurant when I got this, driving my hatchback onto the parking across the street when everybody else was driving up to the soundstage. It was a big deal for me, so I think it took me longer maybe to right myself afterwards. I'm doing so well in my life; I just don't need to go back and feel sad about the past.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JANEL: That was really very honest; I shouldn't have been that honest.

JOSH: We encourage that.

HRISHI: No, I think that was a great answer.

JANEL: That's the truth. But I have to say, when I was on the show -- this is something good to remember as a woman -- I hated the way I looked. Remember Josh, they had these screenings which... Has anybody talked about those screenings that we had?

HRISHI: No.

JANEL: They used to screen the show for us at lunch on the day that the show was airing. Most of the cast, and whoever was around, would take their lunch (they'd cater it) and they'd sit and watch the show. Sometimes Aaron would be there watching with us. It was this great tradition. I would go too, and every time I would be in tears afterwards, just feeling like I was horrible, that I'd missed my chance. What a great opportunity I had [expletive deleted]. Thinking that was weird that face I made. I just couldn't handle it. It was not good.

JOSH: So you've never enjoyed watching *The West Wing*; you're not a big fan?

JANEL: When I see it now, I think it's quite a good show. Yeah, I loved it, but I didn't like to see myself.

HRISHI: I totally understand that.

JANEL: And now I look back and think, was I crazy? And the answer is yes: I was adorable on it. I was young and whatever... So, that's life.

HRISHI: I can't even listen to this podcast, I feel so self-conscious. So I can't imagine having to see yourself on screen. That seems masochistic.

JANEL: It's not right. We don't walk around with a mirror able to look at our reflection. There's a reason for that. I've never been that comfortable with my own image. And that's ok. I remember working with this director who said, "There are two kinds of actors. There are people who can look at themselves and people who can't. And it's not better or worse, but it's good to know who you are." I don't get a lot out of it. Weirdly, now it's not that hard for me to watch. I'm very forgiving of myself, but when I was younger, I was very hard on myself.

HRISHI: Why do you think that is?

JANEL: Oh, Hrishi, it's just age, wisdom, [laughter]. You know, just life.

HRISHI: We've talked already in the past about Donna's relationship with Josh and how you approach that, but could you talk a little bit about Mark Feuerstein and that dynamic, the Donna/Cliff dynamic?

[West Wing Episode 3.03 excerpt]

CLIFF: I'm a Republican because I believe in smaller government. This country was founded on the principle of freedom, and freedom stands opposed to constraints, and the bigger the government, the more the constraints.

DONNA: Wow.

CLIFF: You agree with that?

DONNA: No. It's crap, but you're really cute.

CLIFF: Yeah, I know.

DONNA: I had a hunch you did.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: How did you approach that?

JANEL: I was super excited to get to play with somebody new because... I loved every scene I did with Brad. I could have done every scene with Brad, and I would have been fine. That to me would have been a great day at the office, but it was exciting to have this new opportunity. Something that I got to do that would be fun for people to know is that they let me be in the auditions when Mark came in. I don't know why they did, but they did. He was just so Mark when he came in, and it was like yeah, definitely him.

JOSH: Did you get a vote?

JANEL: No. I don't think so. I don't recall getting a vote. But I have to tell you, I felt like I had really arrived and become a fancy, fancy actor when I got to participate in the auditions on the other side. I struggled so, so hard as an actor before *The West Wing*. I got *The West Wing* when I was 29, not that young for an actor. And I must have gone on I don't know... It would be really interesting to try to figure out how many auditions I've been on as an actor, something really depressing to know. But I've been on so many. So to be on the other side felt really sweet. It was fun.

JOSH: That's awesome. Do you remember any other actors of note reading for Cliff Calley?

JANEL: I don't. I remember at the time Stockard was shadowing someone to direct. I don't think she ever ended up directing, but she was shadowing maybe Alex Graves or someone. So she was there, and I remember her liking this other actor. I don't recall who it was. I remember his face very well, but I can't place him. He was more brooding and more emotional, and a little more interesting in that way. He was good. He was very good, and she really favored him. She thought that we were kind of nuts not to see how great this guy was. He must have been great because she thought so. She liked Mark too. She wasn't saying, "Oh no, not Mark," but it was just interesting. Mark was just so fully formed when he walked in that there was nothing left to the imagination. Even *The West Wing*, even people who are super smart, find that comforting, I think.

HRISHI: And you can't remember who the other guy was?

JANEL: I'm not being cute; I really can't. He was kind of Irishy and had freckles. He looked more like my brother, and Mark has this innate sex appeal and charm. He's got that deep voice, and he looks very different from me, and different from all the other guys on the show. So it was a good fit.

HRISHI: Josh was reacting to your comment about Mark Feuerstein.

JOSH: For me, he's one of those actors you go up against, or the actors who get all your roles. Mark is one of those guys for me. There are a lot of actors who share all my roles that I don't get. He's one of them, and I like him very much.

JANEL: Yeah, Mark's a cutie.

JOSH: Yeah, he's really good. You guys are very good together, I think.

JANEL: It was fun. When we meet for the first time and I shake his hand, that was a big Donna moment. I'm getting set up with this guy and I reach out and I shake his hand.

HRISHI: That was “Ways and Means.”

JANEL: “Ways and Means,” right. There were a lot of people on that show, and we moved really fast trying to get it done. I have to say, when I look at the work that everybody does, Richard and Allison, and even the little stuff that Allison does, that Richard does, they're just so, so good. And the template, the structure, that they're allowed to do their great work... It's just, wow! Dynamite! I can see why all the kids are watching this show again. It really holds up. It does not look dated. In fact now it's even more touching, I think.

HRISHI: Yeah. Thanks so much, Janel. Thanks for talking to us again.

JANEL: See you later.

JOSH: That is it for this episode of The West Wing Weekly. Thank you for listening.

HRISHI: Let me ask you this: Do you know how to tie a bow tie?

JOSH: Not well. I can tie my own bow tie, but I always have to watch a YouTube video nine times.

HRISHI: When this episode comes out, it will have already happened, but I'm going to the White House Correspondents' Dinner.

JOSH: You are?

HRISHI: And I have to wear a tuxedo with a bow tie, and I don't know how to tie a bow tie.

JOSH: Will Lindsey do it for you?

HRISHI: She won't be there in D.C.. It's an invitation for one.

JOSH: Can't she just tie your bow tie before you get on the plane and you can sleep in it and spend all day in it and then go to the Correspondents' Dinner.

HRISHI: I'm renting a tuxedo and the tie comes pre-tied.

JOSH: Fair enough. On whose invite are you attending?

HRISHI: On the invitation of *Time* magazine and specifically a friend of the podcast, Zeke Miller who is one of the Board members of the White House Correspondents' Association.

JOSH: Very cool. Will you represent the podcast? Will you hand out lapel pins to those who are worthy?

HRISHI: Oh, I will but here's one thing that I'm sad about: I can't wear a lapel pin because I'll be wearing a tuxedo, and you don't wear pins with formal wear.

JOSH: I didn't know that ... unless you do. Whose rule is that?

HRISHI: I don't know. Polite society.

JOSH: So the president doesn't wear a little U.S. flag when he wears formal wear?

HRISHI: He does. He does. Otherwise how would you know...

JOSH: ...he's the president.

HRISHI: Yeah, exactly. There will probably be some American flag lapel pins but they are a little bit more subtle than our pin. Speaking of our pin, you know we talked about *Harry Potter* a little

bit recently when we were talking about herping, parselmouths and parseltongues. I was thinking about the pin, and seeing some tweets of people saying, "I'm wearing my pin. I hope I find a fellow West Wing Weekly listener." So I wanted to make an appeal to people to get a pin because it feels to me, in the spirit of Harry Potter and Dumbledore's Army, it's the symbol of Bartlet's Army.

JOSH: I don't know what we're talking about anymore, and I had to look up parseltongue after we had our whole conversation. That happens to me every now and then. Rather than impeding the flow and seeming like I don't know something, I'm like alright what do I think we're talking about, and then I saw parseltongue in the transcript and I thought wow, what did the transcriber miss here. Then I thought wait a minute this is probably a [expletive deleted] *Harry Potter* thing and lo and behold it was.

HRISHI: It was. Do you remember Dumbledore's Army?

JOSH: No. I remember "Oliver's Army," the Elvis Costello song.

HRISHI: In the later stages of the story, the students at Hogwarts take it upon themselves to learn Defense Against the Dark Arts because nobody will teach them. And they sign up and they have sort of secret meetings and Harry sort of leads them in how to defend themselves. And they call themselves Dumbledore's Army.

JOSH: Is this in the movies?

HRISHI: And the books.

JOSH: But it's in the movies as well?

HRISHI: It's in the movies as well.

JOSH: I only read grown up books, so I don't know the *Harry Potter* books. Just kidding. I'm just trying to provoke a furious frenzy on our website.

HRISHI: Anyway my point is...

JOSH: Your point is buy a pin.

HRISHI: ...join Bartlet's Army.

JOSH: I think, at this point, owning a West Wing Weekly lapel pin is the price of admission. Everybody really should have one if you're a listener of the show. You know while I covet it -- not covet because I have one -- I cherish my Radiotopia coin.

HRISHI: Oh yeah.

JOSH: Yeah, I really like it. I don't know why I'm mentioning it except that we are part of Radiotopia, a curated collection of the best podcasts out there.

HRISHI: It's true. And Radiotopia is made possible by the Knight Foundation and by our listeners.

JOSH: That's right. This podcast is made possible by the talents of Zach McNeese and Margaret Miller.

HRISHI: And Joshua Malina.

JOSH: And Hrish Hirway.

HRISHI: Nice to meet you.

JOSH: And Chandra Nitre. What's her name?

HRISHI: Chandra is my middle name.

JOSH: Do you know what my middle name is? It's very similar.

HRISHI: Charles.

JOSH: Yes. Charles. Similar. You have to roll the "r."

HRISHI: Do I get any points for knowing your middle name?

JOSH: How do you know my middle name?

HRISHI: I do my research. It's like in *The West Wing* when Josh goes into the meeting with Adam Arkin and he's telling him about ACVA and he's like, "Do you think for a second I would come into this room not knowing who you are?"

JOSH: Alright.

HRISHI: I'll tell you the real reason I know. I mean I don't know why I know it, but I always remember it because I always thought Josh Charles, Josh Charles Malina.

JOSH: Yes. We're both on Twitter. I'm @JoshMalina, Hrishi is at @HrishiHirway. The show is @WestWingWeekly. We have a Facebook page: facebook.com/thewestwingweekly. We have an Instagram account that's instagram.com/thewestwingweekly. Are there any more tickets to be bought for May 12th?

HRISHI: There are still a lot of tickets left for Los Angeles. I'm actually a little embarrassed for our home city because there are three other stops on the Radiotopia tour: Seattle, Portland and San Francisco, and in every single one of those cities -- despite L.A. being the largest city -- more tickets have been sold.

JOSH: Forget about that. L.A. is the only city where our podcast is taking part.

HRISHI: Exactly.

JOSH: So this is a personal affront and embarrassment.

HRISHI: Yeah. Bartlet's army, show up!

JOSH: Come on. On Friday, May 12th, 8 p.m., the Radiotopia Live West Coast Tour will be at The Theater at the Ace Hotel. You can call them at 213-623-3233, or you can buy tickets. You can find ticket information about the entire tour at radiotopia.fm

HRISHI: Ok.

JOSH: Ok.

JANEL: What's next?

[Outro Music]