

The West Wing Weekly
4.18: "Privateers"
Guests: Allison Janney, Jeff Perry, Helen Slayton-Hughes, and the DAR

[Intro Music]

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

JOSH: And I'm Joshua Malina.

HRISHI: Today we're talking about the episode "Privateers." It's episode 18 from season 4.

JOSH: That's right, Hrishi. And it was directed by Alex Graves. The story is by Paul Redford and Deborah Cahn. The teleplay is by Paul Redford "ampersand" Debora Cahn and – "A-N-D" – Aaron Sorkin. And this episode first aired on March 26, 2003.

HRISHI: Here's the synopsis from NBC: "Abbey is upset when an anti-abortion rider is attached to a foreign aid bill and asks Amy to work behind the scenes to torpedo the president's proposal while Toby gets in a legal bind when an ex-classmate turns whistle-blower on a law-breaking chemical company. Meanwhile, the Daughters of the American Revolution want to disown Abbey when they learn that her distant relative was more pirate than patriot."

JOSH: Hmmm.

HRISHI: I would disagree with, uh, NBC's characterization of some of these things. They've also left out the Charlie/Zoey intrigue that figures in the background.

JOSH: Mmm-hmm. So, what would you give that synopsis out of 10 units of praise?

HRISHI: I'd give it a 6.

JOSH: Do you think that's enough for this episode? Do you think we can just start – uh – reviewing the synopsis?

HRISHI: [laughing]

JOSH: I'm looking for a shortcut. I'm tired, is really what I'm saying.

HRISHI: Ha. Ha. I know you've had a long day. You're ready for Operation Human Snooze Button.

JOSH: That is true.

HRISHI: I want to talk to you the way Abbey talks to the President in the cold open here.

[West Wing Episode 4.18 excerpt]

ABBEY: You had a little plan.

PRESIDENT BARTLET: Yeah. And now I missed the whole thing.

ABBEY: I accidentally blew your plan and you had advisers on this and everything, didn't you? And you had...

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: I like their banter a lot. I like their delivery in general. I like the president's sleepy voice very much.

JOSH: It's convincing. This does seem to be their breakfast ritual. Or waking-up ritual.

HRISHI: We start the whole episode with a frontl of a telephone. I wrote, "tele-frontl."

JOSH: Yes! I wrote, "phone-frontl." You went the extra mile.

HRISHI: Mmm-hmm.

JOSH: It is a tele-frontl. Yes.

HRISHI: This is a...no, you're not charmed by their teasing of each other in the teaser?

JOSH: I am charmed by them, but also a little bit with the kind of baby-talk I was like maybe, maybe go to that, well, once.

HRISHI: [laughing]

JOSH: After the second or third time, I thought, maybe I shouldn't be watching this. Maybe this is too private.

HRISHI: [laughing]

HRISHI: I mean, the baby talk is tempered by the content: "Operation Human Snooze Button." "You had advisers on this and everything." "You had memos from senior staff."

JOSH: Yeah.

HRISHI: [laughing]

JOSH: It's cute. No, it's cute. They're cute together. I mean, they're... Martin and Stockard are excellent together. They're very, uh, they live this scene very well; it's very, all very believable even down to the eating.

HRISHI: Mmm-hmm.

JOSH: Yeah, and we've talked: acting eating can be problematic. But they're very natural and real and I do buy the way they interact, and I buy the whole thing. And I actually did find it interesting...one of the things that occurred to me during this scene is how...And I think it's one of the reasons I like this episode even though...the only way I would describe this episode, if you mention "Privateers" – it's one of the few that I actually go, "Oh yeah! That's the one," and I would say, "that's the one with that, uh, hilarious Allison Janney scene with Marion Cotesworth-Haye." Beyond that, none of the plot points particularly pay off, but for some reason I like these "a day in the life of the White House" episodes and so even though there's nothing that jumps out at me as an incredible or an incredibly realized story that really lands, I like that...it takes place in a single day, right?

HRISHI: Mmm-hmm.

JOSH: ...this episode and...

HRISHI: Yeah. It starts, and it's bookended by the president and the First Lady getting up in the morning and then going to bed in the evening.

JOSH: Right. Exactly. I think that was a very good framework and it's enough for me that at the end of the day, we've seen a day.

HRISHI: Mmm-hmm.

JOSH: We've had day, a bit of a day.

HRISHI: And what kind of day has it been?

JOSH: Very good. And one of the things I also liked about this scene, this opening scene, is how we get their little playful husband and wife morning-time banter. We get to see also a little bit of how they live, which I think is cool. Oh! It's like living in a great hotel. They've got room service and everything and it just arrives and everything looks tasty and they go about discussing their day or what's on their minds and also in there without making too big a meal of it, so to speak, they talk about this foreign ops bill and the funding for it and how half a million dollars has been diverted from sub-Saharan Africa to Western Europe. And I like how as we're seeing this moment of luxury and wealth, the president sort of cavalierly says:

[West Wing Episode 4.18 excerpt]

BARTLET: ... a problem with...I don't know, but I can live with all that.

ABBEY: Great.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Right. Yeah.

JOSH: And you know, if you didn't know President Bartlet and maybe you saw only this scene, you'd think, "What a cold, heartless, horrible person. Oh, you can live with that as you have your meal wheeled in to you?" But, then he is the president, and this is his job and he has to deal with these things, and so while it does sound fairly callous in the moment...

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: That's the job...

HRISHI: Very Marie Antoinette of him.

JOSH: Indeed, yes. And the other thing that occurs to me is that he had to have known, I think, what Abbey's reaction to the gag rule was going to be. He sort of tries to kind of play it off or almost acts...I think he's being a little bit disingenuous, as if "what can we do?" But I think knowing Abbey, he's got to have foreseen this.

HRISHI: Interesting. You know one thing I didn't care for in this scene is the president saying anything in the realm of speaking ill about the butler.

JOSH: I don't recall. What did he say?

[West Wing Episode 4.18 excerpt]

PRESIDENT BARTLET: Lay out the papers, yes, and today, I'd like you to alphabetize them.

ABBEY: He's just doing his job.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: He's sort of self-mocking the office, you know, and what comes with it.

JOSH: That's how I took it, yeah, the privilege.

HRISHI: His contempt for the accoutrements of the office end up spilling over a little bit into this person who, as Abbey says, he's just doing his job. So I feel like, it's not like he speaks down to the butler, but it just, even the whiff of that kind of attitude, that it might encroach on how he interacts with him is, uh, you know, it feels like the way you feel about, how you can judge someone based on how they act toward a waiter or a waitress in a restaurant.

JOSH: I agree. The big distinction, though: talking about someone who's not in the room and the way you actually deal with them when they are in the room...

HRISHI: Yes.

JOSH: ...although, I see, it's still connected nonetheless. It's an attitude; it's an air. And maybe we're learning that President Bartlet is not at his best when he's still a little schluffy in the morning.

HRISHI: Yeah. And this is only by way of saying of the very charming teaser otherwise, this is just a little thing where I was like [high-skeptical-mumbling]. "Wait a second." But, fair enough.

JOSH: We get a Jordan mention.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: They taunt us. They, Aaron teases us with the Jordan mention.

HRISHI: Jordan has become much like Equatorial Kundu: action that's left off-screen.

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: I like the cadence of and the delivery of Abbey's line:

[West Wing Episode 4.18 excerpt]

ABBEY: ...up to Clancy Bangart's moral standards? What the hell?

[end excerpt]

JOSH: I wrote down: "Clancy Bangart. Clancy Bangart. Rock me, Clancy Bangart."

HRISHI: [laughing]

JOSH: So, I think I probably was also reacting to the meter.

HRISHI: I also like the president's glasses.

JOSH: Hmm.

HRISHI: He says, "Let me put my glasses on." And then he puts his fingers up to his eyes...

JOSH: Ah!

HRISHI: ...to look at her through. And he says, "Something about you is turning me on." And he's like, "Let me put on my glasses."

JOSH: Her wet hair he likes.

HRISHI: Yeah. I liked his glasses very much

JOSH: I don't think I even noticed them.

HRISHI: So the table's set between this, you know, potential conflict between what the president is not willing to do and what the First Lady wants him to do. And we go to the main titles. And we come back and we're introduced to this subplot about the glacier in Alaska that's melted.

JOSH: It's a second cold open, if you will.

HRISHI: [laughing] Though not as cold as we would liked.

JOSH: Indeed. Yeah. I noticed that everyone seems to be absolutely gob smacked that a glacier could be melting. And I thought: when was this episode? How long ago was it? And it's interesting.

HRISHI: Yeah. My favorite part of this whole subplot, the line that I think about, besides the Marion Cotesworth-Haye scene, which we will discuss at length later.

JOSH: Ad nauseam.

HRISHI: One of the things that I remember from this episode is:

[West Wing Episode 4.18 excerpt]

HENDRICKS: She's a hydroclimatologist with the USGS.

LEO: What's a hydroclimatologist?

TOOBIN: An expert in what I'm about to say.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: [laughing] That's a great line.

HRISHI: It's a great line. I always like the authority, you know, the authoritative voice that Aaron deploys with a lot of his characters.

JOSH: I thought she was good, too.

HRISHI: Look at me calling him Aaron.

JOSH: President Aaron.

HRISHI: Yeah, exactly. At least.

JOSH: Oh, well, what are you going to call him?

HRISHI: Aaron Sorkin. I haven't earned that right.

JOSH: Amanda Carlin I thought was terrific as Hillary Toobin, if I recall. Again, the small roles, I think Benjamin Brown also plays Mike, the lawyer later in the episode, who kind of lays...

HRISHI: Oh yeah! He's great.

JOSH: He's so good. And I actually watched it a couple of times to try to decide why he was so good and all I came up with was: because he's so good.

HRISHI: [laughing] That is a cutting analysis.

JOSH: Yeah. Well, that's why I don't host this alone.

HRISHI: [laughing] Umm. Well, he was great. As I was watching it, I thought, I want this character to stick around.

JOSH: Yeah. I felt the same way too, like he made an impression without playing a flashy role. He's just the guy in the room who knows what he's talking about and kind of just lays it out for everyone, but he does it in a very deft manner and I was really taken in by him.

HRISHI: I think he had a different kind of energy than we normally get when we're introduced to new characters. A lot of times they come in a little bit strident or they have something to prove or even, you know, like Hillary Toobin: I'm an expert in what I'm about to say. You know she has, like I said, that authority. But here, he's casual from the beginning and he's comfortable and we don't know who he is, but he's a West Wing insider. He's just one that we haven't seen before.

JOSH: You're absolutely right. That is what it is. Now I'm kind of replaying the scene in my head and I think even in his physicality it's – whereas, we're used to especially new characters, just leanin' in from the get-go, from the downbeat and he's got, uh, he's leanin' out. He's a guy who knows what he's talking about but doesn't feel he has to do it in the manner in which, that we've become accustomed to on this show.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: You're right. You're right. He's got a different pace and intensity.

HRISHI: Mmm-hmm. Before we go further, let's mention all of the guests that we have coming.

JOSH: We'll talk to Allison Janney. We're going to talk to my friend Jeff Perry from *Scandal*, who played Burt Ganz.

HRISHI: We'll talk to Helen Slayton-Hughes, who played Marion Cotesworth-Haye.

JOSH: Yes. Unfortunately, I missed that one, but when you – I'm hoping, I haven't even listened to your interview with her yet – I'm hoping she opened by saying, "I'm Helen Slayton-Hughes!"

HRISHI: [laughing] She did not. So, in this episode, Zoey is being inducted into the Daughters of the American Revolution, and around that ceremony there is this protest from some number of DAR members because of the First Lady's qualifying ancestor, whose name is Thomas Broom Weathergill, although the first mention we get of him I think is Josh Lyman calls him Captain Feathersword?

JOSH: Right.

[West Wing Episode 4.18 excerpt]

JOSH: C.J. Talk to C.J. He got called by The Globe about Captain Feathersword.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: So, Marion Cotesworth-Haye of Marblehead is upset about the fact that that the First Lady has a privateer for an ancestor, but I spoke to Bren Landon, who's the Director of Public Relations for the DAR about this part of the episode and she told me that that's not an issue at all. But she had all kinds of stories to tell about the *West Wing* because it turns out the *West Wing* was used as a location for shooting on many occasions. So, let's go to Bren Landon and learn more.

BREN: I am Bren Landon. I am the Director of Public Relations for the Daughters of the American Revolution.

HRISHI: And you're a *West Wing* fan, right?

BREN: Yes, very much so.

HRISHI: When did you first start working at the DAR?

BREN: I first started working at the DAR in 2002.

HRISHI: So, that was right around the time when "Privateers" was going to be on.

BREN: Yes. So, I believe that I had been working at the DAR for about a year when the "Privateers" episode aired.

HRISHI: And what was that like? Did you know that the episode was going to feature the DAR so heavily before it came out?

BREN: We did not. We had been working with, umm, the filming crew had been coming over to our building and doing, filming some scenes several times, but we saw a little subplot line with the DAR and were curious.

HRISHI: Before we get into the "Privateers" part of it, tell me about the *West Wing* filming at the DAR.

BREN: Yeah. So, our headquarters building, we actually own an entire block right in downtown D.C. We're actually just a couple blocks from the White House, from the National Mall, right off of Constitution Ave and we have this beautiful historic building. It's actually three separate buildings that are joined together, and two of the buildings are national historic landmarks, but they're also very versatile for lots of different things. So, we have a genealogical library, we have a museum, we have a concert hall, we have office space, we have board rooms. We have all of these spaces that I'm not exactly sure when the DAR started allowing filmings to take place at the building, but now and over the past 10 or 20 years has really kind of skyrocketed. And so, the thing that is really cool about our building is that it has kind of that stately aura of either the White House or the Capitol or other places in the D.C. area, and so there's not much production that needs to go into making it look like a Washington D.C. scene. And so we have lots of spaces that can kind of double as the White House, essentially, or even sometimes just a hallway and, you know, a hallway that's meant to be, like, the Senate or something like that.

HRISHI: It just has a general air of...

BREN: Yes!

HRISHI: ...of Washington D.C. –ness and institutional formality?

BREN: Yes. And what's even, I think, more funny is that we usually think of people wanting to come film in the beautiful areas – we've got a beautiful library, the outside of our building is just gorgeous – but sometimes when the film crews come, they start walking around the building and they actually see a hallway or the stairwell and they're like, "Oh! This would be perfect!" So, there's a lot of versatility in our building and so that's where we've had *Parks and Rec*, *VEEP*, *House of Cards*, *National Treasure*. I mean, even the most recent Spiderman movie filmed and did a lot of scenes up on our roof because we have sweeping views of D.C. right near the Mall.

HRISHI: I read on the DAR blog that the *West Wing* filmed at DAR headquarters nine different times, more than any other location in Washington D.C.

BREN: I believe so. Yeah.

HRISHI: Do you know any of the specific episodes or moments when the DAR headquarters was used?

BREN: Yeah. So, one of the scenes that really shows off our genealogical library actually doubled as a law library in the first season when I believe, was it Laurie?

HRISHI: Oh yeah. When Laurie and her friend...

BREN: Yeah. So, Laurie, it's the day before her graduation and she's studying – quote/unquote, "studying in the law library" – and you see this sweeping view of our beautiful library space and then it closes in on her. And even just with hallways, I believe one of the scenes with John Goodman, I visually remember him walking down a hallway with – there was a, you know, marble bust in the background, and it's this beautiful hallway, and he's just walking down the hallway and that was filmed in the DAR. And our portico, we've got this beautiful portico with these columns that looks kind of dead-on like the South Portico of the White House and so that is often used. And I believe I can't remember what episode exactly, but I think it was a party scene where they were outside meandering around the columns. So, it frustrates me, but [laugh].

HRISHI: So tell me about "Privateers." Will you relate to me the story that you told me over email?

BREN: Sure. So, we had seen that an upcoming episode of the *West Wing* was going to have a DAR subplot. And actually our event manager had a really good relationship with the crew and she sent an email and – lo and behold! – John Wells was nice enough to offer to get on a phone call with us to describe what the episode was going to be like. I wouldn't say that we were worried, but sometimes in pop culture, uh, DAR can be joked about, the stereotype of an old DAR member. And so, we had a feeling that that was probably going to be an element, but when John talked to us, it was just, like, he was so excited for the episode and explained, and he really took a very positive angle of the DAR subplot because he explained there's kind of a funny, comedic character that is maybe questioning the First Lady's DAR membership, and that has some, some good laughs to it, but that at the end, there really is great – that Zoey is joining the DAR and that there is a reception there at the White House, and it just shows this kind of great progression, and it shows the future of DAR in Zoey Bartlet and we were really excited getting off the phone with him to watch the episode.

HRISHI: Yeah. I think the Marion Cotesworth-Haye character aside, the episode ends with the president talking about...

BREN: Yes!

HRISHI: ...the sweep of history.

[West Wing Episode 4.18 excerpt]

PRESIDENT BARTLET: Zoey Bartlet is the newest Daughter of the American Revolution, so I like our chances in the long run.

[end excerpt]

BREN: Yes! I'm glad you mentioned that because I actually remember that scene from the first time that I watched it, but I did just re-watch it and listening to him, my favorite part was that he said:

[West Wing Episode 4.18 excerpt]

PRESIDENT BARTLET: ...means that change comes in excruciating increments for those who want it. You try to move mountains; it takes lifetimes.

[end excerpt]

BREN: I was just blown away. I just loved that.

HRISHI: And on the other side of things, how do you feel about Marion Cotesworth-Haye?

[West Wing Episode 4.18 excerpt]

MARION COTESWORTH-HAYE: Well, that's a different foxhunt altogether, isn't it?

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Are there some members of the Daughters of the American Revolution who are along those lines?

BREN: Well, I love every single one of our DAR members...

HRISHI: Naturally.

BREN: But we do have 185,000 members, so we have a broad range of types of women in our organization. So, yes, I am sure that we have a Marion Cotesworth-Haye amongst our midst. And I'm sure that with all her quirks, she is also probably a lovely, charming lady who is dedicated to [light laughter] her country and her community.

[both laughing]

HRISHI: [laughing] Very well done, Director of Public Relations.

[both laughing]

HRISHI: As far as the DAR would be concerned with something like this, would having an ancestor who was a privateer in the Revolutionary War, would that be a disqualifying ancestor?

BREN: No. So, we do have, on our website we have a list of, quote, “acceptable service.” So, the types of service that our organization tracks to confirm members is actually very, very broad. And we definitely, right there on our website, we’ve got privateers as definitely one of the acceptable service for a revolutionary patriot.

HRISHI: Great. [both laughing] So, it’s settled. Abigail Bartlet is a fully qualified member. She can join the ranks of fictional TV members along with Emily Gilmore.

BREN: Yes, definitely. We are proud to have her, both Abbey and Zoey.

HRISHI: Awesome. Bren, thank you so much. This was great.

BREN: Oh, thank you. This was so much fun.

[theme music]

HRISHI: I said to her, I was like, “Oh, so, Marion Cotesworth-Haye, really if she had just bothered to look at the website, this whole thing could have been avoided.”

JOSH: And the answer was yes.

HRISHI: Yeah. So we’ll get into that scene more later, but this sets up, you know, one of the major segments of this episode. One thing I wanted to mention – and this is not about the episode, but about the DAR - one thing that I wanted to mention is that the DAR itself has had kind of a makeover in recent years and really decades. For decades they’ve been they’ve been trying to outreach to diversify their membership because historically they have not been a very inclusive organization.

JOSH: How do you make it more inclusive if it’s got a certain set of criteria that need to be met?

HRISHI: More inclusive in terms of, specifically in terms of African American membership.

JOSH: Right. And how do they open that up?

HRISHI: I guess by doing specific outreach within communities and to specific people to try and get them to join. There’s an article in the *New York Times* in 2012 where in one chapter they had 13 new members and five of them were black.

JOSH: Oh. And were these African American descendants of those who had fought in the Revolutionary War?

HRISHI: Yes. Some of them, or, you know, qualified in one of these other ways as we had talked about.

JOSH: Interesting. Other funny things in the episode: Amy and the rather elaborate pranks that apparently Josh is playing on her.

HRISHI: Yeah. The whole episode is so funny. Mary Louise Parker is so funny in this one.

[West Wing Episode 4.18 excerpt]

ABBEY: What happened here?

AMY: I don’t know; I’m sure it’s...[long pause]. Good morning.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Yeah. It's very good delivery. And then the way she just sort of casually holds her hammer during the rest of the conversation.

HRISHI: Exactly. One of the things I love in this episode is how cadence gets broken up, you know, like the speed of the words, how the rhythm is really utilized in the dialogue in this episode. There are so many good moments when people just stop talking like that, when Amy trails off and then takes a beat and then says, "Good morning." There's another great one when Josh finds out about Burt Ganz's situation.

[West Wing Episode 4.18 excerpt]

GANZ: Kierney-Passaic has been concealing from the EPA and local health officials the amount of highly carcinogenic toxins at three of our waste disposal sites.

JOSH: You have?

GANZ: Yes.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And the pace of that...

JOSH: Yeah. I remember that moment.

HRISHI: Yeah. I love that. So many people on the show talked about Aaron's writing, you know, compared Aaron's writing to music and this is a reminder that, you know, the space between notes is music, too.

JOSH: A beat of rest.

HRISHI: How was it for you to see Jeff Perry in this episode?

JOSH: It was fun to see a young, skunk-quaffed Jeff Perry. He's got quite a look. Actually, what I wrote down with an exclamation point is "James Spader!" He looks...

HRISHI: Totally.

JOSH: His look and his delivery and something about him: very reminiscent of James Spader. Not saying he's derivative; maybe James Spader was reminding me of Jeff Perry. But there's something very, uh, Spader-ific about Jeff's performance and appearance.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Yeah. No, it's great. I loved seeing Jeff in this. And he's very good and I think the scene where he kind of ushers his cohort out, he says, "Oh! I forgot to talk to him about his kids!" And I like that whole subterfuge. It's very nicely done between the two of them and, yeah, I like him very much in the role.

HRISHI: I thought between Toby and Burt together in that scene, I'm surprised the TV didn't explode from cantankerousness.

JOSH: Ha ha. Yeah. The two of them could, yeah, have a curmudgeon-off.

HRISHI: Well, we talked to Jeff Perry about his experience filming this episode.

JOSH: Yeah, we did.

HRISHI: So here's our conversation with Jeff Perry. Jeff, do you remember how you got the role in this episode?

JEFF PERRY: I only have a speculative assumption. I had done a television movie with Tommy Schlamme called *Kingfish* prior to that and I assume maybe Tommy helped me get cast in this *West Wing* episode. The scene I remember is with Richard Schiff. We just had a blast. We were able to take it a few times. I was already a fan of the show and of Aaron's work. I remember it just being one of the wonderful gigs you feel honored to do. I had a great time with Richard. I know we both had some theater past in common and had been aware of each other. One of the most talented curmudgeons in the world, I think.

JOSH: I feel like you and he have a similar approach to acting. Not the curmudgeon part necessarily. But the, you know, getting every moment right, every beat, making sure it all tracks and feels right and feels organic. Did you feel at the time that you guys had a similar approach?

JEFF: Yeah. Yeah, I could tell he really loved, the "God is in the details" department, Josh. So, we were cut from the same obsessive cloth or something. [chuckles] And he said that kind of thing, Josh, that you always want to hear when you're day-playing – not that you put much stock in it or anything will come of it – but he said "Oh man! I just wish you were here all the time. I wish you were a regular."

JOSH: Oh, that's sweet.

JEFF: Yeah, yeah.

HRISHI: The two of you, of course, would end up going on to be in *Scandal* together. Did you have any interaction on this day? Do you remember, did you know each other yet when this episode was...

JEFF: I don't think so, Josh. I don't think we did.

JOSH: Sadly, no. No, we didn't cross paths.

JEFF: Right. The storylines didn't cross paths.

JOSH: Yeah. Ships in the night.

HRISHI: When you both started on *Scandal*, was that the first real relationship that you had? Did you know each other?

JEFF: No. I knew of Josh's work. But, I think this was the first time we ever got to work together, man.

JOSH: Yeah. Sadly. Hopefully not the last.

JEFF: I know!

JOSH: I was aware, I certainly knew Jeff at least from 1990 on, having seen him in *The Grapes of Wrath* in New York.

HRISHI: When this *West Wing* episode aired, do you remember watching it? Did you watch it when it came out?

JEFF: Oh, yes. I know some actors just hate watching stuff. I watch everything. Usually in this pragmatic and foolish belief that, “Ok, I’m going to get a little something for my reel, and it’s going to wow some casting director and I’ll be able to get more work.”

JOSH: [laughs]

HRISHI: Well, we know that Shonda Rhimes is a *West Wing* fan, so it’s very possible that that’s in fact what happened.

JEFF: Yeah, man. It is really possible. This should be about *West Wing*, but I have a silly little story about landing in *Scandal* if you want it.

JOSH: Oh, let’s hear it. Absolutely.

HRISHI: Absolutely. Especially with *Scandal* ending right now and, you know, Josh is basically in tears every episode of the podcast about that, so, we should do all the *Scandal* tie-ins we can.

JEFF: I know. My wife is Linda Lowy and as a casting director, she was asked by somebody at NBC to meet Shonda and they hit it off like crazy. And Shonda had some weeks or whatever and they’re preparing to test the pilot and I’m in paint clothes, like, literally, you know, sweatpants and a shirt than I painted the house in or something, and I’ve got a little microwave on my shoulder and I’m dragging stuff from the car into Linda’s office at Prospect, which was about 200 yards from Shonda’s office. And I drop the microwave off and I go back to the car and Linda would later tell me Shonda came running over and Linda said, “I don’t think I’ve ever seen Shonda run.” And she said, “That’s one of my favorite actors in the world! I hate this business! It’s so cruel! He’s moving furniture, Linda!” [JOSH laughs] And Linda said, “Honey! That’s my husband!” And Shonda said, “We’ve got to get him in the show!” Some months later I find myself cast in a recurring part that would become 20-some episodes over a few years.

JOSH: Nice.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: And I feel like Shonda and Aaron have similar approaches in they both like theater actors, they both like using the same actors and creating kind of a little theater company of their own. They both write these, you know, hyper-articulate super fast-speaking characters, right? There’s some overlap. And we know Shonda actually is a fan of the *West Wing*.

JEFF: Certainly, Josh, they’re so cut from the same beautiful cloth in so many ways. Like you say, hyper-articulate people. They’re great at creating big ensembles and I always think in a – Aaron has, of course, written gorgeous theater work – that in the ‘30s or so when big plays were allowed economically, Josh, that they’d both be our, you know, great American ensemble theater writers.

JOSH: Mmm-hmm.

HRISHI: Hmm. Jeff, thank you so much for talking to us.

JOSH: It’s a great performance, too, Jeffie.

JEFF: Long live the *West Wing* podcast!

JOSH: [laughing] I had a good time watching your episode, Jeff, also. You do a very, very good job.

JEFF: Oh, thanks, brother.

JOSH: As always.

JEFF: Well, cool, you guys, have a beautiful day.

JOSH: You, too, man. Thanks for doing this, Jeff.

[theme music]

HRISHI: Who knew you'd end up having such a long career with a fellow *West Wing*...

JOSH: That I would tread the halls of another White House with him.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: Not that I got to work with him on this one, sadly, but uh, yeah, what are the odds? One of the nice things about *The West Wing* and the incredible casting, one of the great legacies of the small roles and the supporting roles and the guest roles being cast so well on this show is it's kind of a who's who now...

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: ...where you can go back and say...

HRISHI: Nick Offerman.

JOSH: There you go. Yeah. And Bellamy Young from *Scandal* did an episode and so, you know, it's kind of like, everybody did an episode and it's kind of fun to go back and look at what they did and to talk to them and see where it sits in their careers.

HRISHI: Jeff Perry on *Scandal* plays Cyrus.

JOSH: Cyrus Beene.

HRISHI: Who in a crew of, I guess I'm being generous when I say, morally hazy people, he is in some ways, the most evil? I don't know. It's a tough title to win in that group of characters.

JOSH: He'd certainly be a leading contender for the title.

HRISHI: Mm-hmm. And I love the way that Burt Ganz kind of plants some of the seeds to demonstrate how good Jeff Perry would be as a kind of conniving, manipulative...

JOSH: Yeah. I agree. What I like here is we've got a layered guy whom you could peg as a villain or as a guy who's trying to do the right thing, but doesn't quite have the backbone to do it in a certain way. And there's some nice complexity to Burt Ganz and just that Jeff realizes in just a few scenes.

HRISHI: Right. Yeah. It's a complex character. That he did the wrong thing for three years, he's trying to do the right thing now, but he's still, he's lying to his own lawyer in order to get to Toby

and then it turns out, you know, and Toby calls him out. “You played us so that you can get what you wanted.” And he still...he’s not a straight-shooter, by any means.

JOSH: No, not at all. He’s playing everybody left, right, and sideways.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Yeah. This subplot, the whole subplot spoke to me. I’m guessing you know, my own son went to a school for sixth grade where it was then discovered that there were carcinogenic building materials, PCBs, in the caulk around the windows of the classroom. So, this stuff happens. And it’s not very generally very neatly dealt with. It’s not a quick thing. And this is, you know, and we yanked my son from the school and – we can, on the website we’ll put it up – I was involved in trying to harangue people and shame them into doing the right thing. And of course it ended up taking years of court cases and they’re still dealing with it. The school’s finally going to have to do something. They fought it tooth and nail, the school itself, talking the position that they would eventually do the remedial work in the classrooms where this carcinogenic stuff had been discovered, but since the EPA didn’t obligate them to check any other classrooms, they wouldn’t check any other classrooms and just hope those ones were fine. So, I mean, the kind of, the evil that swirls around these kinds of issues is really something to behold. And I like that Aaron started to get into it. And that’s another thing, you know, I was saying it as a strength, we never really, we don’t get a full payoff on most of the storylines that start here although I don’t know what’s coming because I don’t really remember. But as with a lot of great *West Wing* episodes, any one of these stories could be broken out into a multi-episode arc. The material is so rife with potential.

HRISHI: I remember when you took that fight on with your son’s school and feeling very proud seeing pictures of you, you know, it felt like you were having, like, an Erin Brockovich moment.

JOSH: [Laughing] Ha! Yeah.

HRISHI: Another movie I’d like to shout-out besides *Erin Brockovich* that this plot reminds me of is *Michael Clayton*.

JOHS: Hmm.

HRISHI: Did you see *Michael Clayton*?

JOSH: Yes.

HRISHI: I love that movie.

JOSH: It’s Clooney?

HRISHI: Yup.

JOSH: Yeah.

HRISHI: And Tom Wilkinson.

JOSH: Mmm-hmm. Good movie.

HRISHI: He kills in that movie. And it’s another great evil, polluting, corporate company in legal troubles. I feel like everybody must have seen it by now, but if you haven’t, you should watch it.

JOSH: Yeah, you should.

HRISHI: You know, as the show has gone on and as we've discussed with Snuffy Walden and others, the score was used a lot more in the first season and then it kind of has tapered off. In this season there's very little music. And as a result when it's used, I really notice it. And I thought it was used to great effect in this episode when Burt Ganz comes back into Toby's office and they have this exchange of pleasantries about the kids because it completely changes the words that are being spoken. They're having this, you know, this exchange of pleasantries and stuff, but throughout the whole thing as Toby writes his note to hand over to say, you know, "Get Josh now." All that stuff, he's talking about names for the babies, but the score is telling you that, you know, some [expletive deleted]'s going down.

JOSH: [crosstalk] There's tension. Yeah. The other thing I noticed is how Alex Graves chose to stage and shoot the following scene with Toby, Josh, and Burt. He's very tight on them and there's some strange angles and just, his shot choice really sets a mood and sets this sense there's.... People's faces are partially obscured. It all sort of just heightens the intensity and the sort of clandestine nature of this meeting among the three of them and I really like the way Alex shot it.

HRISHI: Hmm. The note that Toby hands to Bonnie give us another thing that I love, which is seeing our characters' handwriting.

JOSH: Yes.

HRISHI: And the only handwriting we've seen up until this point, I think, is Sam's. You know, we've seen his beautiful perfect penmanship twice when he wrote the "you're fired" note to Brookline and Joyce and then he wrote to Toby, you know, "he's one of us," about Will. And then it's a nice contrast of Toby's scrawled, "Get Josh [cross talk] right now."

JOSH: [cross talk] "Right now." I like that he's chosen to write [cross talk] "RT."

HRISHI: [crosstalk] RT?

JOSH: Yes, he's chosen to abbreviate. That's a real timesaver.

HRISHI: It's great. [laughing] I love that. And I feel like it gives us insight into Toby to see that handwriting. I wonder if there are any handwriting analysts out there in our listening audience. Please let us know.

JOSH: Well, interesting question. I think, whereas most of the notes we see on camera have in fact been written by the props people, I think this one is practical. It's actually Richard writing, right?

HRISHI: I hope so.

JOSH: It seems that way. My memory of this shot is that he certainly, you know, he's actually writing and then in the same shot he hands it over in, so.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: I suspect it is...

HRISHI: It would be more elaborate to fake it. And I imagine from what we know about...

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: [cross talk] Richard he would want to write it.

JOSH: [cross talk] The way that Richard works. You know we've never discussed it, but in the scene with the Laurens where I'm trying to teach them about the tax plan, I did some writing on the whiteboard, so that necessitated that I write everything, so that my writing would match what was already up there. So I remember like, alright...

HRISHI: [cross talk] Why did I forget that?

JOSH: [cross talk] I had a piece of paper, I had to write all the grids and write everything out, so, yeah, it was a lot of writing for Josh.

HRISHI: Right. Yeah. I forgot that that was another moment of seeing in practice... [crosstalk]

JOSH: [cross talk] ...practical writing. Yes.

HRISHI: What I remember most is the line through the zero, using the null sign for the zero.

JOSH: Yeah, that's not a thing that I do, so I wonder why...

HRISHI: It isn't?

JOSH: No, it's not something that I've carried forward with me into middle age, and don't think that it ever was, so that makes me wonder why I did that.

HRISHI: There's a great example of Aaron Sorkin-ish-ness when Josh says:

[West Wing Episode 4.18 excerpt]

AMY: ...attachment be taken off.

JOSH: Yeah, but if Amy's plan of magic and wonder doesn't work, he's got to veto foreign ops after not one, two, but three continuing resolutions. We need a win.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: It reminds me of...before I'd seen any of these things, I'd seen *A Few Good Men* and one of the lines that stuck with me so much the first time I'd seen it was when Tom Cruise's Daniel Kaffee says:

[*A Few Good Men* excerpt]

LT. KAFFEE: Thank you for playing! Should we or should we not follow the advice of the galactically stupid?!

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: That made such an impression on me that I thought, oh man, that's great. That has a very specific kind of feeling and so every now and then I'll hear something in *The West Wing* that brings me back to that line.

JOSH: Yes.

HRISHI: And this is one of them.

JOSH: We also get in back-to-back episodes now another example, a second dose of near Yiddish from Aaron, or Yiddish-adjacent, as Lauren Hissrich has dubbed it.

HRISHI: And what was it?

JOSH: "Ferschnicked."

HRISHI: [laughing] Oh right.

[West Wing episode 4.18 excerpt]

JOSH: And the First Lady's ferschnicked.

AMY: She's what?

JOSH: Ferschnicked.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: I am unaware of any Yiddish work "ferschnicked." There is ferschnickered, which I think is the Yiddish word for being drunk or tipsy is ferschnickered. But I think Josh means it as more "bent out of shape."

HRISHI: Uh-huh. I like that Aaron is creating his own strain, his own regional dialect.

JOSH: That's right.

HRISHI: It's limited to *The West Wing*.

JOSH: There's somebody, I think, one of our, somebody on the message boards referred to it as "Yiddish-ish."

HRISHI: [cross talk] [laughing] Yiddish-ish.

JOSH: Which is also very good.

HRISHI: Yeah. That's great.

JOSH: That may be the winner. By the way, just to give a proper shout-out, Kurt Basham came up with "Yiddish-ish," so thanks for that, Kurt.

HRISHI: I wanted to talk about this little detail that we get at the end of the episode where the First Lady says to Amy, "I used to babysit you!"

JOSH: Yeah!

HRISHI: Which to me doesn't really fit with what we've seen before on this show. There are two things that I thought, you know, one of them I thought could be, "ok, fine. We can explain that one away," but not too long ago the First Lady asked Amy, you know:

[West Wing Episode 4.17 excerpt]

ABBEY: Where'd you get your mouth?

AMY: Brown and then Yale Law School.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: As if they didn't still know each other that well.

JOSH: That's true. Actually what is that that you like to call when then people list their resume in Sorkin projects?

HRISHI: Tech specs.

JOSH: Tech specs! It's kind of personal tech specs.

HRISHI: Human [cross talk] tech specs.

JOSH: [cross talk] Giving her CV. And she has another run of it this episode, too.

[West Wing Episode 4.18 excerpt]

AMY: Listen, ma'am. I spent a year and a half as Issues Director for NOW, two years as Political Director of Emily's List, Founder of the Democratic Women's Forum, AA to Hope Schrader, and Director of the Women's Leadership Coalition.

ABBEY: Look.

AMY: Excuse me, ma'am.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: There she's making her point, but there are certain things, where I felt like, and then there's another moment back in "Dead Irish Writers" when there's that great scene where they're all drinking: C.J., Amy, the First Lady, and Donna. And I remember Amy makes a comment, like:

[West Wing Episode 3.15 excerpt]

AMY: The First Lady just asked me to get boozy with her, you don't think I want to write a book one day?

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And I do sort of feel like, if she used to babysit you, you probably have...

JOSH: ...got a book there already.

HRISHI: Yeah. And maybe you don't want to, maybe you're not going to write the kind of book where the First Lady revealed secrets while she was boozy. I mean, like, it seems like they would already have a very intimate relationship if she used to babysit her.

JOSH: Hrishikesh Hirway, Backstory Detective.

HRISHI: [laughing] I churn butter by day...

JOSH: Yeah, well, I think slightly bumped on it when I watched the episode. I thought, "Huh, is that really the case?" So, and I think you're, maybe, explaining very well why. It doesn't entirely line up, does it?

HRISHI: Yeah. There's also a line from way back in "H.Con-172" when she says to Josh, "We're not in a dorm anymore." And I thought, well, if she went to Brown and Josh went to Harvard, when were they in the same dorm or whatever? Just...

JOSH: Good point.

HRISHI: I'm here for continuity.

JOSH: [crosstalk] You're not wrong.

HRISHI: Yeah. Unless they were at Yale Law School together and...stayed in a dorm? Which I didn't really feel like [crosstalk] law students didn't do that so much.

JOSH: [crosstalk] That doesn't feel right, no.

JOSH: I wrote down that the door gag, while very funny, might well have killed the First Lady.

HRISHI: Yeah, it's pretty dangerous!

JOSH: It doesn't, I don't want to throw any water on what is a funny moment, but absolutely could kill a person or two.

HRISHI: [laughing] Or two. What did you think about this subplot of Donna having to follow Matthew Lambert at the party?

JOSH: It was fun to watch Janel in another, sort of, awkward situation do her Donna thing. Definitely entertaining. I don't know how plausible...

HRISHI: [laughing] Right.

JOSH: ...that particular subplot was. Yeah.

HRISHI: Yeah. Secret Service needs someone to watch this person. Donna, you have to be the person.

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: You're the eyes and ears for the Secret Service.

JOSH: Don't tell him, just follow him around. That said, I let it go. And I enjoyed, "Bar trip!"

HRISHI: Yeah. I also liked her first line, which is:

[West Wing Episode 3.18 excerpt]

DONNA: You guys here at the party?

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Yeah. Very funny.

HRISHI: But, you know, here's one thing that I did like about that subplot. In both the cases of Matthew Lambert and Thomas Broom Weathergill, they're being judged for unlawful behavior in their past. Thomas Broom Weathergill was a pirate before he was a hired pirate, hired by the soldiers of the American Revolution to help them. And Matthew Lambert, he sold drugs when he was 21. That was five years ago, so presumably he has, you know, done his time, whatever, he's free again, but this stuff stays with you for the rest of your life. You know, there are these consequences that ripple through, you know, your life here and, you know, here he is at the West Wing trailed by this person because of that past action. And with the case of the privateer, you know, it's not just in his own life. It has echoes 17 generations later.

JOSH: Sure. A reach, but I like it.

HRISHI: [laughing] A little DHM-y?

JOSH: Yeah. But you're good at that. You're pro level, for sure.

HRISHI: Speaking of Phillips Exeter Academy.

JOSH: Sure.

HRISHI: One thing I was thinking about is that Matthew Lambert's girlfriend's name is Heidi Choate.

JOSH: Choate, yeah.

HRISHI: And I thought, if you want to quickly convey that you've got a character who is the descendent of Revolutionary War-era Americans, naming him or her after an east coast prep school is a great strategy.

JOSH: Yeah. Not bad at all. Anyway, one little bit on Marion Cotesworth-Haye. She is, I think probably by design, she is like Margaret Dumont from the Marx Brothers movies.

HRISHI: Hmm. Yes, you've mentioned Margaret Dumont before.

JOSH: Have I? Yeah, she's just like this sort of this uptight foil for Groucho and the rest of the Marx brothers for their zaniness and they do horrible things to her and she remains somewhat unflappable, kind of like Marion Cotesworth-Haye even during this scene. I mean, you know, C.J. walks in and within seconds is dissolved in giggles and fits of laughter and she's not particularly thrown by it in a very, I think, Margaret Dumont way.

HRISHI: Uh-huh. [laughs] Josh, let me play you the conversation I had with the delightful Helen Slayton-Hughes about portraying Marion Cotesworth-Haye.

JOSH: Please do.

HELEN SLAYTON-HUGHES: My name is Helen Slayton-Hughes.

HRISHI: Thank you so much for agreeing to speak to me.

HELEN: Oh, it's a pleasure.

HRISHI: Can you tell me, how did you end up on *The West Wing* for this episode?

HELEN: I went to an audition, one of those terrific auditions and it was nice and I got the casting director to laugh, so I think that's how I got it. I went twice. I think I had an initial read and the casting director seemed to like it and sent me in with the producers. I think they made me read it about three or four times and, as I said, they laughed and that must have been what they were looking for. I mean, it was obvious that it was a part that was supposed to get a laugh so, one mustn't be too obvious about it, but...

HRISHI: And how did it go on the day that you actually shot this? Was it just one day of shooting for your scene?

HELEN: Just one day. What I remember most, in addition to the wonderful people I was working with, was the set just blew me away. And now I find that this room we were in, which is the

mural room, isn't really very accurate, but I thought I was at the White House and as I walked in there, of course, I loved having this great, big, tall male secretary.

BOTH: [laughing]

HRISHI: Mr. Thomas, yeah.

HELEN: The only, the first one I've ever had. A tall, male secretary!

HRISHI: And I think it's one of the funniest scenes in the entire series.

HELEN: Beautiful.

HRISHI: Were you just making everyone crack up during the shoot itself?

HELEN: No. The first time around, but, you know, these people are such superb actors. They don't keep cracking up by mistake. They crack up when they want to. And they, according to the script, they had to crack up, but, you know, they were acting. And they were so fabulous. Of course, the speed with which an Allison Janney can talk astonishes me.

BOTH: [laughing]

HELEN: Pure locomotive.

HRISHI: I think that's part of the reason this scene ends up working. She's speaking at such a rapid clip and then you really just break her rhythm completely when you introduce yourself...

HELEN: [cutting in] Well, you know, one of the reasons this scene, my character went over was it was sort of built up beforehand. Everybody was talking about me in previous scenes. So, when I came on, it was sort of like in *Hello Dolly*, you know? People are talking about you through all these scenes and so all of a sudden you come on and there's this big applause because here she is! But that was mostly because I was being anticipated and I'm pretty grateful for that. It's wonderful to do a scene like that, where you'd been talked about previously.

HRISHI: Had you watched *The West Wing* before that? Were you familiar with the show when you got the role?

HELEN: No. Not much, actually, isn't that terrible? I had watched it occasionally, but not over the top. I wasn't an addicted fan. You know, I mostly concentrated on comedy and so *West Wing* was lovely because it was a wonderful show, but when I was trying to see what I could be on, I wasn't thinking of *West Wing* so much as the comedy shows.

HRISHI: That's interesting. So you were specifically looking for comedy roles?

HELEN: When I came to Los Angeles, I was told even though I had done, you know, half drama and half comedy in about a million plays for 40 years, I was told that it was my comedy that would sell for TV. And they were right! Most of the jobs I've gotten have been comedy. I would love to do serious roles, but I'm mostly open for comedy.

HRISHI: When this episode aired, did you get a reaction from it? I feel like Marion Cotesworth-Haye is a fan favorite.

HELEN: That's beautiful to hear. I didn't realize it at the time, but I'm beginning to think maybe that's so. Yes.

HRISHI: Another show that I've seen you in that I've loved you in is *Parks and Recreation*.

HELEN: So much fun. I did 12 episodes of that.

HRISHI: And so people don't stop you on the street and ask you to say, "I'm Marion Cotesworth-Haye" to them.

HELEN: No, they stop me in the street and ask me to say I'm Ethel Beavers, actually.

HRISHI: Sure.

HELEN: Yeah. No, I get a lot of that and I love it. I just, you know, if you're a big star and you get it 90 times a day then it would get tiresome, but I get it twice a week and I find it very exciting. [Marion Cotesworth-Haye voice] I remember Marion Cotesworth-Haye and I certainly enjoyed doing her, thank you.

HRISHI: Where did you find the voice for Marion Cotesworth-Haye?

HELEN: I didn't find it. I mean, I looked at the script and there she was. You know, sometimes it's there! In the words! I didn't search for...the minute I read the script, that was what her voice was. Somebody thought that I had made up such an interesting accent, but I didn't make it up. Marion did. I knew immediately what kind of talk she would do.

HRISHI: Well, that's, your instincts were terrific because that voice is just unforgettable.

HELEN: Thank you so much.

HRISHI: I can't thank you enough for taking time to speak to me.

HELEN: It's absolutely lovely. How do I find you, your e-pod, web-pod?

HRISHI: You can find us online at thewestweekly.com.

HELEN: Thank you. It's been a pleas-uuure.

[theme music]

JOSH: That was great. Lovely.

HRISHI: Yeah, she really was. She was very nice.

JOSH: Yeah. And she is really funny on *Parks and Rec*.

HRISHI: She is. I mean, Ethel Beavers is great. And everything about that character. When, you know, Chris Pratt and Aubrey Plaza go and adopt her as their grandmother.

JOSH: Yeah.

HRISHI: Great.

JOSH: Yeah.

HRISHI: She's wonderful.

JOSH: The other thing I did notice at the end of that scene as I exited, I performed, as I've pointed out before, the patented Bob Malina head bow.

HRISHI: Yes! You do a lot of bowing in this episode.

JOSH: Yes. Yes. It's an idiosyncrasy I've picked up from my dad and utilized many times. And it's a way of, sort of, acknowledging the awkwardness of the scene that's happened and getting the hell out the door.

HRISHI: Well, speaking of Will Bailey and fathers, at one point, you know, Will and Charlie are speaking and he says about Jean-Paul, "Oh, he's the son of a count." And Will says, "Oh, who isn't?"

JOSH: Yeah, that's right.

HRISHI: With this kind of, like, toss-of, like, he's being sarcastic, but then, I thought, but we've talked about who your dad is.

JOSH: That's right.

HRISHI: Will's dad was the Supreme Commander of NATO Allied Forces, so I don't know that the joke doesn't land quite as well for me.

JOSH: No. That's exactly right. When you're close enough.... I did notice also in that scene and we're kind of filmed from afar. Again, it's interesting to watch Alex pick some very intriguing ways to shoot scenes and we're almost shooting from another room when Charlie and Will are talking. And thus a little Blackberry flip that I do is largely obscured, but I noticed it and appreciated it.

HRISHI: Oh, I didn't. What do you do?

JOSH: I don't know if it's my Blackberry or my beeper – I don't think I was wearing a pager – I did a little nifty hand flip with it. I kind of flip it in my hand, but you can...only I would know.

HRISHI: I'll look for it.

JOSH: Please do.

HRISHI: Would you ever do stuff like that in the middle of a take and then drop it and then they have to reshoot it and then they tell you, "Don't do that?"

JOSH: Not that I recall, but that is the risk you take when you flip your cigar on *Sports Night* or throw your beeper in [crosstalk] *The West Wing*.

HRISHI: [cross talk] Right.

JOSH: But I love finding things to do like that.

HRISHI: I always think about that video that you had of you throwing the apple up in the air and then it landing on the knife.

JOSH: Oh I forgot about that. Where was that? Maybe that was a Vine. All my Vines [cross talk] were destroyed.

HRISHI: [cross talk] Yeah, I think it was a Vine.

JOSH: I'm actually very sad about that because there was some, when Vine was going under, they said, you know, by March 15, just click here and save all your Vines and I think I thought of it on March 18. Oh! I forgot to do that.

HRISHI: The Vines of March

JOSH: There you go.

HRISHI: In the Will and Charlie scenes, they talk largely about a "Dear John" email. I never knew the term "Dear John" until, I remember when I was little, Judd Hirsch was in a TV show...

JOSH: Yes!

HRISHIL ...called *Dear John* and at first I was just like, ok, that's because the character's name is John. I didn't quite get what the title was, but then, you know, like, the opening credits are, I think, in the opening music of the show it is actually the "Dear John" letter. But I didn't realize that that was a thing. You know? I just thought this was a specific, a specific instance.

JOSH: Well, that's because you were a little kid and I was 22 way back in 1988.

HRISHI: But, thanks to that show, then by the time I got to the *West Wing*, I was, I was fully prepared.

JOSH: Do we know the derivation, the origin?

HRISHI: When people write letters, a lot of times they'll start with the word "Dear" as an opening.

JOSH: No, I'm familiar with that.

HRISHI: Ok. Ok. And then John is just, like, a really common English name and...

JOSH: Ok, wise guy. Alright, wise guy.

HRISHI: [laughing]

JOSH: Now, I'm going to have to look it up because I'm sure there is an interesting, well, I'm not sure...

HRISHI: [laughing]

JOSH: Oh yeah. It was just because the name was popular. Well, you're right.

HRISHI: [laughing]

JOSH: That really isn't that interesting.

HRISHI: You thought I was taking the piss, but I was actually [cross talk] giving you the etymology.

JOSH: [crosstalk] Well, no, you were taking the piss because [crosstalk].

HRISHI: [crosstalk] I was.

JOSH: You were making fun of me for thinking there might be a more interesting etymology. Never mind.

HRISHI: Back to the Charlie part of this episode, I have to say, you know, Charlie is in kind of bad form here because refusing to accept Zoey telling him, "Stop doing what you're doing," is stalking. You know, at the very best it's stalking-adjacent.

JOSH: Well, here we go. Stalking-ish-ish. Yeah, no. We're going to, I knew we were going to get into...It's a dicey area. We are looking back to 2003 with our 2018 goggles on. I agree with you.

HRISHI: Uh-huh.

JOSH: But yeah, I thought the same thing. It's just no longer a romantic comedy trope: the person who will not accept no for an answer.

HRISHI: Well, I was thinking, you know the difference between a romantic comedy and creepy stalking movie is really just the font on the poster.

JOSH: Well said, I guess.

BOTH: [laughing]

HRISHI: You know, it's a, winning over someone who doesn't want you versus, you know, relentlessly pursuing who doesn't want you.

JOSH: Well, look, there's a whole comic romantic subplot in *Sports Night* where Natalie will not accept that Jeremy has broken up with her.

HRISHI: Mmm-hmm.

JOSH: I don't know if we judge her similarly?

HRISHI: Well, this is what I love about the show *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*. They have masterfully deconstructed all of these romantic comedy tropes and how gendered it is. You know, that these things that you can see a male, protagonist hero do and think, "Oh, he's so romantic!" But, you know, so many of those stalker movies are crazy ladies because somehow, it's noble and romantic when a guy does it, but when a woman does it, it's seen as insane.

JOSH: Well, those days have passed and Charlie is just another victim of the times.

HRISHI: You know, I do really like, though, after Charlie finishes speaking to Zoey when Dulé jumps up and touches the light.

JOSH: Oh! Love it!

HRISHI: That's such a great moment.

JOSH: It is a great moment. And I will say that there's something in Elisabeth Moss's performance that suggests that there's a crack in the door, there's little light getting through.

[West Wing Episode 3.18 excerpt]

ZOEY: *Stop pursuing me.*

CHARLIE: *Respectfully, no.*

ZOEY: *Why?*

CHARLIE: *'Cause I'm in love with you. And that's the way it goes.*

ZOEY: *I have to go inside to dinner.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: She seems to be somewhat tickled by his perseverance.

HRISHI: Yeah. But, you know, there's this running theme throughout and certainly just in this episode of...It's funny. You take the thing that Abbey objects to at the very beginning – Clancy Bangart's position to foreign aid recipients, telling other people what's good for them and what they ought to do – and that kind of position of condescension, actually ends up getting repeated by our heroes a lot in this episode: the president to the First Lady, Charlie to Zoey, Josh to Amy. And in each case, the dudes are borne out to be right, like in this case, where it's, like, Charlie's going to say, "I don't accept, respectfully, I refuse." And Zoey's supposed to be, like, "Ok. I like it. It's cute."

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: And, you know, and in the last scene, the First Lady was, like:

[West Wing Episode 3.18 excerpt]

ABBEY: I like how you think patronizing me is going to make me feel better. It's sweet.

PRESIDENT BARTLET: It means that...

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And then, of course, it does work for him. "Is that what you were going to say with me? Ok. It's pretty good." And then Josh, you know, even Josh is thinking, like, "Amy's plan of magic and wonder." And really, like, throughout the whole episode, he's telling her, he's like, "I'm everywhere."

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: "I know everything."

JOSH: Yup.

HRISHI: You know, and, "You can go to Leo, if you want and, you know, if you want to do that even though I know you disagree." All this stuff. It's a running theme.

JOSH: It is. It is.

HRISHI: Yeah. I thought there was something similar in this episode, Amy's path in this episode is similar to Will's path when he's first introduced into the White House and he's working in Sam's old office.

JOSH: And being hazed.

HRISHI: Hazed and he's staying focused on the work despite that, you know, and people want to mess with him, but he's sort of focused on the task at hand. And there's a need to speak truth to power. You know, that they give him the bad note and they want him to see if he'll actually address it. Not that Dr. Bartlet is giving her a bad note, but she...

JOSH: Yeah, but she's testing her a little bit. Yeah.

HRISHI: Yeah, and she's asking her to do something that Amy herself doesn't actually want to do and then in the end she has to say, you know, "I'm not going to do this." I thought that was a nice little... [cross talk]

JOSH: [cross talk] Yup. There's a parallel there, for sure.

HRISHI: And in both cases they still pursue this thing that they don't necessarily believe in to some extent to try and show that they are a team player. They try and grapple with the thing before... [cross talk]

JOSH: [cross talk] It's that tension of doing the job and doing that which you feel is right. Yeah.

HRISHI: A couple of stray observations: I like Amy's French cuffs. I don't like Trent Ford's French accent.

JOSH: Ha. Ha. Ha. Ooh. That stings. [French accent] "Charlieee."

[West Wing Episode 3.18 excerpt]

JEAN-PAUL: There are...many entrances and driveways and...

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: "Entrances" [cross talk] I think is the one that...

JOSH: [cross talk] "Entrances" is a little bit rough, yeah.

HRISHI: That's the one that sticks out in this one for me, [cross talk] especially.

JOSH: [cross talk] Yeah. That puts you in the penalty box. "Entrances."

HRISHI: [laughing] Let's take a quick break and when we come back, we're going to speak with Allison Janney.

[music]

[commercial break]

JOSH: And now back to the show.

[music]

HRISHI: We're joined here now by Oscar winner...

JOSH: Oscar winner!

HRISHI: Allison Janney!

ALLISON: [laughing]

JOSH: Ugh. I hate that that will just always be before your name now. I mean, I love it! Congratulations!

ALLISON: [laughing] It is kind of intimidating. It makes me feel like I have to be better than I am or something. I have to be, like, I don't know, that people expect more from me now and that makes me, oh boy, that makes me want to hide in a corner.

JOSH: It's the complete opposite. No! You can coast now! They can never take that away from you.

HRISHI: So, we wanted to speak to you about the episode "Privateers," but specifically about the scene with Marion Cotesworth-Haye, which I think is, maybe my favorite scene in the entire series.

JOSH: To me, it's synonymous with "Privateers." When I hear the name of that episode, that's all I think about is Janney laughing in that scene and what a performance.

[West Wing Episode 3.18 excerpt]

C.J.: [laughing hysterically in between words] Sorry! I was...I was...thinking of this thing from...this thing that just happened...with the deficit!

AMY: Oh, God.

[end excerpt]

ALLISON: I would say, I do have to say one of my skills, I didn't list it on my résumé, but laughing is one of my skills. And it takes a lot of energy. That was hard. Because I remember a couple of takes going, "I'm really, this is so not funny anymore." And I had to laugh over, and over, and over again. And it wasn't, it was not that funny to me after a while. There was just nothing funny about it. And I had to laugh and it was almost as hard as having to cry in a scene, I'm telling you.

JOSH: I would argue harder. I couldn't possibly, I couldn't have traded places with you in that scene. I was aware that you were doing the heavy lifting and I was so relieved when I read it that my take was just to be awkward and really concerned about the way you were comporting yourself during this scene. Because I couldn't have done it. I mean, even crying they can blow [expletive deleted] into your eyes, there's a little menthol thing... They can't blow fake mirth into your eyes; it doesn't work.

ALLISON: I did this play, like, a long time ago called, *Inspecting Carol*, which was a mashup between *A Christmas Carol* and *Inspector Calls*? I had to laugh in that and I had to start a whole scene laughing and realized I just had to do it physically. I would just start moving my stomach physically in and out, like breathing and moving it in and out and that finally would start making me laugh with the absurdity of that.

HRISHI: I spoke to the woman who played Marion Cotesworth-Haye, Helen Slayton-Hughes. In her memory, she said that it took something like 27 takes to get this scene right.

ALLISON: I kind of remember it taking a long time, too. I just was, "How am I going to do this again? I just don't feel remotely like laughing. And just tell me to do it." I don't think I even, I think when I watch it now I think there's got to have been a better take.

HRISHI: Really?

JOSH: Oh, it's so good! I remember doing a lot of takes and doing a lot of coverage, but it wasn't for lack of Allison getting it for sure because I stood there in awe, take after take after take, where you, at least apparently, genuinely dissolved into fits of giggles and laughs. I was

astounded. In a million years, I couldn't give that performance. Were you doing the stomach thing? Is that, like, now part of your technique?

ALLISON: Yup. I would do that, absolutely. I could do it right now for you.

JOSH: Oh, I'd love that.

ALLISON: It makes me kind of want to, you know, fall over and go to sleep to think about spending that kind of energy. Anna Faris makes me do it all the time. She's discovered that I'm a good fake laugher so she now doesn't trust me at all when she tells me funny stories and I laugh because she's like, "I think you're faking all the time, I don't know what Allison Janney really thinks is funny," because I've gotten so good at faking laughing. And I don't blame her.

JOSH: I have the inverse. We've talked on this show about how my genuine laugh doesn't sound real.

HRISHI: It's true.

JOSH: I laugh like the Count.

HRISHI: That's if you get a laugh from him at all. Usually Josh's reaction to something funny is, "That is funny."

ALLISON: That is...[laughing] Yeah. Exactly.

JOSH: Yeah, it would've been a very different scene if we had traded roles.

ALLISON and HRISHI: [laughing]

JOSH: "That is funny."

ALLISON and HRISHI: [laughing]

JOSH: "I am laughing at you, Marion Cotesworth-Haye."

ALLISON: [laughing] "You are funny. You have a funny name, Marion Cotesworth-Haye." I think I might even be a Daughter of the American Revolution. I think I might be one of those ladies.

JOSH: Look at you, trying to get the one [expletive deleted] award you don't have yet. You got to, you got to lobby for that.

HRISHI: Wait, speaking of awards, can I show you another award that I've received?

JOSH: Please do.

ALLISON: Oh no.

JOSH: The...

ALLISON: [crosstalk] Hrishikesh, your...

JOSH: The Francis?

ALLISON: The Francis Scott Key Key!

JOSH: [laughing]

ALLISON: Who sent...? Oh, that's so cool!

HRISHI: Isn't that...? It is amazing. Yup. It says, "Hrishikesh Hirway. For your many years of service. The Francis Scott Key Key." Thanks so much to Erin Relyea for sending this to me. She's also offered to make Francis Scott Key Keys for other *West Wing* fans. If you're interested in that, you can contact her through her Etsy page: GeekyNeedlesForHire.etsy.com. Erin, thank you so much. I love it.

ALLISON: Let me see. Hold it up.

JOSH: So cool of her to make that for *you*.

HRISHI: Well. Josh, you had a disqualifying ancestor.

ALLISON: I don't think I've ever gotten anything. The only things that I get are flamingos. I get tons of flamingos in the mail. They've sort of subsided a little bit, which I'm grateful for, but...

JOSH: Do they die in transit?

ALLISON: Most of them have been stuffed prior to transit.

JOSH: I see.

HRISHI: One thing I loved about this episode is that it presents for the first time Will and C.J. We talk about sometimes how the *West Wing* is great for the different pairings that it gives us and this is the first time we see the two of you really the entire episode, all of your scenes are together.

ALLISON: I know! I put olives in his jacket.

[West Wing Episode 3.18 excerpt]

WILL: It's not a hazing. They don't do that. Except, yes, you've put olives in my jacket again.

C.J.: I did. I did put olives in his jacket, but this is on the level.

[end excerpt]

ALLISON: That was hilarious. It was, like, why olives? Is that...? It sort of suggests that there's a prankster relationship going on between us, and that we... Well, I guess, you know, a lot of it is Aaron, you know, knowing what went on behind the scenes and putting it into *The West Wing*, knowing how you were the one, you're the biggest, I mean, if anyone entered into a game of being a prankster or a joker with you, I was terrified of you in that way, so I would never do it in real life, so I loved it.

JOSH: [crosstalk] I appreciated that. I like, you can see me as Will smell my hand as I leave...That was very practical because they, they didn't particularly de-juice the olives they stuck in my pocket.

ALL: [laughing]

JOSH: [crosstalk] They went full prankster.

HRISHI: [crosstalk] That is a legitimate moment of you just smelling your hands that just looked like acting.

JOSH: [crosstalk] Yeah, I got to go film another long scene.

ALLISON: "You put olives in my jacket, again?!"

HRISHI: Yes.

JOSH: My pocket? Yes, again.

ALLISON: My pocket again?

JOSH: Yes.

ALLISON: So, when did that, like, was it...did we go to cocktail parties and I just do it? I don't understand.

JOSH: Well, at a cocktail party it would be handy. I'd have a garnish ready. I could just chuck them in people's martinis.

HRISHI: One of my favorite things that happens is deep in the background, and just, you know, a testament to the visual depth of the show and then also just the depth of the narrative. At the end of the scene between Will and Charlie when, you know, Will is talking to Charlie about the Dear John letter than he got, they're finishing the conversation and out of focus in the background there's a hallway and before the conversation ends, C.J. crosses back and forth three times, like, pacing in the back and then sees Will and says, "Oh, Will!" to go talk to Mary Louise Parker. Just like, the timing is perfect. You know, the conversation ends and then seamlessly, Allison, you pop your head out around the hallway again and see him and say, "Oh, Will! I need you for this thing." And it's pretty perfect coordination and [cross talk]

ALLISON: [cross talk] I have to admit I don't, I honestly don't, I just watched the episode yesterday, but I didn't, I don't remember ever seeing me pace in the back. I've got to go watch that now.

HRISHI: Well, it's really subtle and well done.

ALLISON: I love that. We used to do a lot more background work in the first seasons before you came in, Malina.

JOSH: I refused.

ALLISON: They really used us for that stuff. Tommy would be like, "Come on, we'll do the show. You guys are going to do background work and it's going to be great." And that lasted, you know, one season and then we were all like, "I'm not sticking around to do, you know, [cross talk] to do a cross back."

JOSH: [cross talk] Who was at the forefront of the "I'm not doing that" movement?

ALLISON: Oh, who do you think?

JOSH: Richard Schiff or Dulé. Or probably Richard Schiff because Dulé would, even though he'd be inclined to do it, he probably wouldn't.

ALLISON: No, Richard and, but we all kind of went, "Come on, no." We were all into it in the first season. We thought, "This is cool. We'll show how committed we are to telling these stories and showing how we're all part of this team."

JOSH: We're a hit now. We have one Emmy behind us. We're not doing the background anymore. One of my favorite things about the entire scene that we were discussing is that prior to it - that little scene outside in the hallway - there are times when Aaron surprises us with a funny moment and there are other times where he just sets it up because the execution is going to be so flawless that it's almost more fun to know. So, Aaron actually has C.J. announcing her intention to avoid laughing before she goes in.

[West Wing Episode 4.18 excerpt]

C.J.: Hang on.

AMY: What?

C.J.: I've got to make sure I don't laugh.

AMY: Oh, God.

C.J.: It's a funny name to me, that's all. Just give me a second.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Which I think is great because Aaron's just like, "Ok. We're going to do a scene where C.J. can't keep her [expletive deleted] together and it's going to kill you even though you know it's coming."

HRISHI: And even before that in the first part of this set-up, Will says:

[West Wing Episode 4.18 excerpt]

WILL: If this day ends up with me face-to-face with Marion Cotesworth-Haye, I'm going to, you know...

C.J.: Laugh inappropriately?

WILL: There's a very real possibility.

[end excerpt]

ALLISON: Absolutely setting you up to think he's going to be the one and then...

JOSH: By the way, it's just occurring to me: Aaron is a huge fan of the *Mary Tyler Moore Show* and the other sort of classic TV inappropriate laughter is Mary at the funeral of Chuckles the Clown.

ALLISON: Oh my God. That's right, I didn't know Aaron was [cross talk] a...

JOSH: [cross talk] Yes, So this is... 'Cause I think the epigraph before his play, *Removing All Doubt*, is "A little song, a little dance, a little seltzer down your pants," attributed to Chuckles the Clown, so he's a particular fan of that episode. So, it'd be worth going back and watching the other master of inappropriate laughter, [cross talk] Mary Tyler Moore.

ALLISON: [cross talk] I love that... Because I kind of like to think of C.J. as kind of a Mary Tyler Moore. I mean, in terms of showing women a different way of, like, "Oh, God, look at her holding her own in that male-dominated world [cross talk] of Washington..."

JOSH: [cross talk] That's right.

ALLISON: And look at Mary. I mean, definitely for me watching Mary Tyler Moore growing up, watching her live alone and be a career woman. I was like, "Look at that! Jeez, that looks kind of fun. Maybe I could do that."

JOSH: It does.

ALLISON: You know what I love that Aaron does in a lot... I mean, it's so fun to have the practical joke things, I mean, he had, obviously he had me and you in this episode with the olives, and Mary Louise Parker with the pictures falling and the door falling, and I don't know what episode it was where Dulé and I had all of our game of pranks. What's the other word for pranks? A prank war?

HRISHI: Yeah. It's a prank war.

JOSH: Mmm-hmm. Yeah.

ALLISON: Alright. And I love that he put that stuff in there. Is that because of us, do you think? Because of how pranky we were? Is that a word? Pranky? We were pranky with each other all the time [cross talk] outside of...

JOSH: Yes. I remember putting - I can't remember whether it was an onion or a fish somewhere in your trailer.

ALLISON: A fish!

JOSH: I just, I let it slowly decompose.

ALLISON: In my trailer. And then over the days it started to smell and smell and I'd say, "What the hell?! Why does this smell so bad?" Oh, God.

HRISHI: But the thing is, it's true, like, that prank war episode is from season three and that's before Josh was on this show, so there must have been some pranking going on pre-Josh.

ALLISON: Yeah. Brad would do a lot of... He was a prankster. But then Malina came on and it was a whole other level. A level that I could not participate in because the fear of retaliation was so great, I was like....

JOSH: That's what I count on.

ALLISON: Oh, my God. I just couldn't play. I could no longer play on that level, my man. I think someone put a bunch of, like, Vaseline or mayonnaise all over my car door handle, underneath the car, so I went to open my door and it was just, like, just Vaseline [cross talk] and they...

JOSH: [cross talk] That sounds like me.

ALLISON: ... changed the voice in my car to Portuguese or something.

JOSH: That sounds right. That all sounds like me

ALL: [laughing]

HRISHI: A whiff of Josh's M.O.

ALLISON: Don't you miss us? I miss us.

JOSH: I do too. I so do. *Scandal* is coming to end in the next two days and in addition to getting melancholy about that nice group of people, I'm also sort of re-experiencing the sadness about *West Wing* being over.

ALLISON: Yeah. It's really sad. I really wish Aaron would do something about that for us all.

JOSH: Well, it won't be for lack of lobbying. We've done it a lot and certainly social media is abuzz. Martin recently said somewhere that he'd like to come back and play Bartlet.

ALLISON: Did he, really?

JOSH: Yeah. It will all lead to naught because Aaron's just not going to do it, but it is fun even just the thought of it.

ALLISON: It is fun. I like it.

HRISHI: You know there was one thing, too, back to what you were saying about instead of getting ahead of the audience, just really laying it out, so the inevitability of it has an impact. When I was speaking to Helen Slayton-Hughes, she said, you know, that she felt like that it was a great gift for her in this scene because people had been talking about her so much in the episode, you know, that the name Marion Cotesworth-Haye had been said so many times and her character had been mentioned that by the time she finally gets up to say her line, so much of the work had already been done for her.

ALLISON: [exaggerated voice] I am Marion Cotesworth-Haye!

JOSH: [deadpan voice] I am Marion Cotesworth-Haye!

HRISHI and ALLISON: [laughing]

JOSH: It's just a different approach. It's how I would have played the part.

HRISHI: That is accurate.

ALLISON: Oh, lord. And Mary Louise Parker is just unflappable.

JOSH: Yes.

ALLISON: Her whole demeanor. Everything is just absolutely unflappable, which is kind of charming.

JOSH: You know, soon enough. I guess I'll probably discuss it when it happens, but there's an episode where I, in an effort to make Mary Louise Parker laugh, I do the most unprofessional thing I've ever done on camera and it ends up in the show. I've never actually watched the episode because I'm so embarrassed by it, but there was a series of takes, well, we'll see it down the line, but...I don't even remember the circumstance, but we're all watching fireworks. And, I remember, I think Alex Graves directed and he kept saying, "Okay, you guys really like the fireworks." So, I was *really* liking the fireworks, just "Oooh! Aaaaah!" Because, I somehow thought you couldn't really see us, we were kind of in the background. I had Mary Louise in fits of laughter, which was real for me. Janney's an easy laugh. Harder to make Mary Louise laugh. So, I was just like...and then eventually when it aired, a lot of people were like, "Wow! Will Bailey

really likes fireworks!" I was so, I'm actually, like, I feel like I'm turning red as I think about it. I've never seen it. I'm so embarrassed. I was like, "Oh! Oooooohhhh!"

ALLISON: Which episode was that in? I want to go...

JOSH: I don't know. I'm scared. I want to stop the podcast before we get to it.

ALLISON: Now I've got to watch it. Did you guys talk about "The Long Goodbye?"

HRISHI: We did. We had him as our guest for that. That's...

JOSH: He gave us a wonderful interview and, of course, said lovely things about you. You should listen to it. It's interesting and...

ALLISON: I do want to hear about that. I always feel like Aaron hated me after that one, like I'd had an affair on him, you know. I came back and he was just, never looked at me the same.

JOSH: That's probably actually true. There probably was an element of that. I mean, that would be, Aaron is very proprietary. In a sweet way, but his writing, his characters, I'm sure that's true.

HRISHI: He's used that metaphor before. He's said, you know, that watching someone else write for his characters felt like seeing someone kiss your girlfriend.

ALLISON: Yeah.

HRISHI: Or make out with your wife, or something like that.

ALLISON: Yeah. Gosh.

HRISHI: I have one other question. Over the four seasons we've seen C.J.'s hairstyle evolve as well...

ALLISON: Oh, boy.

HRISHI And I was wondering: Did you get to have a say in that? Would you show up to a new season with a new haircut, and then they'd say, "Ok, we're going to incorporate this?" Or how did that work?

ALLISON: Yeah. There's a lot of C.J. hair moments that are, some I'm proud of, some I'm not so proud of. In the beginning I couldn't stand the flip thing. There was just...I think Tommy and Aaron really wanted to have these women look like Washington women who weren't going to look like Hollywood politicians. They were going to be, you know, their hair was going to be not glamorous and makeup wasn't going to be. And that worked for a while and then I think I started getting into the idea of wanting to wear a wig just to save time in the hair and makeup, because of all the timing. I mean, you guys get to come in a half hour before call time. For a 6 AM on set, I'd have to be there at 4:15 in the morning, 4:30 and I wanted to alleviate the amount of time it took to get ready, so I started wearing wigs and some of them were more successful than others. I don't think I even liked my hair in "Privateers." It looked a little wiggy to me. But I started wearing these wigs that would go in, like, three-quarters and then the front would be my hair and then it would be...

HRISHI: No kidding! Wait, is it a wig in this episode?

ALLISON: Yeah. It's a wig I had on. It's a wig.

HRISHI: No way!

ALLISON: The front is my hair and then the back part is a wig, and I started wearing mostly wigs to save the wear and tear on my own hair and then I started getting into hair extensions. And oh, there's a whole hair journey with C.J. That's a whole episode I could take you through. The hair stuff was enormous for me, trying to get the right look and hair color. I changed it all the time. And, I don't know. Yeah.

HRISHI: Were these things that you had to do, like changing your hair color, was that something that you would decide you wanted to do? Or was that something that would come from the hair and makeup department and you would just have to go along with it?

ALLISON: I tried to not do it within a season, although there is one show and if you find it, it is one of those embarrassing things for me hair-wise because I literally - they did a reshoot - in the mural room in the scene I had short hair and coming out I have long, dark hair. It's a pretty funny continuity mess-up. And I don't know what episode, but it had to have been an episode later on, like in season six or seven. And you'll see it. When you see it, you'll know.

JOSH: Yeah. I want to see that.

ALLISON: Because there's a lot of hair things that were funny with C.J. But I did like wearing a wig because it did save time.

HRISHI: I would have never guessed.

JOSH: Somewhere in there on Air Force One, I put Vaseline or something on the telephone because you had to answer the phone and I remember it got on your wig and people were pissed at me.

ALLISON: Oh, they were pissed at you.

JOSH: I was like, "Oh! I've gone too far!"

ALL: [laughing]

HRISHI: Allison, thank you so much for talking to us.

ALLISON: You're so welcome.

JOSH: Can we end, can we end with like five seconds of all of us fake laughing?

ALLISON: Ok. Yes. Ok.

[10 seconds of fake laughing]

JOSH: I can't do it, it turns out.

ALLISON: [indecipherable]

JOSH: Thank you!

HRISHI: Thank you so much. And that's it for this episode. You can learn more about the Daughters of the American Revolution at DAR.org.

JOSH: You can follow Jeff Perry on Twitter at @JScandalP. "J-S-C-A-N-D-A-L-P."

HRISHI: Follow him now while that Twitter handle is not yet outdated.

JOSH: That's true. Only a few *Scandals* left. You can watch me Thursday nights, a few more Thursday nights on ABC on *Scandal*. You can listen to Hrish's other podcast, *Song Exploder*. You can buy some *West Wing Weekly* merchandise at westwingweekly.com/merch. We've got some shirts, or hats, pins, and coins. I'd like to thank Zach McNees and Margaret Miller for their help making this show.

HRISHI: And PRX. *The West Wing Weekly* is part of Radiotopia, a curated collection of cutting edge podcasts made possible by PRX and listeners like you.

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HRISHI: Ok.

JOSH: Ok.

HELEN, JEFF, ALLISON: What's next?

[Outro Music]