

The West Wing Weekly  
2.09: Galileo  
Guest: NASA Systems Engineer Mallory Lefland

[laughs]

HRISHI: Well, before we get into the episode, Josh, I just thought we should jump on the mic because what people are about to hear was recorded before election day. We recorded this last week and... At least for me, and I know for you, too, my feelings and my overall mood along with so much of the country is drastically different right now than it was when we recorded back in those heady days of early November.

JOSH: Right, it's a happier and a more hopeful Hrishi and Josh-y that you'll hear in a moment.

HRISHI: Yes.

JOSH: So we want, we wanted to hop on the mic and acknowledge that. And I know you and I had a little interaction as the results came in election night, we texted back and forth a couple times, and, in your increasing despair, questioned whether we should even, you know, what does it mean to be doing this podcast anymore? And we've since at least bounced back to, yeah, of course it's worth doing [cross talk] right?

HRISHI: [cross talk] Yeah.

HRISHI: *The West Wing's* been, you know, a kind of therapeutic experience for me in years past, and while at the time on Tuesday I was like, "What do... What's the point of all this?" I think that it might be true that it ends up being therapeutic for me now as well, especially talking to you about it.

JOSH: Yeah. I think so too. Like, my own view of politics swings between idealistic and hopeful, and cynical and bleak. And I think it's going to continue to swing pendulum-like between the two. But I do think the great thing about this show that we love and analyze is that it encourages you, whatever your views are, to try to convert your thoughts on issues into action through politics.

HRISHI: Yeah, and hopefully it'll do that for us as well as we're watching in this climate.

JOSH: Yeah, that's right.

HRISHI: Well, this episode's going to come out, and we're actually going to take a break next week for Thanksgiving, we're going to take the week off, and I just wanted to say a week early that I am thankful for you and for this podcast, and the chance to get to talk about this stuff and actually have people listen to our nonsense.

JOSH: Nicely put, and I completely agree, I'm very thankful for you, I'm thankful that we have this shared project, and I'm very thankful for the listenership. Thank you for letting us into your headspace once a week, and thanks to those of you that interact and further tease out each episode on our website and through Twitter. If there's going to be any coming together, it's going

to be through interacting with people both who have similar viewpoints and who have different viewpoints, and that's something we'll continue to do here.

HRISHI: So, coming up, Episode 2.09, from another life, but we hope you like it and thanks.

JOSH: Thanks.

[Theme]

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 season 2, episode 9, "Galileo".

JOSH: [high pitched, in the tune of "Bohemian Rhapsody"] Galileo!

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: I've been working on that and I was hoping for a better one

HRISHI: That's pretty good. [laughs]

JOSH: This was directed by Alex Graves, a favorite of mine, it was written by Aaron Sorkin and Kevin Falls, and it first aired on November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2000, almost a full sixteen years ago.

HRISHI: Here's a synopsis from *TV Guide*: "Crises come in all shapes and sizes during one hectic day at the White House. The biggest fire to be put out is just that. It's in a Russian missile silo, and the Russian government is covering it up", and then in parentheses they put, "('Your paranoia was a lot sexier when you guys were communists', Bartlet tells the Ambassador.)" A little stylistic change from *TV Guide*.

JOSH: No kidding.

HRISHI: "Other crises range from a missing US fighter plane to a news report that the president doesn't like green beans, but through it all, he's looking forward to a satellite hook-up with school children, during which they'll examine images from a Martian probe. First though, he wants CJ to come up with a broader theme for the event." I have a question.

JOSH: Yes.

HRISHI: There was a missing fighter plane?

JOSH: Hmm... Not that I recall.

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: Wait, read that part again? [laughs]

HRISHI: [laughs] It says, "Other crises range from a missing US fighter plane to a news report that the president doesn't like green beans", and I think that *TV Guide*, in addition to changing up their style, is mixing up their episodes.

JOSH: Other crises include: missing subplots.

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: From other episodes.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Yeah. That's weird.

HRISHI: Yeah, I'm not gonna spoil anything, but they're thinking of another episode. Strange. So we start off this episode, again, with a frontl. But I like this frontl especially because the first word we hear is the President saying:

[West Wing Episode 2.09 excerpt]

*BARTLET: Galileo Five.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: As the word "Galileo" is on screen.

JOSH: Yes. A lovely frontl, and an ode to names, and to naming, and we know that Aaron Sorkin likes his naming. It's kind of funny to hear President Bartlet go off on the names.

HRISHI: It's true. But it raises a question for me. He says:

[West Wing Episode 2.09 excerpt]

*BARTLET: You see, NASA's great at naming things.*

*CJ: They are.*

*BARTLET: Mercury, Apollo, Atlantis, the Sea of Tranquility, The Ocean of Storms...*

*CJ: Good names!*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: But, I don't think that he's right about all those. I actually thought about that, at the start of this episode, if you're down, we could call someone at NASA to get some information, because I had some questions about some of the Mars stuff in this episode.

JOSH: Sure.

HRISHI: So I thought that we could call up the Jet Propulsion Laboratory here in California, and maybe get some Mars insider info.

JOSH: That sounds good, do you have a contact or are you just going 1-800-555-NASA?

HRISHI: I indeed have a contact.

JOSH: Fantastic, it'll go better that way.

HRISHI: We're gonna speak to an engineer at the NASA Jet Propulsion Lab, her name is Mallory Lefland. Mallory, thanks so much for talking to us. Can you tell us what your official title is?

MALLORY: Sure. I'm a systems engineer on the entry, descent, and landing team for the Mars 2020 mission.

JOSH: That's a long business card.

MALLORY: Yes, and actually, fun fact, I don't think you have to get anyone to approve your business cards, so you could just say whatever you want.

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: Oh, I might, I might add that to mine.

MALLORY: Yeah, it's a long title. We normally shorten "entry, descent, and landing" to "EDL", so if you hear me say "EDL", that's what I'm referring to.

HRISHI: Oh. Have you ever been to any EDL festivals?

[excerpt: EDM music]

MALLORY: [laughs] No.

JOSH: [laughs]

MALLORY: That just took me a second.

HRISHI: Well, thanks, we're really excited to talk to you, because I at least have so many questions about this episode.

MALLORY: Ok, hopefully I can answer them all. I did a bit of research after I watched.

HRISHI: Had you seen this episode before?

MALLORY: I had, yeah, I'd watched through the seasons a few times. But I didn't remember it, all of the details of it

HRISHI: The first time you ever saw it, did it pre-date your time at NASA?

MALLORY: It did.

HRISHI: Did it have any influence on your trajectory?

MALLORY: You know, when you look back, you like to think that your life had this beautiful path... I can't really remember [cross talk] I mean, I love space, and I also love *The West Wing*, so it's just kind of this beautiful mix of two things happening, but I don't think it pushed me in either way.

HRISHI: [cross talk] [laughs] Fair enough.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Well just go with "yes" [cross talk] because that would be great for the podcast.

MALLORY: [cross talk] Yeah, yes.

HRISHI: [laughs] Yes. So, yes.

MALLORY: We're going to edit that down.

HRISHI: [laughs] Exactly.

JOSH: Yeah.

HRISHI: Exactly [laughs] Ok, so, thanks for letting us know this episode changed your life.

MALLORY: [laughs] Yes.

JOSH: [laughs]

HRISHI: First of all, the President says, "NASA's great at naming things", and he lists a few things, including the Sea of Tranquility, but that wasn't named by NASA [cross talk] this is a moon question, not a Mars question, I understand I'm already venturing off topic.

MALLORY: [cross talk] You're correct about that.

JOSH: But also I don't think it was a question, I believe it was a statement.

MALLORY: Yeah. And I think it was named back in the 1700s? Maybe? We can check that?  
[cross talk] But also...

HRISHI: [cross talk] Yeah, I think it was named in 1651.

MALLORY: I think also sometimes, do you think Bartlet just says things that he's not 100% sure of [cross talk] because he knows no one will check him on it?

HRISHI: [cross talk] Yeah. [laughs]

HRISHI: [laughs] That's true, he did say one time, he was like, "Sometimes I'm just making it up".

MALLORY: Yeah.

JOSH: Yeah. Feel free to use that technique during this discussion.

MALLORY: [laughs] Ok.

HRISHI: [laughs] Exactly.

MALLORY: I'll get a lot of angry viewers online.

JOSH: Well, we're used to that ourselves.

HRISHI: What struck you about this episode? Were there things where you were like, "This is especially accurate" or "This is especially inaccurate"?

MALLORY: So, it did strike me as very accurate, and I do think that the writing was modeled after one of our missions from a year prior which was Mars Polar Lander, because a lot of the details that they mention in their random hallway conversations match up with details about that mission. So, having two probes strike the surface at a high velocity, and attempting to contact the probes after the entry, and things about the comm dropout, all of those match up with the details about Mars Polar Lander. So I thought they did really well with that.

HRISHI: Hmm.

MALLORY: The one major inaccuracy – and I had to go back to do some math to make sure I was right about this – was based on when the episode aired, if you believe that when it aired is in real-time in their universe when this was happening, [cross talk] and then you subtract back the eleven months from when the spacecraft would have launched from Earth, it doesn't fall in a realistic Mars launch opportunity window. So, with our current [cross talk] launch vehicles and spacecraft, you, at that time, you wouldn't be able to launch a vehicle to Mars.

HRISHI: [cross talk] Mm-hmm.

HRISHI: [cross talk] [laughs]

HRISHI: Why is [cross talk] that?

JOSH: [cross talk] Yeah, I picked up on the same thing.

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: That aspect really bothered me too, [cross talk] the inaccuracy.

MALLORY: [cross talk] Did it?

MALLORY: Do you wanna [cross talk] check our math together?

JOSH: [cross talk] No! [laughs] No, I'm impressed. Bless you for actually making that calculation.

MALLORY: Thank you. Yeah, it's, the hard thing about going to Mars is that the window to launch is about three weeks long and it only opens up every 26 months.

HRISHI: Oh!

MALLORY: So if you miss the window, then you sit around for a little over two years and wait for the next one.

HRISHI: Well that brings into relief another one of my objections, which was, this thing where they talk about the time on Mars, where you know they're like:

[West Wing Episode 2.09 excerpt]

*JOSH: I don't understand how it's noon in the East and nine Pacific, how it's 2:37 on Mars.*

*TOBY: Well, Mars is a different time zone.*

*JOSH: Yeah, it's the 37 minutes I was –*

*TOBY: Mars rotates on its own axis once every 24 hours 37 minutes.*

*JOSH: Oh...*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: But there's no way that on this particular day things just happened to line up so beautifully that at noon it's exactly 2 hours and 37 minutes ahead and...

MALLORY: Oh, I see what you're saying, that for the show to explain it better they had to land on that exact time. [cross talk] I didn't even think about that.

HRISHI: [cross talk] Yeah. Exactly. That was [cross talk] silly to me.

MALLORY: [cross talk] I like that you picked that up.

MALLORY: And it's also, if we want to get very technical, closer to 40 minutes, but I love Josh and Toby so I won't pick on them.

HRISHI: Ah, interesting. Ok. How about the poor guy who was the NASA spokesperson who just gets his ass handed to him by Sam?

MALLORY: Yeah, I felt bad about that. [cross talk] I mean, part of our problem is that we're not great at telling our story. We do so many cool things, and I only know what goes on at JPL in detail, but we do so many cool things on lab, and part of the problem is that we don't always have a great way of explaining it to the public. So, I resonated with that.

HRISHI: [cross talk] [laughs]

HRISHI: Oh, that's really fascinating. Have there been missions while you've worked at JPL and NASA that have had the same kind of, I don't know, did the tension of the situation resonate with you? You know, things going wrong, and not knowing, are things generally smoother than the way they are shown here?

MALLORY: No, I think they hit the nail on the head on that one. All of our missions that we send here normally have a few critical moments throughout the life cycle of the mission and if something goes wrong, it's the end of the mission, and so all of that tension is very real. There are people... So for the Curiosity rover, there were people who had worked on the mission for over a decade and felt like it was their child. And so when you go through something like entry, descent, and landing, and you have seven minutes of events that every single thing in them must go right for it to work, and all you can do is sit on Earth and just wait for the telemetry to come back, that entire room is incredibly tense, and so I think they portrayed that well. When things go right, you can see there's people jumping, because we often, we don't know if things will work. I mean, we hope they do, but you never know what's going to happen.

JOSH: And does this episode correlate well to what happened recently with the ESA? With the European Space Agency and their lander?

MALLORY: Yeah, I think so. It's kind of crazy how well the timings worked out because it's not very often that you have something trying to land on Mars [cross talk] and that we're talking about this a month later is crazy. But, it does resonate well; I think people often forget how hard it is to land things on other planets or to launch to a vehicle from Earth – you get used to things succeeding all the time and you forget that what we do is very tricky and anything can mess us up. But yeah, it's similar in that everything looked like it was going well for Schiapperelli and then they lost comm at some point, it looks like the parachute released too soon, there was some timing issues with the engine firing, and then you didn't hear anything again. And that's also the hard part is if you don't establish – you're not able to establish communications with



your spacecraft, there's no way to know what happened, and so you have to kind of back it out with other data you had beforehand.

JOSH: [cross talk] Right.

HRISHI: What's your next Mars mission?

MALLORY: So, I'm working on the Mars 2020 mission, and we are sending a rover that looks very similar to the Curiosity rover, but we stripped out the front and instead of some of the instruments we carried with us the first time, we're bringing a sample caching system. So, we'll be able to go around Mars and cache samples in tubes and then hopefully another series of missions will pick up those tubes and bring them back to earth.

HRISHI: Well, I hope you can name the rover "Bartlet".

MALLORY: Oh my – that would be so cool. Actually, we don't name the rover... I think for Curiosity, I'm sure for other missions, they do a contest where they have students write essays on why a certain name should be the name of the rover, and then they pick an essay.

JOSH: So would there be any shot at "Rover McRoveronface"?

HRISHI: [laughs]

MALLORY: I mean, if you know anyone in elementary school that you can have write an essay, [cross talk] I think that's your best bet.

JOSH: [cross talk] Yeah.

JOSH: I have a question. During the episode, Sam in yet another impassioned speech with...

HRISHI: Mallory.

JOSH: ...With *his* Mallory, yeah, he basically says that, you know, an answer to "Why Mars?", it's kind of a "What's next?" of modern exploration. And I'm wondering, now it's sixteen years after that episode was made, is Mars more of a pressing concern? So now we hear thoughts of potentially colonizing Mars in not the incredibly distant future, is there a sense of urgency that with climate change that we need to ready a colonization plan?

MALLORY: That's a good question, I mean I don't know, I can't really speak to the colonization aspect of it, but –

HRISHI: Can't speak or [cross talk] won't speak?

JOSH: [cross talk] Oh can't...

HRISHI: [laughs]

MALLORY: Oh, can't or won't... No it's more that, I still think that it's the next thing to do; we've sent humans to the moon and Mars is the next place that you would send them and part of the problem is the technology to do that has not yet been developed. We don't yet know how to land things heavy enough that could land humans, and so part of what our job to do is to develop that technology and so you can have that effort progress.

HRISHI: Is that a propulsion problem? Or a fuel problem? I'm sure you can explain it to a couple of guys who know nothing about this [cross talk] and uh...

JOSH: [cross talk] Or are you just not trying hard enough? [cross talk] [Laugh]

MALLORY: [cross talk] No, we like to take a lot of vacations and so, [cross talk] we just haven't thought about it. No, so...

JOSH & HRISHI: [cross talk] [laughs]

HRISHI: To Mars, I'm guessing.

MALLORY: One of the things that JPL has been working on for years is this research project called LDSD, which is the Low Density Supersonic Decelerator. And part of the research there is figuring out, what are ways with the same surface areas that you can slow down a vehicle? So they're looking at balloons that kind of pop up all around the spacecraft and increase your surface area, they're looking at better parachutes, so we're trying to figure it out.

HRISHI: Ok, even though Sea of Tranquility did predate NASA, as I will agree, NASA is great at naming things, that's pretty cool. The Low Dens- tell me again? The Low Density...

MALLORY: Low Density Supersonic Decelerator.

HRISHI: That's exciting just hearing it.

MALLORY: Right? We also love acronyms.

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: How about other private enterprises? Elon Musk, and Space-X, and is there tandem work going on with other missions?

MALLORY: I think so, I know that JPL advises Space-X in their Mars-X exploration because we've been through this before, and so we know about the process, and so there are a few missions I know we work on together. But I think in general we're kind of just happy that there are more people who are trying to go to Mars and trying to go to other areas of space.

JOSH: Sure, because I guess there's always also a public relations aspect of it, and for people and Americans to continue to be interested in the goal and in the mission and in Mars is a good thing.

MALLORY: I totally agree. Everything that Space-X is doing is just keeping the public engaged and so I think it helps out everyone in the industry.

HRISHI: Awesome. Mallory, thank you so much.

MALLORY: Yeah, of course! This was a lot of fun.

[Theme]

JOSH: Interesting phone call!

HRISHI: I like when we can get science-y on our show. Thanks to Jessie Kawata for hooking us up with Mallory in the first place.

JOSH: Indeed.

HRISHI: Sam in this episode...

JOSH: Salmon?

HRISHI: He's a very sassy Seaborn.

JOSH: He is.

HRISHI: I don't think that we know that he's so cocky. Like, he ventures into Josh Lyman territory here with his cockiness.

JOSH: Early on in the episode we have some extreme Sam cockiness egged on by President Bartlet...

HRISHI: Mhmm.

JOSH: ...In his sort of writing confrontation with the guy from NASA.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: He is really putting down the guy's writing in rather brusque manner:

[West Wing Episode 2.09 excerpt]

*TOBY: Look, I don't wanna step on your toes, you don't wanna step on mine, we're both writers.*

*SAM: Yes, I suppose, if we broaden the definition to those who can spell.*

*NASA: Excuse me?*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Not nice.

HRISHI: No...

JOSH: And then in another classic Sorkin bust gone bad, and I'm sure you noticed this too, [cross talk] President Bartlet takes the NASA guy down a peg because he, what does he write? [cross talk] "Very unique". "Very unique and..."

HRISHI: [cross talk] [laughs]

HRISHI: [cross talk] "Very unique, and extremely historic":

[West Wing Episode 2.09 excerpt]

*BARTLET: Scott, unique means one of a kind, something can't be "very unique", nor can it be "extremely historic".*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: They bust him big time and then they kind of ask Sam for his take on what he would say or what he would write and have the president say, and in the first two seconds of Sam's version he makes a, I think, far more egregious linguistic mistake:

[West Wing Episode 2.09 excerpt]

*SAM: You, me, and sixty thousand of your fellow students across the country, along with astroscintists and engineers from the Jet Propulsion Lab in southern California, NASA Houston, and right here at the White House, are gonna be the first to see what it sees.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: "You and me are"? No. "You and / are". It's just the most simple, glaring error!

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: And, again on the heels of busting someone else for a solecism, a small grammatical error, and this isn't a small one, it's a huge error. I can understand how one person could make this mistake – say Aaron wrote it, or Kevin Falls wrote it – I would think the other writer would say "Hey wait a minute, Kevin, it should be 'you and I'." But let's say they both missed it. There's a staff of writers. Then there's a read-through in front of forty people.

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: Then they shoot the thing with another hundred people on the crew. Nobody said, "Hey guys, this isn't proper English!"

HRISHI: See, I would be fine with it, I'd let it go as a stylistic... Maybe he's trying to make the president sound folksy kind of thing, but it's the juxtaposition of that against getting all, you know, grammar Nazi on the poor NASA guy that makes it seem weird.

JOSH: Yeah, really it's a lot like Toby's busting CJ on her lack of Thanksgiving knowledge, and then getting the wrong century for the founding of [cross talk] Jamestown.

HRISHI: [cross talk] Jamestown.

JOSH: Odd, very odd.

HRISHI: Makes you feel so bad for the NASA guy, because I will accept that he and Sam are playing in totally different leagues, you know, Sam is just miles ahead of this guy, but then it just, you know, it's like a kid who's shooting hoops on the playground, and then Sam comes in, and he's like "Oh here, stand under the basket while I do this insane dunk on your head..."

JOSH: [laughs] It's good.

HRISHI: ...I'm just going to show off in front of everybody."

JOSH: Well, since you bring it up, I think it's almost a through line for a multiplicity of characters in this episode. Toby throws his SAT scores [cross talk] in CJ's face, and there's a lot of elitism going on, I mean Josh Lyman has many instances of just sort of putting down the hoi-polloi, the masses and the people who pick the stamps, and he's got several instances... President Bartlet is incredibly dismissive at least at first of this piece of music he's going to hear and he's sort of a classical music snob.

HRISHI: [cross talk] Mhmm.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: It's a weird through line, isn't it?

HRISHI: I know, I particularly though enjoy the president's like to be snobby about Stravinsky and Barber, and say that "that sucks", and like, Schoenberg and just be like...

JOSH: Yeah:

[West Wing Episode 2.09 excerpt]

*CHARLIE: Modern music is cool.*

*BARTLET: Modern music sucks. Anything written after 1860 sucks.*

*CHARLIE: Samuel Barber, "Symphony no.2".*

*BARLET: Sucks.*

*CHARLIE: Stravinsky, "Variations on a Theme".*

*BARTLET: Sucks.*

*CHARLIE: Schoenberg, "Enlightened Night for String Orchestra".*

*BARTLET: Totally blows.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: [cross talk] "Sucks", he says. Mother...

HRISHI: [cross talk] [laughs] Good.

JOSH: And then he goes on to say that it's clearly not classical music if the guy just finished it at six...

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: The lines are funny, I find, the elitism is done in a very humorisk...humorisk? [cross talk] [in an affected voice] Huh, humorisk. Humorisk fashion. [in normal voice] But, it is elitism nonetheless.

HRISHI: [cross talk] [laughs]

HRISHI: I think that uh, yeah. Certainly, Ainsley didn't get it wrong when she called the administration smug.

JOSH: Hmm. Exactly.

HRISHI: Poor CJ. Man, she catches a lot of flak in this episode.

JOSH: Indeed, as she often does... [cross talk] It's like the pendulum is swinging back, she kind of got her mojo going and people were finally respecting her and the pendulum's just a little bit starting to swing back the other way.

HRISHI: [cross talk] Yeah.

HRISHI: There was one moment in particular that I really loved, when she's talking to Toby about the green beans. You know Toby, talking about his SAT scores, that scene, when she goes in and she's like, "Yes, you were right about the green beans." There's this, like, funny construction of her explaining what the issue is with the green beans to Toby who already knows [cross talk] but she keeps explaining it to him... But my favorite part of that scene is um, as she's telling him, she gets to a certain point, and she kind of makes her point and she goes to sort of like, sit down and lean on the chair in Toby's office:

JOSH: [cross talk] Yes.

[West Wing Episode 2.09 excerpt]

*CJ: But here's the thing.*

*TOBY: There's an electoral problem?*

*CJ: There's an electoral problem. We won Oregon...*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And she immediately stands back up! Like she can't even [cross talk] allow herself to sit down. But the way that she does this kind of awkward lean [cross talk] on the chair...

JOSH: [cross talk] [laughs]

JOSH: [cross talk] It's a good physical bit.

HRISHI: Yeah, and never actually gets to sit, it's really great physical comedy.

JOSH: Of course the green bean subplot, ripped from the headlines.

HRISHI: Yes, from the George Bush elder headlines.

JOSH: Yes. George H.W., 1989...

[George H.W. Bush Speech, 3/23/90 excerpt]

*GEORGE H.W. BUSH: I do not like broccoli. And I haven't liked it since I was a little kid. And my mother made me eat it. And I'm President of the United States. And I'm not going to eat any more broccoli*

*CROWD: [Applause]*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Which was so delightful to me at that age, to witness that and be like "Broccoli's out, mom".

JOSH: I was going to ask you – So wait a minute, wow. How old were you in 1989?

HRISHI: [laughs] I was 10 years old

JOSH: Ok. I was 33.

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: I did not have the same conversation at that point with my mother.

HRISHI: You were not 33.

JOSH: Oh no, I was 23.

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: Wait a minute. I'm glad you had me check the math there. Thank you, wow, I almost put 10 years on my own life. I feel 10 years older than I am. But in fact, California broccoli farmers took exception with what the president said.

HRISHI: Mhmm.

JOSH: And apparently, they had about 10 tons of broccoli delivered to The White House.

HRISHI: That's a prank worthy of Josh Malina.

JOSH: Yeah, I like it. Which, to my shock, costs, I read somewhere, about seven thousand dollars in 1989 dollars, which seems like not that much for 10 tons.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: I think we're getting screwed at the cash register. Do you never eat broccoli now that you're a full-on adult?

HRISHI: No, now I eat broccoli all the damn time.

JOSH: It's good for you.

HRISHI: I guess so.

JOSH: I like broccoli!

HRISHI: I ate broccoli this morning. I ate broccolini, though.

JOSH: Ah.

HRISHI: Because I need a little [cross talk] spin on it.

JOSH: [cross talk] You're elitist.

HRISHI: Exactly, I ate some broccolini and listened to Stravinsky.

JOSH: [high pitched, in the tune of "Galileo!" in "Bohemian Rhapsody"] Broccolini! [normal voice] it doesn't really work.



HRISHI: [laughs] It works. It totally works.

JOSH: I might have to do that now with anything with four syllables [cross talk] for the rest of the podcast.

HRISHI: [cross talk] Yes.

HRISHI: Yeah. Here is something that has four syllables [high pitched, in the tune of "Galileo!" in "Bohemian Rhapsody"] Olafsdottir!

JOSH: [laughs] Nice.

HRISHI: The Icelandic ambassador is a guy, but his name is Vigdis Olafsdottir.

JOSH: Yes, I also, I'm not sure, I'm not even sure myself how to say Reykjavík [pronounced reck-ya-vick]?

HRISHI: Reykjavík? Yeah, sure.

JOSH: There seems to be a variety of pronunciations. There's a lot of [harshly] reck-ya-vehk [normal voice] [cross talk] and some odd pronunciations of it between the president and Charlie.

HRISHI: [cross talk] [laughs] Oh, yeah:

[West Wing Episode 2.09 excerpt]

*CHARLIE: When you come back it's the Reykjavík [pronounced reck-ya-vick] Symphony Orchestra.*

*BARTLET: The Reykjavík [pronounced reck-ya-vehk] Symphony Orchestra?*

[end excerpt]

BOTH: [Laugh]

JOSH: Made me laugh.

HRISHI: So, the thing about the Icelandic ambassador is that, you know, in Iceland they have a different system of naming. They do a patronymic system so, you know, they don't do a family name, but that means that the suffix of "Dottir", like in "Olafsdottir", means daughter.

JOSH: When it should be son.

HRISHI: It should be son. He should be Olafsson.

JOSH: Olafsson. Interesting, good catch. An odd...

HRISHI: It's a strange one.

JOSH: I think I had one more thing on the broccoli.

HRISHI: Oh, yeah.

JOSH: It broke down along partisan lines, that apparently in '92, Hilary Clinton and Tipper Gore at a campaign rally, held up a sign that said: "Let's put broccoli back in the White House again."

HRISHI: Wow.

JOSH: And [cross talk] subsequent to-

HRISHI: [cross talk] [high pitched, in the tune of "Galileo!" in "Bohemian Rhapsody"] "Back in the White House"!

JOSH: [laughs] Yes. Yes.

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: Three and a half more years of this.

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: And apparently President Obama: huge fan of broccoli.

HRISHI: Mm. They were courting the broccoli vote. Back to the beginning of the episode...

JOSH: Sure.

HRISHI: At one point, when CJ's career seemed at its most tumultuous, the point was made that the president sees her almost like a daughter, or sees her as a daughter, and CJ was saying "that's not enough reason for him to keep me around"...

JOSH: Bartlet's daughter.

HRISHI: [high pitched, in the tune of "Galileo!" in "Bohemian Rhapsody"] Bartlet's daughter!

BOTH: [Laugh]

HRISHI: I feel like that dynamic really came to the foreground in the opening scene between CJ and the president: less so that the president saw her as a daughter, and more like she saw him like her dad, or something. At least, the way she was talking to him felt like the way a daughter would plead with her father not to embarrass her:

[West Wing Episode 2.09 excerpt]

*CJ: I strongly urge you –*

*BARTLET: Yes.*

*CJ: I strongly urge you –*

*BARTLET: I know.*

*CJ: I strongly urge you, Mr. President, to act as moderator and pass the questions off to one of the experts on the panel rather than answer it yourself.*

*BARTLET: Yes.*

*CJ: Just don't show off.*

*BARTLET: I don't show off.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI : Like, please, please just let them do their job.

JOSH: Right, “Don’t answer all the questions”, that bit, that’s true.

HRISHI: Yeah, which was sweet, I thought.

JOSH: I had something... I had a general point to make. I spoke last episode about having a certain West Wing fatigue.

HRISHI: Mhmm.

JOSH: And somebody, I wish I could now remember her name, but somebody on Twitter pointed out that perhaps it wasn’t so much fatigue associated with watching the show too much, but rather the current political climate is so jarring and confrontational and partisan, and just generally horrendous, that the more fantastical idealized world of the West Wing... It’s harder for me to enter into that world, and I think there’s something to that.

HRISHI: Yeah. Did you feel that here on this one did you feel too –

JOSH: Nah I was starting to, look, ‘cause there’s a lot of, we have our lightly scored, classic Sorkin, or Sorkin/Falls in this instance, speeches.

HRISHI: Mhmm.

JOSH: And those landed better for me. I loved President Bartlet’s little riff on Galileo...

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: ...For instance, so my West Wing fatigue has lifted. [laughs]

HRISHI: I liked the line that CJ has:

[West Wing Episode 2.09 excerpt]

*CJ: Nobody likes people who know everything.*

*TOBY: So I've discovered in my life!*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: But then everyone in the staff is a know-it-all.

JOSH: It's interesting that you said that too. What is the couplet? Because Toby has the response, "That's something I've known all my life"? It struck me as Aaron's, or again, Kevin Falls co-wrote this, it's like the West Wing's version of the couplet in *Broadcast News* when someone says to Holly Hunter's character:

[Broadcast News excerpt]

*Paul Moore: It must be nice to always believe you know better. To always think you're the smartest person in the room.*

*Jane Craig: No, it's awful.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: I love that.

JOSH: I do too, it's one of my favorite moments, I really feel like this was a nod to that moment.

HRISHI: Yup. But as we've also discovered, these guys don't know everything; Sea of Tranquility was not named by NASA.

JOSH: There you go.

HRISHI: In this episode, John Carroll Lynch makes a guest appearance. John Carroll Lynch, who I know from *Zodiac*.

JOSH: Ah.

HRISHI: But he's been in so many things.

JOSH: Yes, he was terrific as Eastman in *The Walking Dead*, and really recently he's been seen on *The Americans*, in which he's also very, very good.

HRSIHI: Yeah.

JOSH: I was in a, uh, an unsuccessful, weird, low rent pilot with him called *PTA* that never went anywhere, but he was great fun to work with and a great guy.

HRISHI: Well, here's a weird little bit of deep trivia about this episode. Because it's not in the episode credits specifically in terms of what's on screen, but if you dig a little bit you can find that his character Jack, his character's full name is Jack Reese. And again I'm not going to spoil anything, but that is the name of a character who comes up later in the series and figures pretty prominently, so, just one of those things where...

JOSH: A character we'll meet, that is not in fact the same person.

HRISHI: Exactly, yeah. Different Jack Reese shows up later, and it's just another one of those examples of Aaron Sorkin reusing a name.

JOSH: While we're on that I'm pretty sure I found an Aaron steal from me in my life in this episode.

HRISHI: Oh, really?

JOSH: Yes. Inadvertent and unconscious I'm sure, but at one point when President Bartlet is being told by Charlie about the concert he needs to go to, he says:

[West Wing Episode 2.09 excerpt]

*BARTLET: I'll give you a thousand dollars if you don't make me go.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: I'm pretty sure that's something Aaron absorbed from me, because I used to say that all the time.

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: That was just my stock response to anything I didn't want to do, or, "I'll give you a thousand dollars to get me a soda". [laughs]

HRISHI: That's awesome.

JOSH: I wanna say that that's something he subconsciously pinched from me.

HRISHI: I absolutely can hear you saying that. I was wondering if the idea to put the green beans thing in there came from Peggy Noonan, since we know she's a consultant to this season, and she worked for President George H.W. Bush at that time.

JOSH: Ah, good point. It might have been her little contribution there.

HRISHI: Yeah. There's one long shot I wanted to talk about, that I thought was really, really beautifully done. It starts off in the bullpen where CJ and and Sam are getting ready to go to the concert and Toby's talking to them and they start walking from the bullpen, and Sam is fretting about Mallory and as they're walking CJ gets called by Carol, Carol needs her for something, and she stops and Toby and Sam keep walking through the corridor and turn the corner actually, like, leaving CJ behind in the background, talking to Carol. And they're, he's still doing his thing, and then they finally turn the corner and then they stop and Toby says:

[West Wing Episode 2.09 excerpt]

*TOBY: Well, that's twenty seconds of my life I'm never going to get back.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: ...And then CJ comes around the corner, grabs Sam, says, "Let's go", and they move past the camera, the camera kind of turns as they follow, and then we're in with Margaret and the Russian ambassador in Leo's office. And then we have that whole scene and there's still not a cut.

JOSH: Oh, I remember them going in and then I guess I stopped paying attention. Did it actually continue the entire scene? It doesn't then [cross talk] cut...

HRISHI: [cross talk] It keeps going, yeah. And then they, then the camera turns and goes into Leo's office, through Leo's office, and into the door into where Margaret sits, and Margaret and Leo have their exchange:

[West Wing Episode 2.09 excerpt]

*MARGARET: I left her alone 'cause I think I was freaking her out.*

*LEO: Wouldn't surprise me.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: ...it's a shot that takes, it's like a minute and twenty seconds, and it's just beautifully choreographed with CJ's stop, and then the camera moves forward, and then they come past the camera, and then it swings, and then it goes through, and then it goes around.

JOSH: Well, this is one of those examples, I think, of what Tommy Schlamme was talking to us about when we had him on. Specifically, in relation to Alex Graves, and Alex sort of taking the tools and the framework and the style of the show and then maybe sort of taking it up a notch and taking it to another level. This is a great use of the space and kind of a different little twist on the walk and talks we've been seeing, he has a great visual style.

HRISHI: Yeah, exactly, like, Tommy talked about the idea of needing the characters to do something while all this dialogue and exposition or whatever. All these words are being said, and something interesting needs to happen visually and that moment of Carol calling CJ is a perfect example of that because it actually doesn't change the script at all. Sam is telling his story about Mallory, but all it does is it gives this visual texture of something that's happening in the background, and then something that happens in the foreground. So CJ acts as this figure on the screen who moves from the back to the front and without changing the text at all, it's a purely directorial thing that is really beautiful.

JOSH: Yeah, and then I think we are used to people dropping in and dropping out of walk and talks, but this idea of pushing them into a new scene and a new environment and continuing, that's a bit of a revelation, [cross talk] and it really works to make the whole world feel organic and real, and that things are happening simultaneously, and that when you leave one locale, it still exists and it's happening, and new things are happening at different places.

HRISHI: [cross talk] Yeah.

HRISHI: Yeah, there's the sense of the map slowly revealing itself too, of what the West Wing in our show actually looks like. That oh, if you go down this hall and you go for it and then you turn left, that's the entrance to Leo's office. You know, it's easy to think of them as these compartmentalized places, but of course they all connect, and then through these long shots you get to kind of draw the map in your head. Actually, maybe we should talk about the set for a second. One thing that is different in season two now from season one: in season one, the set was actually split up in two different spaces. They built it identically on the two different sets in season one so they go from one to the other and have it seem seamless. There's a really interesting interview, or it's a little like, behind the scenes thing between Tommy Schlamme and Jon Hutman. The video's actually up on YouTube, it was originally like a DVD extra, but we'll put a link up to it and you can actually see the space and how they walk through it and they talk about a lot of this stuff.

JOSH: I just want to get Ken Hardy on here because Ken, who I believe was the production designer, he tweeted a picture of that Marine One with "Untied States of America" [cross talk] and then said I didn't get the story quite right, so I would like that. I want to bring him on to unwrap it. I tweeted at him to ask him what I got wrong.

HRISHI: [cross talk] [laughs]

HRISHI: Yeah, we'll find out when we get to that episode in two and a half years.

JOSH: Ok, fair enough. [laughs]

HRISHI: Ask him if he's free.

JOSH: Hopefully Ken's taking care of himself.

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: Eating a lot of broccoli and green beans.

HRISHI: If he's a Democrat. And now we're going to take a quick break.

*Ad*

HRISHI: What'd you think about the Russian ambassador? I liked that Leo had an admirer:

[West Wing Episode 2.09 excerpt]

*NADIA: You get more handsome every year. And you're having your suits handmade now.*

*LEO: Nadia, are you hitting on me?*

*NADIA: I was sorry to hear about your divorce.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Yes, that was cute.

HRISHI: It was cute. [laughs]

JOSH: And that subplot? What did that do for you?

HRISHI: Sometimes we talk about whether or not those last lines land, and I really liked her response to the president when he kind of asks rhetorically:

[West Wing Episode 2.09 excerpt]

*BARTLET: I really don't know from where you guys get the nerve.*

*NADIA: From a long, hard winter, Mr. President.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And the idea of what the state of the former USSR is compared to the relative, like, wealth and comfort, prosperity of the US in that moment. It's like, all right, they've got reasons for acting the way they do.

JOSH: Yes, I like seeing how these kinds of discussions might play out, I don't know in fact how realistic they are or not, but you know, I wonder when these power players are discussing this kind of high-stakes, both in the life and death scenario of it, and also the power politics of it. Yeah, how would they communicate and they sort of have to be a little cagey in trying to make the point, [cross talk] you know.

HRISHI: [cross talk] Yeah.



JOSH: "Let us help you, we can help you." I liked those scenes.

HRISHI: I liked the back and forth between Leo and the ambassador:

[West Wing Episode 2.09 excerpt]

*LEO: You have a fire in a missile silo.*

*NADIA: It is an oil refinery.*

*LEO: These are keyhole satellite photographs. Would you point please to the oil refinery in these pictures?*

*NADIA: I am not in a position to comment on matters of national security.*

*LEO: Ok, can you tell me how an oil refinery explosion would affect national security?*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: I was like oh, quick, Leo, he's quick.

JOSH: Yeah, well played, well played.

HRISHI: There's a moment in the episode when the president is at the Kennedy Center. First of all, piece of trivia, when they're at the Kennedy Center, they're at the actual Kennedy Center, and the president sits in the president's box, and it's the actual president's box because President Clinton let them use it for the filming. In *The West Wing*, there's this idea that presidents past a certain era are not referenced, which we've found, you know, isn't always the case, that there's supposed to be this rule of you know, presidents after Eisenhower or something like that aren't part of the text of the story, or something.

JOSH: That's right.

HRISHI: Although, there are of course exceptions, so when they go to the Kennedy Center someone had joked that it's George Kennedy's Kennedy Center.

JOSH: [laughs] That's right, I think Eli had mentioned that way back when, [cross talk] when he was our first ever guest.

HRISHI: [cross talk] That's right.

HRISHI: That's right, I knew I had heard that somewhere before. But so, in the Kennedy Center, the president tells a story about his trombone playing.

JOSH: Yes.

HRISHI: And it reminded me so much of “In The Shadow of Two Gunmen” when the vice president is talking to the USC volleyball team.

JOSH: I do remember that moment, sure.

HRISHI: He says something like:

[West Wing Episode 2.01 excerpt]

*HOYNES: Now one of my roommates at SMU was Drew Harper, anybody know that name?*

*PLAYER: '72?*

*HOYNES: '72 Olympics in Munich. Well, I played against him in a pick-up game on the quad, and I thought I'd stuff him with an overhead slam. He sent that ball back at my face like I'd talked about his sister.*

*ALL: [Laugh]*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: It sounds like actually, maybe, he's talking about basketball.

JOSH: Yeah, it did actually. I remember that in fact, to the point where some people responded that we were wrong, it wasn't a volleyball team, it was the USC [cross talk] basketball team and...

HRISHI: [cross talk] Oh, that makes more sense.

HRISHI: We probably were wrong, [cross talk] it was...

JOSH: [cross talk] No, no no no, I looked it up, it was in fact...not only was it meant to be the USC volleyball team, it was the championship USC women's volleyball team.

HRISHI: Oh!

JOSH: I fought that out already on our website, many moons ago.

HRISHI: Ok. That's what I get for not reading the comments.

JOSH: [laughs]

HRISHI: That's what I get for being scared of our own website.

JOSH: [laughs] When you talk about the part with Bartlet reminiscing about his trombone playing, for some reason the image I couldn't get out of my mind was his picking up the trombone the same way that he puts on a jacket.

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: [laughs] Kind of twirling it over his head and getting into position.

HRISHI: But it's the same thing, right, he's like:

[West Wing Episode 2.09 excerpt]

*Bartlet: One afternoon during a game, I gave it all I had and ended up throwing the slide into the end zone.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: it's the same kind of thing of like, "Oh, here's a story about me when I was in college, and I tried to do something great, but boy, was it embarrassing for me."

JOSH: That's true.

HRISHI: There's a particular kind of story that you tell in a situation like that to be like "Oh, here's me being jokey and humble and..."

JOSH: That's true; "Look how charming I'm being".

HRISHI: Exactly.

JOSH: [laughs]

HRISHI: Anyway, it just felt like, it reminded me of "oh, this is the kind of story..."

JOSH: So it's like a Madlibs. Same story...

HRISHI: [laughs] Right.

JOSH: ...But they, he chose a few different words.

HRISHI: Right, [cross talk] yeah.

JOSH: [cross talk] "I need a noun: trombone".

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: But, about the Sam/Mallory meeting at the George Kennedy Center.

HRISHI: Ay-yi-yi.

JOSH: [laughs] Tell me why you “oy”, why the triple “oy”.

HRISHI: I just, I don't know... well ok, I love Sam's speech:

[West Wing Episode 2.09 excerpt]

*Mallory: Do we really have to go to Mars?*

*Sam: Yes!*

*Mallory: Why?*

*Sam: Because it's next. Because we came out of the cave, and we looked over the hill and we saw fire, and we crossed the ocean, and we pioneered the west, and we took to the sky. The history of man is on the timeline of exploration, and this is what's next.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Beautiful, I love it. But the Sam and Mallory dynamic, the whole subplot irks me. It has since the beginning. I don't know if I can exactly say why, but there's something, you know, part of it is this idea of like... We've already got Zoey and Charlie in a more compelling version of dating-the-boss's-daughter. And there's just something about...I don't really like their chemistry.

JOSH: Hmm.

HRISHI: It doesn't track for me for some reason. But there's something about their, like, sparring, that I just, I don't find charming. I wonder why that is.

JOSH: Fair enough.

HRISHI: Do you have... how do you feel about it?

JOSH: Well, you've ruined it for me.

HRISHI: [laughs] Yes.

JOSH: Finally. No, I don't know it feels like, ah, the show is wrapping up a story that it hadn't really developed anyway.

HRISHI: Mm.

JOSH: So, I sorta, there was something a little bit missing for me. It was kinda... I don't have that much, I guess, invested with them. Also, it seems like for a relationship that never really quite started, they've liked skipped a step and they're always talking about sex. On the first date she was saying “There's absolutely no chance you're going to have sex with me”, now in this one he's feeling all awkward seeing her, and you know, she must feel awkward as well, and she immediately says:

[West Wing Episode 2.09 excerpt]

*Mallory: Yes, and we're having quite a lot of sex.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: there's something weird about their interaction given that they never really, nothing really ever took off between them.

HRISHI: Yeah I think you've, I think you've exactly pinpointed what it is that feels weird to me. I liked it the most during the school vouchers fight.

JOSH: Mhmm. Yeah, that's great. Or maybe it speaks to why nothing ever really quite happens between them. Maybe there is this weird tension and they aren't quite right for each other, there's something just a little off in their interactions, and they're not meant to be a couple.

HRISHI: Yeah, I will say this. I think this is the most handsome Rob Lowe has [cross talk] ever looked on this show. Which is really saying something.

JOSH: [cross talk] [laughs] Wow, them's fighting words.

JOSH: That's quite a... Wow, I don't know if I'm willing to pass up the ability to later say, "He's even handsomer here!"

HRISHI: Oh, maybe later. But I'm saying up to this point.

JOSH: Can you articulate why Hrishy? What about him in this scene does it for you?

HRISHI: Certainly the tuxedo doesn't hurt, but I think it's actually his hair. There's something [cross talk] just particularly perfect about his hair. It's like the perfect amount of [cross talk] coiffed.

JOSH: [cross talk] Hmm.

JOSH: [cross talk] Do you wanna stick with "particularly perfect" in this episode? Is "perfect" not an absolute?

HRISHI: But it's perfect in a particular way., that's what makes it particularly perfect.

JOSH: Ok, I think there's an argument to be made for that. Ok, so I was just, I was trying to get you off your rhapsody about how handsome [laughs] Rob Lowe is.

HRISHI: I know, I just can't help it.

JOSH: You just can't quit him.

HRISHI: I can't, I think it's just, you know, I already thought he was at a 10 and then it turns out that there was another level that he could get to when his hair looks like this and he puts on the tux. All right.

JOSH: Yeah.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: I would think with someone like Brad it'll be more noticeable if he ever looks good.

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: We can talk about that then.

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: While we're on awkward, or maybe moments that don't quite work in and around the George Kennedy Center, one moment that really doesn't ring true for me, I think, in this whole episode was Charlie's little interaction with CJ outside the Center, when they talk about his...

HRISHI: Oh, the green beans?

JOSH: ...His part in the green beans. I kinda didn't really buy... I would have thought once Charlie realized that there's potential, you know, electoral fallout from this, that he would just be absolutely chastened and say "I'm sorry, it's just, someone asked me the question and I answered it". But he really kind of lays into CJ and speaks in a, what I find a slightly uncharacteristic way:

[West Wing Episode 2.09 excerpt]

*Charlie: Well, I'm sorry I mouthed off to the reporter, but you're out of your mind.*

*CJ: No, I'm –*

*Charlie: Education's a serious thing. Crime, jobs, national security. In eighteen months I've been in Oregon four times, and not a single person I've met there has been stupid.*

*CJ: Everybody's stupid in an election year, Charlie.*

*Charlie: No, everybody gets treated stupid in an election year, CJ.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Actually the content is good, I like what's being said, I don't know if I buy it coming out of Charlie's mouth.

HRISHI: Right, you'd think that he'd be a little bit more deferent.

JOSH: Yeah it didn't feel right, the position he was taking, vis-à-vis this mistake he made.

HRISHI: But yeah maybe it's a, this is a bit of an evolution for Charlie. He's gone from more deferential in the past, to now he feels like he can state his opinion.

JOSH: "Now that I've created public policy..."

HRISHI: [laughs] Exactly.

JOSH: "...I can tell anyone, anyone I want. You don't like it? I'll attack you with my Paul Revere knife."

[SFX: knife sharpening]

HRISHI: [laughs] There's another scene outside when CJ's talking to this guy who she passed over for the promotion.

JOSH: Yes.

HRISHI: I liked this because it felt like she was channeling Jay-Z. He thinks that she didn't hire him for personal reasons, and he's like "I think you've got a problem now", and CJ says:

[West Wing Episode 2.09 excerpt]

*CJ: I've a number of problems today and you're not close to being any of them.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: [laughs] I see, yeah, she was pre-channeling.

HRISHI: Yep.

JOSH: Nice.

HRISHI: And then I was like, "And then Jay-Z comes up over her shoulder and says:"

[Jay-Z's "99 problems" excerpt]

*Hit me!*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: [laughs] that's good. There's a little G&S shout out too.

HRISHI: Oh, another one?

JOSH: Yeah, in a couplet between Donna and Josh, she says at one point to him:

[West Wing Episode 2.09 excerpt]

*Josh: You know what I'm saying?*

*Donna: Hardly ever.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: and in *HMS Pinafore*, that's a recurring lyric.

[*HMS Pinafore*, "My Gallant Crew, Good Morning" excerpt]

*Chorus: Hardly ever!*

*Captain: Hardly ever!*

*Chorus: He's hardly ever sick at sea*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Huh! That's good. I would not have gotten that one, you might not be surprised to learn. I would have never caught that.

JOSH: Maybe you should be on a stamp!

HRISHI: [laughs] Pretty cute!

JOSH: That moment is so... "Oh, she sure liked to hear that!"

HRISHI: She did!

JOSH: It was just a big ol' Donna smile!

HRISHI: Yeah, but I mean, that's okay.

JOSH: I liked it.

HRISHI: Let Josh be nice, for once, to Donna.

JOSH: Indeed, she deserves it:

[West Wing Episode 2.09 excerpt]

*Donna: Let's put him on a stamp.*

*Josh: Let's put you on a stamp.*

*Donna: Okay.*



[end excerpt]

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: It's also a very cute little, I like Martin's delivery – this is not going back, but early on he's all excited, he's gonna go home and go to his residence and read his two Mars books...

HRISHI: [laugh]

JOSH: ...and his little interaction with Mrs. Landingham:

[West Wing Episode 2.09 excerpt]

*Mrs. Landingham: No, sir.*

*Bartlet: It does!*

*Mrs. Landingham: Oh, I'm sure you're right.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: It's really cute, there's something very, very [cross talk] just like, smart guy and "I'm pretty sure I'm right! Now wait a minute!" I really, really liked that delivery.

HRISHI: [cross talk] [laughs] Yeah.

HRISHI: This is like a little mistake, another little mistake in the episode.

JOSH: Yes!

HRISHI: So the silo where the fire is, is in Kozelsk. Kozelsk is in the Kaluga Oblast, or the Kaluga region, but Leo says it's in the Oblast region, so he's actually saying it's in the region region.

JOSH: Oh! That's what Oblast means!

HRISHI: Yeah, it means "region" or "area", but it reminded me: my sister's favorite joke when she comes to visit LA, and she sees the La Brea tar pits, she calls them "The The Tar Tar Pits", since "La Brea" means "the tar".

JOSH: Oh, [cross talk] that's good.

HRISHI: [cross talk] When she talked about the La Brea tar pits, you're saying [cross talk] "The The Tar Tar Pits".

JOSH: [cross talk] I like it, that's good.

JOSH: I'm going to be using that.

HRISHI: "The The Tar Tar Pits".

JOSH: Pizza Pizza.

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: Yeah, I really like that, it never occurred to me.

HRISHI: [high pitched, in the tune of "Galileo" in "Bohemian Rhapsody"] Pizza Pizza!

JOSH: [laughs]

HRISHI: There's a little thing that is supposed to be cute in the episode, but every time I've seen this, there's a thing that's always kind of bugged me a little bit which is: don't anthropomorphize the Mars probe. First off, the Mars probe hates it when you do that.

JOSH: [laughs]

HRISHI: But there are [cross talk] two examples of this. One is, Toby says:

JOSH: [cross talk] Yes.

[West Wing Episode 2.09 excerpt]

*Toby: Then it entered what they call a communications blackout period and it hasn't been heard from since. I know how it feels.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And then there's also, between Sam and the president, Sam says:

[West Wing Episode 2.09 excerpt]

*Sam: It's not responding.*

*Bartlet: Like my kids. All right.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And there's something a little bit "Take my wife, please!", [cross talk] about both those jokes, and I'm like "uh-uh".

JOSH: [cross talk] [laughs]

JOSH: [Unintelligible] You're not wrong!

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: I like... You're getting nit-picky this episode! I'm delighted.

HRISHI: In my memory, I really like this episode. But then when I watched it, I was like "But do I?"

JOSH: Hmm.

HRISHI: I think I do, but it's not that... Of course I love this episode,

JOSH: Wait, what?

HRISHI: I love this episode.

JOSH: Oh, okay.

HRISHI: But maybe it was a little bit, maybe it's one notch lower than I had thought it was in my memory. But I still really like it.

JOSH: Yeah, I enjoyed this one a lot. I'm just delightful... I'm delighted to hear you start nit-picking.

HRISHI: And you're delightful, let's be honest you're also delightful.

JOSH: Freudian slip!

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: I'm a frothy delight! But people don't like – I shouldn't say people. Some people. Let's be honest, Gail H. on the website, she had this to say: "I love *West Wing*." I shouldn't assume, Gail could be a man.

HRISHI: True.

JOSH: *It* had this to say:

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: [laughs] "I love *West Wing*. I loved it." By the way, this also plays into the when-you-try-to-bust-somebody, [cross talk] don't-then-make-a-[expletive deleted]-terrible-mistake.

HRISHI: [cross talk] Yeah.

HRISHI: Uh-huh.

JOSH: “I love *West Wing*, I loved it when initially broadcast, and I love it still. I was excited for *The West Wing Weekly* podcast, but I’m finally going to unsubscribe. The hosts, in particular, Josh Malina, feels the compunction to pick apart and find fault with each episode week by week.” Okay, she doesn’t know what the word “compunction” means. “It’s small of them. While I love the guests and the initial premise of the show, Josh should remove himself from this podcast and move on.”

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: And while I respect that one person who may either be a woman or a man, and who is too stupid to know what the word “compunction” means, feels that I should step down, I think I’m going to continue doing the podcast [cross talk] because I feel like there’s at least one person who doesn’t mind my occasional nit-picking.

HRISHI: [cross talk] Mm.

HRISHI: Yeah, me.

JOSH: Oh, yeah, thank you!

HRISHI: There’s at least, there’s literally at least one person.

JOSH: [cross talk] You’re the one that I need, you’re the one that I want, ooh-ooh-ooh.

[cross talk] [Grease “You’re the One That I Want” excerpt]

*You’re the one that I want, ooh-ooh-ooh*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: [cross talk] [laughs]

HRISHI: There was a similar comment on Facebook about 2.07, and someone said, “I’ve enjoyed the podcast generally, but you guys are getting too nit-picky, and are starting to ruin the show for me. May have to stop listening.” And I responded that it comes from a place of love. And I wanna reinforce that idea that like, when I’m saying “Oh, they did this thing and there was this thing isn’t, you know, that strange, and that’s not right”, it’s still in the context of a show that I love so much that I wanna talk about for three years.

JOSH: See? This speaks to our stylistic differences. You, on Facebook responding in that manner, I just wrote to Gail H., “You don’t know what...” [laughs]

HRISHI: [laughs] Oh no!

JOSH: I just wrote to Gail H., “You don’t know what “compunction” means. You are dumb. [cross talk] Thanks for your feedback, exclamation point”.

HRISHI: [cross talk] [laughs] Oh, Josh! Oh...

JOSH: So, there you go.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Um, it's just different style. [cross talk] Because of course I agree with everything you're saying, my feeling is just that if you listen to this podcast, even if you get slightly aggravated at one or the other of us or, let's be honest, at me, occasionally, it's quite clear how much we love the show.

HRISHI: [cross talk] [laughs]

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Like, God, the amount of time we're spending on it, and that of course, like Rob Lowe's handsomeness, if you don't comment when he's got a hair thingy, then you're not fully appreciating when he's at level 10 as he is in "Galileo".

HRISHI: Mhmm.

JOSH: Mhmm. So the occasional little nit-picks serve rather than to express our distaste for the show, rather to hold in high relief, our high regard for this show. Much of that I think was English, but not all of it.

HRISHI: [laugh]

JOSH: But I stand by that statement.

HRISHI: [high pitched, in the tune of "Bohemian Rhapsody"] Sam's tuxedo!

JOSH: [laughs] You know what? I thought his tuxedo was slightly ill-fitting.

HRISHI: Did you?

JOSH: Or ill-defined, as President Bartlet would say.

BOTH: [laugh]

JOSH: I thought it was a little big on him. And that's why I [expletive deleted] hate the [cross talk] television series *The West Wing*.

HRISHI: [cross talk] [laughs]

HRISHI: I didn't even notice that, but maybe that's just a product of the fit in 2000. Things were baggier then.

JOSH: Yes, no that is clearly generally the case.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: We've gone far afield.

HRISHI: We have a bit, yeah. I liked when CJ, at the end when CJ's doing her wrap up and she says:

[West Wing Episode 2.09 excerpt]

*CJ: The stamp and depending on who those people were that were standing near me, the possibility of a story about me being good in bed.*

*Toby: Good in bed?*

*CJ: Yes.*

*Toby: Why?*

*CJ: Because I am.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: [laughs] And Toby can't take it and he just averts his eyes.

JOSH: Yeah. He like, withers, and he's, [cross talk] "all right".

HRISHI: [cross talk] Ok. So good.

HRISHI: But that, I wanna say that CJ's the hero of this episode, I think for me, because despite getting piled on throughout the episode, she does... She stays committed and continues to try and like, learn something, and adjust, and that she comes up with the broader theme at the end:

[West Wing Episode 2.09 excerpt]

*CJ: I think you should do the classroom either way.*

*Bartlet: Yeah?*

*CJ: We have at our disposal a captive audience of school children. Some of them don't go to the blackboard or raise their hand, 'cause they think they're gonna be wrong. I think you should say to these kids, "You think you get it wrong sometimes? You should come down here and see how the big boys do it." I think you should tell them you haven't given up hope and that it may turn up, but in the meantime, you want NASA to put its best people in the room and you want them to start building Galileo VI. Some of them will laugh, and most of them won't care, but for*

*some, they might honestly see that it's about going to the blackboard and raising your hand. And that's the broader theme.*

*Bartlet: I'll say.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: She saves the day by articulating how not knowing something is not something to be ashamed of, that not learning is a thing to be ashamed of, not not knowing. And she's kind of exemplified that in the whole episode, she's... Hasn't know, learned, she bones up on her Mars, and in the end she synthesizes all those ideas in a way that actually the most important... You know, if there's a moral of the episode, she's the one who puts it forward.

JOSH: Beautifully put. And that's why I think the star of this episode is the space program.

HRISHI: Ah.

JOSH: And it connects, and it's a, it's kind of because there's something out there to know...

HRISHI: Mhmm.

JOSH: ...We must pursue that knowledge, and I thought it really was a, quite a sweet and compelling love letter to the space program.

HRISHI: Yeah, and implicit in that is that failure is a part of eventual success.

JOSH: Sure.

HRISHI: Yeah. Well, on that note, we leave it up to you to decide whether this episode was a success, or one failure towards our eventual success, hopefully.

JOSH: If you're feeling G or PG, you can interact with Hrishini on Facebook.

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: If you want a hard R, veering into occasional NC-17, I'll meet you on our website [thewestwingweekly.com](http://thewestwingweekly.com), what's the Facebook page? I should probably know by now. I'm going to give it a shot: [facebook.com/thewestwingweekly](https://facebook.com/thewestwingweekly).

HRISHI: Got it in one.

JOSH: [laughs] As far as they know!

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: You can also interact with us on Twitter, Hrishini is @hrishiniirway, I'm @joshmalina, this show is @westwingweekly. Look at this, I'm like a big boy, I'm doing the whole wrap-up.

HRISHI: You are!

JOSH: What else do we usually say? We're part of Radiotopia, I know that.

HRISHI: That's true! Radiotopia is made possible by a grant from the Knight foundation, Mail Chimp, and by donations from listeners like you. You wanna know more about all the Radiotopia shows, you can go to radiotopia.fm. You know what I just got, by the way?

JOSH: What's that?

HRISHI: My copy of Nathaniel Philbrick's *Mayflower*.

JOSH: I'm excited for you to read it!

HRISHI: I'm going to read it over Thanksgiving.

JOSH: You also stopped mentioning the exquisite Song Exploder, your other incredibly great podcast.

HRISHI: Well, thanks a lot!

JOSH: And while we're at it, shout out to the Yale College Democrats. We had a great time with you guys!

HRISHI: Thanks for hosting us. This episode is produced by Josh and me, with help from Zach McNees and Margaret Miller. Ok.

JOSH: Ok.

HRISHI: What's next?

[excerpt from "Bohemian Rhapsody"]

*Any way the wind blows.*

[end excerpt]

[Outro Music]