

The West Wing Weekly
1.16: 20 Hours in LA

[Intro Music]

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

JOSH: And I'm Joshua Malina.

HRISHI: Today, we are talking about Season 1, Episode 16 "*20 Hours in LA*."

JOSH: It was written by Aaron Sorkin. It was directed by Alan Taylor and I'm really excited. It's going to be the last one for this particular month in this year.

[laughter]

JOSH: It first aired on February 23, 2000.

HRISHI: In the United States, the most common pronunciation is *feb-you-air-ee*. Both Merriam-Webster and American Heritage consider the common pronunciation correct, along with the less common, more traditional *feb-roo-air-ee*.

JOSH: I'm very comfortable with being considered less common and more traditional.

HRISHI: Yeah. That's not a bad thing.

JOSH: That said, I'm not that good at pronouncing it that way. Maybe I ought to just go with *feb-you-air-ee*.

HRISHI: Well, you nailed it on take one.

JOSH: That's just because I gave up.

[laughter]

JOSH: I conceded.

HRISHI: Let me read the NBC synopsis. "President Bartlet and several of his staff head to Los Angeles for whirlwind visit that is topped off by a star-studded fundraiser hosted by a wealthy film honcho who threatens to cancel the bash unless Bartlet announces his opposition to a congressional bill banning gays in the military. Back in Washington, Leo tries to convince stubborn Vice President Hoynes to break the senate voting deadlock over an ethanol tax credit favored by the White House. Elsewhere, Josh learns that feisty campaign manager Joey Lucas is staying in his Los Angeles Hotel and he eagerly anticipates seeing her again. The President takes a meeting where he is warned about not supporting an amendment banning flag burning and checks up on secret service security for his daughter Zoe and is unafraid to close down the restaurant where she is lunching."

JOSH: Wow. You nailed it in one . . . before we get too much further, let me say that in a classic quid pro quo, I'm guessing this is in revenge for what I did last episode – we were recording and it was so hot in my office that I took my shirt off – you have now taken off our shirt.

[laughter]

JOSH: Instead of quid pro quo, perhaps I should have said tit-for-tat.

HRISHI: [more laughter]. Not tit-for-tit?

JOSH: Yes. And you have freed your nipples and I'll be staring at them for the next hour and a half.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Let me just add, you look good.

HRISHI: Well, thanks, thanks.

JOSH: You take care of yourself and I appreciate it.

HRISHI: I learned from you to make sure the camera stays above the navel.

JOSH: What did you think of this episode?

HRISHI: I like this episode.

JOSH: I really like this episode.

HRISHI: Oh, okay.

JOSH: I think I'm starting to learn something about the extent of my fandom or the nature or the flavor of my fandom. I actually like the big event, dramatic, huge episodes, for sure. *In Excelsis Deo*, I really like *Take This Sabbath Day*. But I think I have a particular Jones for the less showy, here's just how we grind out a week episodes.

HRISHI: Yes. So that means you're with me.

JOSH: I guess so. I'm with Her. I'm with Him. I'm with Her and Him.

HRISHI: However, this episode on IMDB, compared to *Celestial Navigation* which got a 9.0, 8.1.

JOSH: 8.1. I think in both my appreciation for this series and my approach to the word "February," I'm less common and more traditional.

HRISHI: Before we get into the episode, I want to talk about a couple of things. Sometimes we get comments from listeners; often I would say, questioning why we didn't talk about something that happens in an episode where something in a future episode might contradict it or inform it or somehow change our reading this time around. And, as we've discussed before, we have some listeners who have never seen the show and they're watching for the first time in conjunction with us. But even separate from that, I think there is something to the idea of having a viewing of each episode where we take it on its face value and we talk about it in terms of the information that we have. So if something comes up later that is going to contradict or inform or change the reading of that particular episode, we will deal with it then and not now.

JOSH: Maybe we need a five things you need to know about the podcast. Because we've certainly made clear before our no spoilers approach to our podcast; that we assume that the listener has only listened through the episode being discussed. There's got to be four other things we can warn people about.

HRISHI: [laughter] Nipples.

JOSH: Yes, exactly.

HRISHI: There's four things to be worried about right there.

JOSH: So the first thing is no spoilers. The last four things are if you come to a live taping, you might see our nipples. Boom. Done. Five things you should know.

HRISHI: There's something that happens in this episode that will later be contradicted and I know people are going to say how come you didn't talk about that thing and I'm going to say because that thing hasn't happened yet. One thing that I will talk about that hasn't happened yet; this episode is called *20 Hours in LA* and for a second I got confused when I was looking things up about it because there is an episode to come later, another great episode of *The West Wing*, maybe one of the classic ones, called *20 Hours in America* .

JOSH: Oh, that's right.

HRISHI: There is a little bit of recycling that happens in Sorkin things. There is a famous episode titled *What Kind of Day Has it Been* which is an episode, the finale of Season One coming up, but it was also an episode title for the finale in *Sports Night* .

JOSH: I want to say he used it for *Studio 60* and/or *Newsroom* also. 3

HRISHI: That's right. He's used it four times. In this episode, we've got Bob Balaban as a guest star playing Ted Marcus.

JOSH: Great actor. Great character actor.

HRISHI: I love Bob Balaban, and here, I'm pretty sure Ted Marcus is supposed to be David Geffen.

JOSH: I was going to say I believe he is a stand in for Geffen and he and David Geffen bear a striking similarity and resemblance. No?

HRISHI: I've never really seen or heard that much of David Geffen myself, so I don't know. But I really like, regardless of what David Geffen is really like, I really like the way that Bob Balaban played this character or underplayed, I should say.

JOSH: Yeah. He had the insouciance of a man of wealth and power.

HRISHI: Ha ha. Here is something I think is interesting in terms of consistency: Way back in episode 5: *The Crackpots and These Women* , there's a reference to a fundraiser in LA that the Bartlet administration is supposed to respond to because they are going to go to California and Mandy brings up this fundraiser. It's being thrown by a guy named Larry Posner who is a filmmaker and there is an issue there because the President has just made a criticism about violence in Hollywood and in the entertainment industry. Do you remember that?

JOSH: I remember taking him at the time to be maybe a Brett Ratner kind of guy just because Posner and Rattner sound similar but . . .

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: And there was an objection to the type of movies that he made, yes?

HRISHI: Right. And there is a parallel there, you know, after Columbine in '99, President Bill Clinton came out and criticized the entertainment industry for violence, you know, the depiction of violence in the movies. And David Geffen, he was a huge Bill Clinton supporter, he took offense at that, I think, saying that actually the Clinton administration hadn't done enough about gun control. So the Clinton statement happened in April. In May of 1999, all the Dreamworks guys had a fundraiser for President Clinton. So it's really similar here where in episode 5, the President criticizes Hollywood and then here they are throwing him a fundraiser, despite that. They say even in episode 5, are we going to go to this fundraiser even though we just criticized them. Isn't it hypocritical? And they're like no, we can do both. And that reflects reality too.

JOSH: We've been urged by multiple people, not that my inclination or our inclination, I should say is not to respond to every comment. Well, it would be impossible to respond to every comment that we get because we have a robust and prolific audience that weighs in on our website. But several people on several issues have urged us to look more for the parallels to the Clinton administration. One notable instance that several people have picked up on is what I consider a big miss, especially for me because I'm a lot older than you. "*The era of big government is over*", that quote having actually been a quote from President Clinton's '96 State of the Union.

[Excerpt from President Clinton's 1996 State of the Union]

CLINTON: The Era of big government is over, but we cannot go back to the time when our citizens were left to fend for themselves.

[End excerpt]

JOSH: That was big miss on that one.

HRISHI: That was in *He Shall From Time to Time*.

JOSH: *He Shall From Time to Time*, indeed . Big shout out to those people. There were a lot of elements to early West Wing episodes that are either reflective of, or sometimes in response to, parallels in the Clinton terms. In fact, when we were doing the live podcast with our friends at 538, Eli Attie, early guest on our own podcast, joined us onstage and talked about polling and what it meant to the Bartlet administration and how that reflected on, and in some ways was a response to, the Clinton administration's use of polling data.

HRISHI: And so, back into this episode though. Now we've got Ted Marcus and he has an objection about the President's stance or lack of stance on House Resolution 973 banning gays in the military which is actually something that was an issue between, again, in real life between President Clinton and David Geffen. David Geffen who had been responsible for raising literally millions of dollars for President Clinton felt like he had some right to be able to express his displeasure and he was publically displeased with Don't Ask, Don't Tell.

JOSH: I also, sorry, I got distracted because it occurs to me, I hate to let any potential commentary on the naming of names go by; Ted Marcus reminds me very much of Sorkin actor Ted Marcoux who played Lt. Kendrick in the original Broadway production of *A Few Good Men* and will appear in an episode soon as Major Tate in the *Let Barlet Be Barlet* episode and I contend that Ted Marcoux; his name anyway, is the inspiration for the name Ted Marcus.

HRISHI: We need to ask Aaron still about Josh Lyman and Josh Malina and if there's any inspiration there.

JOSH: I think he'll say "*I don't know.*" And every time I see the name C. J. Cregg, I think of Clark Gregg. I think . . . yeah, there's a big creative mish mash factory in Aaron Sorkin's head and lots of subconscious stuff happens there that I think if you pinned him down on, he'd say "*I don't really know.*" But we'll ask him.

HRISHI: Yeah. What was your favorite part of this episode? 5

JOSH: My favorite part of this episode? You are really, really, putting me on the spot. I liked all the elements really. If I had to pick one, I liked the way the storyline and plot line of the VP played out. It was a little bit unexpected. It was kind of, I think, sophisticated and surprising and very credible in terms of it sort of real politics; the inner workings of how this kind of thing might play out. It wasn't a very TV denouement, but it seemed like a very believable, credible way for it to play out among this group.

HRISHI: Yeah. And I like the way that the story is told. Again, we get bits and pieces of it as the episode starts. We don't know exactly what the issue is with the Vice President, we just hear the President and Leo talking about something. The President says:

[West Wing Episode 1.16 Excerpt]

PRESIDENT BARTLET: I don't like putting him in this position.

LEO: I know.

PRESIDENT BARTLET: I just didn't want you to think I was getting any pleasure for putting him in this position.

LEO: He knew the vote was going to be tight.

[End Excerpt]

HRISHI: And we know that it's about ethanol, but in fact we don't even know explicitly that they're talking about the Vice President, of course, unless, as most of our listeners probably would know, that it's the Vice President who has to cast a vote when there's a 50/50 tie in the Senate.

JOSH: As the President of the Senate.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: And how often does that happen? Once a . . . once a presidency?

HRISHI: That's a good question. Let me look it up. Okay, here we go. It's happened 244 times in the past. It has happened a lot.

JOSH: More than I realized.

HRISHI: Yeah, 244 times. When George W. Bush was President, Vice President Cheney cast 8 tie-breaking votes.

JOSH: I think they just did that so that he could make all the decisions.

HRISHI. Right [laughing]

JOSH: We gotta get it 50/50 so Cheney can decide.

HRISHI: Well that goes, speaks to something that happens in this episode where before the resolution, Hoynes thinks that he's been set up and that seems like a really crazy bit of paranoia. He says *I think you guys set me up*. Leo says *You think the President can arrange for a 50/50 tie in the Senate ?* I mean that would be a pretty remarkable vote whipping and a risky gamble, especially just to, like, show up your Vice President. But Hoynes believes it. He says:

[West Wing Episode 1.16 Excerpt]

VICE PRESIDENT HOYNES: I think the President of the United States can do pretty much whatever he wants.

[End Excerpt]

HRISHI: You know what my favorite part is? I think . . . I think . . .

JOSH: Oh, it was a set up. It was a set up. What's your favorite part, so I can tell you mine. I should have smelled it.

HRISHI: It was, but not in a sinister way. JOSH: Alright.

HRISHI: I really liked the President and Ted Marcus kind of going at it finally. Their confrontation . . . I like when the President gets steamed up. I love seeing Martin Sheen you know, let it go a little bit and raise his volume.

JOSH: Yeah. And actually, just also substantively that was an interesting discussion because, I mean it had me just thinking about the power of money in politics.

HRISHI: Yep.

JOSH: I mean, he's alone in the room with the President for ten minutes because he's rich and that's it. HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: And so he gets his say, but President Bartlet is also bridling under the idea that he has got to be in this room and he's got to listen to this guy and there's a point at which his real message is you know, you support me, you've got to trust me and let me explain to you why your idea would be the worst of all worlds. Whether or not you agree with him, he has an argument to make and his buttons get pushed and he makes it very vehemently.

HRISHI: Yeah. I think Ted Marcus is being a little bit temperamental here saying you aren't coming out in opposition to this bill and the President says:

[West Wing Episode 1.16 Excerpt]

PRESIDENT BARTLET: Right now, right this second, the worst thing that could possibly happen to gay rights in this country is for me to put that thing on the debating table, which is what happens the minute I open my mouth.

[End Excerpt]

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: I like the left turn that happens in the middle of it too, where the President is yelling and Ted Marcus says okay, you're right and Martin Sheen keeps going and his volume is still elevated.

JOSH: I'm not done yet.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: Speaking of money and what it can get you, there's a pretty creepy line when they're in the party and this guy comes to talk to CJ to offer her a development deal and he says

[West Wing Episode 1.16 Excerpt]

MARK: CJ, I was wondering if my money buys me a few words alone with you.

TOBY: Throw in a box of chocolates and a pair of nylons— get you a lot more than that.

[End Excerpt]

JOSH: Oh, Toby.

HRISHI: Gross.

JOSH: I don't know, that doesn't seem like the Toby-est line.

HRISHI: Yeah. Yeah.

JOSH: It doesn't seem overly Tobian. I thought also during that or during the subsequent discussion about development deal and Sam's reveal that he has also been offered a development deal at this party and both of them are non-plussed. They're not even sure what that means. It's another example of Aaron . . . and it works for me, this is not a criticism. I didn't bump on it. It's not like I didn't buy it from CJ and Sam, but it's Aaron just like, now I'm going to do a little comic riff on suits, on studio suits and their vapidness, if that's a word for vapidness.

HRISHI: That's great. I also really like the opposite of the vapidness of David Hasselhoff when he comes, when they pan across the party they are moving through the party and you hear David Hasselhoff saying

[West Wing Episode 1.16 Excerpt]

DAVID: If there's a bedrock principle underlying the First Amendment, it's that the government cannot prohibit expression of an idea simply because it is disagreeable. Justice William Brennan, writing for the majority.

[End Excerpt]

JOSH: That was funny, but all I could think of was oh, pre-floor hamburger David Hasselhoff. These were better times.

HRISHI: Yeah. I'll tell you my least favorite part was – this is a little thing. I mean that thing about Toby's line about the nylons, I was like yuh. But my least favorite joke in the episode was when Joey Lucas and Josh are talking and she says:

[West Wing Episode 1.16 Excerpt]

JOEY: *Vox populi, vox Dei*

JOSH: *The voice of the people is the voice of a dog?*

JOEY: *The voice of God, Joshua*

JOSH: *God.*

[End Excerpt]

HRISH: That's silly.

JOSH: That didn't really track for me either.

HRISHI: Yeah. This is a rare clunker of a joke.

JOSH: I didn't mind it because it seemed like Brad wasn't funny.

HRISHI: [laughing]

JOSH: And that did work for me.

HRISHI: And also what worked for me is all the Joey Lucas / Josh stuff. This is the second appearance of Joey Lucas and her chemistry with Josh is electric.

JOSH: Yes. They do make a very cute couple and I liked that I liked the rom-commy reveal when he finally gets up the courage as he has been encouraged to do by Donna, despite clearly her desire, her clear desire to be with him herself, he goes and at 1:00 a.m. and rings her doorbell and John de Lancie, who plays . . .

HRISHI: Al Kieffer.

JOSH: Al Kieffer, thank you – answers the door and he realizes that they are romantically involved. So help me here. Let's do my usual, I don't really know what's going on thing. First of all, John de Lancie, fantastic actor from the *Star Trek Universe*, um, I know that a little bit, I know that he was incredibly brilliant in *Breaking Bad*.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Amazing arc and just wonderful acting there. But, who was he in *Star Trek*?

HRISHI: I believe he played Q.

JOSH: He's no red shirt, I know that. Oh, Yeah Q. Right.

HRISHI: This is one of the episodes I have actually seen.

JOSH: Oh. There you go.

HRISHI: Years ago. But yeah, he played Q, who's sort of like a Loki kind of figure, I think.

JOSH: Low key? [Laughter] Now I'm pretending I get no cultural references.

HRISHI: I don't remember much about it. I feel like the character is like time traveling, like mischief maker or something like that.

JOSH: Wait, the Al Kieffer is?

HRISHI: Q. Yeah [laughing] Al Kieffer.

JOSH: Oh, okay. Now I got completely. I thought I completely misunderstood the episode. Now I see what you are saying, the *Star Trek* guy Q, yes. But Al Kieffer is a pollster, as well?

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Apparently a lesser pollster, because we find out in the Joey Lucas scene that she has further information or more telling, more well-worded polling data about the whole flag burning issue. Here was one of my questions in the earlier scene in the Mexican restaurant where they make guacamole by the table, which I want to say was inspired by the old Hamm Gardens in Westwood where they made a lovely guacamole by your table and I think Aaron frequented that restaurant. During that scene John de Lancie, time traveling, mischief maker, pollster Al Kieffer is vehement that President Bartlet should just sign off on the no flag burning amendment, right, because his polling data suggests that it's a done deal. It's going to happen, it's what the people want, so he should get ahead of it. So a couple of things that occurred to me – do pollsters get that worked up about what their clients do with the data? As I was watching this scene I was thinking why doesn't he just present the data and then have some guacamole and leave. He's really worked up like "you've got to do this because of this" and so I guess it's a question of how firmly embedded you are in the team. In other words, if you're like a team person, you're kind of on the staff and I'm your polling guy, Mr. President I really think you should do this because the data suggests that. He kind of felt to me like the kind of guy who should just be presenting the data and then let the senior staff do with it what they may.

HRISHI: Right. I guess I got the sense that he wanted to join the team; that he was lobbying for a position as an advisor or to come on as a pollster, but I guess he is just kind of playing his whole hand in the restaurant there. They were like okay great, we've got it. Even if they were going to go with his advice they might be like thanks very much for your help, see you later. But it seemed more like he, I took it as him pitching them on the start of this thing that he wants to explore and then he is sort of proving that he should be a trusted advisor for them. He says:

[West Wing Episode 1.16 Excerpt]

AL: Because of guys like me, you get to know the results before anybody else does.

[End Excerpt]

JOSH: Right. He feels that he could be steering Bartlet towards a big win and that could make him, I guess, invaluable in the future.

HRISHI: Yeah. So Al Kieffer seems to be someone whom none of these people take seriously, even before we meet him we get the sense that none of them take him seriously. And then later when Josh is talking to Joey Lucas it seems like she doesn't take him that seriously either. She's like I've got better data and all that leads me to wonder how believable is it that someone as smart and beautiful and talented as Joey Lucas would end up with Al Kieffer.

JOSH: Yeah. Well, I certainly . . . look, the ways of love. If any two men know this. No, I don't know what that would be. I was going to say you and I, Hrishi, you and I. No, we are married to lovely women. That wouldn't play well at home or abroad.

HRISHI: We both know what it's like to have women better than ourselves fall for our traps.

JOSH: There you go. That's what I'm saying. That's it. Thank you. That's what I was in my awkward way trying to work towards. Right, one could reasonably ask of these women we've married what they were thinking so the ways of love can be blind. So I didn't think . . . yeah, I definitely had a moment where I was disappointed in Joey. Oh, Joey, Joey.

HRISHI: And she seems disappointed in herself. So one of the things, you know, the chemistry between Josh and Joey Lucas is great at the party, but it's especially great. I love the looks that they exchange while Al Kieffer is standing right there. There's so much subtext to just the looks that they give each other and it really seems like Joey Lucas is saying I know, I can't believe I've done this myself. You're obviously a better guy. We have a thing going. I'm sorry. You know, like . . .

JOSH: I agree with you; in a sense there's a whole second scene going on and it's beautifully played. The scene is great among all three, but there is this beautiful silent scene between a deaf actor or a hearing-impaired actor and one that is not that is played silently and beautifully between Marley Matlin and Bradley Whitford. You're right. It's sweet and well realized, that scene.

HRISHI: Yeah, and it seemed like we were all disappointed in Joey, including Joey.

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: We're going to take a quick break to pay the bills, then we'll be back.

[ad break]

JOSH: Should we talk about flag burning? I've never quite gotten the whole thing about flag burning. I can understand being personally offended by it, but it seems so— the flag so obviously symbolizes the kind of democracy that allows you to burn that symbol. It seems like— I never understand when people get so worked up about it or I understand when people get worked up about it but I never can quite understand while people want to legislate it.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: When I was eleven years old. In the late 70's, I was a yeshiva student, I remember the Nazis – the American National Socialist Party wanted to march in Skokie, Illinois and it seemed obvious to me then. I was completely disgusted by it as a kid but that's free speech.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: I've never understood this whole movement to legislate against flag burning or burning the American Flag.

HRISHI: Right. It makes me think of the line you know, I disapprove of what you say, but I'll defend to the death your right to say it. That's what we get for the First Amendment. Sometimes people are going to say things that are horrible and that's what goes along with it and to legislate against the First Amendment is actually more desecratory to the flag or what the flag symbolizes than burning the flag itself.

JOSH: Right. Thank you for articulating – I knew if I babbled long enough you would articulate it better and more succinctly.

HRISHI: [Laughter]

JOSH: I can usually . . . as I get older, I get less and less sure about just about everything and I can always see the gray area and both sides of the issue. This one just seems like such a slam dunk from both the right and the left that I'm always amazed that there is this argument to be made.

HRISHI: I don't think that desecratory is a word. I think I made that up.

JOSH: I liked it.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: I think it should be. I will defend your right to use it.

HRISHI: [Laughter]

JOSH: To my death. To my deathitination.

[More laughter]

HRISHI: I mean, if you add enough syllables to a word it makes it better.

JOSH: I agree. I agree-mify. I'm just going to keep doing that until we have to leave it in.

HRISHI: I liked this little joke, very little joke, but I really liked it when Josh is at the party, he hears somebody calling his name and he said I know that voice and he turns around and he sees Joey Lucas, but the voice of course belongs to Kenny.

JOSH: Oh, I didn't even notice that.

HRISHI: It's cute.

JOSH: It's very cute.

HRISHI: There's also the introduction of Gina Toscano, played by Jorja Fox.

JOSH: Later famous for which series?

HRISHI: CSI.

JOSH: Oh yeah, that's right. First of all, I liked just President Bartlet as parent. I do like when Aaron gives us, I guess as a dad myself, I like when Aaron gives us President Bartlet as a dad. Is he going to be a good dad; is he going to be over-protective? He's not a normal dad. He's a dad whose daughter faces all sorts of dangers or heightened danger that most of our kids do not, so I like to see that even in the midst of the greater national and world issues he has to deal with, he also wants to make sure his daughter is going to be safe as she has as close to normal a college experience as possible. And I liked that he took the time to sit down with this agent who might be on Zoe's personal detail and I like how he spoke to her and he was respectful of her and humorous and I liked the whole thing where he was essentially saying I want you to

keep he safe, I don't need to know all the details. You don't need to tattle, even though he buys it back and says:

[West Wing Episode 1.16 Excerpt]

PRESIDENT BARTLET: Gina.

GINA: Yes, sir?

PRESIDENT BARTLET: If she's cutting English Lit, I want to know about it.

GINA: No deal, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT BARTLET: Okay.

[End Excerpt]

JOSH: I like that scene. I like when we get the human side, the purely human side of these characters.

HRISHI: Um-hum. Did we know that Charlie and Zoe were really an item?

JOSH: No. I think we really find that out. There's like a gentle touch. They're sitting next to one another. I mean we find out explicitly because they have a conversation about what type of boyfriend and what Zoe expects from Charlie and it is sweet and, but they also have a little physical contact and we see that. In however much time has passed since we last considered the issue, they've become a real item and they are sweet together.

HRISHI: Which is interesting, given how much time is spent on the will they/won't they of CJ and Danny, and Donna and Josh and even you know, Sam and Mallory and stuff like that. We got a little bit of that with the first few interactions of Charlie and Zoe, but then, without really showing how they got from that first flirtation to now they are boyfriend and girlfriend. It's just dropped in our laps.

JOSH: That's true. It's kind of a big thing.

HRISHI: It's like she asked him out and now suddenly they are boyfriend and girlfriend.

JOSH: Well wait. You want to know what base they've gotten to? What is it Hrishī? What is it with you?

HRISHI: I'm just saying they want me to accept as fact that they are boyfriend and girlfriend without having shown me on screen.

JOSH: Oh . . . Oh. Okay, alright.

HRISHI: Sorry.

JOSH: I see what you're saying.

HRISHI: Anyway, it's just when this scene started . . .

JOSH: But we knew previously they were fond of each other.

HRISHI: Yes.

JOSH: I do not. I dispute the validity of the Mendoza argument that you're trying to subtly put to me.

HRISHI: No, but when I was watching and they have this conversation about what kind of boyfriend Charlie is going to be, I had to sort of flip through the episodes for a second and be like, did I, am I forgetting an episode where that's established; that they are in a relationship and I went through and I was like I don't think so. I think we are kind of being dropped in the middle of this.

JOSH: Yeah. I agree. And here's what I thought. Here was my thought process as the revelation that they are in fact an item hit me. I thought oh, is there not going to be . . . I was not disappointed, but I was ready to be disappointed that the first daughter's interracial romance, please tell me this is going to be an issue, you know. You could imagine how that would play out today, but back then, just please tell me that the show is going to deal with it and in fact, Gina's introduction is kind of on the heels of they've been getting – it's unclear, but some sort of I don't know if it's phrased as death threats, but they've been getting letters. She comes in and she discusses that with The President and I was pleased that the show dealt with it or that it is going to be something that will continue to deal with and there is a moment when Gina is walking with Zoe and she sort of gets a look at two white-supremacist perhaps looking type of dudes in a crowd and she says Zoe could you step to the other side of me and she kind of hustles her into the car quickly and there's just something now that's part of the fabric of the daily lives of the Bartlets.

HRISHI: Right. I think that there was in fact real life disapproval from showing the first daughter, white first daughter, having a relationship with the . . .

JOSH: On the show.

HRISHI: On the show. And . . .

JOSH: I'm sure you're right.

HRISHI: So I don't mind, really that we're dropped in the middle of this relationship because it immediately gets us to jump into this more interesting plot point.

JOSH: Yeah, that's a rich area to explore.

HRISHI: Yeah. We don't know that it's death threats. We just know that there are letters and there are white supremacists. Just like with the relationship, you can figure out the rest.

JOSH: Can I kind of piggy back off the Hasselhoff thing again? It's been a while. We get a couple other real life celebrities. We have Jay Leno, we have Veronica Webb and we have a weird meta-moment with a supposed off camera Matt Perry, many years before, spoiler alert, he will join the cast of the West Wing. Right?

HRISHI: Um-hum.

JOSH: That was weird. This is in direct contravention of Eli Addy's we don't use real people. What did you think of seeing – was it jarring? Or if you're going to do an episode set in Hollywood, maybe it makes sense to have a few recognizable faces at this big Hollywood party.

HRISHI: Yeah. I think it was – it added production value. One thing that we haven't done in a little bit is pointed out the tech specs when they come up. I don't know if maybe they haven't

come up recently but we get a few at the beginning of this episode in an unusual context; or maybe not unusual and that's what makes it so great when it happens. We get it with CJ and Donna talking about their daily face protector:

[West Wing Episode 1.16 Excerpt]

DONNA: It's fantastic. It's Clinique's City Block Oil Free Daily Face Protector.

CJ: SPF 15?

DONNA: I brought the SPF 15 and the SPF 30.

CJ: Have you tried the Lancome High Protection Sun Stick for Face and Lips?

DONNA: No. Did you bring it?

CJ: Plus the Elizabeth Arden Modern Care Daily Moisturizer.

[End Excerpt]

JOSH: You know, I actually got a little excited during that scene because as a parent, I have a weird obsession with sunscreen and not burning.

HRISHI: Do you burn easily?

JOSH: Yeah. I had a couple life-changing burns as a kid. I grew up in that era where I guess we had sunscreen but we didn't know exactly. I remember during one family vacation to Puerto Rico, I got burned to such an extent that I couldn't go out to dinner one night with my family. I had to sit paralytically in a chair that was just pointed at the television which was tuned to some Spanish TV channel and the Exorcist was on in Spanish. It is no less terrifying, perhaps more terrifying in Spanish, and I was in too much pain to get up even to turn the, to kick the TV over or throw something through it or turn it off. So I was traumatized by that and perhaps as a result, I'm all about sunscreen as an adult.

HRISHI: Huh. I don't know if you were wearing sunscreen in Austin, because it seemed like you were getting burned pretty badly there.

JOSH: I was wearing sunscreen nonstop. By the way, not all sunscreen . . .

HRISHI: On stage?

JOSH: On stage. Oh, snap. I'm getting [expletive deleted] from you and not even realizing it. That sucked.

HRISHI: Sorry.

JOSH: For me. Oh, never mind. I was just trying to work up to saying that there's a great website that will tell you all about the best sunscreens; ewg.org/sunscreen. That's a free shoutout for ewg.org/sunscreen.

HRISHI: Sorry about that. That was a cheap shot.

JOSH: No, that stays in. I want people to learn just what you're about.

HRISHI: [Laughter]

JOSH: People are just going to love it because they hate me.

HRISHI: [Laughter]

JOSH: They should judge you for that comment, but it will be me.

HRISHI: Speaking of production values, we see the inside of Air Force One for the first time.

JOSH: The very first thing I wrote down in watching this episode was how great the production values are. Even before we get inside, just the whole driving up on the tarmac and Air Force One awaiting them and their limousines pulling up; there's just big production value and money well spent and great tech side of things and design side of things. The show looks great.

HRISHI: Incredibly epic.

JOSH: And the other thought I had early on was it would've been a bummer had the show focused as according to Aaron's original intent if it had focused entirely on the senior staff and not on the president, because there's so much great stuff and so many great moments. There are all these great moments that you wouldn't get if the president weren't a key player in this show. I think for me watching the show there's a certain amount of almost like kid's wish fulfillment in terms of like, and I guess all of us at some point think one thing I could be when I grow up is the president and you have that kind of like— the show and just with all the other stuff that it accomplishes, allows you to kind see what it's like to be president. There is just a purely kind of juvenile kind of fascination I have with the presidency where I want him to be briefed on aliens. I want to see what that's like. All the things that I thought would be cool as a kid and I guess one of them would have been picking up the phone and telling Air Force One to take off.

[West Wing Episode 1.16 Excerpt]

PRESIDENT BARTLET: Do you want to see the best part about having my job? Colonel, this is The President. I'm ready to go.

[End Excerpt]

JOSH: I like those moments. I like that stuff.

HRISHI: In the scene between the President and Ted Marcus, there's a shot when he confesses that he has been having trouble sleeping. And he kind of gets— his energy gets down again. This is another unusual shot for the show. We get like a very tight close up on the President in profile and I liked it a lot but it stood out to me.

JOSH: Yeah. I noted that shot too.

HRISHI: I also want to circle back, just for a second to a part that you alluded to when you said that Donna clearly wants to be with Josh herself. She is laying it on pretty thick for him to go pursue Joey Lucas and if you hadn't seen any episode before this you might think okay this is genuinely her getting her friend's back on a romantic pursuit. But there's just one moment when it all comes apart and he leaves and there's a shot where we see Donna for a second looking back at him and her face, her expression changes slightly and she kind of looks defeated and then drops out of . . .

JOSH: Yeah, she drops out of frame onto the bed. Yeah, yeah. I liked that moment too. It's very high school.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: It's kind of like a high school relationship they have where this whole like helping steal him to ask another girl out when boy does she not mean it at all.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: It's very high school, the Josh and Donna relationship. Not that it isn't charming. It is. It's sweet and cute. And there's something also in Janel's body language during that whole scene. She's on his hotel bed. She's kind of leaning back on her arms. It's just sort of a fake casualness where you can kind of think, perhaps she's thinking don't I look cute right now?

HRISHI: Right. That's what I was thinking.

JOSH: Good, good body language. Good acting.

HRISHI: Here's a chance for them to be in a space that's outside of the office and not only is it outside of the office, it's a bedroom.

JOSH: It's a bedroom.

HRISHI: When they first reveal that shot and she's on the bed, I was like Wooo, that's a little steamy.

JOSH: I will somewhere down the line, I guess as a mini-spoiler, have an episode where I'm in a hotel room, but I'm in love with an ice cream novelty.

HRISHI: [Laughs.] That's like wish fulfillment for me.

JOSH: Do you remember that episode? It's a musical montage during which I stare lovingly at an ice cream in a vending machine. That's my romantic storyline.

HRISHI: [Laughter]

JOSH: That's years from now and we'll approach it again.

HRISHI: I haven't seen that one.

JOSH: Oh, you actually haven't? You literally don't get the reference because you haven't seen it.

HRISHI: No, I haven't seen it.

JOSH: Okay, King Corn. Meet you here, same place, same time, two years from now. Like I'm going to try to pull a Hrishi. And that's it for this episode. We thank you for listening. We encourage you to listen again. In the meantime, if you'd like to tweet us, Hrishi is @hrishihirway. I'm @joshmalina. As a show, our feed is @westwingweekly and you can leave a comment, drop some hate or give us a kiss at thewestwingweekly.com.

HRISHI: Or you can leave a comment on our Facebook page: Facebook.com/thevestwingweekly.

JOSH: And this is why you usually do our sign off.

HRISHI: No, you did great.

JOSH: Ok.

HRISHI: Ok.

JOSH: What's next?

[OUTRO MUSIC]