

The West Wing Weekly  
3.15: Dead Irish Writers  
Guest: Prime Minister Justin Trudeau

[Intro Music]

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

JOSH: And I am Joshua Malina.

HRISHI: Today, we're talking about Season 3 episode 15. It's called "Dead Irish Writers".

JOSH: That's right. It first aired on March 6<sup>th</sup> 2002. The teleplay is by Aaron Sorkin, the story by Paul Redford. This the episode was directed by Alex Graves.

HRISHI: Let me give you a little synopsis of the episode.

JOSH: Oh, please do.

HRISHI: It's the First Lady's birthday, but the mood of the party is dampened by the impending hearing to decide the fate of her medical license. Sam helps a former Princeton physics professor who's looking for government funding. John Lord Marbury visits to announce the British government's objection to a visit from the head of Sinn Féin, and Donna discovers she's no longer an American. So, at the time of this recording we do not yet know whether or not Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, may be joining us for this episode, but right now we don't know and if we don't get him, rather than cut this out maybe we could, in the spirit of Sam Seaborn leave this in, like the time when they almost cured cancer in the State of the Union.

JOSH: Let me ask you this. - how are you even - What is your pipeline to Justin Trudeau? And he must be a big *West Wing* fan, is that the hook in here? This is a big fish that you are either going to hook or not but I have nothing to do with it.

HRISHI: Wonderfully if this is something that does happen, it will have happened organically because of our own podcast. At one point, early on in our show, you may remember, I referred to Justin Trudeau as real-life Sam Seaborn.

JOSH: Sure.

HRISHI: and that made its way --

JOSH: Because he's horrible at chess, right?

HRISHI (laughs): I was going to say 'cause he really knows how to wear a tuxedo.

JOSH: Oh, yeah, that makes more sense.

[West Wing Episode 3.15 excerpt]

C.J.: *I'll say this about you, you can wear a tuxedo.*

SAM: *I know.*

C.J.: *I know you know.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Somebody who works for him picked up on that

HRISHI: Actually his Chief of Staff and then with potentially stalker levels of persistence, I have been messaging her to try and get him on the podcast to talk about this specific episode. I said, "Hey, in July 2017, we're going to be talking about this episode and Canada is really heavily featured. Could we please get some time with the Prime Minister to talk about the *West Wing*, and Canada, and his own proximity to the ideals of the *West Wing*?"

JOSH: Very nice.

HRISHI: And it's been several months and we still don't know if it's going to happen.

JOSH: Alright.

HRISHI: But just wanted to let you know how hard we are trying.

JOSH: That's right.

HRISHI: I think so often the *West Wing* is about trying to find some glory in the near misses despite knowing those near misses will never be recorded for posterity. Look at all the good intentions that this failure was built upon.

JOSH: Hm. But perhaps it would be for the best if the podcast were not about that too.

HRISHI (laughter): Yeah, I wasn't even actually going to tell you until I had it confirmed but I was putting on you the way I feel. I never want to talk about something unless it is for sure.

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: And I don't want to talk about the possibilities because if it doesn't happen then I'll feel embarrassed and I'll feel like a failure or whatever. Or that I've let you down, I've let the audience down, you know I'm not going to go out there and tweet "hopefully next week we'll have Prime Minister Trudeau." I wait until we've got it on tape.

JOSH: So you're completely projecting your point of view on me, because I am built - we probably discussed this already!

HRISHI: We did, yeah – you're actually the opposite.

JOSH: I'm built 180 degrees away, exactly. Well for two reasons: 1. I prefer a heads up so I can read the Wikipedia entry on Canada. But also maybe because I'm an actor and my life is steeped in disappointment so I enjoy those heady moments when you think you're going to

get that plum role or you think you're going to get cast in that Broadway show because then when it all falls apart, you're like well at least there were three days when I was really psyched.

HRISHI: Yes.

JOSH: Maybe that's twisted but that's my outlook.

HRISHI: But that's exactly what I was thinking of when I said to myself I am going to tell Josh, because he'll enjoy it even if I don't enjoy it.

JOSH: Absolutely.

HRISHI: And you know there's some kind of immersion therapy that I feel like I need I'm just like just live with the potential failure of this and then in the end I'll find out that the world moved on, people haven't left the podcast altogether.

JOSH: That is true. Definitely. The West Wing Weekly can weather Justin Trudeau's not showing up.

HRISHI: Yeah, exactly.

JOSH: No offence to Justin Trudeau.

HRISHI: Except you called him Justin Trudeau and not Prime Minister Trudeau.

JOSH: Ah. Well, I'm casual that way.

HRISHI: (laughter)

JOSH: Josh refers to Mrs. Bartlet early in this episode and not Dr. Bartlet.

HRISHI: I noticed that too and I thought that there was actually a nice little vein in this episode about names. Names are important in this episode. He calls her Mrs. Bartlet, Amy also calls her Mrs. Bartlet.

JOSH: Yeah, I did notice that too.

HRISHI: And they don't call out the difference between Dr. Bartlet and Mrs. Bartlet. I felt like there is a good opportunity to, considering she's talking about like the revocation of her medical license.

JOSH: Well it crossed my mind that perhaps that was so as not to sap the power of the Donna moment late in the episode.

[West Wing Episode 3.15 excerpt]

*DONNA: Oh Mrs. Bartlet, for crying out loud, you were also a doctor when your husband said give me the drugs and don't tell anybody and you said ok.*

[end excerpt]

HRISH: Right.

JOSH: Had they shone a light on that arena early on it might vitiate the power of what happens with Donna and Dr. Bartlet.

HRISHI: Right. But even on another level, Amy switches from Mrs. Bartlet to Abbey. That's an interesting switch because they're talking about her flipping from First Lady mode to the more casual "let's get drunk" mode.

[West Wing Episode 3.15 excerpt]

*C.J.: Are you First Lady right now?*

*ABBEY: What are you talking about?*

*C.J.: Sometimes you like to talk and I think that's great but sometimes you're Abbey and sometimes you're my boss and I respect both very much.*

*ABBEY: I'm Abbey!*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: All that is running through this episode and then separately I thought that they kind of had a little bit of resonance with the Marbury/Toby conversation about Brendan McGann.

JOSH: Mhmm. As to whether or not, he's a terrorist.

HRISHI: I was more of thinking of Marbury's own role, his diplomatic mission, in the episode. There's a neat thing that happens where it happens so fast that I felt like it was a nice little bit of misdirection. When they first are talking about Brendan McGann, Toby says:

[West Wing Episode 3.15 excerpt]

*TOBY: You have objections to him coming to the White House?*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Which, by the way I thought of you and I was, like, "Oh, actually to his coming to the White House."

JOSH: I noticed that too. I was like am I going to be this guy now in every episode?

HRISHI: (laughs) I'm sure I'm making that mistake over and over and over again but at least now I notice it when other people make the mistake.

JOSH: That's the true pedant. I also point out mistakes that I make myself all the time. I don't point them out when I make them, although I try to cop to them.

HRISHI: But so Toby says he has objections to his coming to the White House and Marbury says

[West Wing Episode 3.15 excerpt]

*MARBURY: My objections are irrelevant. I convey the objections of her Majesty's government.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And he blows past his own objections in a way that's it's almost like he is aggrandizing the objections. He's like forget about me, I represent the Queen. But it's actually a little bit of a faint because later it comes out when they finally get down to it Marbury confesses that he thinks that they have to talk to him. You have to invite him, and you have to have this conversation. You have to have the dialogue for things to move forward.

[West Wing Episode 3.15 excerpt]

*MARBURY: Toby, despite appearances I do have lucid moments, and I know that England is running out of turns in this particular, but as ambassador for her Majesty's government I must tell you that...*

*TOBY: Brendan McGann cannot come to the White House*

*MARBURY: Yes*

*TOBY: Understood, Mr. Ambassador.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: I really do think this name theme is significant because Toby says, "Can I call you John?" when he's introduced by Leo, and John does his whole litany of titles:

[West Wing Episode 3.15 excerpt]

*MARBURY: I am John, Lord Marbury, Earl of Croy, Marquess of Needham and Dolby, Baronet of Brycey, England's ambassador to the United States, and a terrorist is a terrorist even if he wears a green necktie and sings "Danny Boy". Yes, you can call me John.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Yeah, that's right. No, I took the final it, I think this is where you're going with it, I'm not sure, when he refers to him as Mr. Ambassador, I felt like it was a sign of respect for the nuance he wasn't expecting to get from Lord John on the issue.

HRISHI: Oh I took it as he's saying, "You're delivering one message, and that message is your job, and I am not arguing with you. I am saying I understand because I'm speaking to this different role that you have."

JOSH: Right, the different hats you wear. Right. We're drinking and smoking on one level.

HRISHI: I just have to say of this on level because it's my job.

JOSH: Right, no I think the first exchange to which you referred was Lord John's initial attempt to get the more subtle point across.

HRISHI: Yeah, my objections are irrelevant

JOSH: Right, exactly. That was the first sort of signifier that there's a sub-conversation to be had.

HRISHI: So I liked that. I liked that they were tackling this little theme on both sides, both with Mr. Ambassador and Mrs. Bartlet.

JOSH: Yes. There are not a lot of words in Sorkin dialogue that are casually chosen I believe.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: And um, and I also like when we get hidden depths to the intellect of Lord John, because he can be such a sort of an outrageous boob that I like when Aaron brings in the subtlety and sort of on a dime we go ok, this guy's on it,

HRISHI: He's a magnificent boob.

[West Wing Episode 3.15 excerpt]

*MARBURY: Your breasts are magnificent.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: It's the first thing you notice. He is on the verge of, I was wondering where's the secret service that go so hot when C.J. came in with the wrong card and actually making boob grabbing hands over the First Lady's...

HRISHI: He's about to assault the First Lady.

JOSH: Indeed.

HRISHI: And, yeah.

HRISHI: I also like, too, that in Martin Sheen's playing he's really not charmed by Lord John at all. Not even does he feel the need to veil his disgust. It's just a human eye roll.

HRISHI: Right. Which is funny because so often the president delights in unleashing him on Leo.

JOSH: Right. Lord John Marbury always calls Leo or often calls him Gerald. And the British accent and name Gerald is always scratching at something in my brain and I finally realized

there's a very funny sketch by "Not the 9 O'Clock News" the British sketch show called Gerald the Gorilla, in which a guy is on a talk show with a man in a gorilla suit sitting next to him, and he's explaining how he found him and taught him some rudimentary language. The gorilla, Gerald, is incredibly well-spoken.

[Not the Nine O'Clock News excerpt]

*PROFESSOR TIMOTHY FIELDING: I'm sorry, can I put this into some sort of perspective, when I caught Gerald in '68 he was completely wild.*

*GERALD: Wild? I was absolutely livid.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: I've always loved that line, it's pretty brilliant.

HRISHI: Badinage is a good word.

[West Wing Episode 3.15 excerpt]

*DONNA: Is the champagne flowing as smoothly as the badinage? Are there elegant men and beautiful gowns?*

*JOSH: The men are in tuxes.*

*DONNA: And beautiful gowns I said, not in beautiful gowns.*

*JOSH: What are you doing here?*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Ooh, I have a little bit on badinage. Was it a word with which you were familiar with prior to this episode?

HRISHI: No, it wasn't. I looked it up.

JOSH: Ah. See I knew because of my familiarity with the Gilbert and Sullivan canon, which of course in its own way has a *West Wing* connection and perhaps is the reason why Aaron knows this word, because there's a fantastic set of lyrics in "Iolanthe" by Gilbert and Sullivan that goes thusly:

[Excerpt from Iolanthe]

*QUEEN: Your badinage so airy, Your manner arbitrary, Are out of place. When face to face. With an influential Fairy.*

[End excerpt]

HRISHI: I was impressed by how Donna was able to drop that - she didn't even bat an eyelash.

JOSH: No, very nice, indeed she did not. Maybe that was the first tip off that she is not American, her use of the word.

HRISHI: Right, this our entry into the plot in any case. The plot being that a border has been redrawn and Donna of Wisconsin, so we thought actually born in Minnesota. But in a part of Minnesota so far north that when they redrew the borders, suddenly it was no longer part of America.

JOSH: Yeah. That's a plot point you probably don't want to look at directly.

HRISHI: Not under the microscope.

JOSH: Yeah, perhaps not.

HRISHI: Warroad, Minnesota. Let's look at it under the microscope for a second.

JOSH: Ok.

HRISHI: I'm pulling it up on Google maps here and yeah let's see how far it is from Middleboro in Canada. Let's do a little live action.

JOSH: Sure, this is exciting.

HRISHI: They are a good 18 kilometers - for all you Canadian friends - between Warroad, Minnesota and Middlebro, Canada. Even if you were at the very top, you would not be in Warroad. Even more northerly than that city from which Donna hails is a town called Longworth, so if you really wanted to try and make this believable she should have been born in Longworth

JOSH: See my objections weren't going to be geographical to the credibility of this plot but rather like is it thinkable that her citizenship would be somehow stripped of her, she would be stripped of her citizenship?

HRISHI: Right, she'd be un-grandfathered in

JOSH: Yeah, no, it doesn't likely.

HRISHI: And also, because of that she doesn't get to go to the party. Meanwhile you've got John, Lord Marbury just jumping around there. He's not American.

JOSH: Right. Need one be an American citizen to attend a party at the White House? I think not.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: I think this is one of those ones where Aaron is like this is going to be funny and really cool and we're going to play the Canadian national anthem, Oh Canada, and I really don't care whether it's plausible or not.

HRISHI: Yeah.



JOSH: And nor do I as a viewer care. Although sometimes I do object to things.

HRISHI: Ok, let's switch things up for a second and talk about the Sam plot, the superconducting supercollider.

JOSH: Mhm.

HRISHI: This plot was very directly informed by real world history. In the episode, Dr Millgate, who's played by Hector Elizondo.

JOSH: Terrific actor. What a voice!

HRISHI: He says that \$2 billion was spent clearing the land but the supercollider wasn't built yet and in 1993, in the real world, Congress cancelled the plans for the supercollider in Texas after \$2 billion had in fact been spent.

JOSH: Right. But it's interesting that they time-shifted a relatively old story and nearly a decade later they decided to play with this story.

HRISHI: *West Wing* writer and friend of the podcast Eli Attie very generously gave me some insider info on about this part, which came from him. He went into Aaron's office with Kevin Falls and said something, like, "There comes a time in the life of every great TV show when you have to do your story about the superconducting supercollider."

JOSH: That was such a good Friends episode.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: The one where they lobby for the ...

HRISHI: Exactly. According to Eli, Aaron said, "I have no idea what you're going to say next but we're doing that story."

JOSH: That's entirely believable.

HRISHI: Let me read you some more of what Eli wrote to me. So then I asked him where did his knowledge and/or interest in the supercollider come from, since it was such an old piece of news. Like you said, why revive it? And he said: "well my interest in was pretty simple. I come from a family of scientists." So Eli says when he went to work in the White House, his relatives were always complaining to him that government loves to fund causes, diseases, things they can name, that have clear beneficiaries and constituencies but they always explained, that's not how science works. The biggest cancer discoveries are often made accidentally, while researching other areas or just following some abstract scientific question wherever it leads. Eli says: "when I was Al Gore's chief speech writer I often poured particular pattern into speeches where I could make this point, with which Al Gore agreed." So that's pretty awesome.

JOSH: Yeah. I'm glad that you got that from Eli, because I was moved by where it went eventually. It gave Sam sort of Act 2 of his space exploration one man play.

[West Wing Episode 2.09 excerpt]

*SAM: 'Cause we came out of the cave and we looked over the hill and we saw fire. And we crossed the ocean and we pioneered the West and we took to sky. The history of man is hung on a timeline of exploration and this is what's next.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Sam's never better than when he's talking about unexplored avenues of discovery and it was moving. I like how Hector Elizondo positioned the importance of this kind of research but then you know, Sam Seaborn picks up the ball and runs with it.

HRISHI: You know there was one little weird thing I thought about the discovery part of it. The professor says to Sam:

[West Wing Episode 3.15 excerpt]

*MILLGATE: We're losing the race for discovery, Sam. For discovery. Tonight it's just me and you.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And then later when Sam is answering what the practical applications are for the supercollider and they're talking about it and you know and Hector Elizondo is giving this great monologue about penicillin, the x-ray and stuff and then Sam says:

[West Wing Episode 3.15 excerpt]

*Sam: Discovery, that's the thing that you were... Discovery is what. That's what this is used for. It's for discovery.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And it's this great moment but you just got that line. You're acting like you've come upon this incredible insight but it was delivered to you about 20 minutes ago by a guy who's in the room with you.

JOSH: I think in a funny way it's indicative of Sam's character. He has flaws. He has some big flaws and some of them are on display here. This is personal for him to begin with. He's got a personal antipathy to the Senator, and then only late in the game does he find a real connection to his own argument, a real emotional connection to it and intellectual one. He wants to take him down for personal reasons before he's got any kind of emotional or intellectual connection to the idea of the superconductor beyond his connection to the Professor, to Dr Millgate.

HRISHI: This feels like a new layer to the onion of Sam Seaborn though. This little vendetta that he has and even just, you know, it's sort of mentioned matter of factly that he's an instigator

[West Wing Episode 3.15 excerpt]

*SAM: Fair point*

*C.J.: Look, if you're planning on starting a rumble with Enlow, can I send the press home?*

*SAM: I'm not an instigator.*

*C.J.: Yes, you are.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Have we seen that before, that Sam is a guy who's going to start fights because I feel like this is new.

JOSH: Yeah, no I think you're right. I don't know if I saw him necessarily prior to this in that light but he seems to hold a grudge. I mean, in this sort of sullen way he deals with his ex-fiancée. I think things sit with him. He's got some stuff to work out I think. Although I don't know necessarily if I would describe it as the guy who's always stirring things up.

HRISHI: Yeah. I would think that would be more like Josh.

JOSH: Malina.

HRISHI: Definitely him.

JOSH: Oh, and Lyman, sure.

HRISHI: When Sam says, "I have a history with this senator", I really wanted to queue up the President saying to Charlie, "you too have a past?" His Yoda line. My impression of him.

JOSH: I like it, it works.

HRISHI: there's another thing about Dr. Millgate. Eli said that the wrinkle of this plot that introduces the lymphoma, that non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

JOSH: Yeah, why?

HRISHI: Like he said that came from Aaron. That was like Aaron's way of humanizing it. But for me, I'm discovering that this is now another kind of Sorkinism, mortality being a motivator for some of these big block of cheese style visits because Robert Engler came to see Sam after his father passed away. Donna's friend came to see Donna and then Sam about her grandfather because her father was dying. And now Hector Elizondo's character is coming and there's this way of imbuing the situation with like an urgency, and kind of like a personal quality because somebody is dying or somebody has a disease or something or somebody has died.

JOSH: Well it's funny that you Sorkin trope that I had never really pondered before. I wonder if that gives us like a little key in to Aaron's psyche? Whether Aaron feels like he's writing like he's running out of time. If I may paraphrase.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Yeah, perhaps so.

HRISHI: Mortality and dads who are dying.

JOSH: Dads, certainly a thing in there for sure.

HRISHI: And you combine the two often too. Dad, dead Dad, dying Dad.

JOSH: Right. Well I was thinking, perhaps, that's interesting what you're saying. I was thinking that it humanized Sam. Prior to that, it seemed to me, I knew he had a connection to this guy but it seemed like Sam was motivated entirely out of malice for this Senator from Illinois but it gave him at least a personal emotional impetus to get something done on the superconductor when we found out about Dr. Millgate's situation.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Am I wrong or is this a more convincingly realized party than we've seen at the White House in the past? It looks lush and realer to me. For some reason, I feel like in past parties they haven't had this scope, when we're looking at one little table and there's kind of something going on. I don't know if it's increased production values or Alex Graves' shooting style. He's got some sweeping crane shots that gives us kind of an overview of the whole shebang and then bring us into Josh and Amy. This feels like a party to me.

HRISHI: I don't think that in other episodes we gotten such a big shot because they haven't had to reveal an actual band playing. The fanfare. Did you know it's the fanfare joke, it gets book ended, it's the identical joke both times?

JOSH: Yes.

[West Wing Episode 3.15 excerpt]

*ABBEY: I'm not sure up for a lot of First Lady fanfare tonight.*

*BARTLET: Hmm.*

*ABBEY: What?*

*BARTLET: I kind of wish you'd mentioned that before.*

*ABBEY: Oh Josh, I kind of wish you'd mentioned this before.*

*JOSH: Why?*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: She uses the exact same language as the president and both times to reveal a fanfare joke. I like that.

JOSH: By the way, how do you feel about Josh's leaving the party multiple times to go hang with Donna if you're his girlfriend?

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: Am I wrong or is that a dating faux pas?

HRISHI: No, but she's busy with her own thing with the First Lady and plotting and stuff but I guess in general, is he going to hang out with Donna or just that he's going to check on work?

JOSH: He's going to hang out with Donna, I mean not that Amy necessarily knows that. But it seems like he keeps going back to check to her at least from what we see.

HRISHI: Yeah. I mean when you put it that way, for sure it's a faux pas.

JOSH: I also like prior to the invitation to come get drunk, Amy seems to be pretty boozy from the get go. Something in Mary Louise Parker's performance in this role where's she always got a slight booziness to her.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: The edges are softened. She says:

[West Wing Episode 3.15 excerpt]

*AMY: You guys pulling a heist?*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And I loved that. All I could imagine was the idea of Aaron writing his version of a heist movie and I would love that. It is my favorite genre of movie, probably, and Aaron as my favorite writer, God wouldn't that be amazing?

JOSH: It would be great, yeah it would be interesting to see his take on it. It would have a very, very romantic ending, I'm guessing. I like Brad and Mary Louise together, they have a genuine rapport and chemistry, and they seem like a nice romantic couple.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: They're at ease with each other.

HRISHI: She does ask Josh at one point

[West Wing Episode 3.15 excerpt]

*AMY: Hey, what happened to Donna?*

*JOSH: Donna, yes. Excuse me.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: So he's leaves kind of with her prompting him to check on her.

JOSH: Well I think she was asking what happened to Donna, not why don't you go and check on her.

HRISHI: Fair enough.

JOSH: I do like also that, I hope you won't consider this too big a spoiler but that Josh visits Donna at one point and has brought her olives in his pocket.

HRISHI: Uh ha.

JOSH: And pocket olives will be revisited a couple of seasons from now, or next season I should say.

HRISHI: Abbey she kind of does a little bit of a President Bartlet impression when they go off to get drunk.

[West Wing Episode 3.15 excerpt]

*ABBEY: Awasiwi Odinak, far from the things of man. When Jed first took me to his house, which is 25 miles from anywhere, he said "Awasiwi Odinak, far from the things of man." What a jackass.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Far from the things of man. First she does that, but then she keeps going and does this great, very Bartlet-esque move where she says:

[West Wing Episode 3.15 excerpt]

*ABBEY: The wine is a '95 Old Vine zinfandel from Hog Cellars, which once belonged to King Boudouin of Belgium, and is best sipped while making anagrams out of the phrase, "My husband's an enormous jackass!"*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: I like that she's both invoking him and insulting him at the same time.

JOSH: Yeah. That scene is well done, too, I have to say. The four of them lolling around, drinking could be executed very badly in the hands of another writer and another group of actors it might be an eye roller but it's fun to hang out with them. And tonally, there are a lot of shifts in that scene, and it's put over very well and convincingly, and you know I had a thought actually, without getting too deep into it. I have had times where I've been in that zone with Aaron, meaning both drunk but also when somebody's a close friend of yours and then also sometimes your boss, and then sometimes back to being your friend but could be your boss again. The dynamics get a little odd when you're intimate and you're friends with

somebody, but they're also in a position of power ,and so I thought that scene with the First Lady, you know, hanging with her ladies, there's a lot going on there.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: There's a lot of relationships, and then there's even also a secondary difference in terms of power dynamic between say Amy and C.J. and Donna being invited in.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: Ok, and you know she's the one who drops this truth bomb.

HRISHI: Yeah. And when you say this scene is pulled off so well, you know, it could have been done worse by a different group of actors. I was just looking at that scene with the four of them and thought every single person in this shot right now was nominated for an Emmy this season.

JOSH: Well, there you go.

HRISHI: Every single one of them.

JOSH: That's a lot of talent on camera there. And I'd like to know, I wonder whether they were drinking?

HRISHI: Is there even a chance that they were?

JOSH: Oh I know I do.

HRISHI: Oh yeah?

JOSH: Well if you're playing a drinking scene, I think (I'm probably going to get fired for saying this) No, I think you drink up to a point where it's aiding you in the performance but not stopping you from completing the day's work. And I would be surprised if there weren't any drinking on this day of shooting.

HRISHI: Allison playing drunk is so good.

JOSH: I agree. Allison actually drunk is pretty good. I've seen them both.

HRISHI: If someone could get C.J. drunk and give her a root canal, you could just build a whole series out of that.

JOSH: Now I'm gonna have to send an email and ask whether there was any drinking that day. I'm curious.

HRISHI: I'd be impressed if they did that scene inebriated.

JOSH: See I'd be impressed if they did it sober.

HRISHI: I guess that would be better acting but there's so many lines to memorize.

JOSH: Ah, that's the easy part.

HRISHI: I've never been drunk, Josh, so I don't really actually know what it does.

JOSH: Oh my God, I forgot, oh we have so many differences. And yet so much in common. But wow, literally never?

HRISHI: I've literally never been drunk.

JOSH: And you never will be?

HRISHI: I don't have any plans to be.

JOSH: You don't have the desire to be?

HRISHI: No but I am coming over to your house next weekend so who knows what'll happen? There's a moment that I really liked, Amy invokes the First Lady at the end and she calls Josh "jackass".

JOSH: Yes.

HRISHI: And the First Lady, her face is not on camera, she's got her back to the camera so Josh says to Amy, "I understand and I forgive you." What he's forgiving her for, I guess going behind his back to try and pressure him to try and hire more women on the campaign she says "thank you for forgiving me, Josh I appreciate that" and then under her breath she says:

[West Wing Episode 3.15 excerpt]

*AMY: Jackass*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And Abbey laughs and I love it. You don't see her but it's great.

JOSH: That's great, I like that too. I feel like I did notice that when I watched it.

HRISHI: Mmhmm.

JOSH: Interesting too that he acts so put upon by what they're asking of him but he doesn't respond substantively. He doesn't say "Look there are no decent female candidates for this position." You know, does he ever say anything of substance? He acts like he's being so like "God I'm getting the business here."

HRISHI: I know.

JOSH: But he doesn't really have anything to say in response other than just a clear indication that he'd rather not be hassled on this particular point,



HRISHI: Which I think in some ways is probably better because if he try and put up some kind of substantive argument that would be a lot more problematic. Like it's a much bigger quagmire to be, like, "There are no good women candidates for these jobs."

JOSH: Right, but that's what he sort of seems to be implying so I mean so in a sense what I guess what I'm saying is they let him off easy.

HRISHI: Yeah. I feel like the situation is he's just annoyed that he has to do more work.

JOSH: He doesn't want to be handled right.

HRISHI: It's not a good look for Josh.

JOSH: You know how I like, if at all possible, to focus on the background actors rather than the foreground actors?

HRISHI: Mhmm

JOSH: During the playing of "Oh Canada," very funny moment, that whole scene is very amusing. There are actors just in the background who are just chatting. I guess it's the President and Abbey who are talking in the foreground and in the background there are a couple of extras who seem to be singing along but don't really seem to know the words and then in one moment, one weird jump cut, they're just talking to each other and they've given up on singing and then it cuts away and it comes back to them and they're singing again. I love when stuff like that happens.

HRISHI: I haven't written notes about this but one thing we didn't talk about at all was Charlie and the President and the toast.

[West Wing Episode 3.15 excerpt]

*BARTLET: The stewards, they put a piece of toast in your wine cup to improve the flavor.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Did you know this thing about the origins of toast?

JOSH: I did not. Nor did I Google to confirm it.

HRISHI: Yeah, neither did I. Despite mounds of evidence to the contrary, I assume everything on the *West Wing* is true.

JOSH: The term "toast," as in drinking to someone's health, comes from a literal piece of spiced or charred toast, a tit bit once routinely dropped in a cup or bowl of wine, either as a form of hors d'oeuvre or to make the wine taste better.

HRISHI: I think about the principle of this moment between the president and Charlie when he is suggesting that he tells a story about the ditch digger. Charlie says:

[West Wing Episode 3.15 excerpt]

*CHARLIE: Cause it seems like a story about how cool you are.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Well, I'm curious to hear what you're going to say about that. It isn't!

HRISHI: It doesn't seem like it. It seems like, I mean, why isn't that a compliment?

JOSH: To her.

HRISHI: To Abbey.

JOSH: Right, it's saying she's a president-maker. You know, I made you what you are and it's his acknowledgement of same.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: It's just mean-spirited of Charlie.

HRISHI: But so I was trying to, much like the ditch digger himself, get a little deeper into it.

JOSH: Sure. Nice.

HRISHI: And find out what is the version where he's making it about how cool he is? Because he's the president? He's on pretty safe ground since he's making the toast.

JOSH: At the White House, yes. Yeah, no, I agree with you I thought that was unnecessarily snarky and little bit off base of Charlie.

HRISHI: The snark I'm fine with. The accuracy a little but the principle of it, I think about it a lot. When you're telling a story for someone or giving a toast, are you actually just talking about yourself? Is it just using it as a roundabout way of kind of talking about yourself and giving yourself a compliment?

JOSH: Well, it's dangerous territory and you have to be, I think, supremely alert not to tread there, yeah.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: That's the worst kind of toast.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: I was at an event not so long ago when somebody was getting an award and the person giving it to them got up and basically gave themselves an award.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: It was a little rough.

HRISHI: And now, because of this episode I feel like much more on the alert for that when suddenly someone gives a toast at a wedding and I'm like this is not a sweet thing, you're just talking about yourself.

JOSH: Yeah, that's not good.

HRISHI: We haven't talked that much about the Sinn Féin/Brendan McGann sub plot.

JOSH: But you know what, in this episode, they don't dive in deep at all about the conflict. They kind of talk around it. I don't know, it's interesting to me that you know, when Aaron decides to kind of burrow in more and when it's sort of more in a way about the characters and the dynamics and I think that's the choice he made for this episode. It's about Lord John and diplomacy and affairs of state and about the particular players in this conversation.

HRISHI: What did you think about Toby's line:

[West Wing Episode 3.15 excerpt]

*TOBY: I think we have to be careful how we use the word terrorist.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: It comes on the heels of that conversation that he had with Andy, "they'll like us when we win".

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: Which really seemed to be about being a little bit loose with accusations of terrorism or who's sponsoring it or who's using the phrase "Islamic fanaticism" and it's interesting to pair that tirade with this kind of more careful line from Toby.

JOSH: Yeah, that's a very astute point you're making, and it's sometimes hard to parse when we're getting the undiluted thoughts and opinions in stance of the person, you know, himself or the character who has a particular job to do.

HRISHI: Right, the Mr. Ambassador versus Mr. Communications Director.

JOSH: Right, exactly. The same things are in play for Toby who has to do a job and represent a certain point of view that may not be entirely in line with his own.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: Which is why sometimes it's maybe a little bit unfair of me when I say you know he seemed out of character in this episode, you know. One has to take into account that we do not always entirely comprehend how much is the person and how much is the employee.

HRISHI: Mhm. I certainly don't mean you to speak for all Jews or something like that but I was wondering, just personally, what did you make of the discussion about Arafat?

[West Wing Episode 3.15 excerpt]

*MARBURY: When did it become the policy of the United States to negotiate with terrorists?*

*TOBY: We've had Arafat here, John.*

*MARBURY: And my heaven, isn't that paying bloody dividends.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Yeah. Well, I'll be honest. So one of the things that struck me about this episode was, like many other episodes, its incredible aptness 15 years later. You know Hrish, I got back a few weeks ago from a trip to the Middle East.

HRISHI: Mhm.

JOSH: This was a project organized by a group called Encounter, an amazing organization that takes American-Jewish influencers so this is the – I'm laughing because I don't know that I entirely belong in this group.

HRISHI: Sure you do.

JOSH: But their mission is to take a pluralistic group across the whole religious and political spectrum, a group of American Jews. This is rabbis, Jewish educators, politicians, people involved in Jewish NGOs and bring them to the Palestinian territories and expose them to a narrative to which they perhaps have not been exposed before, or not too much, or they've read and heard but haven't actually sat down with Palestinians and heard their points of view on what are very complex issues.

HRISHI: But primary source information.

JOSH: Right, exactly. And for me, a very eye-opening and heart-expanding trip and I met in both the people who were on the group and the people who spoke to us, and it was primarily a listening trip to sit down and listen and absorb and don't race to conclusions. Take your time, process, open yourself. And it was incredible, we heard an equally pluralistic, diverse group of speakers, and I was hosted by a wonderful Palestinian family in a town called Beit Sahur, which is just east of Bethlehem. So I was struck, having just gotten back, by the conversation between Lord Marbury and Toby, by two aspects. One, essentially, the final nuanced message that Marbury is trying to give is as an ambassador I have to say one thing.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: As a person, I'm saying to you I understand, of course you have to speak to him. You have to host Brendan McGann. You have to listen to him. Who else are you going to talk to, is what Toby says. So one thing I was struck by is the fact that this Encounter trip is anonymous. If people want to talk about their participation in it, they can, but certain people on this trip had to protect their identities because their constituencies, members of their synagogues, the board of their synagogue or members of their organizations wouldn't want them going on this kind of trip.

HRISHI: Yeah. Because of just the possibility of negative influence or positive influence?

JOSH: You know I think it's a lot of things. At its base, I think it's fear that your mind's going to expand. I think a lot of people are dug in, intransigent, they've reached their conclusions and they don't want to be open to nuance, and I'm critical of such people. I don't know how you can object to a trip where you say I'm going to meet people on the "other side" and listen to them.

HRISHI: Right. They're not telling you "you must change your mind," they're just saying here's some more information that you can use to make up your mind.

JOSH: Exactly. So the people on the trip were very open minded. Some of the people whom they represent or whom they teach are not so much and of course the ethos of this whole trip is with whom are you going to make peace, other than the people with whom you're in conflict. Like Toby says, who else are you going to talk to?

[West Wing Episode 3.15 excerpt]

*TOBY: You also think if you legitimize him the Protestants will wake up and accept that they've got to negotiate with somebody.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: And then another thing is, my friend William was on the trip and at times, as a group our hope for peace in the region would flag. I mean the situation is dire, they were some very troubling things that we saw and heard on the ground and to buck us up, my friend William, who was on the trip drew a parallel to the Troubles and the situation in Northern Ireland and he told us an anecdote that I asked him to share with us because he is so articulate and I am less so, so I am going to read what he wrote. The other thing I would say is, interestingly, this episode takes place after the Good Friday agreement and Marbury actually refers to the Good Friday peace accord. And so what he's complaining about here in the hosting of Brendan McGann is that he feels that it's not being honored.

HRISHI: That Sinn Féin isn't doing their part to disarm the IRA.

JOSH: That being said, the fact that this peace accord was even reached in this seemingly intractable situation gives one hope, or similar hope for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Here's the story he shared: Former Senate majority leader, George Mitchell, who was appointed by President Clinton, who was appointed as special envoy to Northern Ireland tells the story of how on the Monday before the Friday of the Good Friday agreement was reached, Dublin pre-eminent newspaper, the Irish Times editorialized that after 500 unsuccessful days trying to make peace, Mitchell should pack up his bags and stop wasting everyone's time. And then, just 5 days later, as Mitchell tells it, the right people were sitting around the right table and the sun was shining just right and they were able to forge the Good Friday agreement, which ended decades of strife. The conclusion being even when conflicts appear to be intractable with no light at the end of the tunnel if you have the right people at the right time

in the right place magic can happen and agreements can be reached. And I love that story and I feel like that's the arena where Marbury and Toby's conversation is taking place.

HRISHI: Right, that's beautiful that he related that to you to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict because, yeah, it would be incredibly disheartening to just look at past attempts to solve it and just assume that means it's never going to be solved.

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: Without regard for the idea that you don't know what's around that next corner. You don't know if the people who are going to be sitting around the table a year from now feel differently than they do now or they might be different people who feel differently.

JOSH: Yeah. And there were times we asked our speakers, the Palestinian speakers, some of whom were more hopeful than others, some were incredibly cynical, and we heard and saw rage and joy and understanding and compassion and despair: everything. After most speakers we would say why are you speaking to us? Why are you hosting us? And the answer often was, we're just meeting more people and telling them what we're experiencing and you never know who's going to be in the group that knows somebody else, that knows somebody else, and we don't know what you're going to do with the takeaway, but it was just a hopeful thing and that's what Toby and Marbury are talking about. Sitting, meeting, and speaking is a hopeful act in and of itself.

HRISHI: That's something I think about, I was trying to, as you were speaking, I was trying to figure out a way put this in a way that doesn't just sound simple or pat or obvious. Maybe it is obvious, but I find myself thinking a lot about the arguments against giving up, I think maybe just because of the career that I've had you know and so many times feeling like at what point do you just throw in the towel and always feeling like, well you don't know what's going to happen tomorrow, and if you stop now you'll never get there and thinking about it in terms of physical distance of like you've walked a mile and nothing's happened but maybe it's mile 2, you never know.

JOSH: I see and feel a thematic tie in to Sam's speech about discovery and not knowing necessarily what the final destination is but knowing that the journey and the process and the striving worthwhile.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: My original plan, having watched this episode and feeling such a personal tie to it was still not to discuss my trip because I felt like well I haven't processed it completely, I don't know how to talk about some of these issues without alienating everyone. And you could argue if I've alienated people on all sides I'm doing something right. But then I decided there's something about that discomfort that means yeah no you should talk about it.

HRISHI: Right. That's why they chose you as an influencer, they didn't say you were a good influence.

JOSH: That's right. That's right. An influencer is an influencer, no matter how small.

HRISHI: Just get everybody on the same page and be like man, f\*\*k this guy

JOSH: Yeah. Exactly.

HRISHI: Let's take a little break and we might be back with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, or we might not be.

JOSH: Or else we'll just wrap up the show.

HRISHI: Joining us now, the Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau.

PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU: Hey guys!

HRISHI: Hi

JOSH: Hello

PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU: Real pleasure to meet you guys.

HRISHI: The pleasure is all ours.

JOSH: Yeah. This is an honor, I was a little bit daunted when my Skype told me that Rt Honorable Justin Trudeau is joining the conversation. This does not happen every day for us.

PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU: Well it's a pleasure to be here. Josh, I've been a fan of yours for a long time. Yeah, *Sports Night* remains one of my favorite shows ever so when you flipped from *Sports Night* to *West Wing* it was a glorious day for me.

JOSH: Wow. It was a good day in my household, too, but now you've made my day. I kind of want to stop here and just go out on a high. So you're a long time Sorkinite. Can we establish your Sorkin fanhood bonifides? Did you watch *The West Wing* when it was originally on?

PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU: When I watched this episode, "Dead Irish Writers", it was the first time I'd ever watched an episode of *West Wing* outside of the regular time slot, with the exception of the Richie debate one which was the one episode that I missed and, of course, because I missed it, I never got to see it and I actually watched it a few years ago on YouTube to try and bone up for my own debates.

JOSH: That's fantastic.

PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU: I've never actually seen *West Wing* other than when it was scheduled to appear and I saw pretty much all episodes.

JOSH: The case is the same with me. I'm on my first re-watch in 16 years. Hrishi is a serial watcher, he's the super fan.

HRISHI: Well thanks so much for joining us, we can't believe this is happening. We're big fans of yours and we've been talking about you on the podcast occasionally and since this

episode features Donna's brief time as a Canadian citizen, we thought this would be the best time to try and trick your staff into letting you talk to us.

JOSH: It worked.

PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU: It was funny because "Dead Irish Writers," I don't remember that episode and I looked at a couple of recaps of the episode and they mention Donna finds out she's Canadian but in the episode recaps it was just small and I sat down and they're going the anthem at the end and everything and it's just, like, oh ok now I know why they picked me for this episode.

JOSH: This makes sense.

HRISHI: You said you watched the debate episode to prepare for your own debate before you even got into politics because you were elected in 2008 and the show, of course, aired earlier than that. Did the West Wing at all influence your own political path? I mean as the son of a Prime Minister yourself, I suppose politics was always in the family.

PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU: I mean what I saw from my Dad was the singular moments and the lonely job that he had going through reams of documents and then speeches to the crowds. I didn't really see the dynamic of the team and the great sort of group of folks around him except in little moments but of course as an 11 year old you're not in the office watching the dynamics within the team so being able to see a what happens a little bit behind the scene in the bubble got me aware that there is a lot of really interesting really smart people doing fascinating things in politics.

HRISHI: Hm. Do you find that, now that you are Prime Minister, that the show is more accurate or less accurate?

PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU: Yeah, a lot of the interplay from campaigning to machinery of government to the political lens you put on things is very, very real and a very reasonable facsimile of what it is we're doing. Obviously social media, I mean they were dealing with the 24 hour news cycle back then and not the 20 minute news cycle that we have right now with social media so that has dated it a little bit but the big difference that sort of I see for me, the job and the role that I have is so much anchored on staying connected with regular people, having real conversations and not getting wrapped up or even glorifying sort of the insider nature of the political universe. *The West Wing* is very much focused on the team and from my perspective, you know my team are always working on the machinery, the inside, the bubble things. My job is to stay connected with people in how I'm understanding their concerns and fears, how we're allaying those fears, how we're bringing people together, how we're keeping them focused on building a strong future together. That's sort of where the top job that I have is I think somewhat different than the way Bartlet approached his job.

JOSH: You talk about his team. One of the things that Hrishika and I sometimes comment on is that it is not gender-balanced and one of the subplots of this episode "Dead Irish Writers" includes the First Lady and Amy sort of pressuring Josh to consider more women for the deputy political director of the presidential campaign. We know that you established the first gender-equal cabinet. Can you talk to us about why that was important to you?



PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU: Quite frankly, watching this episode again now for the first in whatever it was 10 or 15 years, Josh's reaction to Amy saying well there should be women on that list was really disappointing to me. I'm like what is that? It's just so jarring. I shouldn't have to put a woman on the list just because -- well, yes, yes! And the evolution we've had over the past years, I mean there's still lots of resistance out there but understanding my Chief of Staff who was also my national campaign director is an extraordinary woman. We have a cabinet that is gender-balanced and everyone was talking about how cabinet choices should be based on merit and not on gender and everyone made that argument until the moment I actually put that forward and everyone's like oh ok, they are way more qualified than just about any previous cabinet had been. So I mean there's still a little bit of pushing to do but we're certainly in a much better place than we were even just 15 years ago. But you know as I was reflecting on from the early episodes to the last episodes, there is an evolution within the show as well.

HRISHI: Yeah, you mentioned your Chief of Staff – Katie Telford – big thanks to her for actually making this happen.

PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU: (Laughter) Well we're all of the same generation. We all watch the *West Wing*, we all have this connection with the fact that politics can be built around ideals and values and principles and being positive and pulling people together and that's certainly colored my approach and it's not just *The West Wing* you can look back through history at those moments of you know Kennedy or Lincoln or Wilfred Laurier in Canada and others, where people really were being brought together. There are moments like that, there are ebbs and flows in our political lives and we all got to draw on that one. The generation 10 years ago who will have had their introduction to politics through *House of Cards* or *Veep* might be a slightly different color but we were all in a certain sense colored by having watched *West Wing* or thinking about how we're having an impact on the world in our lives.

JOSH: I was going to ask you do you watch the more caustic political shows as well?

PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU: I don't watch as much TV as I used to and therefore I'm very selective of what I watch but my staff all love *Veep* and think they should be writers on *Veep*. I have a hard time relating to it, but that's a very perspective thing. I love Kevin Spacey, he's absolutely brilliant, but his Washington is just darker than I need to spend an hour with every now and then.

JOSH: And the current Washington?

PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU: (Sighs) There's a mix of things there. The current Washington has a connection with people and the real anger that's out there, and the real frustration that maybe *West Wing* watchers didn't pay enough attention to over the past years, and I think that's a lesson for everyone about getting involved and not sitting back and taking the political world for granted.

JOSH: Well said.

HRISHI: You know, I think we look at our current situation in the country and it's hard to feel some of the optimistic political idealism that was represented in *The West Wing*. Maybe those ideas were quaint, they were relics of their time and now we've kind of evolved past them. Do you think that's true or do you think we can still get back to that idealistic feeling?

PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU: I think there are stories to tell from every different angle and *Scandal*, which my wife likes more than me, but I watch it for David Rosen. That approach, it just takes the right story so the right writing and the right ensemble. They have different approaches, but you can't say that the idealism has gone. You guys had a great example of an intellectual positive president in Barack Obama. I am certainly trying to approach things in a positive pull together way that the people I meet, the folks I talk to all the time are extremely positive about. They're proud of what we're doing for Canada on the world stage and how we're moving forward in thoughtful ways, the decisions we're taking. The first thing we did was lower taxes on the middle class and raise them on the wealthiest 1%. But you know, those conversations, that optimism will always have its place, it's just whether or not it's succeeding on TV at this given moment or not is a separate thing.

JOSH: Apropos of that, you're talking to us from Halifax, Nova Scotia. Will you tell us why you're there?

PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU: Well I'm here for a whole bunch of things but one of the main things is I'm going to be walking in the Halifax Pride parade in a few hours. I did the three biggest Pride parades last year in Canada, which are Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. This year I'll be doing a couple of those again but I'm also trying to get some smaller communities, great cities like Halifax, who haven't had a Prime Minister come to Pride yet. It's just a message of equality and inclusion and positivity and optimism and kind of messages that Canadians appreciate and stand by.

HRISHI: There's a part in this episode where the First Lady asks Donna after she discovers she's Canadian how she's doing and Donna says:

[West Wing Episode 3.15 excerpt]

*DONNA: No, I'm very upset. I don't know the words to my national anthem, I've been throwing out Canadian pennies my whole life, I've been making fun of the Queen – we don't do that.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: The more serious version of that, when you have refugees coming to Canada and you guys have had such an open policy in accepting refugees, is assimilation a big part of your policies? When Donna finally gets accepted by her new home country, what would she have to do?

PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU: Canada was always stuck from the English and the French to the influence of the indigenous peoples that sort of helped us live in a place that is too cold--too big--too empty for too many months of the year. We learned that surface identity doesn't define you and through the waves of immigration where we look more at multiculturalism,

people are proud to keep their heritage and celebrate them and be of every different background makes it difficult to define what a typical Canadian is. Just the French versus English meant that we had to accept that someone totally different from us was just as much Canadian. So we went through long stretches of angst, of being unable to define what the Canadian identity was, until we sort of figured out that the Canadian identity is just not shaped around surface attributes like religion or ethnicity or language. It's shaped around the shared values, shared core values of openness, respect, compassion, willingness to work hard, the desire to be there for each other, a search for justice, for opportunity. These kinds of things that most Western countries sort of aspire to, Canadians tend to take as definitional, and it's sort of enshrined in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms as well. And what that does is that it means that whenever you're from, whatever your background, if you come and accept those values, which are positive, inclusive, open values, you get to be Canadian.

HRISHI: When we've talked about you on the show before I may have compared you to Sam Seaborn.

JOSH: Your political achievements dwarf his as he left during Season 4.

HRISHI: That's true. Are you ok with that comparison?

PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU Yes on the side of the importance of communication and language, understanding how to use language as a way of telling the stories that drive us, reminding us who we are and where we want to go. I mean when you talk in policy or you talk in numbers, you sound good but you don't connect. The stories we tell about who we are, where we're going, it happens in narrative form. I'm trying to uplift, represent and tell the story of Canadians in a way that echoes and resonates around the world and that focus on storytelling is why I'm fine with the comparisons, I guess.

JOSH: But do you think Rob Lowe is also handsome?

PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU: I think I'm taller than him. I think that's the only advantage I have over Rob Lowe.

HRISHI: Do you have a favorite character if maybe not Sam Seaborn?

PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU: I think it's got to be Bartlet. There are moments, and when I think about *The West Wing* and how it shaped me, it's never the big things, it's the little things. It's those little moments that stick out: the next 10 words from the Richie debate, him asking his priest from when he was younger to refer to him as Mr. President because he needed to remember the responsibility always of the office that he carries. I mean, I tell people to call me Justin, but the reflection on holding the responsibility that comes with this thing that is bigger than me. I mean, I travel with motorcades and crowds and entourages and everything. No person is worth the kind of attention and support and structure that I get as the leader of a country. It is not on me, it is on the role that I wield, the role that I serve in and remembering that this is not about me, this is about the responsibility I hold, why I have folks paying attention to me and all this around me is a really important, sort of, distinction and thinking about that is certainly something that I see in Bartlet.

HRISHI: That makes sense. I mean, it makes sense that your favorite character would be the president as well.

PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU: I wish it was more like that where the president, in the very end of the first episode walks in and fixes everything in five minutes, and that was sort of that whole thing. It's like yeah! It doesn't actually work like that but there's little moments where I get to channel my inner Bartlet but in general some of the struggles he has, I studied Latin for four years and struggled through a very Catholic upbringing and a strong classical education. So his struggles with God, with Mrs. Landingham's death. I mean even the moral struggles that go on in "Dead Irish Writers" between Abbey's career and his responsibilities and the nature of his job are things that are mirrored very much in my own life in my reflections on how to support Sophie as she continues to do amazing work as an advocate for women and girls and mental health in helping fight eating disorders and all sorts of things. There's a lot of trickiness in a modern family life within politics.

HRISHI: Prime Minister, we have to let you go the Pride parade but thank you so much for speaking with us.

JOSH: Thanks for a wonderful interview.

PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU: This was a real pleasure, a real treat. I appreciate you guys taking the time and keep up the great work.

HRISHI: Well, that's it for this episode. Thanks so much for joining us, and please join us next time.

JOSH: In the meantime, if you feel like leaving a comment you can do so at [TheWestWingWeekly.com](http://TheWestWingWeekly.com) or on our Facebook page. Go look at the fabulous images we post on our Instagram account.

HRISHI: We're also on Twitter. Hrishi's [@HrishiHirway](https://twitter.com/HrishiHirway), I'm [@JoshMalina](https://twitter.com/JoshMalina), the show is [@WestWingWeekly](https://twitter.com/WestWingWeekly) and our guest, the Prime Minister is [@JustinTrudeau](https://twitter.com/JustinTrudeau). The West Wing Weekly is part of Radiotopia from PRX, a curated network of extraordinary podcasts made possible by The Knight Foundation and listeners like you. Learn more about all the shows at [Radiotopia.fm](http://Radiotopia.fm).

JOSH: The West Wing Weekly was made with the editing, producing and social media skills of Zach McNees, Margaret Miller and Izzy Malina.

HRISHI: Ok.

JOSH: Ok.

PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU: What's next?

[Outro Music]