

The West Wing Weekly
7.19: "Transition"
Guest: Bradley Whitford

[Intro Music]

JOSH: Josh and Hrishi here. As you've probably noticed from the title of this episode we recorded this live in front of an audience in London.

HRISHI: The show opens with a performance by cellist Adrian Bradbury.

JOSH: Here we go...

[Opens with Adrian Bradbury playing the Prelude from Bach's Cello Suite No.1]

[Audience applauds]

JOSH: Hey Hrishi, travelling across the Atlantic to discuss a single episode of a twenty-year old show. In front of people who've paid good money for a standing room, obstructed view ticket.

[Cheers from audience]

It sounds crazy, no?

HRISHI: It does, Josh. It does. But here in our little village of *The West Wing Weekly*, every one of us is a fiddler on the roof. We're just trying to watch our show without breaking our necks. Why do we watch it over and over again? That I can tell you in one word...

BRAD: [To the tune of "Tradition" from *Fiddler on the Roof*] Transition! Transition!

[Audience cheers]

HRISHI & JOSH: Transition!

HRISHI: Live from the Hammersmith Apollo, this is *The West Wing Weekly*. I'm Hrishikesh Hirway...

JOSH: And I'm Joshua Malina. And this is...

BRAD: Television's Bradley Whitford.

JOSH: Inexplicable Three-time Emmy winner, Brad Whitford! And we are here to discuss..

HRISHI: Episode 19 from Season 7. It's called "Transition." Oh, excuse me, it's called...

[To the tune of "Tradition" from *Fiddler on the Roof*]

ALL: Transition!

JOSH: It was written by Peter Noah, it was directed by Nelson McCormick, I can't find my notes so I'm going to make up a date. It first aired on April 26th 2006. Prove me wrong!

HRISHI: It was April 23rd.

JOSH: Proved me wrong! [cross talk] By the way, those of you who are in fact in standing-room only, obstructed view seats - I guess you can't call them seats when you're standing – congratulations you've found the most expensive, least comfortable way to listen to the podcast! We love you and appreciate you! Yes!

HRISHI: [cross talk] But that was pretty good!

BRAD: Thank you!

JOSH: Those are my people.

HRISHI: So here's the synopsis from TV Guide for this episode: Former cast member Rob Lowe returns as a senior political official in this episode...

JOSH: No, please, please hold your applause till the end! [Brad & audience laugh] Wow...

HRISHI: Let me try that again. Former cast member Rob Lowe...

[Audience cheers]

JOSH: He was pretty great.

HRISHI: ...returns as a senior political official in this episode. Which finds Bartlet and his staff making the transition...oh excuse me...

[To the tune of "Tradition" from *Fiddler on the Roof*]

ALL: Transition!

HRISHI: ...as easy as possible for the President-Elect, who discovers some unpleasant realities about his new job. Meanwhile, a stressed-out Josh realizes that he may need to take some time off after he reaches his breaking point.

BRAD: [Snorts with laughter] [Audience laughs]

JOSH: Why the snort?

BRAD: I don't know. I haven't reached the breaking point yet. It's a tough room. [All laugh] Actually, when I watched it, I hadn't seen this episode ever and I watched it and honestly, I felt like I looked exhausted and it took me back to where I was emotionally when we were shooting this. And we had lost John, we knew the show was ending, and it was a very – it was a splattered time.

JOSH: It must have been around the time you were scrambling for that *Studio 60* job.

[Audience laughs]

BRAD: Actually, Aaron came to me.

[Audience laughs]

JOSH: I actually know that to be the case because I lobbied hard for the role [audience laughs]...and then it was clear that I was not going to get it, and then to make things worse, that you were, I wrote to him and said "How about you just don't cast Brad? [Brad laughs] Can you do that for me?"

BRAD: He couldn't.

JOSH: No, he couldn't.

BRAD: He couldn't.

JOSH: Er, when is season 2 coming out? [Audience laughs] I can't find that in my notes, I...

BRAD: I think it's when you get your first lead in a television show.

[Audience laughs]

JOSH: Don't encourage him! I'm punching up! He's punching down... [All laugh]
Punching down is ugly.

HRISHI: So, in the previously-on, for this episode...

JOSH: Oh yeah...

HRISHI: Yeah.

BRAD: Oh yeah.

JOSH: Before...we have business to take care of before we get into the episode.

HRISHI: Yeah. The previously-on we see some images from Leo's funeral, including one of the pall-bearers. So before we get into this episode, we wanted to take this moment to clear some things up.

JOSH: Every now and then we get something so wrong, and there's such a dog-pile of correctors that we have to acknowledge it.

HRISHI: We didn't realize that the sixth pallbearer was Mallory's husband, even though, clearly that was the case. I think I was just so excited about all the people who I did recognize when I was going through it I was scrambling, you know, furiously writing down who was there, and then some other guy... And I didn't stop to think...

JOSH: I think I didn't care deeply enough to really think on it. I will say this, when you guys correct me on something, over and over and over on something that it patently the case, there comes a point where I will deny it. [Audience laughs] I think you might know what I'm talking about. So bring it to Twitter if you want, or just let it rest now.

HRISHI: But that was Gary Anderson who played Mallory's husband and...

BRAD: I feel like we should move on... [Audience laughs]

JOSH: [Laughs] Brad has to be somewhere. I don't.

[Audience laughs]

HRISHI The other thing...

BRAD: Thanks.

HRISHI: But there's one other from the corrections department. In the "Election Day Part Two" episode, I said how delighted I was by the bit of news, that said "oh the blue states are for Democrats, the red states are for Republicans...", and I thought what a funny joke that they included that in there. But actually, at the time, that was still relatively new and so that probably was actually information that the news would have given. So people could learn something. And I was just making...

JOSH: Right, and if you to assume you might think that red was lefty and perhaps stood for the Democrats.

HRISHI: Maybe.

BRAD: I used to get that confused. So I understand.

HRISHI: Anyway, I was looking at it though 2019 eyes, and screwed that up. Ok... wow to this episode.

JOSH: Yes. What's the name of this episode again? [All laugh] Do it...

[To the tune of "Tradition" from *Fiddler on the Roof*]

All: Transition!

JOSH: By the end, if you're not singing with us, we're going to feel like real asses.

[Audience laughs]

HRISHI: This episode begins with Josh Lyman on the plane and he's having a hard time with it. It kind of looked like me on my way over here, because I had the laptop and my notes, and I was trying to eat something, and, yeah it was a bad scene. I've got a blanket covering my...

JOSH: It didn't look at all like me, because you guys flew First and Business and I flew Economy. [Audience laughs] So that we could pay for his [Brad's] ticket.

BRAD: That's absolutely true.

JOSH: Oh yeah.

[Audience laughs]

BRAD: And it was lovely.

[Audience laughs]

HRISHI: I flew business because I had business to do.

[Audience laughs]

JOSH: That's why I flew economy.

[Audience laughs]

HRISHI: Then we get into the President-elect, making his first phone calls during this transitional period, and he's got Ronna there & he calls, well, he calls a bunch of people, but there was one that you particularly liked Josh...

[West Wing Episode 7.19 excerpt]

SANTOS: Great Britain has always been first among friends, and I look forward to continuing our nations' special relationship. I thank you for your call, Madam Prime Minister.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Yeah. Great. This is your country, that's awesome. But as we've noted in an earlier episode, Santos – or as Bartlet has begun calling him again, *Santos* [pronounced Sahn-tos] – is not necessarily the orator that President Bartlet was. But we discover here that he also doesn't give good phone calls... For his first phone call to Great Britain, I thought he could do better than "you're my special friend". I was disappoint-

[Audience laughs]

BRAD: That's a great point, Josh.

[Audience laughs]

JOSH: I'll let you have that.

HRISHI: My favorite part comes a bit after, when Ronna's explaining the division of all the calls that he has to return. Or, the few that he has to return, and all the calls that he should not.

[West Wing Episode 7.19 excerpt]

SANTOS: Oh that phone sheet's a mile long!

RONNA: Well, traditionally the President-elect returns all the calls from the G8 leaders. The Surinames of the world can be dealt with by your Chief Foreign Policy Advisor.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Burn on Suriname.

[Audience laughs.]

JOSH: There are multi burns on small countries in this episode.

HRISHI: Yeah, but one interesting thing about Surinam, that's where Jimmy Smit's father was born and raised.

BRAD: Whoa! I didn't know that. Really?

HRISHI: I mean, I guess it's their way of picking a small country to denigrate in that moment? Might as well keep it in the family?

[Audience laughs]

BRAD: I thought Jimmy's father was from the Netherlands?

HRISHI: He's of Dutch descent, but he was born and raised in Surinam.

BRAD: Ahh.

JOSH: Burn!

[Audience laughs]

JOSH: Snap! Ohh! Mmmm!

[Audience laughs]

HRISHI: Wait, who got burned in that? Holland?

JOSH: I don't know...I thought Brad did, but maybe I missed it. I wasn't really listening.

[Audience laughs]

We had a Trump Ay-yi-yi moment...

[Audience boos]

You can boo all you want on Impeachment Day! [Episode was taped on Dec 18th 2019]

[Audience cheers]

I know! But yeah, in early December 2016, Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen called Trump to congratulate him on winning the election and he caused a bit of a scandal by taking the call. This flouted the long-standing One-China policy that the US had honored for a long time. Trump of course then started what would become a tradition of tweeting out ridiculous stuff: *'THE PRESIDENT OF TAIWAN' – all caps – 'CALLED ME TODAY TO WISH ME CONGRATULATIONS ON WINNING THE PRESIDENCY. THANK YOU.'*

HRISHI: Yeah, I think the tweet saying, designating a President of Taiwan is really what caused all the trouble.

JOSH: Right. I understood that. [Hrishi & Audience laugh] Yeah, the first call between a U.S. President and the President of the Republic of China since 1979. How about the Sam is back bit of all? How was it working with Rob Lowe again?

[Audience cheers]

BRAD: It was really fun. Honestly, when Rob left, I went into his trailer and I said "you're a [expletive deleted] idiot, why are you leaving?"

JOSH: Joshua Malina's gonna join the show!

[Audience laughs]

BRAD: Yeah. "Do you realize the opening you're leaving?" As I remember, it was really fun to see Rob again. And I think he was happy to be back. He had had complicated feelings I think, and all that was past. And it was sorta fun to kinda flashback.

JOSH: Yeah, whatever was happening off-camera, you guys are very good together and you guys, the Sam/Josh chemistry is kind of special and it was cool to see a sort of – what was the first time that we saw him go to Gage Whitney?

BRAD: Er, like I'm wet? And I go like this...

HRISHI: Yes.

JOSH: You love that look don't you?

[Brad and Audience laugh]

HRISHI: Yeah, Lawrence said about the reunion, he said: "It was a great moment. When I saw them in the monitor and he turned toward the camera and I realized that the series would have been incomplete without that moment. Seeing Rob and Brad together was like the good old days." [Audience cheers]

BRAD: Awwwww.

JOSH: And John Wells said: "You thought it was going to be odd, but it wasn't. It was emotional for Rob, but it gave him and all of us, closure." That's sweet.

HRISHI: Yeah. Because we see Josh off the plane, and then getting driven around. At that point it might dawn on you that we don't know where he's headed yet. But it turns out he's going to California, and he's going to find Sam. And Sam is in a conference room talking business law, what we talk about in the business section of the plane...[Audience laughs]

JOSH: Yeah, I've read about that. [Audience laughs]

HRISHI: And then Josh bursts in, and Sam says: "I thought you'd never call" and boom, the opening credits.

JOSH: It's a little bit of a mislead though, because it seems like it's kind of – can anybody name the first time Gage Whitney, the whole, what episode?

[Audience shouts out]

JOSH: Yes, "In the Shadow of Two Gunmen"...

BRAD: By the way, I wanna say something.

JOSH: Yeah. We flew you here First... [Audience laughs] You'd better start saying something!

BRAD: It's so great to get flown here and remain mute. [Audience laughs]

HRISHI: The eye-candy's worth it!

BRAD: Thank you, I regret it.

JOSH: The silver fox, baby. [Brad laughs awkwardly. Audience cheers.] We'll take you mute.

BRAD: God is my barber. [Josh & Hrishu laugh] I am amazed this podcast has accentuated and highlighted the obsessive *West Wing* fans, the Wingnuts...

[Audience cheers]

JOSH: They're right here.

BRAD: Oh, I'm sorry. [Audience laughs] But it's always been amazing to me that no one has ever noticed that – I think you know what I'm going to say...Can I say this?

JOSH: Yeah.

BRAD: Supposedly, I was shot in the chest "In the Shadow of Two Gunmen"...

HRISHI Oh yeah, we did this on the podcast already.

BRAD: Oh, I haven't heard it. [Audience laughs] I was working. No, I've been so busy working... [Audience laughs] It's tough. Sorry, no, I don't wanna bore people – but did anybody notice that? Did anybody bring it up before I did?

HRISHI: I believe one person, and that was what reminded us that we'd forgotten to include the thing that you recorded in the episode... [Audience laughs] And so we put it in the episode afterwards.

BRAD: Oh you put it...oh ok, I'll shut up. [Audience laughs]

HRISHI: But it was a good point...

BRAD: That I was shot in the chest, and then I'm in bed with Donna, and we finish, and I go "shouldn't I have a scar? I did get shot in the chest..." [Josh and Audience laugh] And he was like, "no, it's ok, nobody will notice".

HRISHI: Chris Misiano.

BRAD: Yeah, Misiano.

Audience member shouts: Why did you eat the toothpaste?

JOSH: Ok, that's the only question we're going to take because it happens to be a very good one, but this is going to be [expletive deleted] chaos [audience laughs] if everybody calls out questions. I believe...I'll repeat it for those in the standing, obstructed view... Why did you eat the toothpaste? [Audience laughs and cheers]

You finally consummate with Donna, we're all thrilled and there's like a morning breath situation. A lot of people do the finger toothbrush, but nobody just puts the tube in their mouth and just swallows it. That was weird. [Audience laughs]

BRAD: Out of an abundance of courtesy...[Audience laughs] After I make love to a woman...[Audience laughs] I simply swallow the paste. [Audience laughs]

JOSH: Alright, I'll just leave it at that.
[Audience cheers]

[Josh laughs]

BRAD: It's not like I flossed or anything. [Audience laughs]

HRISHI: I don't think anybody has any problem if you had flossed. [Josh & audience laughs] Or even that you...

JOSH: Normal dental care is fine.

BRAD: What did I do?

HRISHI: You took the tube of toothpaste, you put it in your mouth, squeezed a little out and then you ate it. [Audience laughs]

BRAD: You want me to get out of bed and spit it out?

HRISHI: No, you were in the bathroom.

JOSH: [cross talk] Did props rig up the toothpaste thing with Nutella? [Audience laughs] Or did you actually do that?

BRAD: [cross talk] No man! I'm DeNiro! I ate the paste! [Audience laughs]

JOSH: Yeah, you're DeNiro. [Laughs]

HRISHI: [Laughing] Ok, so back...

JOSH: [Sings] Transition! [Laughs]

HRISHI: At the law firm where Josh has come to visit Rob, we've got this conference room, it feels a lot like that moment in "The Shadow of Two Gunmen" that little bit of symmetry would have been really cool, but then the show goes ahead and points that thing out for us exactly. Sam says:

[West Wing Episode 7.19 excerpt]

SAM: You showing up does have a nice, nostalgic symmetry.

JOSH: Style points.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Yeah, we know there's this symmetry.

BRAD: By the way, Rob's refusal to age really helped set up my look of exhaustion. [Audience laughs]

JOSH: Do you remember shooting this episode? Do you remember foregoing hair and make-up, so that you would look... [Audience laughs]

BRAD: Foregoing what?

JOSH: Hair and make-up, so that you would look tired, and dishevelled, and...

BRAD: No, I don't.

JOSH: What does Rob say after this...these are my two favorite clips from the show...

[West Wing Episode 7.19 excerpt]

SAM: What about your life? What was I thinking?

JOSH: I've been somewhat busy.

SAM: That explains the...

JOSH: the what?

SAM: Your general...

JOSH: What? The...it's the hair line, isn't it?

SAM: It's retreated...

JOSH: It's routed, like Napoleon out of Moscow.

SAM: There's also a pallor issue.

[end excerpt]

[Audience laughs]

JOSH: I just wanted to hear those in front of Brad.

[Audience laughs loudly]

HRISHI: That actually sounds...the joke there sounds like one that you would've made about the hairline being routed like Napoleon. That's a really Brad joke.

BRAD: I try to make you know, pre-emptive jokes out of anything I'm insecure about.

HRISHI: That's what I was wondering, I mean, I can't imagine being Peter Noah and having to write jokes about your appearance for you to have to say.

BRAD: It was fine. I mean you are sitting there looking at Rob Lowe's and it's, so it's like not weird that you don't think I look good. You know...

[Audience laughs]

[West Wing Episode 7.19 excerpt]

JOSH: What's to think about? Really?

SAM: For one thing, whether I want to...end up looking like you.

[end excerpt]

[Audience laughs & applauds]

JOSH: For those of you who are just listening at home, Brad has just pulled an Adam Driver...

[Audience laughter]

JOSH: He's very uncomfortable when we play clips of his work and he has walked off stage.

BRAD: It's a joke...it's a joke.

[Audience cheers]

JOSH: By the way, we're on this set...how fabulous is this? We're on the set of what is usually a nativity play...

[Audience laughs]

JOSH: I told them if they got a slightly bigger manger...

[Audience laughs]

JOSH: I would go for it. I'm Jewish! But they declined.

HRISHI: There's a little bit of Hamilton between Sam & Josh in their reunion. Sam says to Josh:

[West Wing Episode 7.19 excerpt]

SAM: Amazing thing what you did.

JOSH: Well, that's the easy part, it's what you do with it that counts.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: "It's what you do with it that counts" kind of reminded me of:

[Hamilton: An American Musical, song Cabinet Battle #1 excerpt]

WASHINGTON: Winning was easy young man, governing's harder.

HAMILTON: They're being intransigent...

[end excerpt]

[Audience cheers]

JOSH: I love that you can now play a second-and-a-half clip of Hamilton and it's instantly recognizable.

HRISHI: And then Josh immediately follows it with this:

[West Wing Episode 7.19 excerpt]

JOSH: I almost lost though, you know? At least you appreciate the shot.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: He's not throwing it away! This feels a lot like "In the Shadow of Two Gunmen Part Two" episode, not just because it's between the two them, but also the stuff between C.J. and Toby where...because Sam is making a lot of money here. And in that episode, Toby's trying to get C.J. to join. Do you remember, he asks her how much money she makes and she says \$550,000 a year, and he replies, this pays \$600 a week. And Sam's not totally convinced by the argument even just to come to D.C. to serve the greater good because he

says he's doing a lot of good right there at the firm. But that he would help with the inaugural speech. But it turns out that's not the job that Josh is there to offer him, he's actually offering him Deputy Chief of Staff, and he puts it again, as if we wouldn't make this comparison, but he puts it: "you're me, to my Leo." And then Sam's face changes, and I think the reason that it does is that it goes back to season 4 – I don't know if you remember this, but in Twenty Hours in America, in part two of that episode, when Josh is stranded, Sam has to staff the president, and after doing that for a day, he has this revelation:

[West Wing Episode 4.02 excerpt]

SAM: I love Josh like a brother, and he's a world class political mind, but until today I didn't know he was smarter than I was. I've worked here 3 years and 8 months and until you sit in the room all day, you can't comprehend the chaos of the Oval Office. I had one good moment talking about the global ripple effect of a budget deficit, but that's it. The rest of the day was just keeping up, and this is a pretty light day.

MALLORY: One good moment is good...

SAM: Oh, I'm not complaining. One good moment is great! It's a golf shot! I gotta get back in there, that's where it's happening.

[end excerpt]

BRAD: A little *Hamilton*!

[Audience cheers]

HRISHI: Did you say, "a little *Hamilton*"?

[*Hamilton*: An American Musical, song "The Room Where It Happens" excerpt]

BURR: I, I wanna be in the room where it happens, the room where it happens...

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: But I think that's the fundamental change for the reason why we see Sam tip. The reason why he's actually even considering it, because it seems like he has a lot of reasons to stay where he is. But the fact that it's not a speech writing job, which he's already done – you know, at pretty much the highest level. It's this other mode, one he just got a little taste of that's really exciting for him.

BRAD: By the way, going back to the difference between, was it Cuomo? Mario Cuomo who said that you campaign in poetry and you govern in prose. You know, I think a lot of the disturbing things happening on both sides of the puddle are because with unchecked cynicism and stoking of anger, without an ability to follow up, is part of the reason we're in this pickle.

[Audience applauds]

JOSH: Well said.

BRAD: Thank you.

JOSH: By the way, also, just thought I'd throw a little recommendation out, if you want a check to cynicism, my wife and son who are here tonight – the lovely Melissa and the lovely

Avi – we went to see the musical *Come From Away*. Beautiful musical, in short about after September 11th 2001, many, many planes were diverted to the small town of Gander in Newfoundland and this town of 9000 inhabitants had to take in 7000 people, strangers from all over the world, spoke all sorts of languages. And it's a beautiful, true story in a beautiful musical that will give you hope again and just human kindness. I cried a lot.

[Audience cheers]

HRISHI: I want to go back to the point that you're just making Brad, and ask you to speculate just for a second. We've just watched all these years of the Bartlet administration having to live between their ideals and then what they could practically achieve. And I'm wondering what the future would have held for a Santos administration? Do you think that there would have been the same kind of challenge to try and fulfil campaign promises? Because in this episode, you start to see even little bits of hints of the ways in which the administration's are going to differ.

BRAD: Well I think it would have been a lot more difficult. Part of what happened in our last election in the U.S., when you have...it's just the nature of things that when you have two terms with one party ruling, that people tend to want to shift. So I would think the scalpels would be out for him in a way that they weren't out for Bartlet.

HRISHI: Hmm. I mean I felt like the scalpels were out for Bartlet, and maybe because, well, one of the things the show pits...

BRAD: Well, I think it's similar, like, I just read something today where somebody was saying that during the Clinton impeachment they could not imagine that we could be more polarized.

HRISHI: Right...

BRAD: And we are.

HRISHI: Yeah.

[Audience laughs]

BRAD: You know, and again, we were talking about – I don't want to get off here – it drives me nuts when they say "we're polarized". We're not polarized, they went [expletive deleted] nuts!

[Audience cheers]

JOSH: I like to say that we're currently very polarized in the United States. We're polarized between good and evil.

[Audience cheers]

JOSH: And it's stark.

HRISHI: Well, one of the things that John Wells said to us in the episode that we put out this week, echoes something that Sam says, which is that at heart, he believes America is a centrist nation, and that there are people on the fringes who are making a lot of noise. But I feel like, the Bartlet administration was definitely left of centre, and especially in the Sorkin years, the fight was about trying to live up to that and also there's there the big push and pull in "Let Bartlet Be Bartlet," between the president and Leo saying who's the one whose

responsible for them being driven to the middle? And the action that they want to take is actually further left, and so they're going to have this manifesto...

BRAD: Well you see this again in campaigning where people are... Lawrence O'Donnell makes this point, that recently after a Presidential Debate that all these people are talking as if Congress does not exist.

HRISHI: Right. But so here it's like, the idea is that Santos is maybe a little bit to the right of the president. He's certainly a bit more hawkish, we find out.

BRAD: Yeah.

HRISHI: And so maybe he is more truly a centrist, so maybe it would be easier for him to govern in a way that aligns with his actual values.

BRAD: Well and his life story as the first Hispanic president, would give him cover to be more to the right, if that was his disposition. I'm not conceding that he would've moved to the right, because I don't think Josh would let it happen! [Audience laughs] But I do think what... I've said this before on the podcast, to me what every episode was about and what the show got right was this question of how dirty do your feet have to get before you disappear in the mud, in order to get anything done and that's a kind of heroic rugby scrum of...

[Audience laughs]

JOSH: That's pandering...

BRAD: That is pandering.

[Audience laughs]

BRAD: But I think that was kind of what the show was about, and it's interesting because I think from doing the show, but of the problem with the Bartlet administration is that we didn't get a lot done. It was a beautiful fight, but...

JOSH: Not a lot of legislative victories.

BRAD: Right.

HRISHI: Another thing, speaking of the heart of the story, Josh and I were pondering something earlier today about how Josh Lyman fits into the West Wing now. Especially with this episode. Josh, do you wanna...

JOSH: Well, sure. You're gonna make me say it... I think you're arguably the star of the show.

[Audience cheers and laughs]

JOSH: Josh Lyman clearly is...you know we edit the podcast, this will never air...

BRAD: I know.

[Audience laughs]

JOSH: But this show has become increasingly Lyman-centric, and both your personal and professional lives are front and centre. Did you feel like the mantel of being the focus of the show was on your shoulders at that point?

BRAD: Again, it was at the end of seven years of 22 episodes a year, which doesn't happen anymore. John had passed away, and I'd mixed feelings before John passed away, but when that happened I felt like I don't wanna do this without John, and I remember during this time, thinking "wow, I'm shooting a lot". [Laughs] It was a scary amount of stuff to do. Have you ever had too much work?

[Audience laughs]

JOSH: No Brad, I haven't.

[Audience laughs]

JOSH: You heard me earlier when I said my wife and son are here?

[Audience laughs]

JOSH: Now, I'm curious about something...

BRAD: No, but I did sense... I remember Alex Graves coming up in his super positive way, and going "you're at the center", you know...

JOSH: There you go. You said a little earlier you, prior to John's passing, you had mixed feelings. Mixed feelings about whether the show should continue?

BRAD: I was always split on it because there was obviously this ending coming up, and there was this feeling when you've had an experience like that that you want to get out before the banana turns brown. Which is good life advice I think.

[Audience laughs]

JOSH: That's just good hygiene!

[Audience laughs]

BRAD: But then I was I always torn because, and to this day I see you know, things... you realize the show absolutely could have gone on. But now I look back and think it would be wonderful to have a show like that if the story had gone on.

[Audience cheers]

HRISHI: We found out... John Wells told us the plan was before John Spencer passed away that the plan was to go ahead and move into a Santos administration. There was going to be an eighth season.

BRAD: I did not know that.

HRISHI: Yeah...

JOSH: What could have been. What could have been.

BRAD: Was Josh going to be in it?

[Audience laughs]

JOSH: I did ask that question of John. In front of me, he said yes.

[All laugh]

JOSH: The reality is, I don't know.

HRISHI But for the moment, back in the present of the show, Josh is settling into his role as Leo. Going from campaign manager to chief of staff, we see in this episode is not easy for him, or the people around him. Otto is staffing Josh, and...

[Brad and Audience laugh]

BRAD: A sweet guy.

HRISHI: Rough time. And winning doesn't seem to have made Josh much smoother with Donna.

[Audience laughs]

JOSH: What is the problem?

BRAD: Listen! My wife is here too. We were lying in bed...

JOSH: That's why I'm being so nice.

BRAD: We were lying in bed watching it, you would see Josh sort of stumble and to this day I think God he's such an idiot! Just the emotional constipation. And it was fun to play to his emotional idiocy. And God! Janel is so wonderful!

[Audience applauds]

JOSH: Why, if only briefly, was Josh able to integrate his personal and professional lives with Amy so much better than with Donna?

BRAD: Cause she was the wrong woman.

JOSH: So you think he's scared of the right-ness of it all?

BRAD: I think so.

HRISHI: My feeling is that Josh this whole time has felt that his deep love for Donna is enough, the existence of it was enough and that he should sort of get credit for it and then can you just kind of skip past everything and can they just get on with it already. And in this episode Donna's pointing out that no, that isn't enough, that we need to figure things out and if that love does exist it needs to be translated into words and also some thought about how it's going to work between the two of them.

BRAD: Yeah. I think he's damaged by the work [Laughs] that he's been doing and has no tools in a relationship!

HRISHI: But Donna shows up for it, she's great.

[West Wing Episode 7.19 excerpt]

DONNA: I don't know what this is. And you don't either, which is perfectly fine and understandable. Whatever the build-up, it's all happened amid absurdly heightened emotional circumstances – the election, Leo's death – there's been no moment to so much as take a breath, much less figure any of this out. And now this rollercoaster's plunging into the transition with its time-pressure demands, and the inauguration, then it's hit the ground running in the first 100 days and before you know it the mid-terms and a new congress, and then we're running again, and four years become eight and we've never had the talk...and you can lose that look of panic in your eyes, we're not going to have it now. We don't ever have to have it. But there's a window. I'd say four weeks. If we can't get it together in that time to figure out what we want from each other, then clearly it's not worth the trouble.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: I'm so excited for her [cross talk] in that moment, right?

JOSH: [cross talk] It's a great speech!

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Great writing and a great performance. And I love that she puts him on a clock, it's fantastic. I also think "this rollercoaster's plunging into transition" is the dirtiest line in all of *West Wing*.

[Hrishi & audience laugh]

JOSH: It's just icky! But I like that she's one of two people to give him an ultimatum in this episode...

HRISHI: Yeah, Sam gives him an ultimatum ultimately, later...

JOSH: Nice! Might be a palindrome, I don't know, let's look into it. Let's ask Otto...[Hrishi and Audience groan] Yep, that's the level! [Audience laughs]

HRISHI: I really am proud of this moment for that character, I think it's hard for anybody to stand up for the way they want the love that they want. You know to want to not just accept the existence of it, but also in the form that's going to actually work for them. That's really hard.

BRAD: I remember there was always discussion early on that everybody knew that there was something going on between us, and I remember Schlamme saying all the time "keep 'em apart, keep 'em apart, keep 'em apart. It can't happen..." and you always...I always felt like how much of an idiot would the audience accept Josh being for how long? And I think it's satisfying point for the audience, knowing that we were going to end, if we were to have gone on, maybe they would have chosen to have written it differently. But it's satisfying to see this idiot pinned down, you know?

HRISHI: Meanwhile, we've got Santos making his first visit to the Situation Room. And this is one place, like I said, where you can see contrasts from the first few days of the Bartlet administration. He's got a military background, and he knows what he's talking about. Immediately he's talking about sorties, and he knows...

BRAD: ...what the weapons can do.

HRISHI: Exactly.

JOSH: I notice it hasn't even been programmed for his hand yet.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: Someone else has to...

BRAD: I didn't notice that.

JOSH: Yeah, that's the kind of thing I pick up on...

[Audience laughs]

BRAD: In your free time...

[Audience laughs]

JOSH: Don't encourage him! Free time is fantastic! I got lots of hobbies! We can talk about them in the second half! [Audience laughs]

HRISHI: So Santos makes it known that he is not happy at all with the situation in Kazakhstan. This mess that he's about to inherit, partly due to the arrangement that the Bartlet administration has created means that they're potentially in this stand-off between two superpowers, and the timeline isn't moving the way that he wants it to. One thing he says in this scene is that he's already expressed this displeasure to the president, which is sort of our first clue of how the episode is going to end. The two of them are already in direct communication.

JOSH: Can we continue to focus on minutiae with the five? This is Secretary of Defence Hutchinson...

[West Wing Episode 7.19 excerpt]

HUTCHINSON: The last of our troops are staging out of Manis airbase in Kyrgyzstan, as well the 172nd Striker Brigade.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: I think the Secretary of Defense should know how to pronounce Kyrgyzstan... No soft 'g' buddy! Get out! Un-program his hand & kick him out!

BRAD: I ache for your wife.

[Audience laughs]

JOSH: Is that what you meant to say?

[Audience, HrishI & Brad laugh]

JOSH: I'm going to have to ask you to step outside buddy!

[Audience laughs]

JOSH: Sorry honey.

BRAD: I am too.

[Audience laughs]

HRISHI: Actually, I wanted to talk a little bit about this situation in Kazakhstan...

BRAD: Do you need to leave?

[Audience laughs]

JOSH: No, I just really, really want to.

[Audience laughs]

JOSH: Just kidding.

HRISHI: We got a great email from one of our listeners from Malavika in Seattle, who had some thoughts on the choice of this country in this plotline. She said that Kazakhstan's often been picked to stand in for places that people know very little about. One case in point is *Borat*. And then in *Air Force One*, the terrorists in that are also from Kazakhstan, but they're also actually Russian. So the storyline in Kazakhstan in *The West Wing* seems to be an amalgamation of events that took place across Central Asia in Kazakhstan itself, but also Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan and Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Basically, geographically, politically and historically, nothing feels really right about the depiction here. And she asked us, since Central Asia's often been portrayed as this mysterious, fractious place, because people don't know very much about it, why would *The West Wing* do that again here, as opposed to just make something up, the way it did in seasons past with Kundu and Kumar. Which I thought was a great point, so we asked Eli...

JOSH: We picked up the "At phone."

HRISHI: Yep. We asked Eli, this is not really a plotline he dealt with – he was always more on the domestic procedural stuff. But since he's our source inside the room where it happens...

[Hamilton: An American Musical, song "The Room Where it Happens" excerpt]

BURR: I, I wanna be in the room where it happens, the room where it happens...

[end excerpt]

JOSH: He's quick that Hrishi!

HRISHI: We asked what his thoughts were. And he said, 'I'm afraid I agree with her on this'. So I was asking, well why not still stick with a fake country if you agree that this doesn't feel fair? He said: 'the fake countries always carried the risk of taking people out of the show, in my memory we only did that so we could take significant liberties. As your listener says, Kazakhstan was an easy way to do the same with the real country, which is why I agree with her it was unfair.'

JOSH: You said I was going to play Eli...

[Audience laughs]

HRISHI I realized...Do you wanna...?

JOSH: I read for the role and I didn't get it!
[Audience laughs]

HRISHI [Laughs] Maybe this is a good time to take a break then?

BRAD: Really?

JOSH: A break? In the middle? Of a show? Sounds crazy, no?

HRISHI: It's true, as mandated by the venue here, we have to take an intermission. Sorry!

[To the tune of "Tradition" from *Fiddler on the Roof*]

All: Intermission!

[Ad break]

[Adrian Bradbury plays West Wing theme on cello]

[Audience applauds]

HRISHI: Thanks so much to Adrian Bradbury for being our cellist this evening.

JOSH: I thanked him for adding a bit of class to the proceedings.

BRAD: That was beautiful. You know when he was playing the Bach, it reminded me that when I was shooting that scene it was so easy to lose it because that's the most beautiful piece.

HRISHI: Yeah.

[Audience member shouts "YEAH!!"]

[Audience laughs]

JOSH: [Expletive deleted] Cello fans are OFF THE HOOK!

BRAD: Bach man! Play the Bach!

[Audience laughs]

HRISHI: I mean there are a few reasons why we wanted to have Adrian here, and why we wanted to hear that Bach piece for this episode. One, because it's December 18th, it's almost Christmas and it just feels like a Christmas carol in my mind – because of "Noel." And then also because I think there's something about Noel to talk about in the context of *Transition*. I wanted to play this moment from the episode:

[West Wing Episode 7.19 excerpt]

JOSH: Don't use initiative! It's a highly over-rated quality when it comes to assistant work.

OTTO: Well I don't want to be an assistant.

JOSH: Do you wanna know how to get to not be an Assistant? By not leaving your boss electronically stranded for ten minutes – it feels like an hour! This isn't the campaign! This isn't airplanes and hotels and 'guess where I am now Mom', this is grind it out time! It's three yards and a cloud of dust and if you can't hack what I need from you now, you sure aren't going to be asked to do anything more. Get the Blackberry now. Go!

[end excerpt]

[West Wing Episode 2.10 excerpt]

You need to listen me. You have to listen to me. I can't help you unless you listen to me. You can't send Christmas cards to everyone, you can't do it! Forget the SPR let's get the IMF loans like we said we were going to. Listen to what I have to say about Didion, and please listen to me!!

[end excerpt]

[Audience applauds]

JOSH: Some good acting! It's painful to watch.

HRISHI: Yeah, and...

JOSH: Brad's always painful to watch! But God, in that particular moment...

BRAD: At least you can see me somewhere!

[Audience laughs]

JOSH: I have a really good response, but you're my guest, I'll let you have the last comment.

BRAD: Those things, by the way, are weird to act. Like in "Noel," I go off at the President. I remember Tommy going "we got it, we got it", and I was like no – I don't know there's something about blasting off like that when you're performing it, you have this consciousness of...there are weird things that are difficult to act. [To Josh] Everything's hard for you... [Audience laughs] Like a real sneeze is hard to act. And going off, I personally feel very insecure about it. I just think "you're flattening out, you suck"...

JOSH: Make sure to order Brad's new book on acting: *A Real Sneeze is Hard To Act*.

[Audience laughs]

HRISHI: But you really aren't flat in that scene.

JOSH: One of the things I loved about your performance in that particular moment in that scene you can see there are moments in your rant, and you're just levelling the guy, but there even are moments in there where you can see that Josh knows that he's wrong and his better-self is trying to bubble up and he just can't let it happen. But he says he's been looking for it for an hour and Otto says it's been ten minutes, and he says it feels like an hour. You go through a lot there, you just can't rein it back, and it feels like it's still tied into what was earlier, Josh suffered from PTSD, it still feels part of that piece.

BRAD: I know that was hard for you, and I appreciate it.

[Audience laughs]

JOSH: I love you Brad.

BRAD: I think, I always felt there was a compression in him that he would deal with, with humor and...like one of the first clues to him was his inability to acknowledge what was going on with Donna. And I always thought there was this compression that would occasionally go “boom boom”.

JOSH: Also, let’s not forget, pass by without acknowledging Ramon De Ocampo.

HRISHI: Yeah, his performance in that scene...

JOSH: Otto is very good in this scene.

[Audience cheers]

BRAD: Just wonderful. And it’s good writing, that Peter Noah did. He’s exactly the person who you do not want to see reamed, and that’s good writing.

JOSH: Right. And one of the things that hurts particularly I think about that scene is that throughout the episode leading up to that, you’ve been sort of playfully jabbing at him and his desire to know what role he might fill in the new administration, and then it just turns so ugly.

HRISHI: In the moment when he’s being yelled at, you can see that he’s bearing the brunt of it. But I think the part that is my favorite is right afterwards, when you see him out in the bullpen area, and then he comes back with the Blackberry and he’s gone from the pose of defensiveness to, he is just humiliated. And the performance of that, the shame feels – even though he hasn’t done anything wrong – plays on his face and that’s a really beautiful performance.

JOSH: I agree.

[Audience cheers]

HRISHI: To me it feels a lot like these two moments are connected. That Josh’s moment of PTSD in “Noel” and then this semi-breakdown are coming from the same place. We know that he has that in his past, and he’s been pushed to a place – from running the campaign for so long that...

BRAD: My sister died in a fire!

[Audience laughs]

HRISHI: Yeah. The thing that I remember though, from that scene in “Noel” – is actually the first person to speak after that extended moment when everyone is horrified by what Josh has done, yelling at the President in the Oval Office – the first person to speak after that long break is Sam. He just says “Josh”. And the other person in the room is Leo, and Leo’s gone and the President is going to be there with him. I think there’s some part of Josh’s subconscious that knows that he is at this point, and the only person who’s ever been with him in that kind of moment and can bring him back is Sam, and that’s part of the subtext of what’s going when he goes to get Sam. He’s doing it not just because he thinks he’ll do a good job, and he’ll be great for the Santos Administration, but because Josh really needs him there. He needs that lifer preserver.

BRAD: Yeah, I think when you're scared you go back to people who gave you strength when you were starting out. And I think that's part of it. I was watching it, and I don't if I intended it, and I don't if I was just scared in life, but I think he's scared about being in charge.

HRISHI: Yeah. There's this great scene when Sam delivers this ultimatum, this second ultimatum:

[West Wing Episode 7.19 excerpt]

SAM: For all the partisan noises made on the margins, we're a nation of centrists – and he may just be the right man, with the right message, at the right time and if he is...I want to be a part of it. But he can't do it without you. Liberal Democrats are gonna try to force him left, moderate Republicans are gonna fence it as long as they can. You're the one who's gotta make this go. Who's gonna cut through the reflux of demagoguery and timidity, and make people do what they're meant to do – actually govern. Serve the voters' interests, instead of striking poses and playing gotcha. And it's going to be next to impossible at your best and – what in may be news to you – you are nowhere near your best. Take the vacation. I haven't said I'm signing on, but I can tell you this: I won't stay unless you go.

[end excerpt]

[Audience applauds]

HRISHI: There's actually a moment right before that clip where Josh is demanding the Blackberry that Sam has, that he's taken from Otto, and he won't give it to him yet. He's like "give it to me" and puts it down, "in a minute". And you do this thing, this impatient, you're kind of wiggling a little bit – and it's this great thing, it's like what Josh was saying, it's almost this admission of understanding that you're in the wrong in that moment, and needing help, but also still holding on to some of the anger. It's really good. It's such a complicated bit between the two of you there.

BRAD: It just reminds me of what a horrible President Donald Trump is.

[Audience laughs & cheers]

I mean, I don't know... There is a segue in my head, but can you imagine The Mooch making sure that the President was ok? Oh my God... Sorry.

HRISHI: The thing that's great in this episode is that we immediately get this friendship between the two of them re-established, it happens in this moment, but also of course in the stuff where Sam is ribbing Josh for his appearance. But it feels like these are two old friends and one thing that I think is interesting is that Sam immediately sees that there needs to be some kind of intervention for Josh. And Santos himself sees that something is up, and he calls in Donna and he says "what is the deal? It feels like he's having a hard time..." And these two people close to Josh are concerned for him, and the person who loves Josh the most – Donna – actually says...

BRAD: Oh he's adding to the pressure!

[Audience laughs]

HRISHI: But she also accepts where he's at. These two are saying something has to change, this is untenable. And she says he's keyed up to a peak of particular Josh-ness.

BRAD: Yeah, I think she knows me and she understands that other people might be concerned, but she holds the fish loosely so that it won't flop out of her hands.

[Audience laughs]

HRISHI: That's now the dirtiest thing that's ever been said!

[Audience laughs]

JOSH: I got nothing!

[Audience laughs]

HRISHI: I was trying to make a point about the blind spots we have for the people we love, but it's all disappeared now.

BRAD: No, it's not a blind spot. She knows me.

HRISHI: But you know, the fact that she is not delivering to him this idea that "hey, you are past the point of functioning well", it comes from these other people who have a different kind of role with him...

BRAD: Because she loves me. And understands me. But yeah, I see your point.

[Audience laughs]

HRISHI: I really love that it's a way for the dynamic for Sam and Josh to have its own unique identifier and that's always been something that I've loved about *The West Wing* is that all of these characters that we love individually and that we love as an ensemble also have their own particular keys, that they play. These specific chords that they form.

BRAD: You know, I was watching it and I was realizing that Toby is an example of the principled warrior, and I'm principled but pragmatic, you know in saying principled pragmatism. I was watching that and I realized the Sam character always had a kind of perspective...that Toby would get dysregulated by certain things; I would get dysregulated by certain things, but Sam would always have a detached perspective that was a necessary note.

JOSH: "Dysregulated" not a word, but I understand what you're saying.

BRAD: It's not?

JOSH: Well, if it is, it shouldn't be.

BRAD: Again, [cross talk] I ache for your wife...

JOSH: [cross talk] Quiet, quiet!

JOSH: Actually, she went home, you can say whatever you like.

BRAD: Did she leave?

JOSH: Er, yeah, they don't watch *The West Wing*! They gave me half the show, I appreciated it!

[Audience laughs]

JOSH: Let's not gloss over the fact that Donna herself gets an important job offer this episode.

[Audience cheers]

HRISHI: That's right, she gets offered the job of Chief of Staff for the First Lady, so it's yet one more thing that she'll be coming to after Amy Gardner.

AUDIENCE: Ohhhh

JOSH: Ohhhh snap! He's not wrong! He just dysregulated the [expletive deleted] out of you!

[Audience laughs]

JOSH: That's a good scene, and my friend Paul texted me to remind me that we should talk about how great Teri Polo is...

BRAD: Teri's amazing!

JOSH: She is fantastic!

[Audience cheers]

HRISHI: Yes. And again, the two of them together have their own particular dynamic and it's great. I love that Helen is trying to push Donna to try and be more casual with her and Donna isn't ready to do that.

JOSH: The only disappointment for me in that scene is that I feel that Donna...she knocks herself a little bit, doesn't think she has the expertise for the job. And I wanted her to grasp it.

HRISHI: Yeah, but that's Donna, right? She's too humble for her own good.

JOSH: That is true.

HRISHI: Yeah. I love that dynamic. And then here's one that I thought was interesting: the scene between C.J. and Josh in this episode. To me it feels different, I don't know if anybody else felt this way, but there's a professional quality to the two of them when they talk to each other like colleagues, and not like old friends. And I think you really feel it, because of the contrast with how Josh and Sam are. I don't know if it's because C.J. in her new role as Chief of Staff and the evolution of coming to that place, has to modulate her behavior differently around people who want stuff from her.

BRAD: I sort of flash back to realizing it's interesting you say that, that she was exerting her authority and we were no longer classmates, is what it felt like. It made those scenes kind of interesting.

JOSH: You're also, in this episode, in an odd position – you're each being kept out of the loop by your superior. I mean there's the Bartlet-Santos ruse and why both C.J. & Josh are uninformed about what's happening.

HRISHI: That's true.

JOSH: Is it extreme, watertight, no-leak of information approach kind of thing where I'm not even going to tell my Chief of Staff?

HRISHI: Yeah, so let's set this up. We find...

JOSH: He's good at setting things up. Sometimes I just go right to it. I don't really build...

HRISHI: ...towards the end of the episode, we see President-elect Santos go to the Oval Office, and he has another meeting with the President. He asks for it to be set-up, he goes and he sees him. And the President and Santos are originally, when they first start speaking, there's something that feels a little brusque, a little bit cool – like they're both impatient with each other. But then the tension sort of breaks between them.

[West Wing Episode 7.19 excerpt]

SANTOS: I might have referred to you as an incrementalist.

PRESIDENT BARTLET: I've been called worse. You may have to call me worse if this is going to work.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And then all of a sudden, we're in on the whole thing. That this has been a ruse, that the calls between the President-elect and China, and Russia – they've been monitored, the President knows about them, actually this whole thing was planned out between the two of them. And nobody else knows about it.

JOSH: Well, tell me this – I watched it multiple times and couldn't quite put my finger on it. It felt as if there were moments where we're not seeing the reality, in order for us to be surprised, we were not seeing exactly how it really would play out – including in this scene, where they seem to be, they're continuing the charade even though they're alone. Right? I'm right? There's something at that moment where I'm like "ok", it was a surprise, it was effective, but I felt slightly manipulated – how come when they were finally in the Oval Office they weren't like "Yeah! It worked!" [Audience laughs] You know, you still have 2 beats of these guys being really butting heads.

HRISHI: It's now one of those things you go back and watch the episode and see that all the seeds were there, all the clues were there the whole time. No, they really did push us to believe that they were working in opposition, so then when this reveal happens, it's kind of a bit weird. It's a little bit weird that Josh and C.J. don't know about this at all, because presumably, I mean like your Chiefs of Staff are going to have to hold on to secrets probably...

JOSH: Chiefs of staff, very good!

HRISHI: I'm just saying, maybe you want to let them in on your secret plan to fight an invasion?

[Audience laughs]

JOSH: Oh, sorry!

[To the tune of "Tradition" from *Fiddler on the Roof*]

ALL: Invasion!

[Audience laughs]

JOSH: Do you think we have one more in us?

BRAD: I didn't bump on that. I thought that was the kind of thing that if you wanted it to work you would have to play out very close to the vest...

JOSH: But ultimately isn't it some sort of sign of lack of faith in Josh that he didn't loop you in? I'm not kidding! Don't you think Josh-

BRAD: It's an interesting criticism from somebody who wasn't in the episode.

[Audience and Josh laughs]

JOSH: Well now you're questioning the entire raison d'être of the podcast. You have to be in something in order to have a criticism of it? Oh [Expletive deleted]! By the way, I did watch this episode expecting to be in it...[Audience laughs] ...because I'm in the credit sequence, and my memory was in season 7, I was only in the credit sequence when I was in the episode. So I'm watching the whole [expletive deleted] thing [Audience laughs] for an emotional high point, you know, Will Bailey shows up...

BRAD: Yeah, when the coffee comes in?

[Audience laughs]

JOSH: That's good...

Then finally, we get the scenes on the plane, and I'm like – “what is he? A [expletive deleted] flight attendant now? What is Will going to do?” And then I realized there just weren't enough regular people in the episode – there would have been no credit sequence, so they threw me in there.

HRISHI: It would be nice if you were a flight attendant – it could have been the origin story for your character in *The View From The Top*...

[Audience laughs]

JOSH: No disrespect to flight attendants, don't get me wrong! What were you saying? Why do you think Santos- I know I wasn't in the episode, but let me just, since I have a podcast about this series, [Audience laughs] maybe I could ask just one question? [Audience laughs] Why do you think he wouldn't have let Josh - bulldog, loyal, I think very trustworthy, in on the ruse?

BRAD: I think if you care about someone you don't want to put them in a dangerous position.

HRISHI: I don't buy that.

[Audience laughs]

JOSH: I'm glad you said it!

HRISHI: It does feel like the logic of the episode falls apart a little bit in that reveal.

BRAD: [Expletive deleted] you!

[Audience laughs]

HRISHI: Goodnight!

BRAD: I didn't bounce on that – I didn't – maybe you're right? I doubt it.

[Audience & Josh laughs]

HRISHI: I thought it was funny, as all these people are coming in for jobs, that Louise sits down with Josh saying no to the Communications Director job, she's there for the meeting, she's ready to wait, she knows what the meeting's about and she says no, and she has her reasons why. And then all Josh has to say was: "but you'll get to be the Communications Director" and she's like "Well..." and starts to list all the reasons why she should do the job. And then eventually she, we presume, she took the job. Why even bother saying no in the first place when she sat down?

JOSH: That was a quick turn.

HRISHI: It was. Because you'd think that that character, throughout the entire campaign was considering the idea that if they win, would she be the Communications Director or not? And if she were...it seems like she was considering the idea of why she should take the job for the very first time, she's sitting down in front of him.

[Audience laughs]

JOSH: What do you think? You were in the episode

[Audience laughs]

BRAD: Yeah, it's all [expletive deleted] there is no happiness, the reward was death.

[Josh & Audience laugh]

JOSH: Oh no, we've pushed him too far!

BRAD: Again, I didn't bounce on it. But I may have been exhausted.

HRISHI: I like how when Sam arrives...

BRAD: Oh good, what?

HRISHI: ...I like the power move for Josh. He says he hasn't accepted yet, but Josh just goes ahead and introduces him to the staff as the Deputy Chief of Staff anyway, which was great. And then he says "Knock 'em dead tiger" and I thought that was cute, cause he went to Princeton.

BRAD: Didn't get that...but wow...yeah.

HRISHI: Finally, Josh agrees to leave to town. The ultimatum from Sam works, and we see him get on a plane, and then he really gets to deliver on both ultimatums...wait, ultimata?

JOSH: Better.

BRAD: Really?

JOSH: Yeah, Latin!

[Audience laughs]

Silence!

BRAD: Won't help you act!

JOSH: I have an audition on Monday. If there's a sneeze, can you coach me?

[Audience laughs & applauds]

BRAD: I'm stunned. That you have an audition.

[Audience laughs]

[To the tune of "Tradition" from *Fiddler on the Roof*]

ALL: Audition!

[Audience applauds]

HRISHI: The reason why Josh agrees to leave town is because he realizes that the hire-ees for the new positions...

[To the tune of "Tradition" from *Fiddler on the Roof*]

ALL: Positions!

HRISHI: ...can wait until he comes back. He says, it's not like they're going to take jobs in Benelux countries...

JOSH: Burn!! You thought Suriname was hurting, boom!!

HRISHI: Three burns in one.

JOSH: Benelux.

HRISHI: Think about it.

[Audience laugh]

HRISHI: Then we see that Josh is on the plane and then Donna joins him. [Audience cheers] And I find this scene very troubling, because... [Audience laughs] Donna's not wearing a sweater, and she's going to get so cold on that plane!

[Audience laughs]

JOSH: That is very Hrishi. Thoughtful.

HRISHI: It's night-time in November in Washington DC. Why isn't she wearing a sweater already?

JOSH: Well maybe Flight Attendant Will Bailey can bring her a blanket!

[Audience laughs]

HRISHI: But, I mean, they're dressed for warmer weather, because maybe Josh took Sam's advice and is going to go and lie on a beach somewhere.

BRAD: I think that's where they're going. I didn't struggle with the lack of a sweater.

[Hrishi laughs] But yeah, I think they're going someplace sunny and maybe to reassure you, she's aware of that, and has forgotten about how cold it gets on a plane.

HRISHI: I buy it.

BRAD: And I'm there.

[Audience laughs]

HRISHI: That scene on a plane feels like my first reassurance that the two of them are going work. It's really nice to get, it feels like Josh – all these times that we've harped on: why is Josh so inept with his love of Donna? Why can't they get it right? It feels like ok, he's doing the thing that needs to be done. He's transmuting his love into something actionable, and Donna sees it. The episode leaves you with a feeling that these two crazy kids just might make it after all.

[Audience cheers & applauds]

BRAD: Yeah, I totally, totally agree. It's funny...I was thinking about...I don't know Hrishi, I just want to say it to you... I knew he was kind of a sexist, arrogant jerk. I just want you to know that I knew that. [Josh and Audience laugh] He's an idiot!

HRISHI: But even idiots deserve love.

BRAD: They do.

HRISHI: There's one thing that I forgot to mention, that for me this whole episode has these great little moments of dynamics between two characters. My favorite one actually is, it's unwritten, it's a little moment between the President and Debbie. First she says this:

[West Wing Episode 7.19 excerpt]

DEBBIE: My sister thinks that you are very attractive.

PRESIDENT BARTLET: She doesn't have a sister.

[end excerpt]

[Audience laughs]

JOSH: That is adorable.

HRISHI: It's great! But right after that, as he closes the door, to have his meeting with President-Elect Santos, he just does this thing – he raises his eyebrows at her, and it's like the button on the joke between the two of them. And I love that so much.

BRAD: It's funny, when she came in earlier too, it never paid off, but she had like tons of tissues? Did you notice? When she came in to see the President first, she's like sick and like

[sniffing]? And I was like, “did she have consumption or something?” and then, never happened again. Did anybody else notice?

[Audience murmurs agreement]

You should have a podcast...

[Josh and Audience laugh]

JOSH: I’m always blown away when there’s just a little couplet like that, and it’s Lily Tomlin! I mean...

BRAD: I know.

[Audience cheers]

JOSH: Megastar!

BRAD: I mean, the actors that we got to work with were incredible.

JOSH: Thanks Brad...[Audience laughs] So glad you finally said it.

HRISHI: There’s some talk of pranks in this episode. There’s a bit of concern that there might be some pranking, even though we’re going from one administration to another within the same party, there’s still some concern that there might be some pranking. And this is based on evidence of real pranking...

JOSH: Yes. There has been presidential transition pranking, perhaps most notably in 2000, post Clinton, leading to George W, the contested election of 2000 resolved in the Supreme Court. And apparently the Clintonites did all sorts of nasty things, there was a long – I think 2 year investigation – the General Accounting Office, which is an investigative arm of Congress eventually said that there was damage, theft, vandalism, and pranks. I love that they threw that in: “oh, and there were high jinks!” “High jinks!” Pranks did occur in the White House complex. The agency put the cost at somewhere between \$13-14,000. There were a variety of things done, not that I approve of any of this, but: furniture was damaged, there were stolen TV remotes and doorknobs, Vaseline or something sticky on desks, people wrote on walls, they took cellphones, they stole Presidential medallions, telephones were glued... And the one thing that I think was legitimately funny: \$4850 damage to replace computer keyboards, many of which had damaged or missing W keys.

[Audience laughs]

That’s the one where the GAO’s – the General Accounting Office – investigating, “come on, that was funny!”

BRAD: This is why you can’t do a *West Wing* about Republicans, because they’re not funny. [Audience laughs] I don’t think that’s true, by the way. Did you talk to Sperling, or anybody that we know who worked at the White House? That sounds like deep-stake fake news to me...

[Josh laughs]

JOSH: No, I think that happened.

HRISHI: Any closing thoughts? In conclusion?

[To the tune of "Tradition" from *Fiddler on the Roof*]

ALL: Conclusion!

JOSH: Uh, no. [Laughs]

[Audience laughs]

BRAD: I want to thank everybody in London who came out to this. Thank you so much!

[Audience cheers and applauds]

And it pains me to say it, but I'm really grateful to you two, for doing this whole ridiculous escapade, this journey...

JOSH: We're getting there! We're really getting there! It's sad!

BRAD: Through this most wonderful time in my life. It's been an amazing thing to re-visit, so thank you.

[Audience cheers]

JOSH: I had the thought today, as I walked around, getting psyched for the event, that every word that we speak tonight, gets us one word closer to the end. And then I thought, that was also the case in the first episode...[Hrishi and Audience laugh]...and that kind of killed the mood. But tonight was super exciting! I've never been in front of an audience this size. I've been to Mets games that had smaller audiences...

[Hrishi and Audience laughs]

Ah! The Mets are a baseball team. Baseball's a sport, it's a little like cricket...never mind. But this is an unbelievable venue and it's literally filled to bursting with unbelievable fans of this show. Earlier, when I was out in the rain saying hi to you guys, and these guys were inside... [Audience laughs] ...I thought, we really do have the best fans in the world, obviously it's all about love for *The West Wing* itself, but I hope you know how much that we appreciate you guys.

[Audience cheers and applauds]

HRISHI: Thank you for bearing with us. This is what it looks like when this is unfiltered. Thanks to Margaret who is not here to keep us from going on these terrible tangents.

[Applause]

Thanks to Zach who isn't here to put my clips in the right order.

[Applause]

JOSH: Thanks also to Nick Song, jumped back in and did some research for us.

[Applause]

HRISHI: That's right. Gave us that figure from the GAO.

JOSH: Huge thanks to Adrian Bradbury for playing the cello beautifully.

[Applause]

HRISHI: Thanks so much to Bradley Whitford.

JOSH: Yay. [Audience cheers] Brad has a lot of projects coming up. He has a wonderful new show called *Perfect Harmony* – I don't know if it's made its way here yet.

BRAD: Is it here?

JOSH: Well, do what you need to do to get it here! I don't know if there's anything else we need to mention?

HRISHI: Well let's mention a very special episode of *Perfect Harmony* that's coming up...

BRAD: Featuring a pretentious podcaster, played by Josh Malina!

[Audience cheers]

JOSH: Yeah. I was delighted to do the episode, and when I finally got the script, yes, it was a podcaster. A guy who has a podcast about a contest that he won like 20 years earlier... [Audience laughs] ...and he's still re-living his glory days. And I was like, "It's a stretch, but for top of show, sure..." What else? We remain proud members of Radiotopia, which is... [Audience cheers] Yeah! Radiotopia's the best! They're a cavalcade of the best podcasts available on the planet. You can find out more about them at radiotopia.fm

HRISHI: And this is the part where we say: OK.

JOSH: OK.

ALL: What's next!

[Audience applauds and cheers]

[Outro Music]