

The West Wing Weekly  
4.08: "Process Stories"  
Guest: Joanna Gleason

[Intro Music]

HRISHI: You're listening to The West Wing Weekly. My name is Hrishikesh Hirway.

JOSH: And mine is Joshua Malina.

HRISHI: And the name of this episode is "Process Stories." It's Season 4 Episode 8.

JOSH: It aired first on November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2002. The teleplay is by Aaron Sorkin. The story by Paula Yoo and Lauren Schmidt; Lauren, a name that will be revisited in the series. And this episode was directed by Chris Misiano.

HRISHI: "Process Stories" follows directly after the previous episode, "Election Night." In this episode we see Jack Reese moving in to his office in the White House and we learn that Andy Wyatt is actually hoping for a fight over her pregnancy with Conservative factions of the country. Plus, there's a coup in Venezuela and Sam Seaborn decides what he's gonna do in the race for the California 47th. Later on in the episode we'll be joined by the delightful Joanna Gleason, who played Jordon Kendall. This is her last episode as Jordon Kendall.

JOSH: She's the best. I'm very sorry to see her character go.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: What did you think? Did you like this episode?

HRISHI: I do like this episode. I really love episodes that work like this, where they follow directly on the heels of the last episode; where one episode ends, the next episode starts and it's just continuous.

JOSH: I like that too. Especially today in the era of Netflix when you can just watch it as essentially one episode.

HRISHI: Right. And I love the way that they introduce that seamlessly by having the end of the 'previously on' segment, there's a round of applause and it actually carries over as a Frontal into the title card. So we begin the show with a Frontal that's actually audio from the previous episode. I love that.

JOSH: This entire episode seems to be rife with the potential of coitus.

HRISHI: [Laughs]

JOSH: Sex is in the air. Everybody is looking to get some. Am I wrong?

HRISHI: No, you're right. It's also rife with mansplaining.

JOSH: Hmmmm... Is there a lot of mansplaining?

HRISHI: It's book-ended by some really, um, egregious mansplaining, starting with Sam explaining Aristotle's "Poetics" to Donna. In classic form of: let me ask a question and then tell you the answer.

JOSH: Very Socratic of him.

HRISHI: Right. [Laughs] A couple of... Yeah. He's getting all the Greeks in there. He says:

[West Wing Episode 4.08 excerpt]

*SAM: What he said was this. He said, "A probable impossibility is preferable to an improbable possibility." The impossible's preferable to the improbable. What did he mean? He meant it's okay to have a broomstick sing and dance, but you shouldn't turn on the radio and hear the news report you need to hear.*

*DONNA: D'you want some cake?*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: I understand his brain is just running on and he's trying to cycle through the possibilities. But it is, it's essentially like Donna might as well not be there.

JOSH: While we're on it, do we agree with Aristotle? Do we agree with his take on art? Is that true that a probable impossibility is preferable?

HRISHI: Yes.

JOSH: Why?

HRISHI: Think of it this way: the most extreme versions of the probable impossibility is any version of science fiction, right? Or fantasy potentially?

JOSH: Sure, yes.

HRISHI: And for all of that stuff, we're able to suspend our disbelief when watching those. We know that dragons don't exist. We know that there are no hoverboards. Things like that. But we can-

JOSH: Hovers board.

HRISHI: "Hovers board" [Laugh-cries] But we can deal with those impossibilities because in the logic of the show or the movie or whatever we're watching they seem probable. Even though they're impossible. Whereas things that we've objected to, things like, even just recent examples like Cornell Rooker serving in the same Miami City Council as the reporter who talks to C.J., the guy with the magic index card. That is certainly possible but it seems improbable, and I bumped on that, as did you. And, you know, other coincidences like that where we feel like 'alright...'. Or even Will Bailey's story about... he's both running the Horton Wilde campaign and he also wrote this incredible speech for Gabe Tillman that happens to also have been read on the very same day that people are going to meet Sam Seaborn.

JOSH: Sure. No... Plenty of examples and I'm with you and I complain about the improbable possibility all the time but aren't there also great works of art- say, the movie *Lion*. This little kid gets lost, thousands of miles away from home... as an adult figures out a way to use technology to find his way home. Possible. Highly improbable. Great work of art.

HRISHI: But in that example the reason why it's a great work of art or the reason the story is so exciting is because of the improbability. The improbability is what the thing hinges on. Whereas this other stuff that we're talking about, these are just points within the dramatic structure that, uh, that we're just supposed to accept.

JOSH: Bottom line, would you have preferred if the kid found a way home on a hoverboard?

HRISHI: [Laughs] Well, uh, my personal preference is improbable impossibilities.

JOSH: Yes, okay, fair enough. I'm with you. I'm glad we worked this out.

HRISHI: Yeah. One little nit-pick, though, about this section while Sam rants about Aristotle, he talks about this confluence of events, you know, that has led to the situation that he's in and he talks about that a few times. And then he says to Toby and C.J.:

[West Wing Episode 4.08 excerpt]

*SAM: Impressive, though it was an Aristotelian confluence of events that could only happen to me.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And it isn't an Aristotelian confluence of events, it's more like a Homeric confluence of events.

JOSH: Hmm. Which is, I think, what motivated the whole Aristotle in the first place, right?

HRISHI: Exactly

JOSH: Responding to Homer...

HRISHI: Yeah. yeah.

JOSH: You're right. I mini-bumped on it when he called it an Aristotelian confluence of events.

HRISHI: I love the word Aristotelian and I'm all for-

JOSH: It's just fun to say.

HRISHI: For employing it, it's great, great fun to say, it's up there with 'gubernatorial' for me in terms of fun words to say, but I think it's misemployed here.

JOSH: Do you know who's going to win the gubernatorial race?... The fastest goober.

HRISHI: ...I'm not-

JOSH: It's a Lenny and Squiggy joke.

HRISHI: Ah. Okay. [Laughs]

JOSH: But back to what we were talking about. Aaron is just using an overly clever technique to point out the improbability of the storyline. It's like the smart version of when sometimes in movies people say, "Oh my god, this is the kind of thing that only happens in movies!"

HRISHI: Right. Or someone says this'll happen... and they say, "It's never gonna happen. Look, this isn't a movie."

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: Yeah. He's kind of covering himself.

JOSH: Mmmhmm.

HRISHI: By having one of his characters just express shock.

JOSH: [Laughs] Right.

HRISHI: I did like the part where they say if you pitch this to a movie producer they'd say a probable impossibility is preferable to an improbable possibility, and Donna says, "That doesn't quite sound like them."

[Both laugh]

JOSH: I'll also add, at some point I wanted someone in that Sam scene to say, "The cake is a lie!".

HRISHI: [Laughs]

JOSH: It felt like it would have been apt.

HRISHI: Hmmm. Cake is a many splendored thing. Flavors of cake.

JOSH: Indeed

HRISHI: And, uh, I was offended that Sam wouldn't care about his flavors of cake. But I also know that he's a health nut.

JOSH: Are we talking about Chris Traeger now? Or Rob Lowe?

HRISHI: It's now bleeding in to all three.

JOSH: Into one.

HRISHI: Speaking of Rob Lowe's other roles. I wonder if you've been watching the show *Orville*?

JOSH: I have not yet. That show perplexes me. I cannot tell from promotions what it is. I thought it was a spoof of *Star Trek* shows, but then I watched further promos and it looks like it's just like a *Star Trek* show.

HRISHI: Yeah, it's actually a little difficult to pin down, in a way that I like. In that sometimes it's very silly and very broad and spoofy. And then other times it follows a structure and tone that really mirrors something that you might see on *Star Trek* with occasional bursts here and there, little flourishes on the edges, that are very silly. So it's kind of neat. I'm actually enjoying how hard it is to pin down.

JOSH: I'm going to give it a try based on that new information from you.

HRISHI: But in a recent episode Rob Lowe appeared as a blue alien who has irresistible sex appeal.

JOSH: This is actually funny. I realize now somebody tweeted that out at me and said remember how, I think the first time I ever mentioned him on this podcast, I said how

meeting him made me feel like I was meeting another species. And somebody tweeted out he's now playing one in *The Orville*.

HRISHI: And in both cases [Laughs] it's about how his sex appeal is through the roof.

JOSH: That's very funny. Speaking of... one quick Rob Lowe piece of trivia, it has also been pointed out to me, something that I knew and then didn't notice in the re-watch of "Game On", is that in that "He gave him the tie!" scene at the beach-

HRISHI: Oh! Yes!

JOSH: There's a shot of him walking away from me and it's very clearly a body double.

HRISHI: Right. Do you remember that scene? People pointed that out. I never noticed that before.

JOSH: Yeah. It's funny I didn't notice in the re-watch. I know that to be the case and my memory is it was scheduling thing. For some reason he had to leave before the end of that last shot of the scene. And so they had someone else who is not particularly built like Rob Lowe walk away.

HRISHI: [Laughs]

JOSH: We should put up a still on our website.

HRISHI: Right. Do you remember who that was?

JOSH: I do not.

HRISHI: Would it have been the Rob Lowe stand-in?

JOSH: I guess so, yeah.

HRISHI: I'm surprised that his stand-in would look so dissimilar to him.

JOSH: Yeah, I'm glad that we got on to the subject of 'stands in'. [Laughter] Because my stand-in for I think my entire tenure on *The West Wing* is seen very clearly on camera in this episode. His name is Lee Faranda. Great guy. Couldn't have been a nicer, sweet guy. And when you're looking for a stand-in for someone usually you want someone to be really exactly the same height, or as close as possible. Sometimes stand-ins have to stand-in for multiple actors, just budget-wise. But you want somebody who has a similar complexion, with similar color hair, and the same height, roughly, so that they can light the scene without the actors themselves...because it's important to go back and play video games in your trailer and have people bring you cold beverages. So most of the time a stand-in will have a similar look and build to the person, but it seems not to have been the case, at least for this one scene with Rob.

HRISHI: So, tell me about Lee Faranda in this episode. Where can we see him?

JOSH: There is a scene when Sam Seaborn steps into kind of the main office, the bullpen, to watch the newscast saying that Horton Wilde seems to be winning the race.

HRISHI: Right at the beginning of the episode.

JOSH: Yeah. And just kind of behind him, off his shoulder, is Lee. I'll put up a still of

that.

HRISHI: Hmm. I see that Lee actually has a credit as an aide in the episode "Enemies Foreign and Domestic".

JOSH: Yeah, I noticed that too. This is the nice thing about certain productions. The people who stand in on television shows and movies generally are actors and often very good actors, and it's nice when they are given an opportunity occasionally when a role comes up that may be suitable to step in front on the camera. And that happens a fair amount on *Scandal* and it happened occasionally on *The West Wing*.

HRISHI: Maybe he can sub in for you on this podcast if there's ever an episode that you can't make.

JOSH: Absolutely. Some listeners are disappointed that Rob Lowe is not going to do the next three and half seasons [Laughter] of the podcast with you.

HRISHI: Or at least maybe we can get Lee to, uh, test your levels.

JOSH: Yes. That would be nice.

HRISHI: Before we start recording.

JOSH: [Chuckles] One weird moment in the cold open is a piece of, one of the newscasters is talking about the election and the importance of the debate in the elections and turning it around and the numbers

HRISHI: Right

JOSH: And he uses the phrase:

[West Wing Episode 4.08 excerpt]

*NEWSCASTER: ...based on the debates. And 69%...*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Plural.

HRISHI: Agh!

JOSH: Which is odd.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Cause it's just a mini-gaffe.

HRISHI: That is odd.

JOSH: As there was only one. This cold open typified I think what I like most in 'colds open.'

HRISHI: Ah.

JOSH: The button, I feel, into the swell of Snuffy's opening credits theme has got to make you want to say, 'Those guys!'

HRISHI: Ha.

JOSH: I think those are the most effective 'Colds Open' and I think this is one of them.

[West Wing Episode 4.08 excerpt]

*JOSH: Toby, is the president endorsing Sam?*

*TOBY: Hmmm?*

*JOSH: Is the president endorsing Sam?*

*TOBY: I don't know, he's asleep. But let's go ask him.*

*SAM: ...Alright.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: It's effective... And you're like "Aaaaw".

HRISHI: You want a sad trombone into your uplifting oboes.

JOSH: And also, just, sort of, like, oh, these guys are such friends. Gaw, these knuckleheads!

HRISHI: [Laughter]

JOSH: I love them.

HRISHI: How would you feel if after Sam said "Alright" it went straight into to, "I'll be there for you" by The Rembrandts.

[Excerpt of *Friends* theme, "I'll Be There For You" by The Rembrandts]

JOSH: Yeah, that would work for me. I'd clap along at the appropriate moments.

HRISHI: Speaking now, many minutes later, speaking of other credits from actors of *The West Wing* we get two cheeky, in my mind cheeky, mentions of *The Badlands*.

[West Wing Episode 4.08 excerpt]

*PRESIDENT BARTLET: I won the Dakotas. The Badlands. The Black Hills.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Mmmhmm. Oh, I see. I didn't think of that as a nod to Martin Sheen.

HRISHI: I thought it was. I mean, there was no reason to say Badlands. They could have mentioned any geographic part of the country that might be unlikely to vote for a Democratic candidate. Feels a little gratuitous, and then we get another mention of the Badlands from Bruno later when he's trying to flirt.

[West Wing Episode 4.08 excerpt]

*BRUNO: The Badlands.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Nice

HRISHI: And I thought, that there's no way that's coincidence. That has to be a nice little nod to Martin Sheen. Young baby-faced Martin Sheen in his role in the Terrence Malick classic.

JOSH: Good movie, very good movie.

HRISHI: We'll put up a picture of Martin Sheen on the website at age 33 in *Badlands*. It's great. He looks like his sons.

JOSH: Yeah.

HRISHI: He looks great. I love that movie. Martin Sheen at 33 looks pretty sexy.

JOSH: He was a sexy mofo in his day. And he still, he's aging well, if I might comment.

HRISHI: Certainly, he's bringing in the sexiest Bartlet, version of the president we've seen so far.

[West Wing Episode 4.08 excerpt]

*PRESIDENT BARTLET: Who's your Commander in Chief?*

*ABBEY: You are.*

*PRESIDENT BARTLET: Yes.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: I love when Sam finally does approach the president and interrupts his potential encounter with the first lady.

JOSH: Mmmhmm

[Laughs]

HRISHI: The president says,

[West Wing Episode 4.08 excerpt]

*PRESIDENT BARTLET: Look, man, is everything alright?*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: He calls Sam 'man'

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: And I LOVE it.

JOSH: Ha



HRISHI: It feels both unusual and not out of character. I really believe that this is something he'd really say, and it also jumps out as something I don't think I've ever heard him say. You know, he doesn't often call people man.

JOSH: Feels authentic though.

HRISHI: Yeah. I also like at the end of that, when Sam is leaving the room and he says, kind of conspiratorially:

[West Wing Episode 4.08 excerpt]

*SAM: This Dean Martin?*

*PRESIDENT BARTLET: Yeah. Thank you.*

[end excerpt]

[Both laugh]

JOSH: I like "eyes front mister."

HRISHI: Yes. I'm glad they used that correctly and not 'eye fronts', as some people think.

JOSH: Indeed. I like that in his preparation of what appears to be a martini he dabs just a bit of gin behind each ear.

HRISHI: I like that too. Toby gets a nice kiss from Andy.

JOSH: Yes, he does.

HRISHI: There are two kisses that are a little bit heart-breaking in this episode. There's this kiss from Andy-

JOSH: Exes, yeah. I know where you're going with the other one.

HRISHI: And then Amy gives a kiss to Josh and both of those are a little heart-breaking.

JOSH: Ah, those crazy kids they just can't work it out.

HRISHI: But Andy, it turns out, has some reason for not wanting to get back together with Toby that has absolutely nothing to do with Toby. I mean, she has reasons that have to do with Toby as well. But in this moment her refusal to get married to him, we discover, has political motivations as well.

JOSH: You mean because she wants to deal with the controversy?

HRISHI: Yes, she's inviting the controversy, not from her own constituents, but anyone who might have some issues with an unwed congresswoman giving birth.

JOSH: Right, now but where do you get that's why she doesn't want to remarry Toby.

Well, I think that's because Toby says:

[West Wing Episode 4.08 excerpt]

*TOBY: You're sniffing around for a fight.*

*ANDY: Yes*

*TOBY: Not sniffing around for one as much as trying to create one, trying to create trouble where none existed.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And so, in order to incite the fight, she has to be a single mom.

JOSH: Hoo, that is a big old reach to me.

HRISHI: Really? When he says "trying to create a fight," how is she trying to create trouble where none existed, if not?

JOSH: By not trying to address, in any of the ways that he's suggesting, the controversy of the situation. I mean I don't get any, yes, she'd like to get back together with him.

HRISHI: Well, that's what I'm saying, I'm not sure that that's her only reason to not get back together with him.

JOSH: I don't think that's any part of it.

HRISHI: Okay. [Laughs]

JOSH: Otherwise I think she'll be saying, "I know I love you deeply and want to get back together but that's gonna have to wait till after I'm done creating this controversy by not getting together with you."

HRISHI: Well, she's also already stated to him that she doesn't want to get married to him, he's like 'why not?' And she says,

[West Wing Episode 4.08 excerpt]

*ANDY: I have the unique experience of having done it once before.*

*TOBY: Yes.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: But here it goes deeper, it's not just that.

JOSH: You sound like, you sound like what I think Toby might say.

[Laugh]

JOSH: She really loves me but... now I realize why.

HRISHI: Possibly.

JOSH: I don't think it has anything to do with-

HRISHI: Maybe. Yeah, that's possible.

What I wanted to talk about what this moment when she gives him the kiss,

[West Wing Episode 4.08 excerpt]

*ANDY: My man got the president re-elected tonight.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: It's sweet that she calls him my man.

JOSH: Is it?

HRISHI: Or you think it's mean to Toby?

JOSH: A little bit. I mean, when she kisses him. I guess it's sweet, he's like that was pleasant. I don't know, it's just getting, maybe it's a little manipulative.

HRISHI: Stringing him along a little.

JOSH: I think, a little.

HRISHI: It's tough, it's hard. I can imagine from her point of view she's saying I'm being completely upfront with my intentions and I'm clearly very fond of this man and he is my man. Yeah, it's tough. But what I really wanted to talk about was that line –

[West Wing Episode 4.08 excerpt]

TOBY: That was very pleasant.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: His response is so great. It reminded me a little bit of when you say, "that is funny", 'That Is Funny Out Loud'.

JOSH: I was just about to say, it's A TIFOL moment.

HRISHI: I wrote TWVPOL.

JOSH: Haha, there you go.

HRISHI: That Was Very Pleasant Out Loud

JOSH: That's exactly what that was.

HRISHI: I also felt like Andy has a superpower similar to Will Bailey's superpower ability to summon rain at will.

JOSH: Sure

HRISHI: She has the ability to summon the word "Maryland" from large groups of people at will.

JOSH: [Laughs]

[West Wing Episode 4.08 excerpt]

ANDY: Maryland!

ALL: Maryland!

[end excerpt]

JOSH: That's actually a great moment, the way she does it.

HRISHI: It's a, uh, very limited superpower.

JOSH: Yes.

HRISHI: But useful in this context. Did you ever see *Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along-Blog*?

JOSH: Yes

HRISHI: In that show, Simon Helberg from *Big Bang Theory* plays a character who can moisten things

[Both Laugh]

HRISHI: It's a little like that

JOSH: I just wrote down: a lot of men trying to get laid based on election results.

HRISHI: [Laughs] You should vote 'yes' to going to bed with me

JOSH: Something like that, yeah. And a lot of loose lips about a potential coup in Venezuela.

HRISHI: Yeah

JOSH: Both Leo and Captain Jack Reese seem to be a bit loosey goosey with what I would think would be highly classified information

HRISHI: Right. I had a question about Jack Reese's behavior overall.

JOSH: Sure.

HRISHI: He's the Watch Commander and at one point Donna invites him to the party, he's like:

[West Wing Episode 4.08 excerpt]

JACK: *They'll page me up at the party, right?*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: That seems like... I don't know, really, what the etiquette is when you're Watch Commander of a post but I feel like you should be watching, not relying on people to get in touch with you if something goes wrong.

JOSH: Or at the very least maybe this is, like, the third day on the job behavior.

[Laughter]

HRISHI: Right. Not the sixth hour...

JOSH: This is his first, right, first few hours on the job.

HRISHI: I don't know if that speaks to the power Donna has over him. Or his just incredible crappiness at his job.

JOSH: What an improbable possibility that the person with whom she swapped votes is coming to work in her workspace.

HRISHI: Yup. A scene that I like. And I don't mean scene as in Act 1 Scene 2, but just I like the setting of this, I like the setup, is the scene in C.J.'s office when everyone is piled in to couches and chairs watching TV.

JOSH: Yes

HRISHI: Where you've got Bonnie and Ginger and Ed and Larry and Carol all together. It's very cozy and collegial. Just, to me, it reminds me of what I want most from the holidays. The reason why I like holidays is that it affords me a chance to be in a group setting like this.

JOSH: Sure.

HRISHI: I would do this every weekend, if possible, where it's just a bunch of people piled in couches, you know, flopped around in various positions lounging, watching something together and, like, having fun. That is the dream for me.

JOSH: I'm with you. I love that, and I did get that vibe and I thought it was a great piece of group acting. There are nine or ten actors in there whose work we've enjoyed that don't really speak during that scene but what they are doing is very credibly helping create that atmosphere that you just described and it's good acting. Partial credit must go to Allison Janney who creates that kind of vibe around her wherever she goes. And I think we've touched on this before, I think, that her trailer was the Flamingo Lounge. It had a similar lighting scheme and drinks were poured and there was always good music playing. Allison always creates that feeling around her. This reminds me, too, of something that a couple people have pointed out. In the "Game On" episode we see the debate and there are a couple of just quick glimpses of Hoynes and Stackhouse-

HRISHI: Yes, yeah, just hanging out.

JOSH: Yeah. Of Tim Matheson and George Coe. It's fantastic because it just of course they would be around, but it means those two actors came in and were willing to be background artists for a day, or however many hours it took to shoot that scene, and that happens on a show like *The West Wing* that isn't necessarily gonna happen on every show

HRISHI: Right. But it lends so much depth to the credibility of the scene and the production values, you know, it's almost like when the art department does a really fantastic job to make you feel like you're living in the real place. I'd say that's my platonic ideal of a party.

JOSH: Aaaah nice, very nice.

HRISHI: There's a little throwaway thing I love and now watching the show like this I appreciate more deeply as I surgically go through the lines which is Amy and Josh when she goes to drop off her coat in his office and they're having a conversation and he's talking to

her and at one point she says, "want me to open your door, " and he actually responds, "I can do it" while then continuing to make his point. Just that little - her annoyance is funny, but the fact that he says, "I can do it" in a sincere way. I thought that was great.

JOSH: Yeah. They're very good together, Mary-Louise and Brad.

HRISHI: Yeah, their characters' dynamics are so great in this episode. When she's his wingman and he's trying to talk to C.J. about Sam running and he goes off and she says:

[West Wing Episode 4.08 excerpt]

*AMY: This is what you do, you bounce off the subject.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Right

HRISHI: Which, by the way, was the original title of this podcast.

JOSH: Haha, I see what you... An apt one it would be.

HRISHI: In this episode, the modesty of Bruno Gianelli in terms of taking credit upfront reminded me of another consultant that we've seen from Aaron, William H. Macy's role as Sam Donovan in *Sports Night*.

JOSH: Sure.

HRISHI: In both he presents these, sort of, outsiders who come in with their facial hair and do their job and then they want to leave without making a huge show of things or taking a big curtain call. I like that subtle, kind of, Sorkinism between those two, this archetype.

JOSH: Yeah, good catch. I liked it too. It made me like Bruno more when he was doing his riff. I also recognize in him a certain comradery in the, uh, "I got paid, and that's what I was here for."

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: I felt like, huh, I'm the acting version of his political consultant.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: "Ah, naa, I don't need any special hoo-haa or anything. I got paid and that's why I came here."

[Both laugh]

JOSH: That said, I love the comeuppance scene. I love that it's sticking in C.J.'s craw, that this guy is out there trying to-

HRISHI: C.J.'s Cregg

JOSH: Sticking in C.J.'s Cregg, that there's a stolen valor issue going on here, politically speaking. And I like how thoroughly she destroys him.

HRISHI: Right. There's another little *Sports Night* echo there, too. The guy's name is Chris Whitaker-

JOSH: Dana Whitaker

HRISHI: Yeah, Aaron loves to reuse names, as we've noted many times

JOSH: He does

HRISHI: And I thought after seeing C.J. totally castrate that guy, Chris Whitaker has no sex.

JOSH: [Laughs] Well done.

HRISHI: I wanted to give a shout out to the music editor.

JOSH: There's great music on this episode.

HRISHI: I wanted to give a shout out to Matthias Weber, the music editor on this episode. There's this little moment following C.J. and Bruno's conversation, where she leaves the room after he says, you know I got paid. She leaves the room, the song ends, the light jazz playing in the background ends with a:

[music excerpt]

And then in time her hand hits the doorjamb as she exists. It's a nice, I mean you could have played it many ways, the song didn't have to end there. To have the song end there was clearly a choice and it punctuated her hit in a nice way. I liked that choice.

JOSH: I want to go back and look at that moment, then. Can you shout out the exact time code? It's hard to get an exact time code on Netflix.

HRISHI: It is.

JOSH: They've got that ball, you've got to stick the cursor somewhere in the ball.

HRISHI: Stop me if I'm turning you on.

[West Wing Episode 4.08 excerpt]

*ABBEY: This is like, nerd hot talk?*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: It's after Bruno says, "nice win", and it's just before the 30-minute mark, around 29-something.

JOSH: Okay. Look for it, people. There's a lot of food in this episode

HRISHI: Caviar

JOSH: Caviar, yes.

HRISHI: Shrimp.

JOSH: Shrimp.

HRISHI: Is there non-fishy foods?

JOSH: There's also some kosher food in the episode.

HRISHI: C.J.'s eating cake.

JOSH: The reason I draw our attention- well the cake is both mentioned and then later seen, and according to the Chekhov rule about cake, is eaten in the third act. [Hrishi laughs] There are a couple, I think, of consumable continuity gaffes. I'm Jewish, never eaten a shrimp so maybe I don't know how they work, but I could swear in this scene with Amy... First of all, it's just a funny moment when they're just chatting and she's frustrated that she can't get Josh to focus and then she's like "Ooh, shrimp." she grabs one, she eats it. I think when you cut back and forth she's eaten it almost entirely and then all of a sudden, it's kinda there again. I think you need to take another look; I think there are some continuity issues. Which is one of the great difficulties of eating during a scene-

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: Which is that you're going to use bits of different takes when you put a scene together and so if you don't remember exactly how much you've eaten on which line of dialogue, there's the possibility that the shrimp's gone, and now it's back, and now it's half, and now it's three-quarters. And I think that thing happens again later with C.J. and she's eating the cake and it's little, then it's big, then there are two pieces on her plate and then there's one piece. Maybe I'm just seeing things. It's possible also that I was just really hungry when I watched this show.

HRISHI: [Laughs]

JOSH: And also, the caviar gave me another opportunity for a discursion into the wacky world of Judaism. Caviar from sturgeon, or as President Bartlet refers to them sturgeons - I had to look it up, either apparently is acceptable - the sturgeon is the subject of a mahloket, a controversy in the Jewish world. Fish, in order to be kosher must have fins and scales. And sturgeon, like swordfish, have scales as a young fish then lose them. As a result, orthodox Jews will not eat sturgeon nor sturgeon caviar, which is a great loss. I am a huge fan of caviar because I hitch my wagon to the conservative movement and their perspective that both swordfish and sturgeon are kosher.

HRISHI: You've canvassed the opinion of many 'sturgeons general', it sounds like.

JOSH: Boom! Yes. [Laughs] TIFOL. Anyway, that's all I've got from the world of Judaism.

HRISHI: No, that's great, that's an interesting caveat, err, caviar, err-

JOSH: You're really egging me on. Ruh-row.

HRISHI: Shall we talk about Roe Vs Wade?

JOSH: Nice. If I had a caviar store, I'd say "this is where your roe gets weighed", where we'd ring you up. Brilliant.

HRISHI: The other difficulty I was thinking about food scenes is the question of whether or not to actually eat the food.

JOSH: Agh.



HRISHI: I mean, will you fill up between takes?

JOSH: Yeah. This is a huge - there's a scene in *Bulworth* in which a few of us are eating Chinese food and Warren Beatty, the director, wanted us to appear to be famished and eating with much relish-

HRISHI: Did they provide relish?

JOSH: Hah, no, no relish at all. He insisted that we spit out every bite. And I kept saying to Warren, "I'm really hungry, can I just do one take where I eat it and I'll swear I'll still look really hungry on the following takes and I'll spit it out". [Laughter] But he insisted, to the point where, between every take, and he does insane numbers of takes. We'd do 10, 20, 30, 40 takes sometimes and he kept running over with paper bags making me spit out in front of him.

HRISHI: So, you could stay hungry.

JOSH: Exactly.

HRISHI: Stay hungry my friends.

JOSH: Yes. Stay lean, stay hungry.

HRISHI: It reminds me of an episode of *Arrested Development* where the family goes on a carb-free diet at the end of the episode they give it up and they're eating all these carbs. But in actuality, of course, the actors are so concerned with their appearance on screen and they were not excited about eating all those carbs, so just out of the frame line of the camera, there are these buckets where they'd just spit out in to as they did take after take.

JOSH: Oh really? That's fantastic. I had a *Scandal* scene recently where David, my character, is eating egg rolls with Abby and they have these great Trader Joe's vegetarian egg rolls so I was like, um, I am actually going to eat. I needed to take a bite in the scene too, and I think I'm actually gonna... It's just one little piece, one little bit, it'll be fine. Because I'm always trying to lose weight too, unsuccessfully. And it wasn't until the end when I asked them to give me a count take, how many takes we'd done, that I'd realized I'd eaten 27 egg rolls.

HRISHI: Laughter

JOSH: It was not good, it was like three days' worth of calories. They're good though.

HRISHI: Oh, one moment back to Chris Whitaker. I like that he invoked the phrase, "silver bullet".

[West Wing Episode 4.08 excerpt]

*CHRIS WHITAKER: I told Leo McGarry that. I said education is the silver bullet.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: It's great that he has that because we've heard characters in the show, we've heard our heroes, talk about education being the silver bullet twice now. We've heard Sam say it to Mallory and we've heard the president say it to Toby. And so, this is a real thing, somehow that little internal phrase managed to be externalized enough that this random sixth string pollster-

JOSH: Picked up on it.

HRISHI: Yeah. Maybe it became a public talking point for them and he got to run with it.

JOSH: Did I miss something... early on there's a little repartee between Toby and Andy on how they're going to tell the babies apart at first. Was that all joking because it's a boy and a girl?

HRISHI: Y'know with newborns...You can't really tell.

JOSH: When it's a boy and a girl?

HRISHI: I imagine he means just y'know on a day to day basis not-

JOSH: It's a boy and a girl. Quick peek, you know who's who.

HRISHI: Well you're not gonna do a quick peek every time.

JOSH: You're not going to mix up your twins and screw up their lives when one's a boy and one's girl.

HRISHI: I think you're allowing for the possibility of quick peeks too often.

JOSH: Early on in the show, Jack Reese's first moments in the Sit Room, Leo's introducing everyone-

HRISHI: [Laughs]

JOSH: And he introduces everyone by name and then he just kinda says "and there's some other people".

[West Wing Episode 4.08 excerpt]

*LEO: Major Carson from SOUTHCOM; Adam Hallridge, CIA Venezuela Desk; Troop, Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs; and some other people.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: [Laughs] "Some other people", that's great.

JOSH: It makes me laugh. It did make me think of *Gilligan's Island* where the credits were everybody and "the rest" which was just two more cast members. And then finally they made the commitment later in *Gilligan's Island* where they'd sing "the Professor and Mary Ann" but it used to be "and the rest."

HRISHI: Oh really? No, I didn't know that. I just know the Professor and Mary Ann version.

[Excerpt from *Gilligan's Island*]

JOSH: No, they didn't get there early on.

HRISHI: Shocking

JOSH: And I thought, come on Leo. Give the Professor and Mary Ann their due.

[Excerpt from Gilligan's Island]

HRISHI: Mary Ann and the Professor, both valuable voices inside the Sit Room.

JOSH: Indeed.

HRISHI: Mary Ann, get the popcorn.

JOSH: I had a question that just popped into my head watching that scene with President Bartlet mixing those drinks. I wonder, is there an ethical question about the president drinking? Or drinking too much? Cause it's a 24 hour a day job and one could be called upon to make incredibly high stakes decisions at any moment of any day. Can you drink to inebriation when you're the president?

HRISHI: Right. That's an interesting question

JOSH: I feel like there's a good premise for a movie, maybe a comedy, in there where the president is completely [expletive deleted]-faced. And has to make some sort of nuclear war decision or something.

HRISHI: Completely re-contextualizes *Drunk History*.

JOSH: Doesn't it?

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Can you take a sleeping pill?

HRISHI: Yeah. I mean...You do have to invoke the 25th amendment when you do.

JOSH: Well, no wonder.

HRISHI: You know, we talked a little bit in the last episode about this restriction for Sam and potential carpet-bagging if you were to run in other places, he says if he loses he can't run. We talked about Mitt Romney running, you know, as a potential Senate candidate in Utah after having already served as governor of Massachusetts, and I looked up... It turns out there's a Senator when, back in the day before we had direct elections for senators, James Shields in the 1800s, he served as Senator for both Illinois, Minnesota and Missouri.

JOSH: You know we have a word for that.

HRISHI: Masturbatorium

JOSH: Right. Really?

HRISHI: Yeah and there's a page on the Senate.gov website about James Shields. We'll put a link to that.

JOSH: Why not?

HRISHI: Before we take a break and speak to Joanna Gleason I wanted to point out that I love the way she says the last line of this episode. Leo asks:

[West Wing Episode 4.08 excerpt]

LEO: Will you dance with me

JORDON: Yes

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: The way that she says "yes" is electric.

JOSH: And the scenes of then dancing together and lovely and romantic and I'm so happy for them both.

HRISHI: Electric maybe isn't the right word. Smoky?

JOSH: Smoky. There you go. That's a Sorkin word.

HRISHI: That's a Whitaker word. Dana Whitaker gets called smoky by Peter Krause.

JOSH: It's a real loss to the show that we don't see Jordon Kendall again and a real loss for Leo because she brings out a very tender side of him.

HRISHI: Mmmhmm.

JOSH: I'm glad they got at least once dance in.

HRISHI: That's true. Oh, and this is the bookend, the final scene is also the bookended mansplaining scene where Leo tells her about process stories and in the end actually says 'and therein ended the lesson.'

JOSH: Maybe that's why she never came back.

HRISHI: [Laughs]

JOSH: And he says, I believe, "the process matters more than the outcome". That sound so quaint these days.

HRISHI: And also, just not true. I mean it was quaint even in the moment that he's saying it. It's not true.

JOSH: True.

HRISHI: The process certainly matters.

JOSH: Joanna Gleason, I don't know if you not as an explicit not-a-fan-of-musicals, in addition to being a marvelous actor is an exquisite singer and musical performer. Multiple Tony nominee, Tony winner in 1988 I believe, playing the Baker's wife in Stephen Sondheim's *Into the Woods*. She's so great.

HRISHI: Did you ever see her on stage?

JOSH: Well, I've heard her many times and watched her performances and there's a great filmed version of the stage production of *Into the Woods* and she's wonderful in it and the whole thing is great. We'll put up a link or two of that. I saw her on stage on Broadway in a play called *Joe Egg* in the early, or maybe mid, 80s. And she was wonderful in that. Sadly, I

did not see the original production of *Into the Woods*, I saw the filmed version. My wife Melissa saw her in *Into the Woods*, and we're both huge fans.

HRISHI: One thing I didn't realize before we spoke to her is that her husband is Chris Sarandon. One of my favorite roles of Chris Sarandon's might not be on the radar of big Chris Sarandon fans but he provides one of the voices in *Princess Nazika* the Miyazaki film. In the English version of it he plays a great character called Kuratawa, and he's fantastic. And it just makes me so happy that the two of them are a couple. It's one of those discoveries that just gives me a lot of joy. Let's take a quick break now and when we come back we'll be joined by the effervescent Joanna Gleason.

[Ad Break]

JOSH: And we're back and now I'm delighted to welcome to the podcast Joanna Gleason.

JOANNA: Your first season Josh was 'Game On'?

JOSH: 'Game On' was my very first episode, yes, so 6th episode of the 4th season.

JOANNA: Yeah, and that was one of my absolute favorites.

JOSH: Aw, it's a good episode. He's a good writer, that Aaron Sorkin.

JOANNA: He's a good writer. He left after season 4?

JOSH: Yes. Somewhere in the middle of Season 4, I had just joined, and all of a sudden we were having this meeting and Aaron and Tommy was telling us they're leaving. It was like, wait a minute.

JOANNA: Right, it's either Malina or me.

[Laughter]

JOSH: Wow, I never thought of that. I don't think I pushed him out, I think there were other factors.

JOANNA: And I also remember that we had a version of a drinking game that we'd play when we watched the show, when it would air, except we used Cheetos instead of booze. And that's every time Bradley said the word "the", there was always a little kind of pause after it, like an elision. Like theeee thing da, da, da, da, da. If you watch theeee...da, da, da...

[West Wing Episode 4.08 excerpt]

*JOSH: Does the... US Attorney's office know about you?*

[end excerpt]

JOANNA: Always with the word the, there's an extra beat and... And then we'd eat a Cheeto.

JOSH: [Laughter]

HRISHI: Oh my gosh.

JOSH: I haven't noticed that.

JOANNA: Now you'll hear nothing but that.

HRISHI: This is going to be a new tradition in the podcast.

JOSH: Yes, we like to analyze the verbal tics.

HRISHI: Can we adopt that? The West Wing Weekly Cheeto game?

JOANNA: Yes.

JOSH: You eat a Cheeto and I'll do a shot.

HRISHI: [Laughs]

JOSH: No, no, maybe not.

HRISHI: I don't know, he might be doing it a lot, Josh.

JOSH: You're right. Maybe I'll stick with Cheetos.

JOANNA: Yeah.

HRISHI: That's amazing. Was that just something you did at home or was it something among the cast?

JOANNA: It's not something you really talk about.

JOSH: Well, too late now.

JOANNA: [Indecipherable]...I'm incredibly proud. We're trained, our ears are trained, and I was an avid follower of the show. Plus, you could take the script and you could cover all the characters names and read the script and you would know because of the way Aaron wrote who was speaking. The characters had their own voice, they were so distinct. But then I think of Bradley, maybe it was a Brad choice, you know.

HRISHI: Something he brought to it.

JOSH: It's funny you say that because Aaron sometimes gets, I think, an unfair rap that "Oh he writes all his characters the same" and it's really not the case. There is maybe something Sorkinian to his dialogue but he writes pretty distinct, pretty well-developed and fully-formed characters.

JOANNA: Everybody has the rhythm at which they're the most comfortable even though they're all sprightly, they may be, but when they're not like when it's Mrs. 'what's-her-hooter-tooter from Marblehay' or whatever that...

[Laughter]

JOANNA: It just puts me away. There are characters who for a reason don't hear the music. That's how he wrote it, that's part of the music, and that's where you know that they're transient and, you know, part of the story. But man, I miss that music. I miss that music.

JOSH: How did that music come to you? How did you become part of the show?

JOANNA: Just a phone call. And it happened again with the very last episode of the season finale of the *Newsroom* too, where I just got a phone call saying Aaron wants to know if you'd do this, and, "yes!" And it was like that with *The West Wing* too, 'we want you to play Jordon Elaine Kendall' and I thought she's named for, in my mind of course, she's named for Barbara Jordan, great politician, Elaine May, personal heroine, and Kay Kendall, another cinematic, you know, kinda...

JOSH: Fantastic, I love that.

JOANNA: Yeah, I'm just gonna be proud of that.

HRISHI: Had you worked with Aaron before, that it was just a phone call that you-

JOANNA: It was a phone call, it was the "I now, I now have had my passport stamped by Aaron Sorkin." It's like you know if you get it stamped by Sondheim or Mike Nichols, you know what I'm saying? Now Aaron Sorkin stamped my passport.

JOSH: You have an impressive passport.

JOANNA: I do!

JOSH: You really do. And my guess is that Aaron probably a was huge fan of yours, your work in theater.

JOANNA: It's nice to think so, and I had a great time with him and also, man, your cast Josh. That cast, and those directors! You know, Tommy Schlamme and Vince Misiano and his brother, Chris Misiano, and Alex Graves. You know, there were these first-rate, phenomenal directors, and then we can get to John Spencer.

JOSH: Let's. Unless you have something else, Hrishi, first?

HRISHI: Yeah, I was just wondering if you'd first spoke to Aaron about whether or not there was something in particular that he'd seen you in that had let to the role?

JOANNA: No, that would have been eerie cause he might have been, "No, just a casting person thought you might be... I'm not actually familiar with your work."

[Laughter]

JOSH: I don't think that would have been the case.

HRISHI: Right. Better to leave Schrodinger's box unopened.

JOANNA: Right, exactly. But back to John Spencer.

JOSH: Yes. Had you ever worked with him prior to *The West Wing*?

JOANNA: We'd never met. The first extended time we spent together was in the episode where we're in front of the House Committee and it was a long day, you know, like a 12 hour day, and we never stopped talking. In fact, Tommy came over and said, "what's up with you two?" and I said, "I think he's coming to our house for Thanksgiving." We never stopped talking, for at least 8 hours.

JOSH: How much of that was theater talk?

JOANNA: A lot of it was theater talk. A lot of it was life talk. A lot of it was just, I don't know but when John looked eyes with you, and when John - you know this - he'd go right to the core. Right to the core of you. And when you'd act with him, I'd had great scene partners and been part of phenomenal casts in the theater, but on television I've really never have had an experience like that. Where suddenly you're better and you're not sure what made you better, but it was John.

JOSH: That's exactly what I was thinking. It's like some days you play tennis with someone who's a lot better than you are and all of a sudden, you're playing better, it elevates your game.

JOANNA: Yeah, and I went back and I looked at- I watched "Game On," and I watched, I think I watched all the ones I was in, and I realized it really was a kind of work I had never done before. Because you can have no plans of what you want to sound like, or what you want to emphasize, but you can have endless expectations because everything is there already in John and in the writing, that whatever happens is gonna be right. And that's a freedom for an actor, to come with no plans.

HRISHI: And would you discover what the ultimate path was in rehearsals or was it really sometimes you'd figure it out on a particular take when the cameras were rolling?

JOANNA: I think the thing about it that was the most like theater for me is when the cameras are rolling, that to me is the point of no return. I never imagine to hear the words "Cut, going again." The curtain goes up and you're, and it's 8 o'clock and you don't stop till you know, it's 10:30. So rehearsal is great, it's for the marks, it's for the crew, it's for the lighting, it's for general blocking. And then there's that thing that happens when I hear the word "Action," it's, now it's show time. And you go until you get the story told. I do remember I got to meet Martin Sheen because I had never met him. And finally I have scene, a small scene with him and I said:

[West Wing Episode 4.03 excerpt]

*JORDON: Due respect, Mr. President, this isn't funny.*

*PRESIDENT BARTLET: Due respect, Ms. Kendall, I'm the last person to whom that needs to be pointed out.*

[end excerpt]

JOANNA: I got intimidated. I really, physically, Martin intimidated me. And not actor to actor, it was just "I'm talking to the President of the United States." And John gave me a look like, "you don't joke, you don't get jocular with the President of the United States" and I thought I'm in a corner here, I'm sweating.

[Laughter]

HRISHI: What were some of the things that surprised you most of things that ended up on screen?

JOANNA: I think my favorite thing of all that's happened to me as an actor was at the end of the House Committee hearing, the one where he's pretty much been questioned for hours and hours, is at the end he asks me what I'm doing for dinner and then I say fine and he says something like-

[West Wing Episode 3.09 excerpt]



*LEO: You want to do it tomorrow night instead?*

*JORDON: What's tomorrow night?*

*LEO: It's Christmas Eve.*

*JORDON: Okay.*

*LEO: Okay.*

[end excerpt]

JOANNA: Just the way he said "It's Christmas Eve" I saw something happen to my face that I wasn't aware of at the time was just this kind of... I saw she was a lonely woman, and this was a lifeline, and that she is sentimental and doesn't want to be alone at Christmas Eve. Someone took the Venetian blinds and opened the slats and a little light came in, you know, and I thought "wow." It surprised me, and then it thrilled me.

HRISHI: That's great.

JOSH: That is a special moment.

JOANNA: Well you feel it while it's happening but you don't really understand, in the context of what the whole day has been, just how necessary that tiny turn is.

JOSH: Somebody, when I was first starting out and was about to do my first work on camera, said "Just know that the camera reads your mind." So you don't have to try to communicate those moments all the time, if you just experience the moment and look at the other actor and it's there, it's going to read.

JOANNA: It lets your thoughts move around. You know what I'm seeing, don't show me anything. And it's so relaxing when that happens, and you're falling, you feel like you're falling. And you're in a zone. And then they say 'Cut' and you're like, 'Not one more!'

HRISHI: Did you know from the beginning how many episodes you'll be on for?

JOANNA: No, I think I did five. And I thought it was in-n-out... Burger.

[Laughter]

HRISHI: "In-n-Out Burger" [Laughs]

JOSH: Well, you guys were so great together and that's what usually happens to Aaron, he falls in love with an actor. He thinks 'I'm gonna bring someone in for one episode and something special happens and he's, "I need more"

JOANNA: Yes, I know. And there's this wonderful, kind of, off-screen love affair or, well, we got to dance, slow dance together, John and I. And the Christmas Eve dinner and somebody yelled they want half your stuff -

[West Wing Episode 4.03 excerpt]

*LEO: History's shown that if you just wait and tell it to a divorce lawyer, you can have half my stuff.*

JORDON: *I don't want half your stuff.*

LEO: *You don't know- some of it's good stuff.*

JORDON: *Where are we going?*

[end excerpt]

JOANNA: The implication being that there's something going on here, and then of course later they replace me... Aaron was gone by that time [crosstalk] and I abandoned all hope. I guess Aaron saw something and it was good for John... It was, you know, probably good for John's character, and man, it was great for me.

JOSH: [crosstalk] That's true.

HRISHI: It was, it really was. I think Leo as a character ends up continually building these walls around him and you see so many of the characters around him trying to get through them, trying to break through and reach him in a way that lets him know how much they care about him, usually unsuccessfully.

JOANNA: Absolutely. And he's so... everything is very close to the vest and also he has the armor, the kind of Leo McGarry armor.

HRISHI: Right.

JOANNA: That when it does resonate it's like from the last echo in the Grand Canyon, you know, it's like, "did I see that? Did I hear that?... Hello, hello?" Yet on John you see it because you he doesn't show you anything, you just know deep down inside that he's felt something. When you work with an actor who has got 900 layers, it's endless discovery and it is he whom you want to discover.

JOSH: Still waters.

JOANNA: Yeah. Missed, sorely missed on screen and in life.

HRISHI: It's sad that "Process Stories" is the last moment we see Jordon Kendall because it is the moment when the two characters are the most, you know, finally they're dancing, they're slow dancing, she's got a rose, I mean-

JOSH: They've been doing a dance of sorts around each other for a while and now we finally get to see them dance together.

JOANNA: And then...Goodbye.

HRISHI: And then goodbye, yeah. I appreciate but am also frustrated by how much Aaron subverts our desire for the culmination of happiness for our characters.

JOANNA: Yes, and probably that's the plan all along but as we were dancing John said, "sing" he said "just sing into my ear. Just sing." So as we were rehearsing I was just humming and singing into his ear. It was very, very sweet.

JOSH: That's beautiful.

HRISHI: Ahh, do you think it's something we can see on screen? I don't think I noticed that.

JOANNA: I don't think you can. To this moment I don't remember whether it was just as we rehearsed it and we just didn't stop dancing as we were rehearsing and he said sing. Or if it actually happened when rolling. I don't think it would have happened, they would have picked it up on the mic and have to pay residuals to the song.

[Laughter]

JOSH: I love it though. That's the kind of thing that even in the rehearsal would inform the performance. I love it.

JOANNA: On top of everything I don't think she was a singer. Right? She did enough.

HRISHI: Do you have other memories; do you remember when you came on set the first time?

JOANNA: The first table read was terrifying because you're coming in to a world that exists and everybody is so, they know the bones, they know where everything is, so the first table read it terrifying actually, but fine. And I knew- I don't think Stockard, who is an old, old friend of mine and dear friend of mine, I don't know if she was there that day. So I really knew nobody else. I'd worked with Tommy Schlamme and he'd directed me in a Tracy Ullman episode and an ER episode.

JOSH: I worked with him on the Tracy Ullman show, too.

JOANNA: Fun, so much fun.

JOSH: Yeah

HRISHI: Were you living in Los Angeles then or were you on the east coast?

JOANNA: No, we had left New York, we were back in Los Angeles, I had been doing lots and lots and lots of television. My, as I referenced, the motherboard died, the pilot light went out, I was feeling kind of, I gotta get back East. We came back in 2004 and are happy, you know we've been more productive. My husband and I, Chris Sarandon, my husband and I are-

JOSH: Good actor

JOANNA: Yeah, the best. We've done Broadway and off-Broadway and movies and I've now written a movie I'm going to direct. And just life really blossomed again, because we're just truly, metabolically, East Coast people.

HRISHI: We do talk about *The Princess Bride* a lot on this podcast, it seems.

JOANNA: Ah, well, Humperdinck is in the other room.

[Laugh]

HRISHI: Has *The West Wing* travelled with you through your career? Do people come up to you and remember Jordon Kendall?

JOANNA: They do and right away I know these are people I would have a cup of coffee with because if that show means something to you, it means something to me about you.

HRISHI: Beautiful

JOANNA: Yeah

HRISHI: That's how I feel about our listenership in general. I think it was a really great discovery for me to know how many other *West Wing* nerds there really were. The kind of people who could understand the very deep love that I have.

JOANNA: Frankly there's more than nerd-dom to this layer cake of love for Aaron's writing and for *The West Wing*, there's optimism, there's hope, there's critical thinking, there's common sense, there's empathy, there's the willingness to be moved and open, and the willingness to have dialogue.

JOSH: And inspiration. The number of times that we meet people who say - I'm doing what I'm doing now, whether it's social work or in the government or I'm in a think tank, because of the show is incredible. People who weren't alive when it first aired who are just discovering it now or who have in the last ten years or whatever it is, it's evergreen.

JOANNA: That's right. So now we need people to run for the vacant seat in Orange County, you know in the...

HRISHI: Exactly.

JOSH: Indeed.

JOANNA: Yeah.

HRISHI: This is an aside but I just saw someone announce- a democrat announced their candidacy for the California 49th over the weekend.

JOANNA: Go, go. Well, we have to fight the good fights, and we can steal a page or two from the episodes of *The West Wing*.

HRISHI: Absolutely. I wish more people would.

JOANNA: Yeah, strange and interesting times, as they say, not less interesting than strange.

HRISHI: Thank you so much for taking the time to talk to us and for even shouting us out on Twitter so that we would know that you'd be open to it.

JOANNA: You know, we take a lot of car trips, my husband and I, we like to drive. So we get it in the car and then, "what's the podcast?" First of all you guys are amazing and detail-oriented and smart and interesting, so it's a pleasure.

JOSH: That's a lovely thing to say, thank you so much, and thank you for joining us on the podcast. And thanks to you all for joining us for this episode of *The West Wing Weekly*. We're calling it, it's a wrap, it's over, there ain't no more, that's all we got. Except to say, that I like Toby's brown suit. I found that one last note. Which is if-, there's something perfect...hat tip to Linn Paulo, about Toby's suit.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: He looks so Toby in it. And that's all I got.

HRISHI: If you've got more, you can let us know on our website, [thewestwingweekly.com](http://thewestwingweekly.com), or you can tweet at us, [@westwingweekly](https://twitter.com/westwingweekly) or you can post on our [Facebook page](#) or Instagram, [@thewestwingweekly](https://www.instagram.com/thewestwingweekly). Josh is also on Twitter [@JoshMalina](https://twitter.com/JoshMalina) I'm on Twitter [@HrishiHirway](https://twitter.com/HrishiHirway).

JOSH: Hrishi, I don't know if you've heard, has another podcast. It's called [Song Exploder](#). It's terrific you should check it out.

HRISHI: My most recent episode is with Lin-Manuel Miranda which might be of interest to West Wing fans.

[Excerpt Song Exploder: Lin-Manuel Miranda]

*LIN-MANUEL: And I go straight from the airport to the studio, and I grab Ana Villafañe, who is a Broadway actress and she agrees to do, sort of, the female vocals for me. And I grab Alex Lacamoire, who is my long-time arranger, to help me figure out rudimentary harmonies that can go on top of the main melody I'd written in Austria.*

[Excerpt of Almost like Praying]

[end excerpt]

JOSH: And I'll be back on *Scandal* on January 18<sup>th</sup>. Join us then.

HRISHI: Thanks so much, as always, to Zach McNees and Margaret Miller for helping us make our podcast.

JOSH: Thanks to everyone who has bought a ticket to our West Wing Weekly live events. Pretty much everything sold out in a blink. That is very exciting for Hrishi and me.

HRISHI: The West Wing Weekly is a proud member of Radiotopia from PRX, a curated collection of extraordinary, cutting edge podcasts. You can learn more about all the shows at [radiotopia.fm](http://radiotopia.fm).

JOSH: Patronize our sponsors. That helps us, and so does buying merchandise. Go to [thewestwingweekly.com/merch](http://thewestwingweekly.com/merch) and buy some West Wing Weekly swag for the person whom you love.

HRISHI: A reminder that a West Wing Weekly lapel pin makes an excellent little gift that you can give to anyone. If you hang stockings up, good stocking stuffer.

JOSH: Sure. It can help you hang the stocking up.

HRISHI: [Laughs] Right.

JOSH: Forget about whether the person likes The West Wing Weekly or not. You stick the thing into the wall. Think of it as an expensive thumb tack. I do.

HRISH: Ok.

JOSH: Ok.

JOANNA: What's Next?

[Outro Music]

