

The West Wing Weekly
7.09: "The Wedding"
Guest: Nina Siemaszko

[Intro Music]

HRISHI: You're listening to *The West Wing Weekly*. I'm Hrishikesh Hirway. What? Whoa, stupid squeaky chair. Sorry Zach, I still haven't oiled it. Okay. You're listening to *The West Wing Weekly*. I'm Hrishikesh Hirway.

JOSH: More like Squeakykesh Chairway.

HRISHI: All right. [laughs] Now we've got to leave the squeak in. Actually, did you know that my name anagrams to High Chair K Shy Wisher?

JOSH: [Laughs] No, I didn't know that. Do you know that mine anagrams to Joshua Animal?

HRISHI: [Laughs] I did know that actually.

JOSH: And I'm Joshua Malina.

HRISHI: And today we're talking about "The Wedding". It's episode nine from season seven.

JOSH: It was written by Josh Singer, it was directed by Max Mayer, and it first aired on December 11th, 2005. I'm not unaware that we're steamrolling our way towards the last second month of the year. The last four times I'll have to attempt to say it.

HRISHI: It's coming up. We are wedged thin between now and February.

JOSH: Oh...show off.

HRISHI: Wedged thin, by the way.

JOSH: Anagrams to thin wedged.

HRISHI: It's an anagram for "The Wedding" actually, the name of this episode.

JOSH: Oh, God, you're good. [Hrishi laughs] I don't, I don't get it. Jaw on the floor.

HRISHI: Coming up later we're going to be joined by Nina Siemaszko who plays Ellie.

JOSH: Fantastic.

HRISHI: In this episode there's a wedding.

JOSH: Yes.

HRISHI: You would never have guessed it, but there is. Ellie Bartlet and Vic are getting married and meanwhile there is a crisis in the Santos campaign centered around whether or not Josh Lyman ought to remain the campaign manager.

JOSH: Mm-hmm.

HRISHI: In addition, there's a crisis that continues in Kazakhstan involving China and Russia fighting over oil. And maybe by the end of this episode we will have a better sense, or any sense, of what that...what's really going on there.

JOSH: Well, I did learn this. In my attempts to summon up from the internet a map of Kazakhstan, I inadvertently wrote 'Kazakhstan app', which took me to the app store, and so I can, I think with some confidence recommend oix.kz if you're looking to sell some of your junk in Kazakhstan.

HRISHI: Okay. Like an eBay for Kazakhstan.

JOSH: Correct.

HRISHI: Alright. Not a sponsor.

JOSH: No, that's exactly...that is a real-deal recommendation. Although I also stand behind all our products and services.

HRISHI: That's right.

JOSH: That do sponsor us.

HRISHI: That's right. Let's begin with our processional.

JOSH: Nice. Very nice.

HRISHI: I couldn't remember the word.

JOSH: Play us in Zach.

[West Wing Episode 7.09 excerpt]

Processional music: La Paix, Largo Alla Siciliana by George Frideric Handel.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: You know, Jewish weddings don't traditionally have a rehearsal.

HRISHI: No?

JOSH: No. We're all about performing cold. Just cold read. I think the idea is that the time under the chuppah, the wedding canopy, is sacred and it's not something you practice for. I'm not judging anyone else's traditions, but I was happy when President Bartlet had to leave the rehearsal.

HRISHI: You thought, "save it for the mic."

JOSH: As a Jew, I felt that it's more in the spirit of the thing.

HRISHI: We try and do something similar where we stop ourselves from having any kind of pre-discussions of the episode to avoid any sense of preparation.

JOSH: That's right.

HRISHI: Or forethought.

JOSH: Right, and because our time...

HRISHI: under the chuppah...

JOSH: ...under the chuppah, is sacred. Right.

HRISHI: There are something like 600 people who are at this wedding.

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: How is none of them a Bartlet sister?

JOSH: Uh, wait, how do we know that?

HRISHI: I mean, well, I mean presumably they are both invited, but they're not at the wedding rehearsal.

JOSH: No, we don't see them do we?

HRISHI: And we don't even hear anything about them. There is no mention of, "Oh, Zoey will be doing a reading of Corinthians" or whatever.

JOSH: Yeah, you're not wrong. Why? Explain to us why you're too cheap to show us them. Or at least throw in a mention.

HRISHI: That's what I'm wondering. I mean it doesn't actually cost money, production money, to mention the characters' names.

JOSH: No, that is correct. They really should have.

HRISHI: For what is a otherwise very sweet and family-oriented plot, they've forgotten 40% of the immediate family.

JOSH: Yeah, that is true.

HRISHI: Well, anyway, that mystery lingers, but here we are in the opening scenes of the episode. It's the rehearsal of the wedding, the very un-sacred according to Josh's Jewish radar...

JOSH: That's right.

HRISHI: ...rehearsal.

JOSH: Not to mention no chuppa or chuppah altogether. I mean that's really, if you're gonna, I mean the least traditional aspect of their wedding.

HRISHI: Imagine the chutzpah to forget the chuppah.

JOSH: Very nice.

HRISHI: The President has to be taken away from the rehearsal, and this is a recurring theme throughout this episode, because China and Russia just can't respect the weekend's activities.

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: For now.

JOSH: Yes. They will later be talked into a small break.

HRISHI: A little bit of decorum for Ellie's sake.

JOSH: Right, trying to have a wedding here.

HRISHI: I feel like I've been in the room while Lindsey has been watching a show, just on my phone or something, looking at something. And then about halfway through, some character's said something that's made- caught my ear and now I'm trying to catch up. That's how I feel about the Kazakhstan situation.

JOSH: Hmm.

HRISHI: I'm like, I know this has been going on for a while, but wait, what's happening?

[West Wing Episode 7.09 excerpt]

KATE: Pretty much.

C.J.: President Tarimov's got to be nervous with the Chinese camped out at the border and his own people ready to storm the palace gate.

PRESIDENT BARTLET: Not nervous enough to reschedule elections. The Chinese seeing what we're seeing?

C.J.: The Chinese won't enter the country unprovoked, but if those convoys cross the border...

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Yeah, I felt the same way. I watched this through twice, an exercise, which was close to excruciating, I have to say.

HRISHI: Really?

JOSH: Yeah, I didn't love it, and the first time I didn't watch the Previously On... and then having felt so sort of left in the dark about what exactly is going on in that area of the world, I decided to watch the Previously On... and it gave me a little bit more of my bearings. But again, I'm surprised that, as we theoretically delve further into the situation, that I'm left still wondering, kind of like you say, what's going on?

HRISHI: Yeah. I'm, I am the annoying friend who's come over to watch *Game of Thrones* starting with season...you know, just some random episode in season four and I'm just the person saying "and so, so...this guy wants the land. Wait, what?"

JOSH: Yeah, no, that's a very good description. Yeah. I mean, I felt that way sort of about the entire episode, it felt pallid to me. It just felt like it was wan, it was [Hrishi laughs]...something was missing. Yeah. I have other, synonyms too and I'm still just getting started.

HRISHI: Maybe 'ashen'. A bit ... insipid. Chalky. [Josh laughs]

JOSH: Just, it wasn't zesty and good the way it ought to be when there's, one plot is a major character possibly losing his job on a presidential campaign, and the other, the B plot, is possible nuclear conflagration between nations. I mean, it's like; the stakes are high, so why don't I care?

HRISHI: Yeah. You know what I do care about? [Josh laughs] More synonyms for pallid.

JOSH: What've ya got?

HRISHI: Oh, this one is my favorite. Can I just jump straight to my favorite one?

JOSH: Please.

HRISHI: Whey-faced.

JOSH: Weigh-faced? like W-E-I-G-H?

HRISHI: No, W-H-E-Y.

JOSH: Oh. Oh, that's what I meant. That's what I meant. Actually. Something missed shot. There. You mean like curds and whey right? W-H-E-Y right.

HRISHI: Yeah. Whey faced. That's pretty good.

JOSH: That isn't bad. Whey-faced. I know baseball players have an 'away face'.

HRISHI: Away-face. You know who would not be whey-faced?

JOSH: Who's that?

HRISHI: A dewy chef.

JOSH: A dewy chef? I don't get it.

HRISHI: It's an anagram for whey-faced.

JOSH: Of course I get it. There we go.

HRISHI: Because their skin is dewy.

JOSH: Nice.

HRISHI: Probably from all of the moisture from the steamer that they're working over.

JOSH: Makes sense.

HRISHI: Mm-hm.

JOSH: So where were we? I derailed us again.

HRISHI: We were talking about ... I mean we've heard about these folks, you know there's Tarimov...so Tarimov, just a little refresher, Tarimov is the acting president of Kazakhstan...

JOSH: Sure.

HRISHI: ...was installed after Issetov was assassinated as predicted by Mr. Frost.

JOSH: Right, and he's a...he's Russia leaning.

HRISHI: Well Tarimov is Russian leaning.

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: Issetov, was Chinese leaning, and so Tarimov axed a deal that they had with China and now the Chinese are upset because their access to oil has been restricted.

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: So that's some context.

JOSH: Yeah.

HRISHI: I know it a little bit better than nothing, but just barely. The biggest ai-yi-yi moment for me in this episode was when the President calls them on it.

[West Wing Episode 7.09 excerpt]

PRESIDENT BARTLET: I am trying to stop two nuclear powers from going to war over oil.

TRANSLATOR: Oil? Mr. President, this is not about oil. It is about the brutal suppression of a democratic movement.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And I thought, oh, is stopping the brutal suppression of a democratic movement what China is all about?

JOSH: Hmm.

HRISHI: Ai-yi-yi.

JOSH: Ai-yi-yi.

HRISHI: Cause I really thought it was more like they were into it. Brutal suppression of democratic movement is kind of like, it's kind of their bag.

JOSH: Yeah. Yeah. You're not wrong.

HRISHI: This episode has just gotten both of us banned from China, it turns out.

JOSH: Indeed. Yeah.

HRISHI: But the President really doesn't...we cut away before the President can really call the Premier out on that.

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: Okay. So the President's called away. He has to deal with this. He's trying to oversee two uncomfortable unions.

JOSH: Yes, you're not wrong. This was my other thing. This I actually found slightly troubling, I let it just kind of roll over me the first time round. The second time I watched, President Bartlet doesn't like his...Vic.

HRISHI: No.

JOSH: I mean he makes jokes that aren't really jokes that are just like, yeah, I would prefer if they didn't get married.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: I mean, he just doesn't like him, which is a bummer.

HRISHI: Yeah, and we know he's not crazy fond of Doug Westin.

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: I mean, but he doesn't, he really doesn't know Vic at all.

JOSH: No, and doesn't do a great job getting to know him in his final...in their final meeting together. I mean he eventually admits that he just wants to hear that your motivation to marry her isn't just the fact that she's pregnant, and we have, I guess what's supposed to be kind of a sweet, significant moment, but in my books a little whey-faced.

[West Wing Episode 7.09 excerpt]

VIC: 11 months, two weeks and three days.

PRESIDENT BARTLET: Excuse me?

VIC: That's when I decided to marry her. A year ago, on our third date.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: But it doesn't quite work to me.

HRISHI: It doesn't quite land. Why would you describe that moment as...bloodless or waxy? Perhaps blanched. [Josh laughs]

JOSH: I'll tell you whey. I mean why. Yeah, well first of all I didn't buy it. Like that's just weird if you really do know exactly how many days...like, come on, you didn't quit smoking that day.

HRISHI: That's what it felt like, he was like 11- I thought he was about to say something about how long he's been sober.

JOSH: That's what it felt like, yeah. That's what it felt like to me, like that kind of stuff you mark. Do you really, I mean maybe they just...maybe he recently had a reason to figure out the number because he said something sweet and romantic to his fiancée, but I just didn't quite buy it, and so it took me out of the moment and it didn't feel like...I still felt like President Bartlet had shortchanged him in their conversation.

HRISHI: Yes.

JOSH: He didn't really try to get to know him or get closer or do anything other than ask a really awkward, if candid question.

HRISHI: Right. Which turns out was really just the heart of why he set that meeting up. Josh, what if I drop this on you?

JOSH: Yes.

HRISHI: September 17th, 2007.

JOSH: Well, that was clearly the day that you and I first exchanged emails?

HRISHI: No.

JOSH: Oh.

HRISHI: I love that you thought it was about you though. That's very sweet.

JOSH: I think everything...that's my first instinct, that everything is about me, if you know anything about me. No, that would be way too early.

HRISHI: No, no, we first exchanged emails longer ago than that.

JOSH: Oh, okay.

HRISHI: September 17th, 2007 that was the day that I decided I was going to marry Lindsey or propose to her.

JOSH: Oh. That would've been really hard for me to figure that out. How do you know the exact date?

HRISHI: Because it was after our second date.

JOSH: So wait a minute. Wow. This is romantic. See, this is working on me.

HRISHI: But I don't know how many days and weeks and...

JOSH: Right, but when did you actually asked her? You're saying this is the date you decided?

HRISHI: That was the day I had a phone call with my sister and I said, I said to her that I think I'm going to propose to this girl.

JOSH: Wow, that's fantastic. I know that my folks had a blind date at Cornell and apparently my mom came home and told her friends like, I can marry this guy.

HRISHI: Ah, that's great. Some Googling has told me it was a mere 4,377 days ago. But that's so much creepier than just saying the date. Right?

JOSH: I was just going to say...that's exactly the distinction between, I was taken with, it seems really romantic that you know that date and if you had said the 4,000 whatever number, I would've been like, dude, that's weird.

HRISHI: Yeah. Like it's me counting the toothpicks that fell out of the box.

JOSH: Right. There you go. Exactly. So rather than feel like warming up to Vic, it made me kind of recoil a little bit.

HRISHI: But maybe that's actually fitting for his character. He is a little bit odd.

JOSH: Yeah. I have to say, I mean, I actually like Ben Weber as Vic, even though he hasn't had a lot to do, I've enjoyed him in his scenes, I feel like he doesn't gild the lily by, you know, overacting the part. He seems like somebody who's a little uncomfortable in his own skin just at rest, and I liked the job he's done. So you're...you are perhaps correct that he's created this guy who maybe would know down to the day.

HRISHI: Yeah, and would say it in a weird way. What I love about Vic, and the portrayal of Vic is somehow Ben Weber has given me the impression of someone who continually has clammy hands.

JOSH: Yes.

HRISHI: No matter what the climate or the temperature of the room is, that guy's hands are always clammy.

JOSH: [Laughs] Yeah, very well put. And as such, it's a little bit cruel the way that the...that President Bartlet has treated him, you know, inviting him into the Oval and having him meet a

bunch of high-powered people on his way in before he even sits. He's trying to put the...the guy's already uncomfortable. His hands are clammy always.

HRISHI: He doesn't need to be in the West Wing.

JOSH: How about put the guy at ease because he's having this wedding at the White House that he feels uncomfortable with, he's gotta deal with all of this stuff. Maybe put him at ease and get to know him a little bit. Like, President Bartlet could be kinder.

HRISHI: For sure, he definitely could be kinder, but in the end he shakes one of those clammy hands and gives him his blessing.

JOSH: Yeah. A toweling-off shot would've been funny.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Debbie, get me a chamois!

HRISHI: And they finish off with this sweet moment between, you know, a few scenes between President Bartlet and Ellie at the end.

JOSH: Yes. That was the one scene that really sort of fired on all burners for me. And I think that's largely because the two actors were so good.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: You know, I like the story. I like that it wasn't like too on the nose, it was just sort of a story about this kind of spirit he sees in his daughter. I like that each seem to be fighting back tears without overdoing it. They just...it was a nice sweet moment between father and daughter before the wedding.

HRISHI: Mm-hm, and what did you think about how that ties in to this temporary detente between China and Russia, also because of Ellie.

JOSH: Yeah, I agree. It definitely occurred to me like, oh, this is maybe why he's thought of this particular story, and I thought that was subtle and nice.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: That was some good writing.

HRISHI: Yeah. I am glad that they didn't make that any more explicit.

JOSH: As was I.

HRISHI: Let's switch gears and talk about the Illinois surprise and Josh Lyman's status as campaign manager.

JOSH: Yeah. Well one thing that occurred to me the second time through was, was this such an Illinois-sized mistake? Like what was the mistake that was so huge? Isn't there a way to flip it over and say, look, we didn't spend any money there and suddenly we're within a couple of points.

HRISHI: This is exactly, exactly what my issue is. Everybody wants to blame Josh for not having campaigned more aggressively in Illinois, where they were losing by a lot, but no one wants to give him the credit for getting them into a place where the state is actually now competitive.

JOSH: I'm so delighted to hear you confirm my thought, because the first time through it really didn't occur to me, second time through, I realized there they're having fundraising issues.

HRISHI: Right. Yeah.

JOSH: That's really the most of it. It's not that...not necessarily this whole Illinois thing where he missed the ball and...

HRISHI: And that, you know, like the argument is being made that if they were there, if they had been more aggressive in Illinois earlier, that would've driven fundraising up overall and they could have used success there and momentum there to drive fundraising in other places and then they wouldn't be in this situation. But that's a whole lot of "woulda, coulda, shoulda".

JOSH: Yeah. It's very speculative and I think a little unfair to Josh.

HRISHI: Yeah. I feel the injustice of it and I think we're meant to and you know, and the self doubt that it inflicts on Josh. All that stuff is really well done and I think all of the circumstances and the feelings of all the people - the vultures, so to speak, that are circling. I understand all of that. I just wish someone had stood up for Josh in that way. Leo does stand up for Josh a couple times in the episode.

[West Wing Episode 7.09 excerpt]

LEO: I would have made the same decision as you.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: I just wished someone made the argument that they're taking this negative situation only from one side without looking at the incredible work that he must've done to get them there to begin with.

JOSH: Yeah, I was kind of hoping Josh would say it.

HRISHI: Sure. Yeah.

JOSH: You know, dude, speak up on you're...there's a lot, there are a lot of maudlin or mawkish, or lacrymose if you prefer, moments of Josh sort of, you know, whey-faced staring at a map. There's even...the music was kind of a little hokey, it was almost soap operatic. I wanted things to get energized a little bit at some point with perhaps maybe Josh saying, "Hey, wait a minute guys, I got us within a couple of points in Illinois and I didn't spend anything. Let's just relax. I've got...here's what I think I'm going to do." And instead we get a really sort of passive Josh. And then I also felt in terms of this entire storyline, which I felt wasn't playing with the gusto it deserved, at the very end, Leo walks up to Santos and basically says, "It doesn't matter who runs the campaign at this point, it's all on you."

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: I mean this guy also thought that was a weird moment and I'm like, after all this, [cross talk] you know, import attributed to the decision about who's going to run the campaign and will it continue to be Josh, Leo is like, "It doesn't even matter, it's all on you."

HRISHI: [cross talk] Right.

[West Wing Episode 7.09 excerpt]

LEO: Goodwin's right. Josh has taken you as far as he can. The rest is up to you.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: And I thought that was, instead of, I don't know...whatever that moment was supposed to be, but it sort of to me devalued...

HRISHI: The 43 minutes previous?

JOSH: Right, that I just invested twice in this storyline.

HRISHI: Yeah. I am surprised that Josh didn't stand up for himself. I'm still surprised that Josh didn't stand up for himself in the previous episode when Toby made the argument about Santos not being a fit candidate for President. Josh has never been somebody who's been non-confrontational.

JOSH: No.

HRISHI: Politically, you know, I mean he's a doofus when it comes to dating and we see plenty of evidence for that here. When Donna sits down next to him looking amazing and saying, please entertain me. I'm bored. And he can't even look up from his scribblings. So that part I get.

JOSH: Right. Complete miss.

HRISHI: But in professional things and political things, whether or not he's right or the argument is sound, he'll make the argument that he's in favor of. So it's strange that he is lacking when it comes to Toby's criticism. Here, maybe it's a little bit different because he does blame himself, you know, he's feeling the pressure and he does think that, that it's his fault and he can't find it in himself to sort of make the argument for his own self-worth, which breaks my heart.

JOSH: Yeah. I feel like Lyman needs to get his groove back.

HRISHI: Oh, yeah, it's true. I also feel like it's not fair that everyone says, well, Leo can do it, Leo knows how to win a Presidential election because there's no fair way to compare the two elections. It's not like Santos is running against the same person that the President ran against. You know, if Vinick had run against then Governor Bartlet, maybe it would have been a much hairier race. Maybe he wouldn't have won. Maybe he wouldn't have gotten past the primary with Hoynes. You know?

JOSH: That's a fair point.

HRISHI: You know, it's like, Oh yeah, Leo won. That's great. So...and I'm guessing that he's won a lot of elections, but it just feels unfair again to say, well clearly Josh can't do it and there's only one person who could, and that's Leo.

JOSH: Yeah. I also felt like there was...it's kind of an obvious compromise to be made where like, well, I am always there anyway. How bout I'll sort of supervise things with Josh and discuss the issues with him.

HRISHI: It's almost like we have a previous working relationship on a campaign.

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: Or in the White House.

JOSH: I was like, how come nobody's saying, "Oh yeah, you're right. I'll...I'll check in with him. Like, I don't think we need to get away....you know, we need to fire him. But uh, yeah, I'll add this to my portfolio too, and we'll discuss things." Like, I was just, nobody is suggesting that?

HRISHI: Yeah. There's a compromise that seems very obvious. You can just co-run it.

JOSH: Yeah. It might be a little bit of a come-down for Josh, but like not that big a deal.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: And then when, you know, Josh and Leo had that conversation, Josh says, I'm at sea, like tell me what do...so I think Josh would be open to Leo's knowledge. So it's just not that big a reach that they would work something out.

HRISHI: Yeah, I do like that Leo tries to talk Josh off the ledge where he says...

[West Wing Episode 7.09 excerpt]

LEO: I wouldn't have gotten the money because I wouldn't have been in Illinois, the polls there looked as bad as they did when we were running against Eisenhower.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And then he says "What's important is what your next move is." And then Josh just asks for help. He's like, "They're right, you should take over." Or just ask Leo for some advice.

JOSH: Right. What's the big deal? I also thought it was sort of uncharacteristic of Leo to lie early in that scene when Josh says like, "Who wants to get rid of me?" Or something like that. And he says, "No one wants to get rid of you." I'm like...Leo's usually a little bit more sort of straight up.

HRISHI: Mm-hm.

JOSH: I think he'd say "Well yeah, they are talking about it, but you know, here's what I think, or here's what I told them." It's a weird sort of approach that Leo takes.

HRISHI: It's strange because he says no one wants to replace you, just lies straight up, but then has no poker face when Josh realizes that it's actually Leo who they want.

JOSH: Zero.

HRISHI: Like, pick a lane man.

JOSH: Exactly. Like what? You didn't really think this through before you walked into this conversation, did you?

HRISHI: Yeah, and I do think the only value that's being given to Josh is that he picked Santos. There's that. Yeah. Okay, good. Picked somebody to get us here. One, that counts for a whole lot more than I think they're giving him credit for.

JOSH: Right. Indeed.

HRISHI: But yeah, he took a nobody and is making him a contender in several of these states. Also, just in terms of a sheer political strategy, like you said, it's a fundraising problem, but everybody is enthused about the gains that they've made in Illinois. Why can't they turn that into a fundraising call to action?

JOSH: Mm-hm.

HRISHI: To then close the gap to be like, look how great this...I mean...

JOSH: Yeah, let's put an email together.

HRISHI: Certainly, as far as I can tell, no candidate has any qualms with sending out too many emails asking for money.

JOSH: No, I know. It's like they get a piece of good news and that's the whole thing falls apart. Like this is terrible.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: What are we going to do?

HRISHI: I'm sure they've tapped out a lot of their donors, but I'm sure there are a lot of other donors that they can say, "Look, we've got momentum, give us more money so we can keep on going."

JOSH: Yeah.

HRISHI: But it feels really like no, six weeks out, there's no more money to be found.

JOSH: No. Yeah. Which would...it could have been its own interesting subplot. I kind of wanted to dig into that. Like what's happened?

HRISHI: Right. I mean the President even says to Santos.

[West Wing Episode 7.09 excerpt]

PRESIDENT BARTLET: Find me later and we'll talk about cabinet travel and ways we can be helpful in the home stretch.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: I thought, how about after this you go get on a plane to a couple of places and raise a bunch of money by charging some exorbitant fee for high rollers to come have dinner with you. Do it in Chicago maybe.

JOSH: Yeah. Yeah.

HRISHI: If only they had us on their political...

JOSH: I was just gonna say, if only we were on the staff. [Hrishi laughs] That's exactly right. Look at us. We'd get it done.

HRISHI: It's funny that Leo invokes the Philadelphia Eagles fans and then two lines later, he talks about how Monday morning quarterbacking is a favorite pastime in Philadelphia, but they don't actually tie those two things together.

JOSH: [Laughs] That's funny. That is odd.

HRISHI: Right? They...it's right there.

JOSH: If only they had us on their writing staff. [Hrishi laughs]

HRISHI: Instead they had to settle for Oscar winner, Josh Singer.

JOSH: Boo.

HRISHI: A note that I had made about Josh in this, was that if you're going to believe in somebody to get you this far, then don't you kind of feel a little bit like, well, here's what I wrote. You take the good of Josh and you take the bad of Josh and then I put, you take them both and there you have the facts of life. The facts of Josh. That's *The Facts of Life* theme song Josh.

JOSH: [Laughs] I'm slow. I was getting there. I was wondering why that sounded familiar.

HRISHI: Back to wedding stuff for one second.

JOSH: Sure. I have more wedding stuff.

HRISHI: There's a ceremony where foreign dignitaries come and present gifts to Ellie and the First Lady beginning with the ambassador from Bermuda, but there is no ambassador from Bermuda. Bermuda is not a sovereign nation to have ambassadorial relations with the U.S.

JOSH: Ooh, good catch. Wow. That one got by me. Why would they make that mistake?

HRISHI: Well, I think because there is this, one thing that is true is this really nice tradition of the cedar sapling on a wedding cake. That's a real thing.

[West Wing Episode 7.09 excerpt]

AMBASSADOR: I bring this sapling from Warwick Pond, one of the few surviving cedar forests on the Island. May it grow with your love.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Well, I thought that was incredibly lovely, which made me think, and this is in part possibly because I re-watched *Goodfellas* on the big screen yesterday, and when Ray Liotta and Lorraine Bracco are getting married and people are lining up to hand them envelopes filled with cash.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: I always thought that looked really good, I would have liked that at my wedding. And so watching this scene I was like ah, they're playing it as if it's a negative. But 71 ambassadors are in line to present meaningful gifts from their countries. That sounds awesome.

HRISHI: I know, really awesome. And there's a weird little aside from the First Lady like we'll keep it off the cake and Ellie's like, oh okay. Like...this weird thing. But it's actually really nice. I encourage everyone to Google "Cedar sapling wedding cakes" cause there are some very pretty examples online that you can check out. It actually looks really nice.

JOSH: Yeah, I thought there's ... everybody has to sort of snap out of it a little bit and enjoy this incredible wedding at the White House.

HRISHI: Yes.

JOSH: Like what the hell? What's your problem people, this is awesome.

HRISHI: A wedding anywhere. I mean there's so many things to be stressed about at a wedding or you can just choose to not be stressed about them because at the end of the day you're going to be married to this person and there's going to be this beautiful thing that happens. So just, you know, chill out.

JOSH: Right. And maybe have some good stories from the 71 ambassadors who've lined up to give you gifts and pay homage.

HRISHI: Yes. I liked the idea of a dignitary bingo.

JOSH: Yes, and I liked the joke that the President pulled on Debbie.

HRISHI: Uh-huh.

JOSH: Although it was particularly...I feel like she should've caught us since the Duke of Edinburgh...is that who he claims somebody is?

HRISHI: Yeah. She says, is that the Swiss ambassador? And he says, no, who is the Queen's husband?

JOSH: Right. It would be Prince Phillip, like that's a major score. I think people would be aware if he were at the wedding and probably people would recognize him and I was like, that was...as bluffs go. I'm surprised that one got through.

HRISHI: Yeah. One thing that probably did not get through to our friends who might be listening in the British Isles.

JOSH: Sure.

HRISHI: Is their pronunciation of "Edinburgh"

JOSH: It is incorrect?

HRISHI: Well, you can really hear it the way Debbie says it.

[West Wing Episode 7.09 excerpt]

DEBBIE: Duke of Edinburgh. [ED-IN-BURROW]

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Like "Edward R. Murrow".

JOSH: True. It is more correctly pronounced how? Edinburgh? [ED-IN-BURRA]

HRISHI: It's more like...the last syllable is more like if you were a surfer addressing another surfer, Edinburgh. [ED-IN-BRAH]

JOSH: Edinburgh. Okay. Yeah, I probably make that mistake myself. I'm glad we had this conversation.

HRISHI: This is a little chat that we have to have before the ceremony. Yes. [Josh laughs] I wasn't sure, but then I poked around and sure enough people were saying that they mispronounced it and then I tried to find out how to pronounce it correctly. Edinburgh [ED-IN-BRA] or Edinburgh [ED-IN-BURRA], but still not Edinburgh [ED-IN-BURROW]. I tried to find some kind of evidence of a real-life moment when German soldiers might have waved to each other from either side of Checkpoint Charlie. I couldn't find one, but I did find a video from 1961 of Germans waving to each other from either side of the wall as it was going up.

JOSH: Oh, that's interesting. You say you found a picture.

HRISHI: A video actually.

JOSH: Oh wow. We'll definitely have to link to that and I would like to see that. That's very cool.

HRISHI: Yeah. All right. We're going to take a quick break and then we're going to continue our discussion of "The Wedding" and then we'll be joined by Nina Siemaszko.

[Ad break]

JOSH: How about Will in this episode, is it time?

HRISHI: Let's talk about Will, yes.

JOSH: I was just amused. I started to reshape in my mind who Will is and how he's thought of like, there were just a couple...I thought it was hilarious how nonplussed or in fact disappointed Ellie is that Will's going to be at her wedding. [Both laugh] Again, there's 600 people and she was like...

[West Wing Episode 7.09 excerpt]

ELLIE: Why is Will Bailey wearing a tux?

[end excerpt]

JOSH: [Expletive deleted] How did he get in?

HRISHI: I think it's really because he was the one who, he had to have the thankless job of giving them all the bad news about all the invasive plans of the White House's needs...

JOSH: True.

HRISHI: ...that were going to be imposed on their wedding. And I thought maybe this is why C.J. had him do it instead of her, so she could still go and be in Ellie's good graces.

JOSH: Oh, that was a good one to delegate. That was a good idea.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Yeah. I just thought it was funny that he's aware that he's not invited. He has a hint why and then he's asked that and he's like "Sure", and then Ellie's not pleased. And I also thought it was funny when it becomes clear that Kate has asked Will out on a date and C.J.'s bemused and even somewhat amused reaction.

[West Wing Episode 7.09 excerpt]

C.J.: Will Bailey?

KATE: Yeah, I'm gonna....

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Again, possibly because I yesterday watched *Goodfellas* on the big screen. I wanted Will to come in and go.

[*Goodfellas* excerpt]

TOMMY [Joe Pesci]: I'm funny how? I mean funny like I'm a clown? I amuse you. I make you laugh?

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Oh my God.

JOSH: It's just, she is actually somewhat gobsmacked that Kate would ask Will out.

HRISHI: I know it's true. I like how just a few minutes ago in this conversation I tried to present a theory of why Will was not popular with Ellie as if it weren't something that Will just says in the episode.

[West Wing Episode 7.09 excerpt]

KATE: You're not going?

WILL: Wasn't invited. I was concerned it might have something to do with my encounter with the happy couple last weekend, but, I hear it's a small affair.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: What you're just saying, you agree, you think he's, he's correct.

HRISHI: Yeah I think that is the reason why, because certainly what else would Ellie possibly have against this wonderful...

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: ...very awkward guy. She seems to have a thing for awkward guys.

JOSH: Good point.

HRISHI: I mean Will is very smooth compared to Vic.

JOSH: Maybe that's why she doesn't want him at the wedding. I think we may be onto something.

HRISHI: I see, I see. There are two great moments of retreat in this episode. One is when Will backs out of the room after that, you know, before Ellie says, "Why is Will wearing a tux?" It's a great...I don't know what you're doing.

JOSH: Me either.

HRISHI: It's really awkward and it's great. And then the other is another retreat through a door, which is Debbie, when Debbie is interrupting the President and Vic.

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: Debbie comes in, she says:

[West Wing Episode 7.09 excerpt]

DEBBIE: The guests are starting to arrive.

PRESIDENT BARTLET: Yeah.

DEBBIE: You should be heading back to the Residence to change. You don't want to be late to the cocktail hour you're hosting.

PRESIDENT BARTLET: Thank you, Debbie.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: You know, the whole time she's really trying to mind the schedule of the wedding and, and doing everything she can. Not so much for the office of the President in that moment, but really the office of Chief Dad and trying to just hurry him along. The President says, "Thank you Debbie", and she leaves. But the way she leaves is great. She glides backwards through the door to the oval office that she came in through and with the expression on her face and the movement, I thought it was a great comic moment.

JOSH: Pretty great. Yeah.

HRISHI: Two great comic moments that just rely on people leaving a room.

JOSH: You're nice to say. You're nice to include me.

HRISHI: You and Lily Tomlin. Lily Tomlin, by the way, looks so good in this episode as does Mary McCormack.

JOSH: She looks good going to that wedding.

[West Wing Episode 7.09 excerpt]

C.J.: You really look nice.

KATE: Okay. Now I'm starting to think you're hitting on me.

C.J.: No, I'm serious.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: C.J.'s incredulity is partly fueled by how good Kate Harper looks.

JOSH: Yes. I think you're right. And maybe, yeah, how whey-faced Will Bailey looks.

HRISHI: [Laughs] And then she keeps on going. The necklace, the neckline, the earrings, the back. The way she says Will Bailey, you don't feel like she's judging her or like...it's not a negative thing, her reaction. I think you're, you're being sensitive to it. She doesn't really fully come down on positive or negative.

JOSH: No, I, that's why...I just found it funny.

HRISHI: It's hilarious. She's just great. "Will Bailey!" [Josh laughs] Here's another bit of the real world reacting to *The West Wing*. The reason why they actually have the Illinois problem in the Santos campaign, they attribute it to the *Chicago Tribune* for endorsing Santos.

[West Wing Episode 7.09 excerpt]

LEO: No, this has got to be the Trib.

SANTOS: The Tribune endorsement put us within four?

LOU: Wow.

LEO: Four points, the state's in play.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: The *Chicago Tribune* actually wrote an op-ed in response.

JOSH: Oh, is that right?

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: How fantastic.

HRISHI: Well, first they had a little bit of criticism for the show. Here, I'll read this. They said "*The West Wing* has earned praise for realistic portrayals of the policy debates and political intrigue of Washington. It may have strayed a little with Sunday's show. Everybody knows Illinois has been such a blue state in recent years that the Republican presidential candidates write it off."

JOSH: Hmm.

HRISHI: So they didn't find it believable that Vinick would be leading to begin with. But I would argue that's the whole point. Vinick and his 50 state strategy...

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: ...is a real force with which to be reckoned. They also said that, in fact, quote "*It has been a spell since we favored a Democratic presidential contender.*" The last time they had, at that writing, was Horace Greeley over Ulysses S Grant in 1872. [Both laugh] So we'll put a link to that. Oh, here's one thing we didn't talk about, the Santos sandwich order.

JOSH: Mm. Yes.

HRISHI: In 2008, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* wrote an article "Whiz on a cheesesteak: Hit or myth?"

JOSH: Wow.

HRISHI: And they're wondering is the authentic version, in fact, Cheese Whiz? There are places like Pat's and Geno's that are actually places that candidates will go. In the article they mentioned that Barack and Michelle Obama as well as Bill and Chelsea Clinton ate cheesesteaks at Pat's and they had Whiz on their...

JOSH: Oh, no kidding.

HRISHI: ...on those.

JOSH: I was just going to say about this subplot that, although I liked the reveal of his shirt and thought that was slightly funny, this was one of those moments I would have liked to see.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: If they're going to set this up, let's do it, let's see if folks. This could have been a funny physical bit that I was sorry to miss.

HRISHI: But then they'd have to be on location and they'd have to have a Cheez Whiz budget.

JOSH: We could have seen it, you know, on a TV. They could've shot it real tight.

HRISHI: Mm-hm.

JOSH: Done on a swing set, I would have liked to have seen it. But I liked the idea that, like, nothing's going right for Josh. Even his, his calling the sandwich is wrong.

HRISHI: I didn't take it that way because I was impressed that Josh knew what the order should be just off the top of his head that he said...

[West Wing Episode 7.09 excerpt]

JOSH: He screwed up the order.

DONNA: Sauce and Whiz, no onions.

JOSH: That sounds fine.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: He knows what the right of passage of a cheesesteak really entails. You know what...how people are going to judge a political candidate based on their order, and he's like, all right, it's gotta be this.

JOSH: Yeah. I've never had a cheesesteak myself, cause in addition to the separation of church and state, I believe in the separation of meat and milk.

HRISHI: I was gonna say that my favorite cheesesteak in Philadelphia is at Govinda's Gourmet Vegetarian and...

JOSH: What?

HRISHI: Yup. And next time you're there, maybe you should try their chicken cheesesteak, which is entirely vegetarian.

JOSH: Oh, I'm literally salivating at the thought of it. Oh, I want to. Are hoagies an east coast thing? Hoagie, I mean resonates with me, but is that like what a west coaster would call a gyro?

HRISHI: No, I mean, they might call a gyro a protagonist.

JOSH: Fair enough. Yes.

HRISHI: A protagonist sandwich is what we called, what we call a hoagie over here. I think I might have first heard that type of sandwich referred to as a grinder.

JOSH: Grinder. Yeah. That's another east coast thing, I think. Right? But what do west coasters say? A sub? I guess we say sub also. I don't know. I just...I know back in our Yale days, my cousin Joel and I, after a night of partying and having fun, there was one place we would stop where Joel would order a mayonnaise sub.

HRISHI: Was it at Wawa?

JOSH: Probably.

HRISHI: There was a Wawa's, it's no longer there, but...

JOSH: [sadly] Wa-wa.

HRISHI: There was a Wawa's on High Street, I believe. And Wawa's is I think originally from Philadelphia, so they served hoagies.

JOSH: Hoagies yeah. Well I think a mayonnaise hoagie was Joel's thing. I remember a lot of mayonnaise in it. I'm not sure what else.

HRISHI: Yeah...Wawa's...headquarters in Wawa, Pennsylvania. Oh, so it's not just a sound, it's also a city.

JOSH: No kidding. I would never have guessed that.

HRISHI: If anybody else wants to back me up on how great Govinda's is, anybody who's played a punk rock show in Philadelphia at one time or another, these are the traditions. Much like planting a Cedar sapling on your wedding cake, you play a punk rock show at the first Unitarian church, you get dinner at Govinda's, you get your vegan sandwich or vegetarian.

JOSH: I would like to do all of that. Although technically I'm only qualified to order the sandwich.

HRISHI: We did not talk about Donna much.

JOSH: Sure.

HRISHI: One thing I liked in this episode is the dynamic between Donna and the story about Josh. You know, that she's acting in a way, even when he's not there, that's sort of protective both of him and the internal machinations of the campaign.

JOSH: Right, when she's early on, she's questioned by the reporters about the state of the campaign.

[West Wing Episode 7.09 excerpt]

DONNA: We're a little more focused on the state polls.

REPORTER: I've got a senior Democrat on record saying it's time to shake things up.

DONNA: He should look at a map. Do the electoral math. This race is tighter than you think.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And she's, throughout the episode, expressing some concern, you know, on Josh's behalf about Illinois and what that's going to mean. And you can tell that she has a sense of what this news is going to do to Josh's own sense of self. I feel frustrated that Josh is too caught up in the turmoil and the job security, and what the right move is going to actually be. If he could only just dedicate a couple brain cells in the direction of Donna to appreciate what she's doing for him, that would be great. I understand why he can't.

JOSH: Yeah. It's...it's sort of illustration of how in his head he is.

HRISHI: Yeah. Speaking of processions, the endless procession of just democratic haters coming in just saying, "yeah, you should have done it this way. Oh, he should have done that." You know, the number of different strategies that they're suggesting of like, actually you should take the money out of Philadelphia. Actually, you should take the money out of Wisconsin. Actually don't take the money out of Wisconsin. You know, that's an annoying part that I am sure must be realistic and I'm glad they've highlighted in this episode.

JOSH: Yeah, I did. I thought the same thing. Like, oh, that's something I'd never really considered, but I'm sure you get harangued...

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: ...by people in that situation. Everyone's got their own contest they want highlighted.

HRISHI: Yeah, exactly. The Senator, George Montgomery is just such a pain.

[West Wing Episode 7.09 excerpt]

MONTGOMERY: At 21 electoral votes, I'd have thought it'd be a little higher on the priority list.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Played by Robert Foxworth. He's a "Hey, it's that guy." One of those guys.

JOSH: Absolutely.

HRISHI: And now we're happy to welcome back to the podcast, Nina Siemaszko. Nina, thanks for joining us.

NINA: Of course, my pleasure.

HRISHI: Did you get a chance to watch "The Wedding"? Have you seen it recently?

NINA: I actually just watched it.

JOSH: You rock.

HRISHI: Thanks for doing that. So what do you...what do you remember about this episode?

NINA: I remember a lot of dress fittings.

HRISHI: Just like a real wedding.

JOSH: Oh yeah. Did you...you gave input? Did you get to pick out your favorite?

NINA: I didn't, but when I put on the dress that I ended up wearing on the show, it was like we all knew it was the dress because it just fit me perfectly.

HRISHI: Do you remember when you first heard that Ellie was going to be getting married?

NINA: Yes, I do. And I remember going, "What?" [Laughs] I was very surprised.

HRISHI: Because you didn't think of that fit into in your sense of the character?

NINA: Yeah. I was surprised that I was marrying a man...

HRISHI: Oh-ho...

NINA: ...and I was surprised that it was going to be on the show.

HRISHI: Wow. Wait, that's fascinating. Your take on Ellie was that she's not straight.

JOSH: That is interesting.

NINA: Correct.

JOSH: Huh. And there's a scene where her parents speculate, or seem to have speculated earlier.

NINA: Yeah. [Laughs]

HRISHI: At what point did you come to that determination about your character?

NINA: Day one.

HRISHI: Wow. So in the episode "Ellie"...

JOSH: Really?

HRISHI: ...that was your, your take on her?

NINA: Yeah. My take at the time was she wasn't sure.

JOSH: Did you ever have discussions surrounding the issue or just, this was your instinct?

NINA: Never. We never had a discussion. It was my instinct. It was just the way it was written.

[West Wing Episode 2.15 excerpt]

ELLIE: I don't know how to make you happy, Dad. For that, you've got to talk to Zoey or Liz.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Huh.

NINA: [laughs]

JOSH: That's intriguing.

HRISHI: I love that.

NINA: I thought she was a lesbian!

HRISHI: That's so, that's, that's so fascinating. That's such a fascinating character detail to bring to something that you know that's not on the page. I love that. So in the episode where the President and the First Lady meet Vic, they do have that little aside where they said, "Oh I, you know, I wasn't...I wasn't sure" At that point did you have any kind of discussion with the writers saying, by the way, this is how I was interpreting this character? Or did they also just write that again separately?

NINA: Separately. There was never a discussion and it made me laugh when I read it.

HRISHI: Wow. So she's getting married, which doesn't rule out the possibility that she might also be into women. Do you think that's the case or did you re-configure her in your head to be straight?

NINA: I think she just met the person that she fell in love with.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: Like Demi on *Bachelor in Paradise*.

NINA: Exactly.

JOSH: Thank you, thank you.

NINA: That was a really nice turn by the way, loved that turn for you. That was great television.

JOSH: Was it fun to film this episode? Is it fun to plan and execute a fake wedding?

NINA: It was, I think the most fun that I had was our stuff together. Like we finally got to do something together.

JOSH: I know. Even though you weren't very happy about my ultimately attending the wedding.

NINA: Correct.

JOSH: [Laughs] Yeah, we did have fun. Those scenes were a lot of fun to shoot.

NINA: I loved the scene that we did in the previous episode with the guest list.

JOSH: Right.

NINA: That was a fun scene to shoot.

[West Wing Episode 7.08 excerpt]

WILL: They sent us a copy of the playlist. We're wondering if we can pull some things.

ELLIE: Is there a problem?

WILL: Well, is "Baby Got Back" something you're particularly attached to?

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Yeah. I have fond memories of that.

HRISHI: For this episode, did it feel like a wedding where you were just, you know, you had to be uncomfortable and in a wedding dress and you know, just kind of, I imagine it's a lot like a

wedding, just being on set and waiting for people to get into the place where they need to be and everybody doing the thing that they need to do.

NINA: I just remember that there was a second meal that was delivered to the set, of In-N-Out Burger and I couldn't eat it.

JOSH: Because you were dressed so nicely

NINA: Because they were afraid that I would like pop out of my dress. So second meal for me was a no go.

HRISHI: That's just cruel.

JOSH: Ahh, that's terrible. They should have like at least funneled one into you.

NINA: I don't think it was actually stated, but it was kind of assumed that I wouldn't be imbibing or enjoying the second meal.

HRISHI: So speaking of the dress, did you end up spending a lot of time with Lyn Paolo then? Is that the person who is actually responsible for getting the dress fitted on you and getting you into it?

NINA: Honestly, it was really fast because I tried on maybe like four or five dresses and that was the fifth one and it was like, "Oh, perfect, done." And then I think I came in maybe once again to just make sure that everything was fine. But I mean I had my own wedding dress made for me, so I had more fittings that way. This was fast. If I'm being honest.

HRISHI: Yeah. I love that Will lets everybody know that Ellie decided to go with the Monique Lhuillier and I imagine that with a show like *The West Wing* and with designers, when you're name-checking the designer, it really must have been a Monique Lhuillier dress.

NINA: It was a Monique Lhuillier dress. Correct.

HRISHI: You know, I can imagine, you know, this is a character that you're playing, but I could imagine having very strong opinions about what kind of wedding dress you're going to end up being on TV in.

NINA: Oh, it was a total like princess moment. It was pretty great.

HRISHI: The whole set looked pretty incredible. I mean, in addition to the...all the regular production design of an episode, they had to actually also create all the production design of putting on a fake wedding in the fake White House.

NINA: Correct. Yeah. It looks pretty good.

HRISHI: It looked...yeah. I thought so too.

JOSH: Yeah, it was pretty lush.

HRISHI: The scene at the end of the episode, I think it's probably my favorite of the entire Ellie arc, the teary exchange that you have with the President.

[West Wing Episode 7.09 excerpt]

PRESIDENT BARTLET: You just calmly looked up at one of the soldiers on the wall and you waved, and the soldier waved back, and then....

ELLIE: ...and then all the soldiers were waving at each other. I remember, Dad.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Do you remember filming that scene?

NINA: Yeah, I do, and it wasn't actually the originally written scene. It was a night before rewrite that was the final scene.

HRISHI: No kidding.

NINA: Yeah, Josh, we wrote the scene the night before. I was devastated by the way. I was devastated because I loved what the first scene was like.

JOSH: Really?

NINA: Yeah. Yeah. And this was the end result. Martin felt that the scene wasn't right and ultimately he was correct because what turned out was perfect.

HRISHI: Can you tell us what would the original version was?

NINA: You know, I don't remember. I just remember there...I said way much more. Like there was a lot of talking, which was unnecessary at this point.

HRISHI: In the original version, Ellie went out and killed a couple of German soldiers.

NINA: Correct. [Josh laughs] No. Um, I think in the original version, that story was there, but we also had more of an exchange where I was trying to get him to like, let's go. And he was stalling, me going down the aisle, I believe. I can't really remember. All I know is that I was...the night before I got a call, "Hey, we rewrote the scene per Martin's request." and I was pissed. Damn him. And then I got the scene. I was like "Oh alright. Okay." I was actually really happy. I was like "Alright, it's much better."

JOSH: You were on board by the time you filmed it?

NINA: Yes, I was on board when we filmed it because what I love about Martin is that he...I mean he definitely knew our relationship on camera. Me reacting to him is always better than me talking to him. I think.

JOSH: The end result is a very lovely scene.

NINA: It is. It's very lovely.

JOSH: And we've been kind of waiting for that personal moment of any kind between the two of them and this sort of, it's been fits and starts and he can't...doesn't really have his full attention on the wedding, because he's got international affairs going on and then we have this final quiet moment between the two of you. It's kind of beautiful.

NINA: Yeah. And it's also, to me, I think what I loved about it is that you understand who she is and who she is to him from that story, you know, the ultimate peacemaker.

HRISHI: Yeah. That's a beautiful way of putting it. What was your take on the character of Vic?

NINA: [Josh and Nina laugh] Perfect for Ellie. Perfect. Total goofball. You know, they have their own language.

HRISHI: Yeah. I mean, on the screen we don't get to see a lot between the two of them, but there's enough imply that you feel like there must be something really great between the two of them here because otherwise what's going on?

NINA: Exactly. I actually think they're very much like the parents. Like, you know, my dad and mom, we have this very interesting chemistry which they have.

HRISHI: That's true, yeah.

NINA: There's a little bit of goofiness in them too.

JOSH: Was Ben Weber fun to work with?

NINA: Oh, great. So fun. I mean, we had a blast shooting that scene together. I think we only did two real scenes together.

HRISHI: And this was the second to last episode that you appeared in, in *The West Wing*. At the time when you were filming this, did you know that the show was wrapping up?

NINA: I didn't. Every time I came on the show, I assumed it was the last time. Except for the first episode.

HRISHI: Right. Are there other things that you remember from the making of this one?

NINA: Yes. There's a suit that I wear that I wanted to take home so badly. It's the scene where we're getting the gifts.

HRISHI: Oh, the white suit.

NINA: Oh my God. Oh my God. And my hair. Forget it.

HRISHI: Yeah.

NINA: I look like, I mean, I don't know what they were trying for, but I literally...who is that person? Like what an awesome like hairdo and outfit and makeup. I like...you know?

HRISHI: Yeah. I thought...I thought you looked like a Scandinavian princess. I thought [cross talk] that would be how a Scandinavian princess would dress to receive dignitaries.

NINA: [cross talk] Yes!

NINA: Yes. You know what the out...whole outfit was like *Rear Window*.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Yeah. I can see that.

HRISHI: But they didn't let you keep it.

JOSH: Yeah. You're a well-behaved doctor. My wife who used to be in wardrobe is like, you know a lot...a lot of actors just steal their stuff and my wife is always like, do they know that's stealing? I'm supposed to return that.

NINA: You know, I actually am one of the very...I also hang my stuff up at the end of the day. I'm very conscientious.

JOSH: Ah, yes. Yes. That's how you can usually spot a theater actor.

NINA: Yes, I started in the theater.

JOSH: They hang their stuff up.

HRISHI: I wanted to ask you about Ellie's hair because the last time that we had you on for the episode "Ellie" I remember you said that you were bummed because they made you dye your hair.

NINA: Yeah.

HRISHI: But blonde Ellie in this episode, that's your actual hair color.

NINA: Oh God, no.

[All laugh]

HRISHI: Oh, ok.

NINA: Actually I have no idea what my hair color is, I have no idea.

HRISHI: I remember you told me that you're actually blonde and so the...you know...

NINA: I'm a dirty blonde I think, I mean, you know, I've been dyeing my hair forever. It's like a dirty blonde. Yeah. It's not that super blonde, blonde, blondie blonde.

HRISHI: Did you have to have any kind of conversations with them about continuity? And now you know that Ellie would have a different hair color. Was it all right? Because just, you know, it's wedding time. Enough years have gone by.

NINA: You know, when I came back in season five and I came to the table read, nobody said anything.

HRISHI: Maybe I was the only one who remembered.

NINA: Maybe you are the only one because nobody said anything, and I think when I went into makeup and hair, they're like, "Oh, you're blonde now." And that was it.

HRISHI: I like the idea of that. I liked the character detail that it implies, you know, that Ellie is grown up and she's evolved and that her outward appearance, you know, reflects the change in the character when we...from when we first met her.

NINA: I do too.

HRISHI: What did you think of the episode? Did you like it?

NINA: I like what's brewing between Josh and someone else on the show. I was like, "Oh, hello. Little romance brewing."

JOSH: [Laughs] Yeah, that's right.

HRISHI: It's a great subplot. We've really gotten into some great romantic moments in *The West Wing*.

NINA: Yeah, there's quite a few that have happened. So going back to that original question, it was such a surprise to get married on *The West Wing*. It was a total shock. It was the last thing I expected and it was really cool. It was really cool. It did feel like it was like a full circle for her.

HRISHI: Yeah, I agree.

JOSH: Though Vic and Ellie not thrilled with the whole West Wing wedding of it all. It seemed like a pretty nice opportunity to me, but I guess if you're the President's kid, maybe it's like "Ugh, do I really have to indulge 71 ambassadors and take their gifts?"

NINA: Correct. Especially, you know a kid who likes to be out of the limelight, you know, do her thing.

HRISHI: Yeah, exactly. It felt especially fittingly cruel to have it be Ellie who was having the White House wedding. Was there anything difficult about doing this episode?

NINA: No, not at all. I got nice flowers from Aaron. That was sweet.

HRISHI: Oh, you did?

JOSH: Wait, is that true?

NINA: Yes! He sent me a bouquet of flowers "Congratulations on your marriage". It just was so sweet and funny.

JOSH: Oh, this is like, this is some new evidence. Aaron famously claims not to have watched the show after his tenure, but apparently he knew of a wedding.

NINA: Oh, that's interesting.

HRISHI: Maybe he just saw the commercial.

NINA: No, he sent me flowers while I was shooting it. He sent them to the set.

JOSH: That's a classy move actually. It's very sweet.

NINA: It was really sweet of him.

JOSH: Thank you for doing this again. Thank you for giving us your time.

NINA: My pleasure. Are you kidding? My total pleasure.

HRISHI: We seem to have come to the end of our episode. Just wanted to say that I needed poofs, like Bamba poofs. I needed poofs. It's an anagram for *end of episode*. [Josh laughs]

JOSH: Boom! Moob! Bomo! [Hrishi laughs]

HRISHI: Ah. Thank you so much Josh. Thanks to all of you for listening. Thanks to Margaret Miller, Nick Song, and Zach McNees for their help making this episode. Thanks to Nina Siemaszko for joining us.

JOSH: Oh sure. Thanks to PRX and Radiotopia for including us in their parade of stellar podcasts. You can find out more about radiotopia at radiotopia.fm

HRISHI: And you can leave a comment for us on our website, on our Facebook page, on Twitter, on Instagram.

JOSH: That's right. Ok.

HRISHI: Ok.

NINA: What's next?

[Outro Music]