

The West Wing Weekly
5.03: "Jefferson Lives"

[Intro Music]

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

JOSH: And I'm Joshua Malina. Thanks for sticking with us into season 5.

HRISHI: Today we're talking about episode 3 from season 5; it's called Jefferson Lives.

JOSH: The story is by Carol Flint and Debora Cahn, the teleplay by Carol Flint, the direction by Alex Graves. And this episode first aired on October 8th, 2003.

HRISHI: It might have been October when this aired, but in the episode it's the 4th of July. But the mood at the White House is far from jubilant. The Bartlet's are trying to dig a tunnel to recovery from the depths of the aftermath of Zoey's kidnapping. The Bartlet administration is trying to build a bridge to the next election cycle by nominating a strong choice for Vice President, Secretary of State Berryhill. But the brief and fragile bipartisan alliance that was cobbled together in crisis has already fallen apart, and the President must meet with a list of watered-down candidates, pre-approved by the Republican congressional leadership. Plus, C.J. has a crisis of confidence. And some things steam up between Amy and Josh.

JOSH: Yeah they do. I thought that was palpably post-Sorkin.

HRISHI: Well, to jump right into that... Amy, she takes off her shoes and puts her feet on Josh's desk, and then they kiss. This is basically the *Fifty Shades of Grey* episode of The West Wing.

JOSH: [Laughs] Yeah, she should have had gray nail polish.

HRISHI: We might have gone out of where Aaron Sorkin would have taken us, but still like only just a tiny bit further. I mean, as we've commented in the past, this is like a shockingly scandalous, sexy romance scene.

JOSH: For sure. For The West Wing this is dirty. That said, I liked it. I liked that scene actually.

HRISHI: I thought the stuff between Josh and Amy was great, and it feels like it has been on its way for a long time. You know, even in the previous season the stuff that we talked about with Amy and Donna, where Amy was trying to get back into Josh's good graces after the comment she had made, you know they're working in such close proximity. I also loved this - before the kiss, they have this flirty exchange, which I didn't even read as flirting at first, but then Amy's radar is more finely tuned than mine when she says:

[*The West Wing* episode 5.03 excerpt]

AMY: *Not my forte, waiting.*

JOSH: *You have other fortes.*

[End excerpt]

HRISHI: And I didn't think anything of it, but then she said, "What's that supposed to mean?"

JOSH: I immediately went there.

HRISHI: You did?

JOSH: Oh yeah.

[*The West Wing* episode 5.03 excerpt]

JOSH: *Nothin', I didn't mean that.*

AMY: *You absolutely meant that.*

JOSH: *Ok, maybe I did.*

AMY: *Careful what you start.*

[End excerpt]

JOSH: They're good together. There's some real chemistry there.

HRISHI: Yeah, I liked it too. Ok, but let's go back to the beginning of the episode.

JOSH: Sure. By the way, Carol Flint, a long time colleague of John Wells. I can't remember whether we discussed or someone brought up that he surrounded himself with people whose work he knew and people he felt comfortable with, and I think Carol Flint was one of them, having worked I guess for him and with him on *China Beach* and *ER*, and now *The West Wing*, he brought her in.

HRISHI: Yeah. I also want to say up front, I liked this episode.

JOSH: I did too. Wow, I was wondering what you would say. I did too.

HRISHI: There's so much about it that I liked.

JOSH: And this is the episode to which I alluded earlier, I can't remember whether I told a specific story or... [cross talk] I did actually tell this story?

HRISHI: [cross talk] Yes, yes, I was going to get to that. Yeah [laughing].

JOSH: This is one I've never seen before, because I was so... It almost disappointed me. It was less humiliating than I thought it was going to be. That end scene with the fireworks, and we can get to it later.

HRISHI: Yeah, let's wait and get to that later. It's so good, so good [laughing]. Ok. At the beginning of this episode, we're definitely in a post-Schlamme-Sorkin world, because this opening slow-mo dreamy flashback of Zoey on the horse, she's riding horseback. It's a little bit unsettling; it's just, you know, so different from what we're used to on *The West Wing*. It's a flashback, it's cutting between two different times: Zoey as an adult, and then Zoey as a young girl, riding horseback. But it's very different from the kind of flashbacks we're used to from *The West Wing*, you know the kind in *Two Cathedrals* or *Shadow of Two Gunmen*, where it's still, you know, real - there isn't some stylistic effect to make it clear that it's a flashback.

JOSH: Right, although I think in this first iteration—we see it a few times, they go back, and maybe the iterations aren't different—but at least this first time that we're seeing it, it's actually a dream, right?

HRISHI: That's right. No, you're right.

JOSH: So, it's not technically even a flashback, although I guess the same footage is used later, so we will learn that this is in fact an actual moment that happened, but its through the filter of President Bartlet's fitful sleep.

HRISHI: Right, no, good point. Yeah, exactly, a dream sequence. We've never had a dream sequence. I mean, we've had the President imagining the ghost of Mrs. Landingham, but never overtly a dream sequence.

JOSH: Yeah, which actually leads me to what I found to be the most odd moment of the episode, is when Fiderer later presents him with the picture, these options of family pictures I guess they might later use in the news or give to the press corps, and presents him with a picture of Abbey and Jed and Zoey from that day. You know, the older, grown-up Zoey's day of riding, and he doesn't go "Oh my God, I dreamt about this last night." Where was that? Isn't that an incredible coincidence?

HRISHI: [cross talk] Yeah, I know. The president has ESP.

JOSH: Perhaps so, there is perhaps a prescience to his dreaming.

HRISHI: I just kept thinking about how they kept showing it over and over, and it was the same scene and the same... You gotta get everything you can out of this one location - this shot on location.

JOSH: Yeah, exactly. Look, we rented a horse and a trainer...

HRISHI: We need young Zoey, we need older Zoey, we need a still from it...

JOSH: The other thing I thought was funny - although now we're going all over the place - I think the last time we see this kind of footage, and maybe it's the third time we've gone to it, is the sequence where he's remembering that day and how he kept referring to her as "fearless," and we see the young Zoey literally flying off the horse as she takes a jump. That's the fearless young Zoey, and then the older Zoey says fearless, and we cut to Elisabeth Moss just gently posting in the saddle as the horse trots. And I was like, wait a minute, is that fearless? Or is that just what you do your first lesson on a horse? Cuz the little girl is in midair. It seemed significantly less fearless when Elisabeth Moss was doing it.

HRISHI: Elisabeth Moss is great in this episode, and overall I really like this one for the evolution of Zoey that we're getting from it.

JOSH: Yeah, she is great. And I never thought that she wasn't a good actress, but I'm so taken with her current work that I keep thinking, "Wow, look what this person developed into." But now that I'm watching her early stuff, she's great then. She's just playing a much younger woman, and so there are aspects of it that somehow, I guess in my mind I decided that the acting wasn't as refined as she is now. But it really is, it's all there, she's a great actor back then.

HRISHI: Yeah. I love seeing this complexity here in Zoey. I think what the character is given and what Elisabeth Moss does with it is more sophisticated than what that character has had so far.

JOSH: Yeah, I agree. There are scenes in this episode that are either silent, or not really scripted, there's you know there's noise and there's sound. Like when they're walking, they're doing that, it's almost like a perp walk but it's supposed to be her first exposure to the press.

HRISHI: The spray.

JOSH: Right, exactly. And they've cleverly staged it as a walk so that she can't be pinned down with questions. I like how the scene plays out, there's a lot going on dramatically and it's a very layered performance from Elisabeth Moss and from Martin Sheen. And I like again that John Wells or I guess Carol Flint's decision to play some of these scenes, not to overly script some moments in this episode.

HRISHI: In the very beginning of the episode, in the teaser, I was surprised at first at how upbeat Zoey seemed when she says “Dad” and smiles at her father, on my initial viewing she was looking pretty rough but she’s so chipper. I guess that’s great? I felt a little bit of whiplash, like she’s already doing so well? But then, of course, this gets paid off by Charlie telling the president later:

[*The West Wing* 5.03 excerpt]

CHARLIE: She knows you like to see her strong.

[End excerpt]

HRISHI: And that becomes the sort of fundamental, unspoken conflict between the two of them, even though they’re not in conflict. This dynamic of Zoey trying to be chipper and not too vulnerable in front of her father, and her father, the President trying to do whatever he can to try to support her, but not really getting the truth of it because of the front that she’s putting up.

JOSH: Yeah, that whole concept of ‘she’s fearless’ really spoke to me as a dad, and how as a parent, you have to be careful in your praise as much as in any criticism you give your kids, because everything that you think just might sit so positively with a kid very quickly can turn into expectation, and then your kids - if the message is “You’re brave, you’re brave, you’re brave, you’re brave, you’re fearless, you’re fearless, you’re fearless” then all of a sudden I’m feeling scared and I can’t show that to my dad, that will disappoint him. And I just thought there was something kind of profound there about parents and kids.

HRISHI: You’re really screwed as a parent, no matter what you do.

JOSH: Yes, can’t win for losing really applies to parenting as much as anything else in this world.

HRISHI: Yeah, as I’ve discovered through hours of therapy, the source of really all of my fundamental problems comes from the fact that my parents were too loving. You know, they were there for me too much, and as a result I expect that that’s how the world should work.

JOSH: That’s interesting. Definitely I had similar parenting, but I really am able to do anything I put my mind to, so it has not come back to bite me in the ass, as it has you apparently.

HRISHI: [Laughing] That’s true. Luckily for me, I really am the most handsome and smartest boy in the world.

JOSH: [Laughing] Well that is true.

HRISHI: That's great. Ok, so then as we go further in to the episode, we get into the West Wing itself, and Josh is describing a 4th of July fireworks prank that now certainly would get him arrested for domestic terrorism I think right?

JOSH: I thought so too. He's saying that as if that's kind of charming, and I'm like, dude you blew up the toilets at the stadium is that what it was? He very casually just tosses that out.

HRISHI: He says:

[*The West Wing* 5.03 excerpt]

JOSH: Me and Tommy Ledden and the guys pooled our ammo and in a burst of patriotic pride blew out the toilets behind the concession stand.

[End excerpt]

JOSH: That's bad. Reprobate. Bad person. Juvie.

HRISHI: When you have wholesale destruction of public property in a public place - at a celebration, I guess, for a holiday - it has all the hallmarks of domestic terrorism.

JOSH: Indeed. Yeah. I think that that's going to be a problem for him if he decides to run for office at any point in his life.

HRISHI: I also had a problem with this line that comes soon after, where they're talking about this letter; the resignation letter from Berardi, who I assume is a deputy Secretary of State, someone who worked in the state department.

JOSH: I never quite figured out who he was, and I gave a little mental tip of the cap to Wells and company for that. Like, ok, we still have the thing where I feel a little bit thrown off because I'm not exactly sure who or what they're talking about. Somebody of note, but not so huge that it becomes the A plot.

HRISHI: Right, yeah. I guessed it was deputy Secretary of State, but maybe it was somebody else in the cabinet or something - who knows? In any case, Josh's comment about the letter was:

[*The West Wing* 5.03 excerpt]

JOSH: Aaron Burr's call to the interview at Weehawken was less stilted.

[End excerpt]

HRISHI: And I thought, “Was it as stilted as that sentence you just said?”

JOSH: [Laughing] Yeah, I’m with you.

HRISHI: You know, you remember Aaron Burr’s call to the interview at Weehawken. We all know. We all know how stilted the wording was in that letter. I mean, who can forget all the memes. But, Josh loves Aaron Burr references. I like that - that’s a little bit of continuity. Do you remember back in Stirred in season 3, he says:

[*The West Wing* 3.17 excerpt]

JOSH: Say what you want. Hoynes is a pragmatist. To do this he’d be the craziest Vice President since Aaron Burr, and Burr shot a guy.

[End excerpt]

HRISHI: Although, that reference is a little more populist. I think we can all get on board with ‘Aaron Burr shot a guy.’

JOSH: Yeah, I’m with you there.

HRISHI: But then Josh’s trivia seems to stop at Burr, because he says this line:

[*The West Wing* 5.03 excerpt]

JOSH: The guy’s a war hero. He’s the most popular Secretary of State since whoever Lincoln had.

[End excerpt]

JOSH: He should have known Seward.

HRISHI: That was Josh’s folly.

JOSH: Oh nice! Boom! It was all leading up to this. We had this date from the beginning. How about that. Well played.

HRISHI: Thank you. So, Berardi’s resignation is over Shareef’s assassination—finding out they assassinated Abdul Shareef—and people for the most part in the administration don’t seem to be phased by this, but his sentiment is mirrored and actually quoted by C.J. later who turns out is questioning some of the same things, though at first she kinda covers for herself.

JOSH: Yeah, I liked the subtlety of the C.J. storyline. It’s not really in the forefront, and it’s sort of a little bit of a reveal at the end about what she’s really thinking and what’s

kind of sticking in her craw and even then she doesn't really dig in too far into it, but there's just this sense that there's some discord among our heroes.

HRISHI: Yeah, I do like the way this little bit of the performance was done when she asks Toby, she says:

[*The West Wing* 5.03 excerpt]

C.J.: The questions I keep getting asked are, "Why not a trial or tribunal? Why covert ops? Why didn't we simply detain him?"

TOBY: Stick to the script.

[End excerpt]

HRISHI: But you can hear in the way that she's asking that she's not simply repeating questions that she got from the reporters. There's a little bit of a stammer to the way she asks them that belies, you know, in fact these questions are coming from her.

JOSH: Right, yes, I agree. There's good nuance to the performance.

HRISHI: Yeah. When you hear that what Berardi had written is:

[*The West Wing* 5.03 excerpt]

C.J.: Violence is the last resort of civilized nations. Violence wrapped in secrecy is the choice of thugs.

[End excerpt]

HRISHI: Toby asks "You think we're thugs?" and C.J. just says, "I don't know." She's mulling it over. And by the end of the episode, you know, she's alone in she's in her office and she's separate from the group and she's just thinking it over. I like that this is framed on the 4th of July, it makes sense because we're still in the aftermath of the kidnapping, but it's a nice contrast to have this overtly patriotic event happening and then inside there are all these factors that are muting people's sense of their own patriotism or allegiance.

JOSH: Yeah, well said. I like also that President Bartlet's interview with Adair is immediately going badly because he is droning a version of a story that Bartlet himself loves to tell. And presumably he would really make it come alive, but to him the nightmare is having to sit through someone else's version of it.

HRISHI: Yeah, exactly. The 4th of July celebration is getting ruined on all kinds of fronts, and the President is getting his legs cut out from under him in a number of big and small

ways. He has to even sit with Senator Adair because he wants to go with Berryhill for the Vice Presidency and they don't get to. Yet at this point he doesn't even know, and they're just trying to appease the new Speaker of the House and so they're meeting with this lameo set of VP picks, and because of that he doesn't even get to the fun - his pedantic fun talking about Jefferson and Adams which was set up by Zoey earlier, and Charlie. It gets swiped by Senator Adair.

[*The West Wing* 5.03 excerpt]

ADAIR: *So, there he was, on his deathbed. Fifty years to the day. Fifty years since the signing of the declaration. July 4th. Independence day.*

[End excerpt]

JOSH: And it is stultifying version that Adair is putting forth. The actor is quite actually, we should give him a shout out.

HRISHI: His name is Robert Arce.

JOSH: Robert Arce. Move your blooming arse.

HRISHI: I think. I'm not sure how to pronounce it.

JOSH: Yeah, he was excellent I thought.

HRISHI: Was that a *My Fair Lady* reference?

JOSH: No! Nice! And *My Fair Lady* is a...

HRISHI: Musical.

JOSH: Yeah it is.

HRISHI: But it wasn't a reference?

JOSH: Yes it was. Yeah, sure.

HRISHI: Oh it was. Come on Dover.

JOSH: That's right. Very good. That is on your very very very brief list of Hrishi approved musicals, right?

HRISHI: That's true. It is. [Laughs] It's amazing that he would normally be the one who gets to tell the story, gets to be the boring professor, and he can't even stand five minutes with someone else's version of it.

JOSH: Actually that's a funny little set of lines where he comes out with Fiderer and he says:

[*The West Wing* 5.03 excerpt]

BARTLET: Debbie, you were supposed to interrupt after five minutes.

FIDERER: It's only been three, sir.

[End excerpt]

JOSH: I like that a lot. I was also just struck for some reason, just generally, how amazing it is that there's a small supporting role on this television series played by Lily Tomlin.

HRISHI: Played by Lily Tomlin.

JOSH: I mean, she's always fantastic and refreshing and I love those little hits of Debbie Fiderer, but then something goes off in my mind and I go, "That's Lily Tomlin playing that role!" How did that even happen? She just sits at the desk and does her little bits.

HRISHI: I know, it's crazy.

JOSH: It's incredible. It's wild.

HRISHI: And the Debbie moments in this episode are fantastic. She has a couple of gems. There's a little thing that I loved. The little moment when the President sees the stack of things waiting for his signature and Charlie says they're going to assign a bunch of it to the autopen, he says:

[*The West Wing* 5.03 excerpt]

BARTLET: the autopen couldn't do its thing while I was on hiatus?

FIDERER: It raised some constitutional issues we couldn't parse.

[End excerpt]

HRISHI: It's both funny and really relevant, and it's a great little bit. The whole idea of him signing away power, and what it means while Walken was there and what they could or couldn't do with the autopen. It's so good.

JOSH: Yeah. It's fantastic. What is an Autopen? An autopen is a self-standing machine that writes your signature for you, right?

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: For some reason, in my mind, every time I hear 'autopen,' it's something that you hold, like a pen, but it moves. [Laughs] I don't know why, but that is the image I always have when I hear the autopen. Like you still have to hold it, but it does all the work and your hand just flies around with it over and over.

HRISHI: [Laughing] It's like a jetpack.

JOSH: Yeah, something like that. Exactly.

HRISHI: Also, I loved her exchange with the first lady. First of all, this is a great line, again how great it is is only revealed by the end of the scene. But she says, "Mrs. Bartlet, I can't tell you how hard I prayed for you." And then we get the whole thing, and she says:

[*The West Wing* 5.03 excerpt]

ABBEY: I appreciate that.

FIDERER: Well, you shouldn't. I'm not very religious, so, there's the risk that my praying could be taken as insincere or even an affront, which if it's a vengeful God...

[End excerpt]

HRISHI: Really, she really can't tell her how hard she prayed for her, because she has no register, no scale to measure her prayer on. [cross talk] I loved it.

JOSH: [cross talk] Yeah, that is a funny run.

HRISHI: This whole thing with the Vice Presidency, I liked the political mechanics at work here. That Haffley is in a position where he can throw his weight around. And the fact is they don't have a majority. They don't have a majority in either of the chambers, and the whole time they're thinking that they can use some good will or they can use Berryhill's reputation, all these things that they can leverage to get him across, until finally they're told bluntly by the democratic leadership—this will not happen, you can't get him.

JOSH: And this is the first episode, I believe, in which we see Haffley. He's been referred to before, but this is the first time we see Steven Culp—excellent actor—playing Haffley.

HRISHI: Yeah, and I thought that his performance and his casting was excellent because they really have set him up to be so evil. They described him as someone who even republicans consider to be a fascist.

JOSH: Yeah, that's right.

HRISHI: And Josh makes this joke about having to postpone the meeting because he likes Nascar, wanting to see the green flag at Daytona, or whatever. Really, they set you up for a caricature of the person who would be the opposite of President Bartlet.

JOSH: Yeah, the mustache twisting villain of sorts.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: I think Steven Culp is a terrific actor, but there's also sort of an added resonance for me as he has played a variety of Kennedys over the years. He played Robert Kennedy in *Thirteen Days*.

HRISHI: Oh in *Thirteen Days*, that's right.

JOSH: And in a T.V. movie called *Norma Jean & Marilyn*. And he's played JFK in a T.V. series call *Perception*. So he is Kennedy-esque, and so that's sort of a great casting coup for Haffley, the republican Speaker of the House.

HRISHI: That's great. I love *Thirteen Days*.

JOSH: Yeah, it's a good movie.

HRISHI: I've only seen it once but I remember really loving it. I didn't connect that, but yeah, that's a great point. It's funny there are a lot of people who have played Kennedys in this episode.

JOSH: Yeah, that's right.

HRISHI: As we talked about in the last episode, between...

JOSH: Devane, Sheen...

HRISHI: Yeah, exactly.

JOSH: I got a strong whiff of Nicholson from Devane at a certain point in this episode. I didn't Google, maybe that is something a lot of people noticed. Something, he's got a little Nicholson...

HRISHI: The smile?

JOSH: Yeah, you know where he said he was ready to put up a fight, and there's something very Nicholson-esque and I thought William Devane would have made a great Colonel Jessup in *A Few Good Men*.

HRISHI: Yeah. And now we're going to take a quick break.

[Ad break]

HRISHI: You know the other person we see for the first time—not a character that we've heard of before—but we get Gary Cole as a special guest star.

JOSH: Yes.

HRISHI: He comes in as Bob Russell—

JOSH: Bingo Bob!

HRISHI: Who has this nickname "Bingo Bob," although there's no explanation of what the provenance of that name is.

JOSH: It's always said with a certain amount of disdain or mockery, but it's unclear exactly what the joke is.

HRISHI: Yeah, I'm hoping that's going to come out sometime. Do we find out? You don't have to tell me what it is, but do we find out?

JOSH: Honestly, I don't recall.

HRISHI: Well, we'll find out soon enough.

JOSH: I suspect we do, yeah.

HRISHI: It seems too significant of a nickname for it not to be explained.

JOSH: I agree with you. Gary is one of my role models in acting, because he's got a huge range. Equally adept at comedy and drama, he's just a fantastic actor. There's nothing he can't do, I think he's Allison Janney-like in that way. From *Office Space*, to *The Good Wife*, to *The West Wing*, he's got an unbelievable list of credits and he's always great.

HRISHI: *Veep*, as Kent.

JOSH: Wonderful in *Veep*, yes.

HRISHI: I want to focus for a second on another role he played, which was Mike Brady.

JOSH: Yeah, that's right. In *The Brady Bunch Movie*.

HRISHI: In *The Brady Bunch Movie*, and in *A Very Brady Sequel*. And, he also played Mike Brady in the TV movie *The Brady Bunch in the White House*...

JOSH: What!

HRISHI: ...where Mike Brady becomes the U.S. President, and it includes this relevant gem. Here's a clip where he has to think about choosing a Vice President.

JOSH: Get out of here.

[*The Brady Bunch in the White House* excerpt]

SAL: You know, I was thinking that since you got propelled into this office by that little incident, you probably haven't had much time to think about who you'd like to select as a Vice President.

PRESIDENT BRADY: Maybe a little to the left...

SAL: No, no, no. The Vice President has to be lockstep with the President, if you go to the left they'll think you're a liberal.

PRESIDENT BRADY: I mean the picture.

SAL: Oh [laughs]

[End excerpt]

JOSH: Nice catch.

HRISHI: How crazy is that? It was a TV movie.

JOSH: That's unbelievable. Wow, nice.

HRISHI: Spoiler alert: he eventually nominates Mrs. Brady.

JOSH: Is that true?

HRISHI: And she's confirmed narrowly along party lines [laughs]. But before *The Brady Bunch in the White House*, there was *A Very Brady Sequel*, and in it—this is just another great synchronicity with *The West Wing*—Gary Cole, who is playing Russell, who may be the choice to replace Hoynes, in *A Very Brady Sequel*:

[*A Very Brady Sequel* excerpt]

MIKE BRADY [Gary Cole]: There's nothing. Nothing in this world that can split us apart. Can I help you?

ROY [Tim Matheson]: I'm looking for Carol Brady. My name is Roy Martin. I'm her husband.

[End excerpt]

JOSH: Ha! Oh my god. That's crazy. And just to make it even crazier, what is today? Today is world otter day, so it's all coming together.

HRISHI: Exactly. So, in *A Very Brady Sequel*, the Brady's get a surprise because Carol Brady's first husband shows up, and he's played by Tim Matheson.

JOSH: How about that?

HRISHI: And he's in the movie and there are sort of these two dad figures side by side, and idea of one of them being a replacement for the other.

JOSH: That's fantastic. And you still don't believe in God? Oh, Hrish.

HRISHI: I'm on the Debbie Fiderer religious subscription plan.

JOSH: Fair enough.

HRISHI: I can't tell you how hard I prayed [laughs]. You know what I do love, though, actually, I was thinking about this, Josh. I was thinking about our shared love of puns, and I think what it is is that people who love puns just get an outsized amount of delight in coincidences.

JOSH: I think there is an element of that.

HRISHI: I'm just so thrilled by the coincidence here of Gary Cole and Tim Matheson, and Mike Brady being in the White House. But, yeah, every time you get excited about a pun, or you make a pun, really all you're doing is playing on the idea that isn't it a coincidence that this word and this other word have this contiguous relationship.

JOSH: You're right, well said.

HRISHI: It's so silly. Okay, I want to jump towards the end, and I just want to say, I loved, loved, loved your performance in this at the end with the fireworks.

JOSH: Wait, you know the story behind it?

HRISHI: I do, yeah. We heard it last time when we had Allison Janney on for episode 4.18, you told us this story.

[*The West Wing Weekly* 4.18 excerpt]

JOSH: You know, soon enough, I guess we'll discuss it when it happens, but there's an episode where I, in an effort to make Mary Louise Parker laugh, I do the most unprofessional thing I've ever done on camera, and it ends up in the show. I've never actually watched the episode because I'm so embarrassed by it, but there's a series of takes—we'll see it down the line—I don't even remember the circumstance, but we're all watching fireworks, and I remember I think Alex Graves directed and he kept saying "Ok you guys, really like the fireworks," so I was really liking the fireworks - like ahhh! oooh! - because I somehow thought you couldn't really see us, we were really in the background. And I had Mary Louise in fits of laughter—Janney is an easy laugh, harder to make Mary Louise laugh. So eventually when it aired, a lot of people were like "Wow, Will Bailey really likes fireworks!" I feel like I'm turning red as I think about it. I've never seen it, I'm so embarrassed - ohhhh! ahhhh! look at that! [Laughs]

[End excerpt]

HRISHI: You'd never seen the scene... now you've seen it.

JOSH: Yeah, I was almost a little disappointed, although literally I started to sweat a bit as we were getting up to that scene, and it's a series of shots going back and forth so I never knew quite when it was done until the episode was over. And it's not as bad as I anticipated. Rewatching it, I remember, the story of course essentially is what's going on between Josh and Amy during these scenes where the rest of us are just watching, and then there's a moment where there's a break and somebody comes in to tell us that the President has chosen Bingo Bob and in silence as the fireworks are going we kinda have a little mini reaction or something. So, I just really thought that I was less in the foreground than I was, and I guess they cut around my ridiculously overacting, although it still does read like if Will Bailey had a Tinder profile: "He likes long walks on the beach and FIREWORKS."

HRISHI: To me it read as if you'd never seen them before.

JOSH: "What is this?! Air rockets?! What are these?" Yeah, knowing what I actually did, I was relieved when I saw this, because my memory of what I was doing to make her laugh would have been unusable. Oooohhhh! Like, near orgasmic response to fireworks.

HRISHI: I guess because I had this in the back of my head—I didn't know which episode you were referring to when you told this story, because I had never seen the episode before, and so then the episode came, I thought "Oh, wait, I think this is the moment where Will is overly excited about the fireworks," and then I was only watching you the whole time. I had to go back and watch to see what was supposed to happen.

JOSH: Now you know what it's like to be me watching the show.

HRISHI: I had to stop and zoom out to look at what the real plot was.

JOSH: Well, I'm glad that I didn't oversell it to you and that it still seemed ridiculous.

HRISHI: I was laughing so hard. The first time it happens, there's this big smile and it's so sweet actually. It made me laugh so hard. But then when it comes back later on, Josh brings everyone champagne, and he gives you champagne and you toast the fireworks [laughing].

JOSH: [laughing] You're right, I noticed that too. Well, I remember on the day of, first of all, I'm a sucker for getting a laugh, like I won't stop until someone stops me, and I kept thinking, well, Alex hasn't said "Josh, what on earth are you doing? This is unusable," so I'm just going to keep doing it. Until someone tells me to stop, I guess it's ok.

HRISHI: The whole time I was watching, I just was thinking "Will is thinking about how he's the smartest, most handsome boy."

[both laugh]

JOSH: That's right. That's years of my parents, every 4th of July saying "Those fireworks are for you. They're celebrating you."

HRISHI: That's great.

JOSH: Another Will scene, the scene between Will—or I should rather say among Charlie, Will, and Zoey, I thought was excellent.

HRISHI: Not between? It's not a scene between them?

JOSH: Well, instead of among the three of them?

HRISHI: It couldn't be between the three of them?

JOSH: I don't think so. I thought between suggests two people.

HRISHI: Really?

JOSH: Let's look it up!

HRISHI: According to the Oxford English Dictionary, it's not only permissible but actually preferable to use between rather than among for more than two parties.

JOSH: What! It's preferable to say between three people than among?

HRISHI: But, when you're talking about a contract, this is about contract drafting, I'm reading this from adamsdrafting.com which is a website on contract drafting, the author writes: "It's commonly held that whereas one speaks of a contract between two parties, the correct proposition to use in the case of a contract involving more than two parties is 'among'." So this supports your argument, Josh. And then it continues, "But, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, it is not only permissible but actually preferable to use 'between' rather than 'among' with more than two parties. That the pointless distinction between 'between' and 'among' is generally accepted is a good indication of the state of traditional contract language."

JOSH: Interesting. I guess I'm just wrong. That's one of those things that just hurts my ear when I hear it. I'll have to do a deeper dive, but I guess I'm wrong. Let me ask you another question: I thought I noticed the first non-Sorkin use of "What's next?" in this episode.

HRISHI: I think it's not the first use, I think we've already come across one.

JOSH: Ok, so that's the substantive response. Regardless, I wrote down "First non-Sorkin 'What's next?'" and I wanted to put the question mark outside of the quotation marks, because I'm asking is it the first, but the phrase itself is also has a question mark. So, would it be open-quotes-what's-next-question-mark-close-quotes-question-mark? ["What's next"?]

HRISHI: I think so. If you wanted to use a question mark, include the fact that he's asking a question, you could, I think, get away with dropping the inner question mark.

JOSH: But I like to use it.

HRISHI: It'd still be a quote. He still did say "What's next."

JOSH: Yeah, indeed. But it wouldn't be incorrect to have the two question marks?

HRISHI: I don't know that it would be incorrect, but it would be terrible to look at for sure.

JOSH: Yeah, it doesn't look great on my pad.

HRISHI: I would drop the inner question mark, just for the sake of the visuals.

JOSH: Well, just *among* you and me I'm not going to. Anyways, I think I was derailed when I was trying to talk about...

HRISHI: You were trying to talk about the scene...

JOSH: About that scene with Charlie, Will, and Zoey; I think it's very well written. Her discomfort in trying to respond to the questions that Will is asking her so that he can write a first draft of his statement for her - and very beautifully acted on Elisabeth Moss's part.

HRISHI: I really thought you were going to say 'my part'.

JOSH: That's implied.

HRISHI: Yeah, I don't envy Will's task of having to try and take this mix of guilt and fortune and have to spin something out of it.

[*The West Wing* 5.03 excerpt]

ZOEY: I feel lucky. I feel happy to be back, and grateful.

[End excerpt]

JOSH: No, not an easy task.

HRISHI: I think perhaps my favorite scene in this episode and my favorite thing that happens in this episode is the confrontation between Abbey and Leo.

JOSH: I thought you were going there. I would have to agree with you.

HRISHI: Yeah, what did you think?

JOSH: I thought it was terrific. And again, I think I like this episode very much, I think so far season 5 has been good, and I think obviously there's a transition from Sorkin to Wells, but also things are amiss in the White House. Things are not sitting right, things are not great between President Bartlet and his wife. Things that we're learning there's some serious resentment that's gonna come to the fore here - that Abbey feels towards Leo. C.J. isn't feeling great about some of the decisions that this administration has made, and so things are just off and don't feel great, and I thought this was a very honestly written and acted scene between two people who are intimate and one of the things that most struck me both in the dialogue and the performance, Leo gets it.

[*The West Wing* 5.03 excerpt]

LEO: I've been trying to, I thought you need some space...

[End excerpt]

JOSH: He doesn't fight with her, he doesn't defend himself, he does a lot of nodding and without saying it explicitly: I understand where you're coming from. Oh, you didn't want

me there in the residence. And what does she say, oh, 'you laid us open.' That's a great line and that must be a tough thing for Leo to hear.

HRISHI: Yeah. The only time I think that she catches him off guard, because it does seem that he understands, my favorite part within this favorite scene is when she says:

[*The West Wing* 5.03 excerpt]

ABBEY: And don't think that you took the bullet. I blame Jed. He did this.

[End excerpt]

HRISHI: Because I think Leo is sort of playing into this like 'yes. I understand'. What I love about this is she is furious, but her rage is not imprecise. It's really precise, it's really surgical the way that she is able to aim it. She doesn't even allow Leo the sort of honor or the duty bound honor of saying, yes, be mad at me, because he's going to be able to serve his president and allow him to do his job better, or whatever. She doesn't even grant him that.

JOSH: Right. I'm pissed at the both of you, and seriously so. Yeah, you're right. It's a great moment.

HRISHI: It's vicious.

JOSH: I like that, although there's been a real glossing over of what exactly happened to Zoey and what it all means politically and who did what. That they are... John and his staff of writers and producers are allowing the White House still to live in this topsy-turvy moment of the repercussions. And Zoey, I can't diagnose it as PTSD, but she's certainly dealing with some trauma from this horrendous event that happened, as are the people surrounding her, her parents and the staff of this administration. I'm glad that they didn't gloss over the event entirely. Maybe it is even more interesting to explore what happens in the aftermath than the action-packed hostage taking and rescue.

HRISHI: In some ways not having the details amplifies some of the horror of it. Just her description of an arm grabbing her, you know we don't know the fuller context of it, but that is awful and trying to imagine what else was happening, there's a shroud around all of it and I think it makes it scarier. As she was describing all of that, I kept thinking, where is Stanley Keyworth?

JOSH: Hmm. Good point. He is needed.

HRISHI: He is really needed. And maybe it's too early for that. The President says, "We're all gonna help you." But I really wished that he were there right then. I wanted them to be like, he's on his way.

JOSH: They need help.

HRISHI: The tension in the White House meant that C.J. didn't get to see Will Bailey's reaction to the fireworks. She's alone in her office when the fireworks are going off.

JOSH: That's right. This episode is dimly lit.

HRISHI: It's true. Even more so than normal. The lighting - when you were supposed to be looking at fireworks, you were just looking at what, flashing red and blue lights?

JOSH: I'm not even sure there were any lights. I can't quite recall, because as you know I wasn't really doing my job very professionally that day, or concentrating. I think we were just staring out at a green screen, and I think Alex was yelling, "A big burst! Ok, and now little shimmering..." I think it was something like that. I don't...

HRISHI: I think there must have been some lights, because the lighting is changing on your faces.

JOSH: On our faces, yeah. So I guess that's true. Yeah, I suppose that only makes sense. But I remember it more being about eye lines and making sure we're all looking in roughly the right place.

HRISHI: The shot of the President inside the White House with the fireworks going off behind him, I thought that was a really strikingly done.

JOSH: I agree.

HRISHI: I guess that was green screen, but...

JOSH: It looked good.

HRISHI: It looked good to me. I loved that shot of C.J. too just in her office as the fireworks are going off, she's lit by them but she's in her own headspace.

JOSH: Jesse Bradford as Ryan does not get to do too much this episode.

HRISHI: And yet, it's too much.

JOSH: Is it? Interesting. I thought he had a couple little Will-like moments in terms of awkward physicality as people kind of blew by him or walked by him in a doorway, that struck me as familiar to stuff I'd done.

HRISHI: Yeah?

JOSH: Yeah. What's your problem with Ryan?

HRISHI: His moments are just too broadly comic for my taste.

[*The West Wing* 5.03 excerpt]

RYAN: *Hey, uh, sorry. Does anyone know Mr. McGarry's extension?*

[End excerpt]

HRISHI: I just wanted a sad, wah-wa-wa-wah, like some kind of *Benny Hill* sound effect there. And scene.

JOSH: I did not feel that way. I kind of liked him. He's the new new guy, taking over for me.

HRISHI: His whole demeanor with Donna being on the phone... He feels like the guy in *Sports Night* who Jeremy has to fire. Corbin is his name.

JOSH: Ha! And is the actor's name Charlie?

HRISHI: The actor's name is Charlie Finn.

JOSH: Yeah, I remember him because I liked him.

HRISHI: Yeah, he's sort of like that character only you're not supposed to like Corbin in *Sports Night*, and here I'm being told I'm supposed to like this guy, I think. I think I'm supposed to like him.

JOSH: I think it's up to the viewer.

HRISHI: He's rude to Donna, he's just an irresponsible intern. I don't know. You know, those internships, that's a coveted position. You have to take that stuff seriously, and he's saying "Dude, I can't go on the trip."

JOSH: Alright.

HRISHI: I don't like him.

JOSH: Fair enough. And then I just, I can't even remember now the context, but I wrote down what I think is a quintessential Toby line:

[*The West Wing* 5.03 excerpt]

TOBY: *I'm over the moon. This is my over the moon face.*

[End excerpt]

HRISHI: Yeah! This is a meme. I've seen that graphic so often, it feels like classic Toby. In some ways it's shocking that it wasn't written by Aaron Sorkin. It is so true to his character. And it does give me a lot of faith in what's to come. That's a perfect line for him. I think also because I've seen it online for so long that in some ways—not that season 5-7 aren't canon, but that was my attitude towards them for a long time—and so it had been canonized in my head even though I had never seen the episode I was like, yeah I know that part. This is my over the moon face, I saw that and thought 'That's where this is from!'

JOSH: How 'bout that. And I don't know the show well enough where I've seen that line, as you say they've memed the hell out of it, I never would have guessed that was not an Aaron line.

HRISHI: Oh right, you're making your over the meme face.

JOSH: [Laughs] By the way, ironically, the transition into season 5 is almost giving us a boost I think to this entire endeavor. There's a fair amount of passionate discussion on our website between...

HRISHI: [crosstalk] Among?

JOSH: Ooh, among. But now it is between I should be saying, right? "Bamong" the various factions who poopoo seasons 5-7 and are done with the rewatch and listening, those who are open to it but feel that the differences have to be highlighted, and those that say maybe it's different but it's still The West Wing. And there's a lot of passionate argument and debate, and I'm enjoying reading it. I'm not interacting as much online, I'm just looking for places where I can be foul to people that deserve it, but I'm not really digging into the conversation but I am reading it and enjoying it and I do think that it's actually a little breath of fresh air.

HRISHI: I hope people are enjoying the podcast too. Let us know what you think so far of our coverage of season 5.

JOSH: Yeah, absolutely. And then there are some though who are encouraging us to continue, as if we might not. I don't know where we gave that impression. I think we've sort of been discussing some of the issues that circle this transition, but we're going to do the show. I mean I am, aren't you?

HRISHI: Probably. I can't tell you how hard I'm praying that we'll continue the show.
[Laughs]

JOSH: [Laughs] Oh, maybe they're getting it from you then. But, yeah, you don't have to keep encouraging us. As long as we can still potentially sell you a shirt, we will continue this podcast.

HRISHI: Let Josh know he is the smartest, most handsome boy in the whole world and we will keep doing the podcast.

JOSH: That's right.

HRISHI: On that note, thanks so much for listening. This has been a lot of fun for me, I hope it was as fun for everyone listening.

JOSH: I have been enjoying these last couple non-live episodes, these dead episodes that you and I have been doing.

HRISHI: The West Wing Weekly is a proud member of Radiotopia from PRX, a curated collection of extraordinary, cutting-edge shows. You should check them out at Radiotopia.fm.

JOSH: This podcast would not be what it is without the gorgeous help of Zach McNeese and Margaret Miller.

HRISHI: And if you do want to tell Josh how handsome and smart he is, please do so on our website, thewestwingweekly.com. You can also tweet at us. We're on Twitter. We're also on Facebook and on Instagram. Please find us there and follow us there. We also have a newsletter.

JOSH: Yes we do. But it's very expensive to communicate with you, so don't expect to hear from us often.

HRISHI: It's a good thing. We're not going to spam you, we're only gonna send you emails when it's really important because, as it turns out...

JOSH: We thought it was going to be free for us, and now we realize we have to spend money to communicate with you in this particular fashion, so we're only going to do it when it really counts. Like when we have something new to sell you.

HRISHI: And the more of you that sign up, the more expensive it is to send these emails out.

JOSH: That's right. So if you don't like us, sign up for the newsletter.

HRISHI: ...at thewestwingweekly.com/newsletter.

JOSH: And as always, while not all our merchandise is available, we do have some stock items, some evergreen items, that are available 'round the clock, and you can see those at thewestwingweekly.com/merch.

HRISHI: They're evergreen, they are not deciduous for all you leaf peepers.

JOSH: And they're now available in evernavy and evergrey. Oy vey.

HRISHI: Ok.

JOSH: Ok.

HRISHI: What's next?

[Outro Music]