

The West Wing Weekly  
1.12: He Shall, From Time to Time

[Intro Music]

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

JOSH: And I'm Joshua Malina.

HRISHI: Today we're talking about episode 12 of season 1 of The West Wing "*He Shall, From Time to Time.*"

JOSH: It was written by Aaron Sorkin and directed by Arlene Sanford. First female director of a *West Wing* episode.

HRISHI: Is that right?

JOSH: Yeah, I believe so.

HRISHI: This is the only episode she directed of The West Wing.

JOSH: It first aired on January 12th, 2000, so it's the first episode of the new Millennium. Lot of firsts. Lots of meaningful firsts.

HRISHI: Is it the new Millennium though, Josh?

JOSH: Oh, here we —

HRISHI: — or is it really the end of the 20th century?

JOSH: Which episode was that from?

HRISHI: That question was raised in "*In Excelsis Deo.*"

[West Wing Episode 1.10 excerpt]

*TOBY: It's not the new Millennium but I'll just let it drop.*

*SAM: It is.*

*TOBY: It is not the new Millennium. The Year 2000 is the last year of the Millennium. It's not the first year of the next one.*

*SAM: But the common sensibility, to quote Stephen J. Gould...*

*TOBY: Stephen J. Gould needs to look at a calendar.*

*SAM: Gould says this is a largely unresolvable issue.*

*TOBY: Yes, it's tough to resolve so you'd have to look at a calendar.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Ah, that's right. I think we started to discuss it and then, uh, it made Richard cry. So...we cut it out.

HRISHI: So mean...

JOSH: Hey, this is exciting. You're currently in the Antipodes.

HRISHI: I am. I'm in Australia. I'm in my hotel room in Sydney, Australia.

JOSH: So I'm recording *my part* on Thursday.

HRISHI: It's Friday for me.

JOSH: And *my* toilet is flushing clockwise.

HRISHI: And *mine* is full of koalas.

JOSH: Nice.

HRISHI: So here's the NBC synopsis for the episode. It's a long one: "The White House staff is in full crisis mode when President Bartlet is found unconscious as he prepares for the State of the Union speech while the India-Pakistan border skirmish flares again when a fearful Pakistan gives its field commanders control of its nuclear arsenal. While the President's condition is officially blamed on the flu, the First Lady knows better, and Toby is too busy to notice as he polishes his boss' upcoming address. Equally distracting is the inevitable disclosure of Leo's former substance-abuse problem by political rivals, as well as the reappearance of the amusing Lord Marbury-- a besotted ladies' man who doubles as a key adviser on the India-Pakistan conflict. Despite the crises, C.J. and Mallory express their romantic feelings about two very different men." Who wrote these?!

JOSH: I don't know. Not I.

HRISHI: Taking a lot of dramatic license.

JOSH: This is true. So, good episode!

HRISHI: Yeah...?

JOSH: Yeah? Uh, oh. Not for you?

HRISHI: Yeah, no, it's a fine episode. It was a light episode for me. It kind of harkened back to me to "Enemies" in that it felt, again, like there was a lot of rom-com to this episode.

JOSH: Hm, well, maybe you'll now, after the fact, ruin it for *me*. But I was more taken with the dramatic, yes -

HRISHI: Yup.

JOSH: - for the state dinner. I was more wrapped up in the dramatic, higher stakes A and B stories of President Bartlet and Leo's travails.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: So I guess the romantic stuff for me didn't ruin the other stuff. But I see what you mean. It is tonally different from...

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: I guess what I wrote down, what I thought as I watched was: it's a very personal episode.

HRISHI: That's -

JOSH: It's got into other people's...

HRISHI: Yeah, that's exactly what I thought.

JOSH: Yeah, so while world events are, of course, continuing to play out and there's national events and politics, it really was more about these people in a more personal way than we had seen them previously; more focused on their personal lives.

HRISHI: Yeah. I watched the show a lot on my own. And I'll watch beginning to end. But there are lots of times when I watch with somebody to, like, introduce them to the show or to, like, try and hook them. And this is not an episode that I would play to try to hook someone into the show because it doesn't really stand on its own. It is delving deeper into the personal lives of the characters and so you need to be kind of invested...I feel like this kind of asks more of the viewers in terms of their investment into the characters.

JOSH: Absolutely. No, I completely agree. I can see what you're saying. Whereas in "*In Excelsis Deo*", or as I've been corrected and apparently some people would like us to say "In Egg-chelsis Deo" or "In Egg-sellsis"?...I don't know.

HRISHI: Or "In Egg-Shellsis"?

JOSH: Nice! Uh, that's a standalone you might hook somebody onto, into, the show with, "*A Proportional Response*" that's a good standalone to pull somebody in. This feels like, you know, a bit of a Part Two to "*Lord John Marbury*" in some ways and also as a continuation of various story lines.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: You can't skip it. For sure, you need it, you want it. And it was effective for me, but you're right: it's not a "hey, here's a good introduction to the show."

HRISHI: Starts off pretty dramatically.

JOSH: Remind me. How does it start off?

HRISHI: The President is practicing his State of the Union address.

[West Wing Episode 1.12 excerpt]

*BARTLET: For the first time in three decades, the budget is balanced. From a deficit of \$290 million just ten years—*

*TOBY: Billion dollars.*

*BARTLET: What?*

*TOBY: \$290 billion.*

*BARTLET: What did I say?*

*TOBY: You said 'million' but let's move on.*

*BARTLET: I said 'million'?*

*TOBY: Yup.*

*BARTLET: From a deficit of \$290 billion just ten...it says 'million' on the teleprompter, by the way.*

*TOBY: Sam.*

*SAM: Our fault.*

*BARTLET: Let's take it back. I came to this hallowed chamber one year ago...and I see we're spelling 'hallowed' with a pound sign in the middle of it.*

*SAM: We'll fix that.*

*BARTLET: The pound sign is silent?*

*LEO: Move on, Mr. President.*

*BARTLET: ...to restore the American dream for all our people as we gaze at the vast horizon of possibilities open to us in the 321st Century. Wow, that was ambitious of me, wasn't it?*

*SAM: Leo...*

*LEO: Let's take a break.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: You know, it's funny. All those teleprompter issues are reminding me of just a quick little West Wing story: seasons later, we were in DC to film on location and we were filming this scene where the President was getting out of Marine One, his helicopter, and we got to the set and Art Department — normally Craft Art Department — the side of the helicopter, it said, "Untied States of America." And we were just standing there, looking at that thinking, "something doesn't look right." And it was a big issue because it was like, "do we have a decal that was spelled correctly?" "We do not." "Okay, we're gonna take an hour break while we take this apart and figure out how to fix this."

HRISHI: My God...poor Art Department.

JOSH: Yes, it was a bad day for them.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: I was just gonna say, well, he's practicing his State of the Union speech and it kind of sounds middle-of-the-road-y and like every other State of the Union address.

HRISHI: Yeah, but he looks sick the entire time.

JOSH: Yeah. Also, put me in mind as I noticed the Sheen on Martin.

HRISHI: Oh, God.

JOSH: Sorry, but his forehead is sweaty. It made me think of the Kennedy/Nixon debates. Which taught us that you cannot have a sweaty candidate nor, I guess, a sweaty president. It doesn't look good on TV. People don't like it. And, uh, that's what sort of flitted through my head as I watched it and Josh is the first one, sort of, to notice.

[West Wing Episode 1.12 excerpt]

*JOSH: He doesn't look so good.*

*CJ: Yeah.*

*JOSH: He's pale and sweating.*

*CJ: I know.*

*JOSH: Think he's getting sick?*

*CJ: I don't know.*

*JOSH: Are his glands are swollen?*

*CJ: Damn.*

*JOSH: What?*

*CJ: You know what I forgot to do today?*

*JOSH: What?*

*CJ: I forgot to feel the President's glands.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: And soon enough, we'll discover that he really is not in good health as he goes into the Oval Office and falls to the ground.

HRISHI: I don't want to do this chronologically, I just want to talk about my favorite part of the whole episode.

JOSH: Let's do it.

HRISHI: Can we do it? Because I can't get over how good it is. It's just that scene between the President and Leo when he's in bed and Leo knows now that the President has MS.

JOSH: Yes, oh wow, you really are jumping ahead.

HRISHI: I really am.

JOSH: But such is our right and our want.

[West Wing Episode 1.12 excerpt]

*LEO: Jed? Of all the things that you could have kept from me...*

*BARTLET: You haven't called me Jed since I was elected.*

*LEO: Why didn't you tell me?*

*BARTLET: 'Cause I wanted to be the president.*

*LEO: That wouldn't have stopped me from getting you here. And I could've been a friend.*

*BARTLET: You've been a friend.*

*LEO: But when it was time to really...*

*BARTLET: I know.*

*LEO: When I was lying on my face in the motel parking lot, you were the one I called.*

*BARTLET: When you stood up today, I was so proud. I wanted to be with you.*

*LEO: Nah, nah.*

*BARTLET: I tried to get up and I fell back down again.*

*LEO: I know the feeling.*

*BARTLET: I'm so sorry, Leo. I really am.*

*LEO: Don't worry about it.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Such an incredibly well acted scene and, for me, one of the most powerful we've seen so far. The President breaking down like that.

JOSH: I know! And you see him fighting — at first I couldn't even quite tell what was going on, he won't quite look at Leo and I'm like, I had to even — I had to look closely. Is he fighting tears? And you realize that he's really just barely holding it back.

HRISHI: Yeah. Yeah. The whole exchange is really...I think it's the most tender that there's been so far on the show.

JOSH: Mmhmm. I don't know whether John Spencer and Martin Sheen knew each other before working here, but I believe that these guys have known each other for a long time and really been through it together. That's just great acting and they just have a history. There's a weight to their relationship that you feel in this scene, and so the magnitude of President Bartlet's decision not to share this huge piece of information with Leo...it's significant and it's real and he's also admitting in a way that it was his weakness and maybe even ego or the dark side of ambition is just, he didn't tell him because he wanted to be president.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: And then John Spencer has that sweet response which is essentially, "I would have still gotten you here."

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: In other words, "you can tell me anything and it would not have been a deal breaker for us. I would have still made it happen."

HRISHI: I think, especially telling of that depth and history between them, is that moment where Leo calls him Jed. Leo isn't addressing the Office in that moment. He isn't addressing the President. He's addressing the Man, he's addressing his friend.

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: And you understand that this is a situation that transcends that kind of formality.

JOSH: And you know, this bombshell is a bombshell to the viewers as well. We're learning a huge -

HRISHI: Yeah, it's a huge plot twist.

JOSH: - Yeah. And in that sense, we're also put in this position of what the citizen really might feel were they to discover that their president has this significant medical condition.

HRISHI: Aaron Sorkin said that the main impetus for the scene was that he wanted to write a scene where the President was in bed watching his soap opera and watching daytime TV. And he also wanted to introduce the idea that the First Lady is a doctor. And then he reverse-engineered from there what it could be because it had to be more serious than a flu and it had to be something that could allow the show to keep going for four years and have a chance to introduce transformation and so they settled on MS. And while the MS itself is a new thing, the President's health has been a plot point for a few episodes.

JOSH: Well there is the back-pain scene.

HRISHI: Right, there's the back pain medicine. He doesn't want to take the pills and there's also Morris Oliver.

JOSH: I missed Morris in this episode.

HRISHI: Yeah. Yeah.

JOSH: I warned him briefly as I watched.

HRISHI: Yeah. This doctor is not nearly as charming.

JOSH: Doesn't have the same bedside manner.

HRISHI: No. But we get to experience the First Lady's bedside manner instead and that's pretty great.

JOSH: Yes. She's one of those rare doctors that actually gets in bed with a patient. Or maybe she would only do that for her husband. Maybe I'm extrapolating.

[West Wing Episode 1.12 excerpt]

*BARTLET: I never really saw you study while you were in med school.*

*ABBEY: Deep breath.*

*BARTLET: Do you even know what you're listening for right now?*

*ABBEY: Do you know how many other people I could've married?*

*BARTLET: How many?*

*ABBEY: Shh.*

*BARTLET: I'm going to the Office.*

*ABBEY: Okay.*

*BARTLET: Really?*

*ABBEY: Feel free.*

*BARTLET: Okay...uh, oh...*

*ABBEY: Anything else?*

*BARTLET: Alright, I think I'll stay here for a little bit.*

*ABBEY: Okay.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: She's very cute with him and very sweet and... a nice way to open up their relationship. Instead of exposition. Just to see them physically with each other.

HRISHI: Yeah. There's a great conscious demarcation of boundaries in this episode, you know, a few instances of people being asked to leave the room.

JOSH: Yes.

HRISHI: So that she could give the President an injection or so that somebody could be told something.

JOSH: Yeah. Charlie gets sent out of the room. The doctor gets sent out of the room. And that speaks to the fact that there's subterfuge going on; they are keeping a piece of information that you certainly could argue the American public has the right to know. They're keeping it super close to the vest. The Chief of Staff doesn't even know. And so that is questionable behavior from a president and I also think maybe, well, no. I was going to say, maybe in the end when the President, as he...just before he goes off to finally give the State of the Union, he really briefs Lionel Tribbey as if he might actually have to become president. Like, something might really happen because a lot of very specific detail. I was going to say maybe because he knows he's sick. But there's so many people that would have to go down before it gets to Lionel Tribbey.



HRISHI: I love that you keep calling him Lionel Tribbey.

JOSH: Oh, what's his name? The trouble with Tribbey is...I'm just kidding, but I have seen Star Trek. No, what is his real name?

HRISHI: Well, the character's name is Roger Tribbey.

JOSH: Oh. Then why am I saying "Lionel"?

HRISHI: Because that is a character who has yet to appear.

JOSH: Hm! So somewhere in the deep recesses of my adult brain...

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Is he related to Roger Tribbey?

HRISHI: He is not! It's just one of those weird Sorkin naming things and I was trying to figure out if we're bringing it up because I feel like if we don't then everybody who's seen the show will be like, "how come you didn't mention the name?" and I would have to say, "because Lionel Tribbey hasn't appeared yet." But it's not that much of a spoiler alert.

JOSH: Yeah, but I guess the presence of a second Tribbey isn't necessarily a huge spoiler.

HRISHI: But yeah, there is another character who's going to appear later whose name is Lionel Tribbey. This guy's name is Roger Tribbey. So it's a little weird.

JOSH: So Secretary of Agriculture Roger Tribbey, played by...do you know?

HRISHI: No.

JOSH: Harry Groener, who was nominated for a Tony for his role in "Cats" on Broadway. Really. He played Munkustrap, who may or may not have been one of old Deuteronomy's children. There's some that believe that Munkustrap and Rum Tum Tugger are old Deuteronomy's children.

HRISHI: I can't take any of this seriously.

JOSH: Well, you should, you really should.

HRISHI: Alright. He was nominated for a Tony. Okay.

JOSH: But yeah. He's a song and dance man too...is our Roger Tribbey.

HRISHI: A lot of Broadway people get pulled in for guest roles on *The West Wing*.

JOSH: And there is a musical reference in this. Somebody gets the credits wrong in "Oklahoma" during the scene with Toby and these Democrats who wanted to help shape or push the direction of the State of the Union.

HRISHI: It's pretty bad. They're talking about the NEA. They said that...

[West Wing Episode 1.12 excerpt]

*BURNS: I don't know what to tell people when they say Rogers and Hard didn't need the NEA to write "Oklahoma!" and Arthur Murray didn't need the NEA to write "Death of a Salesman"!*  
[end excerpt]

HRISHI: You're really going to invoke these references and get the names wrong on both of them?

JOSH: Yeah, that's wrong. Arthur Murray's really wrong.

HRISHI: That's real bad.

JOSH: This moment stuck out to me and I thought, "wow, are we not in 2016?" There's this moment when CJ comes to speak to Leo and he knows immediately why she's there and he says, "it's going to break tomorrow" and she says something like...

[West Wing Episode 1.12 excerpt]

*CJ: Yeah. It's on the Internet right now.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Like, wait a minute. Was there a time when a story being on the Internet suggested that within the next 12 hours or so it's gonna go wild. I can't tell if that's ministrative of what the Internet was like back then or was it different then? Because I think once it's on the Internet, it's out. So quaint.

HRISHI: Yeah. Did you see...there was a pretty good shot of Gail's goldfish bowl because Danny's got his fingers in it.

JOSH: I'm quite sure that Gail's dead within the hour. And no offense to Danny's hygiene, but I don't think you want to put your big, dirty human hands into someone's goldfish bowl.

HRISHI: Yeah, I mean, how much does he care about this fish? He just sticks it right in there.

JOSH: Yeah, not a lie. And what do we find in Gail's goldfish bowl in this episode?

HRISHI: This time there's a podium with the Seal of the President on it. In honor of the State of the Union speech.

JOSH: And the color of the gravel?

HRISHI: It's red, white, and blue.

JOSH: Indeed it is, Hrishu.

HRISHI: There's a lot of kissing.

JOSH: There is a lot of kissing in this episode.

HRISHI: There is.

JOSH: Yeah. I used to say that there's never any sex on *The West Wing*. It takes place off-camera but you get a little snagging this episode. You...we get a Danny-CJ kiss. We get a Mallory-Sam kiss. And we get a President Bartlet-First Lady kiss.

HRISHI: I don't really get the Mallory-Sam stuff. Find that confusing. I feel that there's been so much great buildup of the tension and the dynamic between CJ and Danny and that kiss has so much more of a pay-off. Maybe this is how they play it in the show too, the Sam and Mallory thing is kind of the lighter version and inspired by that, CJ decides to make her move. And we spend much more time focused in that moment and building up to it and it's really quite sweet.

JOSH: I think you're right. We get this sort of comic-romantic spontaneous kiss from Mallory...

[West Wing Episode 1.12 excerpt]

*MALLORY: Sam! Did you write this statement defending my father?*

*SAM: Uh, yes.*

*(They kiss.)*

*SAM: Well, now I'm even more confused.*

*JOSH: Yes.*

*SAM: Though I've got to say, I'm enjoying being a writer.*

*TOBY: Yes.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: And you're right. That leads, or inspires, CJ to sort of, in her delightfully awkward way, make her move on Danny and that kiss and that connection lands in a more substantive, or important, way.

HRISHI: Yeah. I think it's not just that Sam and Mallory's kiss inspires CJ. There's this other pressure point that we get towards the beginning of this episode which is Mandy has this kind of a little bit of a flirtatious exchange with Danny. And CJ doesn't really appreciate it.

[West Wing Episode 1.12 excerpt]

*MANDY: It was very cute.*

*DANNY: So I grow the rest of the beard back?*

*MANDY: Yeah.*

*DANNY: Okay.*

*CJ: Hello.*

*MANDY: CJ, don't you think Danny looked very cute with the full beard?*

*CJ: I've actually never thought about it.*

*DANNY: Well, take your time.*

*CJ: What do you need?*

*DANNY: I just came by to see my fish.*

*CJ: The fish is fine and I need my office.*

*DANNY: I'm leaving?*

*CJ: Yes.*

*DANNY: Okay.*

*MANDY: Goodnight.*

*DANNY: Goodnight.*

[end excerpt]

*JOSH: She does not dig it.*

*HRISHI: It seems like, when Mandy tries to call her out on it...*

[West Wing Episode 1.12 excerpt]

*MANDY: CJ, it wouldn't kill you to be friendlier to him.*

*CJ: It doesn't seem to kill you.*

*MANDY: CJ.*

*CJ: What do you need?*

*MANDY: Are you kidding me?*

*CJ: Yes.*

*MANDY: CJ...*

*CJ: I was kidding.*

*MANDY: You sounded serious.*

*CJ: I'm very dry.*

[end excerpt]

*HRISHI: It's just...I don't buy it. I don't know if Mandy buys it either.*

*JOSH: No, nor do I. That definitely got under her skin and I think there's one more mention of it later,*

*HRISHI: Yes, exactly! Josh teases CJ.*

[West Wing Episode 1.12 excerpt]

*JOSH: You're jealous 'cause Danny was flirting with Mandy.*

*CJ: There are no lines.*  
[end excerpt]

HRISHI: There's some pressure on her to maybe make a move. To make it real.

JOSH: And she does.

HRISHI: Yeah. Or, well, she sets up the pieces. She doesn't actually knock over the first domino.

JOSH: That's true.

HRISHI: Uh, Danny's the one who...

JOSH: She leaves that to him.

[West Wing Episode 1.12 excerpt]

*CJ: I thought what I'd do is kiss you. You know, on the mouth, and then I'd just get past it. I'd just get past it and then I'd be able to give my work the kind of concentration it really deserves.*

*DANNY: Okay.*

*CJ: How's right here?*

*DANNY: That's fine.*

*CJ: Be careful of the fish.*

*DANNY: Sure.*

*CJ: No, I'm saying 'cause if you rock against the...*

*(They kiss.)*

*DANNY: How's that?*

*CJ: Oh, good.*

*DANNY: Past it?*

*CJ: Yeah.*

*DANNY: Good.*

*CJ: Okay, I've got to go now.*

*DANNY: CJ? Taking that fish with you?*

*CJ: No.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: I like that she leaves with the goldfish. It's a very cute moment. There's another thing I wrote down. It seems like thematically on some level, the issue is dealing with how we present ourselves. There's the State of the Union, which is: how is the President going to present himself to the nation and give an accounting of where we stand, how things are going. Leo is forced to give a press conference in which he has to make some sort of statement about his past and deal with something very uncomfortable publicly and there's also the speech being written for the President —

HRISHI: By Sam.

JOSH: — to make on Leo's behalf.

[West Wing Episode 1.12 excerpt]

*SAM: Oh, Leo. I wrote a draft of the President's statement of support. You might want to...*

*LEO: What did you do?*

*SAM: I wrote and drafted statement in support.*

*LEO: Who told you to do that?*

*SAM: The President's in no condition...*

*LEO: I know what condition he's in. I'm asking, who told you to write a statement of support?*

*JOSH: Toby told him to...*

*SAM: Nobody had to tell me. You're about to get attacked. It's what I do.*

*LEO: No, your job isn't to protect me, Sam. It's to protect the President.*

*SAM: Leo...*

*LEO: Do me a favor, Sam. Don't show initiative. Don't rush to my defense. I don't want to see you on "Crossfire". I don't want to see you on "Larry King". I don't want to read your name in "Newsweek" unless it is in advocacy of the President's agenda. I go down, I go down. I'm not taking anyone with me. Is that clear?*

*SAM: Yes, sir.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And then there's a scene later...

[West Wing Episode 1.12 excerpt]

*LEO: You did it again.*

*JOSH: Leo.*

*LEO: You did it again.*

*JOSH: I understand your being pissed off... LEO: Has the President seen it?*

*JOSH: Yes, and he...*

*LEO: Who gave it to him?*

*JOSH: Leo...*

*LEO: WHO gave it it him?*

*SAM AND JOSH: I did.*

*LEO: What, you're giving me Abbott and Costello?*

*SAM: I did.*

*LEO: I told you...*

*SAM: They want to tear you down, plain and simple. They don't like you, so this is what they do. And for us not to defend you...I disobeyed you and I apologize. But that's the way it is.*

*BONNIE: Leo? The First Lady's in your office.*

*LEO: Thank you. This is not what I wanted.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: I was with Leo on that. It really wasn't the right thing to do. Josh and Sam and their insistence on doing the exact opposite of what Leo has asked them to do.

HRISHI: Oh yeah? Do you watch Game of Thrones?

JOSH: I do.

HRISHI: Leo reminds me a lot of Jorah Mormont.

JOSH: And President Bartlet is Khaleesi.

HRISHI: He's Khaleesi! Exactly.

[Game of Thrones Episode 2.07 excerpt]

*MORMONT: Forgive me, Khaleesi. No one can survive in this world without help. No one. Let me help you. Please. Tell me how.*

*KHALEESI/DAENERYS: Find my dragons.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: I like this. Go with this. I like this a lot.

HRISHI: Yeah, he's like an older, grizzled veteran who's seen a lot of action and he knows how to fight battles and I love that he says, "if I go down, I go down. I'm not taking anyone with me." and that's his principle objection about Sam's statement for the President. The statement of support. And that's really noble and a lovely thing...selfless stance for Leo to take. But I don't

think that it's necessarily right. I think that Josh and Sam and the President are justified in saying, "no, we're going to give this guy every single inch of support that we can."

JOSH: Eh...I like that Leo was righteously pissed and I was with him on this. "Enough with saying one thing and then doing whatever you think is right! I told you how I wanted this to be handled. It really was my call to make. Enough with the then running out and doing your goody-two-shoes thing that you think is what I really want. I told you what I really wanted." I don't know. It pissed *me* off.

HRISHI: Couldn't an argument be made that protecting Leo does protect the President? Because if Leo goes down, then the President might not be as effective at his job if he doesn't have his Chief of Staff, if he doesn't have his best friend as his Chief of Staff, his most trusted advisor.

JOSH: I suppose. But here's the thing: they didn't stay and make that argument. They just told him one thing, and they left and they decided, "We know best" and they did whether it was based on that argument or something else, they just did what they wanted to do. And also, we don't see the President making a statement. But there could be a real price to pay depending on what he said for supporting Leo, depending on how the public takes it. So yeah, I think Leo's not necessarily completely off here; he may be right that there's some serious damage to come and he would like to deflect it from the President.

HRISHI: But I feel like there's some President established. That, whether it's right or not, it's not what these guys do. That they will always have each other's backs. They're not gonna just abandon — you know, Leo's kind of giving them a "save yourselves" kind of command and they're just doing this to disobey him.

JOSH: Yeah.

HRISHI: I like it.

JOSH: There we go. This just points to a distinction between the two of us.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Yeah. It's not I can't see how you possibly like that. To me, it just annoyed me. Okay, fine. So if I can't ever have a conversation with you where you swear you think we're on the same page or you think you're don't something even though you don't really want to do it, and I've told you, I outrank you. You've never just going to do that? This is the point where I would fire you. Like, come on. But that's not the ethos of The West Wing. In the end it's like, "Awww, glad you did that. Thanks for not listening to me. I was just, ehhhh."

HRISHI: I was just trying to take the path that was noble and selfless, And you took a path that was noble because we're a team. We're a team and we're a family and you don't abandon each other.

JOSH: Cue oboe.

HRISHI: Yes, I am the oboe of this podcast.

JOSH: Right. And I'm the silent Fade to Black.

HRISHI: Exactly. You're the Flentl.



JOSH: I'm the Flentl. Now you've got me all with this Khaleesi thing. I just desperately...tell me there's an episode, since I don't remember anything, where President Bartlet emerges from a burning yurt, his clothes having been blazed off of him, in all of his nakedness. That probably doesn't happen.

HRISHI: That was in the, um, the controversial Isaac and Ishmael episode.

JOSH: Oh, let's not get ahead of ourselves.

HRISHI: But you know what I mean by the Jorah Mormont kind of thing?

JOSH: Yeah, absolutely, I do.

HRISHI: I feel kind of like, everything about John Spencer. Such perfect casting. I love that about Leo. He seems like a gladiator to me, or like a retired boxer or something like that. That he's just been, he's a guy who has fought all the battles.

JOSH: It's a very good parallel. Like there's also a moment, that moment in the Oval between President Bartlet and Roger Tribbey with Leo just outside the door...

HRISHI: Ah, my favorite.

JOSH: And I think, hearing, in fact, what he has to say. He describes what you want as your Chief of Staff and it would be a fine description of Jorah Mormont as well.

HRISHI: Yeah.

[West Wing Episode 1.12 excerpt]

*BARTLET: You've got a best friend?*

*TRIBBEY: Yes, sir.*

*BARTLET: Is he smarter than you?*

*TRIBBEY: Yes, sir.*

*BARTLET: Would you trust him with your life?*

*TRIBBEY: Yes, sir.*

*BARTLET: That's your Chief of Staff.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: So sweet. But I'm not sure that there's a ton in this episode that lends itself to deep critical analysis.

JOSH: So let's do more trivial stuff. I'm not telling you this...

HRISHI: Did you say, Tribbey-al stuff?

JOSH: Bah boom! That's what I'm saying.

HRISHI: Tribbeys! Come.

JOSH: There's a moment. Just before the President walks off to give the State of the Union. He's addressing the troops in the Mural Room. This is just a tiny little moment. But I'm telling you, there is a moment there, when we're seeing Allison and Richard, not CJ and Toby. They're laughing. It's hard to tell, she's kind of pointing at him and I'm telling you from knowing them, that's not two characters; that's Allison and Richard laughing at something. It's just a quick little hit and then they don't give us enough to see what one of them did to the other to make them both laugh, but that's them being them.

HRISHI: I really want to see this.

JOSH: I'm going to make you watch this. Wanna see what you think.

[West Wing Episode 1.12 excerpt]

*BARTLET: Friends, let me have your attention please. A lot of time, energy, passion, wit, skill, and talent went into this and while you might not know it from my performance later, it is an extraordinary speech and I say thee, yea, Toby Ziegler and I say thee yea, Sam Seaborn!*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Oh!

JOSH: Do you see it? I'm telling you, even its inclusion suggests to me that they just got this great, genuine laugh like you gotta stick it in anyway. I'm not even sure how it plays.

HRISHI: It is...just after the 40-minute mark.

JOSH: Take a look at it, people. Take a look at it and weigh in. Maybe I'm crazy.

HRISHI: It's after he says this really weird line of "I say thee yea" I don't know...

JOSH: What?

HRISHI: Yeah, what is that?

JOSH: It's that thing, where you cut two...from "Animal House"; he's on a roll.

[Animal House excerpt]

*BLUTO: What? Did you say over? Nothing is over until we decide it is! Was it over when the Germans bombed Pearl Harbor? Hell, no!*

*OTTER: Germans?*

*BOON: Forget it. He's rolling.*

*BLUTO: And it ain't over now!*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: What we've got...now it's just like, I don't know. He's getting all worked up, like, I want someone to turn to the other way and just, "what the \*bleep\* is he talking about?" And that's when he's on a roll.

HRISHI: I say thee yay? Is that from something?

JOSH: I think it's from West Wing now, I don't know. I don't know. I think it's just mish-moshy weirdness. It's just something Aaron can get away with. I had another scene that I wish they hadn't played music under.

HRISHI: Oh yeah? What's that?

JOSH: It's the scene about the changing of the line. Where Josh and Toby come in and talk to President Bartlet about taking out, or changing, modifying, this whole "the era of the government is over."

[West Wing Episode 1.12 excerpt]

*TOBY: We have to say what we feel. That government, no matter what its failures in the past and in times to come, for that matter. Government can be a place where people come together and where no one gets left behind. No one...gets left behind. An instrument of good. I have no trouble understanding why the line tested well, Josh. But I don't think that means we should say it. I think that means we should change it.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: This is another one. And again, this isn't a crack on the music itself. The music is beautiful. I just feel, as I often do, that the writing is so good and it's all there and the moment will play out and land with greater import if the music didn't take it into a slightly schmaltzy area. And you know, ehh, I didn't need that.

HRISHI: I don't even really get the point of that scene. Like, the whole conflict there, about the era about how the era of Big Government is over. Like, so Toby is saying despite all these Democrats saying, "yeah, let's abandon this piece of platform," like, the big moment is him saying, "hey, let's actually say that we do believe in government." Like, does that even merit the playing of the oboe?

JOSH: No, I agree with you actually. I think you're right. I think in this circumstance it's more like, making too much of a meal out of something.

HRISHI: Yes, that's a great way of putting it. Yeah, he says we're running away from ourselves and we've had some serious conflict in previous episodes where the administration has to take a position that is more practical than idealistic. They have to abandon their ideals a little bit for the sake expediency. And those have played out so well and have been really interesting, but here, the thing they're running away from is the era of Big Government is over. It's such an abstract concept to begin with, it's sort of a meaningless, toothless platitude to start with, and then for Toby to be like, "ah, I figured it out! We shouldn't say that."

JOSH: And then it is treated as if he has an epiphany. In that scene, he stops mid-sentence.

[West Wing Episode 1.12 excerpt]

*TOBY: It was called the WPA and it was Roosevelt's...it was Roosevelt's...*

*BURNS: Toby?*

*TOBY: Yeah.*

*BURNS: You stopped talking in the middle of a...*

*TOBY: Thank you, everybody. This meeting's over.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Right, because he remembers. He remembers FDR.

JOSH: Yeah, like, "wait a minute - FDR!"

HRISHI: WPA...FDR...WTF...LOL...OMG

JOSH: Yeah, yeah. That might be a subplot.

HRISHI: Didn't work. Didn't work for me.

JOSH: Yeah, it didn't. I mean, I think it's trying to feed into the greater, full season theme, or plot line, of President Bartlet, the left-leaning progressive who's steered to the middle to win the presidency and even a year in, is hesitant to get back into that left lane. So I think that's the idea. He's still saying the sort of, that line is kind of a GOP mantra maybe...too much government and so the idea that it's inclusion, I guess, is kind of a hat tip to people who are more conservative or too Republican to the Moderates, and that moving it or modifying it is sort of getting his groove back?

HRISHI: Yeah, but it's a pretty...that's a pretty weak groove.

JOSH: Yeah. I agree.

HRISHI: How about the President not knowing what echinacea is?

JOSH: Right? Or is he just making a joke?

HRISHI: Is he making a joke? He says...

[West Wing Episode 1.12 excerpt]

*BARTLET: Vitamin C, Vitamin B. Is it possible I'm taking something called euthanasia?*

*SAM: It's Echinacea.*

*BARTLET: Ah, that sounds more like it.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Ah, that's right.

HRISHI: It's strange. Why doesn't he take the flu more seriously if it's potentially life-threatening? Why wouldn't he take a damn Ibuprofen?

JOSH: You know, you're not wrong. And that speaks to a little, for me, a bubbling undercurrent of this episode, which is, "yeah, I love him. Yeah, I support him." But he's not being super responsible in deciding not to divulge this very serious medical condition that may have played a serious part in the general direction had people known. So I think you really could dig into the

question of whether this guy's not being honest about a very important issue. And on top of it, you're right. He's not taking care of himself the way he ought to.  
HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: And even his official doctors don't know? I mean, "Step out of the room while my wife takes care of me because she knows my actual..."

HRISHI: Well, we have established his precedent with the back pills...back pain scene where he doesn't want to take his pills because they make him goofy.

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: He's stubborn about taking care of himself in that way. But it's one thing if it's like, "oh, I don't want to take the Percocet or the Vicodin because I can handle the pain." It's another thing to be like, "I don't feel like taking something that's going to fight this cold. But if I don't, we could be invoking the 25th Amendment."

JOSH: Right. And this is an episode where he actually is in the Sit Room at one point and making important decisions and if he's fallen to the floor at that moment...

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: ...he'd have a different situation in the Situation Room. This is high stakes.

HRISHI: That, to me, doesn't feel as strongly plotted and really thought-out as the kiss between CJ and Danny.

JOSH: Hm.

HRISHI: Which has had episodes to build up and, you know, we've been able to marinate and appreciate it from so many sides. And he's got MS. And he doesn't take care of himself or anything. He fainted. It's the, what the opposite of D.S.X. Machina, the \*bleep\* Machina.

JOSH: \*Bleep\* Machina. Yeah, think so. That's it.

HRISHI: Okay.

JOSH: Getting punchy over there on Friday.

HRISHI: I guess so. I think the thing is, I'm sick. I'm a little under the weather.

JOSH: Take your pill pack.

HRISHI: I went and I got a little thing of Echinacea and zinc to try and get over my cold faster. I don't know if you can tell from the sound of my voice but I have to do an interview on the radio for the Australian version of NPR here. And I was like, well better take some medicine to try and make sure that I don't sound too bad and that I'm alert. I'm not in the Situation Room, you know, talking about moving troops.

JOSH: And you take care of yourself.

HRISHI: Exactly!

JOSH: You care enough about this podcast.

HRISHI: Exactly. Can the President at least care enough about the country as we do about this podcast? That's all I ask for.

JOSH: Well, here's a couple of little things that I think are, although done seamlessly, are Aaron. We're getting a little bit of Aaron throughout this episode. The discussion of the NEA.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: And these Democrats that would like to remove any mention of it, well certainly any mention of increasing its funding...I know that speaks to Aaron and I like that he included, you know, that he spoke through Toby.

TOBY: The national endowment allows a 1/100th of a percent of the total budget for the federal government costs tax payers 39 cents a year. The Arts Budget for the United States is equivalent to the Arts Budget of Sweden.

JOSH: This is a nice little seamless working of Aaron's viewpoint into characters and I think President Bartlet is standing in for Aaron when he discusses daytime TV.

[West Wing Episode 1.12 excerpt]

BARTLET: I don't understand. Don't any of these characters have jobs?

CHARLIE: I don't know, Mr. President. I think one of them is a surgeon.

BARTLET: They seem to have a lot of free time in the middle of the day.

(Phone rings.)

CHARLIE: Hello?

BARTLET: And that woman's changed her clothes a lot for one afternoon.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: That made me laugh. It's actually very funny.

HRISHI: Well let's take a break to thank our sponsors and then when we come back, we'll do some music.

[ad break]

JOSH: We're back. So, we reached out. And we asked people to send us their versions of the West Wing song. Taking *The West Wing* theme and adding lyrics to it.

HRISHI: Yeah, we'd heard a lot of people came up with their own lyrics and they sang the cast's name, they had a little version of the theme. So they sent in some recordings and we put together a little super-cut that we're going to play now.

JOSH: A five, six, seven, eight...

[ *The West Wing* Intro Plays]

The West Wing

Some of it is in Latin

You are champions of smart Rapport Charlie and CJ, Toby too

Richard Schiff is bald

Bradley Whitford and Martin Sheen Inside

And will Donna and Josh do stuff to each other

[ *End of Music* ]

HRISHI: Thanks to everybody who sent in themes. That was Neil, Robert, Cheryl, Courtney, Lee, Simon, and Chris. Thanks so much for sending in those.

JOSH: That was a treat.

HRISHI: And that's our episode.

JOSH: Thanks for listening and we hope you'll join us next time.

HRISHI: We're going to be joined by Senator Bob Casey of Pennsylvania and by Liza Weil, who guest-stars in the next episode.

JOSH: And in the meantime, if you have comments or questions, you can discuss this episode with us and with the other listeners at [thewestwingweekly.com](http://thewestwingweekly.com) or on our Facebook page: [facebook.com/TheWestWingWeekly](https://facebook.com/TheWestWingWeekly) .

HRISHI: You can also find us on Twitter. I'm @HriskyHirway and Josh is @JoshMalina. And the show is @TheWestWingWeekly.

JOSH: Okay.

HRISHI: Okay.

JOSH: What's next?

[OUTRO MUSIC]