

The West Wing Weekly
4.20: "Evidence of Things Not Seen"
Guests: Richard Schiff, Marlee Matlin and Jack Jason

[Intro Music]

HRISHI: Live from Dublin, at Vicar Street, it's the West Wing Weekly. [crowd cheers] Thank you so much. I'm Hrishikesh Hirway.

JOSH: And I'm Joshua Malina. By the way: love Dublin! Super, super psyched to be here. I've had a few days here with my wife, the lovely Melissa who is on premises somewhere. Love the literary vibe that permeates the city. Love the culture, I like pub culture, enjoy the drinking and the music. We've only been here for a couple days so we haven't been to many but I do want to thank the proprietors of Toners and The Palace and Nesbitt & Doheny and The Playwright and The Horseshoe Bar at Shelbourne and Mary's and O'Donoghue's and Stag's Head and the bar at the Merrion Hotel in particular. Back on topic.

HRISHI: Today we are talking about season four, episode 20: "Evidence of Things Not Seen."

JOSH: The teleplay is by Aaron Sorkin. The story by Eli Attie and David Handelman. This episode was directed by Christopher Misiano. It first aired on April 23rd in the year 2003.

HRISHI: In this episode, it's the vernal equinox and C.J. is trying to stand an egg on end. Matthew Perry guest stars as Joe Quincy, a lawyer applying for Ainsley Hayes' old job in the counsel's office, but his interview with Josh gets interrupted by a shooting in the press briefing room. It's the third potentially terror-related incident in one day, so the Secret Service crash the West Wing, and everyone is stuck there. The staff keep trying to have a friendly poker game and Leo and the president are trying to recover a US spy plane that crashed into Russia.

JOSH: By the way, that's not a synopsis, but an artisanally crafted hrynopsis. [crowd cheers]

HRISHI: Also, to note this episode was submitted as part of *The West Wing's* Emmy win for outstanding drama and for Bradley Whitford's Emmy nomination for best supporting actor.

JOSH: And worth noting - [crowd boos]

HRISHI: Wow. You've really got a hometown crowd.

JOSH: He didn't win that year. [crowd 'yays'] The closest I'll ever get to winning an Emmy is when Brad doesn't win. [crowd laughs]

HRISHI: Joining us today to discuss this episode is a very special guest. Please join us in welcoming Richard Schiff. [crowd cheers]

RICHARD: That was lovely, thank you. I just came for the Guinness so I'm gonna go. I heard an expression in a pub, which is appropriate since you guys are so raucous: "I'm as nervous as a long-tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs." [crows laughs] And I have a Guinness which is like an angel crying on your tongue. Cilantro.

JOSH: Cilantro? Did he say 'cilantro?'

RICHARD: The first time I heard that I thought, "Who wants cilantro?" I don't understand...

HRISHI: Ok so in this episode, everyone's betting and everyone's bluffing. So, if you're starting to feel nervous, just bluff like you're not.

RICHARD: This is me bluffing.

HRISHI: The episode centers a lot around a poker game, and Josh, as our resident poker expert, how's the poker?

JOSH: As depicted in this episode, not... great. I brought some cards by the way. I meant to bring some. I could only find very cheap, little... We'll throw some. I'll try to hit the fifth row in a minute. One thing I did notice, is that Fiderer, as played by Lily Tomlin, who is wonderful, is supposed to be the kind of the card shark of the group. But she, as I complained about I think in the first season, she splashes the pot. Does anybody know what that is? That's when you call or when you make a bet and you throw your chips in such a way that they hit the main pot, which is also a great way to cheat, so maybe it's by design. Because if you say she bet fifty dollars, and kinda tosses them into the middle, who's to say whether she really put out fifty? So that is splashing the pot and Fiderer is an inveterate pot splasher [crowd laughs]. And I can't approve of that.

HRISHI: But you didn't object to it on set that day?

JOSH: Oh yeah I don't get paid for making suggestions [crowd laughs]. And as a result, in four seasons, I made none[crowd laughs].

RICHARD: I just want to point out that it wasn't a camera stunt with someone else shuffling the way he shuffles.

JOSH: I'm a machine when it comes to shuffling and I subscribe, OCD-ish as I am, there was a New York Times article, we'll put the link up when we actually post the episode, saying that seven imperfect shuffles makes for a thoroughly shuffled deck. So now when I'm actually playing cards and when it's my deal I always shuffle seven times.

HRISHI: Did you say seven imperfect shuffles?

JOSH: Yeah I don't know what a perfect shuffle is, where every card I guess interlaces with the other? But seven regular riffle shuffles makes for a well shuffled deck.

RICHARD: That is two minutes of my life I will never get back [crowd laughs].

JOSH: Don't encourage him.

RICHARD: [cross talk] That's an Aaron Sorkin quote.

JOSH: [cross talk] He'll just act like a short-tailed badger in a room full of metal barrels. [crowd laughs]

HRISHI: Richard, I thought you had an air of someone who had been around a lot of poker tables; it might have just been the cigar smoking, but have you played a lot of poker too?

RICHARD: I believe I won the very first round of *Celebrity Poker* that you guys produced.

JOSH: I produced a celebrity poker show called *Celebrity Poker Showdown* back in the States, invited *The West Wing* players on and Richard made quick work of them and did win that episode. He's a real card player.

RICHARD: Then I stayed out all night and in the championship round I was out like lightning. [crowd laughs]

JOSH: Well that happens too.

RICHARD: Yes.

JOSH: Maybe we can go to it. My argument is that Toby Ziegler is the closest to a Damon Runyon-esque character that Aaron has created. Are you guys familiar with Damon Runyon's work?

HRISHI: No. [crowd laughs]

JOSH: That's because he's probably best known in the States for having written short stories on which were based the musical [crowd laughs] - that's a play with songs, Hrishikesh - *Guys and Dolls*. And there's either I think a subconscious or consciously made choice by Aaron to give Toby a very Runyon-esque line of dialogue.

[West Wing Episode 4.20 excerpt]

TOBY: I've seen guys make the ace of spades jump out of their shoes; I don't think it was the equinox.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: This put me in mind of a line that Marlon Brando, spectacularly miscast as Sky Masterson in the film version, has and I think you can play that too.

[Guys and Dolls excerpt]

SKY MASTERSON: One of these days in your travels, a guy is going to show you a brand new deck of cards, on which the seal is not yet broken. Then this guy is going to offer to bet you that he can make the jack of spades jump out of this brand new deck of cards and squirt cider in your ear. But son, you do not accept this bet. Because as sure as you stand there, you're going to wind up with an ear full of cider.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Toby Ziegler-like, right?

RICHARD: I wish I had known about that before I actually did the shoot, I would have imitated Brando.

HRISHI: In the episode overall, I think this poker game serves as a, well I felt there was a lot of poker metaphor throughout the whole thing. The other major subplot is this spy plane that's trying to be recovered by the president and the way his conversation with the Russian president, Chagorin, plays out, a lot of it feels like it has a little bit like it has the energy and dynamic of a poker hand. Where the president will say something, Chagorin will say something, the president will say something back and they are sort of checking each other and rechecking each other and trying to see who might fold first.

RICHARD: And the president had a very bad hand.

HRISHI: Yeah exactly.

JOSH: That's actually a very good point, both of you. I think it is like a poker game, and it speaks to Bartlet's - President Bartlet [crowd laughs] - his relationship with Leo.

HRISHI: President Leo.

JOSH: President Leo. [crowd laughs] Buckle up, it's gonna be a long night. President night. The president knows that he does have a particularly weak hand going into that conversation with Chagorin. He even says, ostensibly about the egg, this is never going to work, but it seems like he is talking about the ploy that Leo is kind of feeding him. But I think it's a tribute to his friendship with Leo that he gives it a shot at first.

RICHARD: It's also a great example of Aaron Sorkin planting seeds. With him saying, "This is never going to work," and then he's gotta go into a scenario which is most likely never going to work.

HRISHI: Yeah. Here's a little bit of the conversation between Chagorin and Bartlet.

[West Wing Episode 4.20 excerpt]

INTERPRETER: I'll take a look at those pictures and send them to you with your UAV.

PRESIDENT BARTLET: Well, the problem is, our UAVs have a self-detonating capability and our people know how to disarm it and I wouldn't want to put your guys at risk.

INTERPRETER: Well given the circumstances, I'm sure your experts wouldn't mind talking through the steps with our experts.

{HRISHI: That's a raise.}

PRESIDENT BARTLET: It's proprietary technology, Peter.

INTERPRETER: To view coastal erosion?

PRESIDENT BARTLET: I know, it seems -

INTERPRETER: Sir, I'm going to interrupt this call at this time to speak with my counterintelligence attaché.

PRESIDENT BARTLET: Yes, Mr. President.

INTERPRETER: Thank you sir.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: He calls him on it. [crowd laughs]

JOSH: Listening to them, it's funny, they're recording a scene where the two actors are in the room and they're both pretending to be on the phone, the interpreter and Martin Sheen. I wonder whether there was actually someone there mumbling in Russian. [crowd laughs] Certainly, if you had been doing the scene, you would have demanded someone on the other end, right? [crowd laughs]

RICHARD: I would have demanded them being on the other end in Russian. [crowd laughs and applauds]

JOSH: [laughs] That's method. That is badass.

RICHARD: It's actually the opposite of method. It's making it easier for me [crowd laughs]. By the way, I would say that it wasn't a call. He lost that hand. It wasn't an all-in hand yet.

HRISHI: Right.

RICHARD: But he lost that hand. I didn't mean to stop the conversation, I'm sorry. [crowd laughs]

JOSH: That's all we've got, folks. [crowd laughs]

HRISHI: Meanwhile in the actual poker game that is happening, one of the things that I love is Leo's reaction - before the game even happens, just his reaction - to the deli platter.

RICHARD: Oh the rye bread.

HRISHI: Excited, yeah! He gets so excited about the rye bread.

[West Wing Episode 4.20 excerpt]

LEO: This is what I call a night off. Squeeze this piece of rye bread.

[end excerpt]

RICHARD: [cross talk] If you watch this-

JOSH: [cross talk] That's really disgusting out of context. [crowd laughs]

RICHARD: If you watch that, it's such a beautiful actor's moment because he's talking about something else, he happens to squeeze the rye bread, and it trumps everything else the - excuse the word -

[crowd boos]

RICHARD: Alright, alright. It overwhelms everything else that he was talking about at that moment. It's just such a beautiful actor's moment. It's been a while since I watched *The West Wing*, since the last podcast I believe, [crowd laughs] and it just made me miss him so much. He's just such a lovely, lovely actor, and man. [crowd applauds]

HRISHI: I thought Leo's excitement over the rye bread, and I apologize in advance if this is a little bit racist... but [crowd laughs]

JOSH: Apology not accepted in advance. [crowd laughs] That's not how that works.

HRISHI: That's fair. That's fair. But it reminded me of a scene from earlier in season four, when Ben Yosef, the Israeli foreign minister says:

[West Wing Episode 4.04 excerpt]

YOSEF: And in addition to being a good friend to Israel, Leo McGarry, of course, is the most Jewish man most of us have ever met.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: I'll wait for a ruling.

JOSH: That reminds me, actually, as a Jew in Dublin, I feel very comfortable around Gaelic. You've got more guttural stuff going on than I realized. There's an old joke about the Israeli cheerleader who revs up the crowd by saying, "Give me a [guttural sound]!" Could have been an Irish cheerleader. Works just as well. [crowd applauds]

HRISHI: I don't know if you heard, at the end of the clip there with Leo, C.J. says, she squeezes the rye bread and then she says -

[West Wing Episode 4.20 excerpt]

C.J.: Now what do I do?

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: I'm kinda with her. I don't really understand what squeezing bread will prove, regardless of what the result of squeezing the bread is. What does that demonstrate?

RICHARD: I'm on Leo's side, myself. I like to squeeze a good bread.

HRISHI: There's actually a listing I found in Urban Dictionary. They have a listing for 'bread squeezer.' [crowd laughs]

JOSH: Are you sure you wanna go there?

HRISHI: [laughing] It's defined as 'a person who is so awful, they go into a grocery store and squeeze the loaves of bread.' [crowd laughs] Sorry, Richard.

RICHARD: Thank you very much.

HRISHI: But also, about Leo's excitement about, when he says, "This is what I call a night off," how is a night off? It's a Friday night and they are all at work. They're dressed for work. It's not

one of those days where they're in their Notre Dame sweatshirts or anything like that. They're all at work.

JOSH: I was slightly annoyed just that they *would* spend their time off together. That makes me crazy. The cast of *Scandal* was always like that. We're together working all the time, then on their time off, they're like, "Do you wanna get together and watch *Scandal*?" GOD NO.

HRISHI: By the way, this doesn't just stop at *Scandal*, when Josh and I were planning our trip, I said, "Which hotel do you want to stay at? Should we stay at the same hotel?" and Josh said, "No." [crowd laughs]

JOSH: I'll see you on stage! You're going to tell me this isn't quality time? Did you, in the good old days, before I joined the cast, did the cast spend much off-time together?

RICHARD: Not in Los Angeles, but when we were in D.C. We did make a point of not sitting next to each other on the plane because then you'd have to talk to each other. [crowd laughs] Who needs that? When we were in D.C., we hung out quite a bit, and then you showed up. [crowd laughs]

JOSH: And everybody dispersed.

HRISHI: I was hoping that, if they're going to have a night off, at least Josh would show up in his giant blue pajamas that C.J. gave him.

JOSH: Oh right! That would have been a good touch. Also, by the way, to my memory, we both threw the cards into the bucket and it didn't take many takes. I'm saying we were good at it.

RICHARD: I actually have no memory of it. [crowd laughs]

JOSH: Well you should make for a fine guest tonight. [crowd laughs and applauds] I wish you had told us that three weeks ago.

RICHARD: Again, I say, I've got my Guinness, I'm good.

HRISHI: Right, to backtrack for a second, Debbie wants in on the card game and the president is kind of patronizing with her, saying "we don't play for matchsticks" and all this stuff. But we know from when we first met her, when we first learned about her occupation, that after getting fired from the Office of Presidential Personnel, and before she started farming alpacas, she described her occupation as "craps and blackjack." So, I think that, you know, she's a hustler.

JOSH: That said, when you produce a wad of money, so as to impress, it shouldn't be twenties. President Bartlet's like, "Oh I've never seen that much money before!" How about hundreds?

HRISHI: [laughs] That's true. He is in charge of Fort Knox.

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: But then, when Will sits down, she kind of gets upstaged by your riffle shuffle.

JOSH: I guess. It's a standard riffle shuffle.

HRISHI: Ok.

JOSH: I'm a standard riffle shuffler.

RICHARD: Standard -

JOSH: Everyday I'm shuffling, if I'm to be honest.

HRISHI: Man, Rick Ross...

JOSH: I work in some chip tricks as well. That's all I got.

HRISHI: Yeah, so Will kind of upstages her there, and then immediately it kind of goes into this one ups-man-ship between Toby and Will about throwing cards. After the joker shows up, Will, Josh, you throw this card and the way it's shown in the episode, the card goes flying and we see from another office, it lands in the trash can. But we don't see it land in the trash can, we just hear it. So I was wondering-

JOSH: How dare you! [crowd laughs] We get what you're implying.

HRISHI: I'm just wondering!

JOSH: It. Landed.

RICHARD: I have no memory of...[crowd laughs]

JOSH: Someone tell Richard the premise of the show. [crowd laughs]

RICHARD: I remembered it when I saw it, I have no memory. And I noticed when we were doing it that I had no memory of actually shooting it.

JOSH: My memory as well is that even though we go into the press room, right?

HRISHI: Yup.

JOSH: The press briefing room to toss, I also don't buy that you leave a poker game, where in a single bet you can bet fifty dollars, to wager a dollar a card. That is a move I would never make.

A dollar a card, let's go! So we never get to actually throwing cards, but my memory is that we actually did, and that we were pretty good. Where are we? Where were we? Matthew Perry is in this episode. [crowd cheers]

HRISHI: That's right.

JOSH: Should we talk about Matthew Perry? In a little preview, in terms of Sorkin-ese, of *Studio 60*, we get Brad Whitford and Matthew Perry working together.

RICHARD: This episode was actually an audition for *Studio 60* I believe.

JOSH: Perhaps so.

RICHARD: And a successful one.

HRISHI: He plays Joe Quincy, whose *[unintelligible shout from the crowd]* interviewing for the *[laughing]*.

JOSH: Sawbones, shyster. That's just a random Jewish insult. [crowd laughs] But I think I know what you were going for. But you're supposed to say, "Ahead of time, I apologize if this is anti-Semitic." [crowd laughs] But your heart's in the right place, I know.

HRISHI: So, Joe Quincy is applying for the White House counsel job that Ainsley has vacated. This is one part of the episode that I don't really like and I don't think holds up to modern scrutiny, which is, Josh's constant discussion about how the job needs to be filled by an attractive woman. Here's a little trio of things that Josh Lyman says in this episode.

[West Wing Episode 4.20 excerpt]

JOSH: I miss Ainsley. That's who the Counsel's office should get to fill that position, another Ainsley. A sexy conservative with first-rate law credentials and a strange name.

{HRISHI: That's one.}

JOSH: It's funny, it's what I was just saying, the person who created the job opening, her name was Ainsley Hayes, and she was, uh, she was a very attractive woman, and I was saying that we needed to find another attractive woman with an unusual name, and, here, you're a man and your name is Joe.

{HRISHI: Two.}

JOSH: 'Cause if you're a Republican, then you damned well better look like Ainsley Hayes.

DONNA: He does.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: That last one is being said in front of Joe Quincy. I mean if you thought you could somehow get away with discussing the employability of someone based on how they look behind their back, that's one thing, and then to do it in front of the person that you're interviewing I feel like...I mean, as they often do, Josh and Donna both need a trip down to HR. [crowd laughs]

JOSH: I remember Matthew Perry having come off massively successful run on *Friends* before this, and if you know a multi-camera sitcom like *Friends* is pretty much the easiest job in the world. You show up the first day, you do a table read for about a half an hour, then you go home while the writers and the producers rewrite, and the second day you come back and you read through it, you put it on its feet a little bit and then you go home after two hours, and so on. It's never a lot of work, and then you show up and you film it in front of a live audience for about five hours and I remember Matthew after about three days of shooting *The West Wing*, saying, "My God, this is the hardest I've ever worked." [crowd laughs] And I said, "Yeah, and we don't get a million dollars at the end of the week." [crowd laughs] Much, much less.

RICHARD: Speaking to that, after, I worked with him in his next episode. Matthew and I had a storyline and at one point, into our thirteenth hour, I said, "How long is your work week?" He said, "Actually acting?" I said, "Yeah." And he goes, "Eleven hours." We'd already surpassed it in the first day. And then I calculated in my mind how much money he was making an hour. [crowd laughs] It didn't make me happy. [crowd laughs]

HRISHI: Do you want to talk about the egg?

[crowd cheers, some shout 'yeah!']

JOSH: Well I think we have to now, Hrishi. Now that you've said it.

HRISHI: This episode aired well past the vernal equinox. But in the episode, it is the vernal equinox and C.J. has this theory that you can stand an egg on end. And this actually came from one of the story by, co-writers of the show, of this episode, Eli Attie. Eli actually, he gave us the origin story of the egg, what came first.

JOSH: You beat me to that.

[excerpt of recording of Eli Attie]

ELI: Back when I was a teenager, my parents went to a party on the vernal equinox, the first day of spring. And everybody at this party was given an uncooked egg, so that at the exact moment of the equinox, they could try to stand their egg on its end. And my mom said, and she still maintains to this day, that nobody could stand their egg on end beforehand, but that at the exact

moment of the equinox, at that very second, suddenly, everybody could stand their eggs on end. Some weird gravitational force kicked in, who knows? But my mother brought home a Polaroid photograph of a few dozen of these eggs standing on end on the porch of this party. Sure enough, the next year, we tried this at home, during the next vernal equinox, and it worked, at that second, you could stand the egg on end. A protein based miracle. So one day, a bunch of years later, I told this story in The West Wing writer's room and Aaron thought I was nuts. He thought I had completely lost my mind, joined some kind of an egg-based cult. But I insisted it was true. I'd seen it with my own eyes. So Aaron demanded that our researcher, Lauren Schmidt look it up online that very second. She jumped on her computer, and there were a million hits. I thought I was vindicated, but they were all from websites debunking urban myths, which became, in Aaron's mind, thingsthatarenttrue.com. And I still insisted it was true. That really became the idea for the teaser and the egg storyline in this episode. It was Aaron's outright mockery of me, mined for all its dramatic and comedic juice.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Before Eli's parents, it seems like the story came to America about the eggs from China via an article in *Life* magazine. There's a headline in an article from March 19, 1945, that says 'Eggs Stand on End in Chungking.' And the article says that according to Chinese legend, one day each year, winter ends and spring begins and for an hour before and after the change of season, eggs will stand on end. But it also mentions that the date that this happens is variable, like Thanksgiving in America, where it doesn't stick to one date on the calendar. Anyway, it turns out, you can stand an egg on end, but it's a matter of balance and friction, and not one of seasons or astrophysics, as Toby says. Although even this is disputed by people with anecdotal evidence doing it on the vernal equinox.

JOSH: I like that Bartlet attempts.

HRISHI: Yeah. That's right. And he just has an egg.

JOSH: The Oval's got everything.

HRISHI: Leo walks in and he says -

JOSH: It's an oval. I guess that makes sense.

HRISHI: Oh my God.

JOSH: Hrishi do you think you could balance an egg on end, if you had one? [crowd cheers] Oh, there's an egg!

HRISHI: Alright. Like President Bartlet, I carry around an egg, I guess. Here we go.

JOSH: This is going to be great for the people listening at home. [crowd laughs] Ok there it is. [crowd laughs]

RICHARD: I will not give away any secrets. [crowd laughs]

HRISHI: It's an egg, what more do you want?

JOSH: So that was Eli Attie, one of the writers to whom is credited the story of this episode. The other one is David Handelman. I forgot to mention, fun fact about David Handelman who is a wonderful writer and a great guy. He's the only writer in the world to have written on every Sorkin television series.

HRISHI: No, I think there's one other.

JOSH: Aaron Sorkin [crowd laughs]. That's why I'm staying at a separate hotel. [crowd laughs]

HRISHI: David told us about some of the backstory for Joe Quincy's character. He'd written a memo when they were trying to figure out what this process would be like, of interviewing someone for the position. So he got to interview Bernie Nussbaum and now Supreme Court Justice Kagan, who both had been associate counsels for the Clinton White House, which is pretty cool. Bernie Nussbaum's daughter, by the way, is now one my favorite TV critics, Emily Nussbaum.

JOSH: Yes. Someone that David pointed out was not particularly kind to Aaron on *Studio 60*, sad fact. [*someone in the crowd boos*] Thank you, on behalf of Aaron Sorkin. I think David Handelman also mentioned that the, what is it, the SF-86, the form that Joe is failing to fill out completely, he sent us a memorandum that he I guess and Eli had written for Aaron about the real SF-86. It does not, it turns out, include questions like, "Are you sad?" It's a little bit drier than what they came up with for the TV show.

HRISHI: Richard, did you ever get to interview your corresponding people in the Clinton administration or anything like that?

RICHARD: I wouldn't call it an interview, but a conversation, yeah. I did. And I forgot her name but she was the communications director at the end of the Clinton term. But I spoke to previous communication directors as well and -

JOSH: Communications director. Is the plural. [crowd laughs]

RICHARD: Communications director, like attorneys general. [crowd laughs]

HRISHI: Exactly. He gets it.

JOSH: He gets it.

RICHARD: And Chefs Boyar-, oh never mind [crowd laughs]. And of course, every communications director for every state legislator and local mayor around America has introduced themselves to me [crowd laughs]. So I've had a lot of conversations since *The West Wing*. But yeah, also, being a speech writer, the additional visit to the Clinton White House, I went down to the writers' room, which became an open invitation whenever we were in town. And this was before 9/11, so you'd go up to the gate and they'd go, "Hey come on in." and I'd go downstairs and hang out with the writers.

HRISHI: Was that just fun or did it actually end up informing any of your choices?

RICHARD: It was painful.

JOSH: Would you be able to tell if it was fun, Richard? [crowd laughs]

RICHARD: Yes, doctor.

JOSH: President Doctor!

RICHARD: It's not Doctors President? [crowd laughs]

JOSH: He's good. He's good.

RICHARD: Don't applaud him, meaning me. It just encourages me.

HRISHI: Was it fun or did it actually in a substantial way inform any of the choices you made as Toby or things that you'd suggest? Because I know, unlike Josh, you were someone who would suggest things if they felt -

RICHARD: This is when it became fun, was at, say the Correspondents' Dinner, that we would be invited to and Clinton had given a recent speech, or later, Obama, and you look at Jon Favreau, not the movie director and actor, but the speechwriter for Obama, who was Sorkin-esque and quite eloquent and uplifting in his speech writing he did for Obama. And then to have a conversation with him about the race speech for instance, Obama's famous speech, which was mostly written by Obama, but just to talk to him about the message that President Obama was implementing and his participation in that was, to me, was fascinating. I enjoyed quite a bit the relationships that I made in Washington, and the consultants that we had on set early on, before you came, [audience laughs] a conversation with Dee Dee Myers very deeply affected how I portrayed Toby. I was just having a conversation with her, early on, and she mentioned an incident where she was a senior adviser to the president, as my position was, she was press secretary, the first one under Clinton. And they were having a session in the Oval Office about some domestic policy and her advice ended up being taken by President Clinton and the next day she saw her advice on the front page of every newspaper in the world at the kiosk. And that's when it hit her how impactful her position is and how much responsibility, it scared her. It

freaked her out. I took that in and realized that if I was in that position, I would feel like I'm carrying the world on my shoulders. Because every decision that we make determines whether people have a home or not, determine whether people get healthcare or not, determine whether people live or die. I realized that responsibility would be burdensome to say the least and would excuse a character being somewhat morose. [audience applauds] And have a very dark sense of humor.

JOSH: You mentioned the Clinton administration. You were, were you not, rubbing elbows with the man himself yesterday? [crowd cheers]

RICHARD: Knees, we were rubbing knees. Yes, I went up to the Good Friday Agreement 20th Anniversary in Belfast. [crowd cheers] I was not personally responsible for the agreement. [crowd laughs] Make that clear.

JOSH: You are too modest. [crowd laughs]

RICHARD: I rooted for it, if that helps. It was quite a phenomenal experience for someone, an outsider, an American, who, closest he came to the troubles in Belfast was a bar on 3rd Avenue in New York. Which, most likely, was running guns to the IRA by the way, no kidding, but was always very curious - not really understanding it completely. To see all the players, the PR guy for the IRA was on stage with the police commissioner. They were having a conversation. I don't know how dangerous it is for me to say it but; I won't pick a guy. But you can tell there were guys up there who have killed people. Bill Clinton told a story up there; he went and visited the largest black Methodist church in the South. He was trying to be clever and was introduced to the president, and he said, "I wish I was a president with no term limits," trying to be clever, he says. And the preacher said, "Mr. President, everyone has term limits," the point being is that - and he was speaking to the two women who are now responsible for either ending the stalemate or not and said, "We're gray-haired talking about yesterday. You're tomorrow." The message is, which this episode has, that our time is short-lived here, get back, as C.J. says, to doing the work of the nation, right? When she's talking to the press after the shooting incident. What's fascinating, to me, about watching this episode again, is that I'm pretty sure that Aaron Sorkin knew he was leaving when he wrote this episode, because two episodes later, he wrote his last episode, correct? I noticed that there was, first of all, a great appreciation for every character and he was establishing love between Donna and Josh, between, who else is in this show? [crowd laughs] Donna and Josh... I didn't remember doing the show but I remember when I watched it and I was quite fascinated with Toby's disposition. He seemed to be a little more alive, he was chewing bubble gum, sucking on lollipops. He seemed to have a special appreciation for C.J. I remember the very last moment when I think I say, "Are you ok?" and she says, "Yeah," and I just say, "Good night." What I do remember, because I saw it, was a moment when I could have stopped and made a moment, and chose not to, because a moment would have been made. And that was too dangerous between us, I think. Oh! Between Zoey and Charlie, who clearly have deep love for each other. And circumstances had pulled them apart, which, by the way, plants the seed for the last episode. I thought it was beautiful that Aaron was really showing his love for us before we knew that he was leaving.

JOSH: It's funny that you bring that up, because I watched it wondering, trying to remember when we did have, we were finally told.

RICHARD: Wasn't it before the very last episode?

JOSH: That's not the way I remember it but clearly-

RICHARD: How do you remember it?

JOSH: We'll trust your memory. I'm sure you probably got it right. I thought it may be even this episode.

RICHARD: I remember everything off set, just not on set.

JOSH: Here's my thing, whenever it happened, my big memory of being told was that Tommy and Aaron called for a full cast meeting, we knew something momentous was happening, they told us without too much fanfare, "Look, we're leaving at the end of this season, for a variety of reasons" Maybe they give us a little bit of information, and my strong memory of that moment - because everybody's faces just fell and it was very emotional and everybody was very upset and we kind of had a - it was a very *West Wing* moment where everybody had a chance to say something around the room. It was very, "I serve at the pleasure of the president." I remember each person stood up, and you [Richard] spoke particularly movingly, I believe you had tears in your eyes, and there was some question as to whether people wanted even to continue without Tommy at the helm and Aaron as the creator and writer of essentially every episode, and I remember it finally got around to me and I was like, "Not to be a buzzkill, I just got here [crowd laughs], and I would like the show to continue. Still, I'm very sad and you should know that I wish you guys would stay." And then the meeting sort of ended on that note. [crowd laughs]

RICHARD: As it should. [crowd laughs]

JOSH: But I'm a huge fan of yours and as I re-watched this episode...

RICHARD: When are you going to start acting like it? [crowd laughs]

JOSH: [crosstalk] As soon as we're off mic.

RICHARD: [cross talk] Kidding, kidding, I'm a huge fan of yours.

JOSH: I watched this episode, but I could watch an entire episode of 'Toby Ziegler consumes a lollipop.' There's something about every moment is so fully invested, and there is a lot going on with you, even as you just look at C.J., and it's reflective of also what happened earlier, I noticed that in the fight or flight response competition, Will loses handily in the press room, because as the shots ring out, Will just hits the floor. And Toby makes sure that C.J. is down and safe.

RICHARD: That's not what happened, you're an Air Force guy. Come on.

JOSH: Will has the presence of mind to say, "It was three shots; it came from this direction." But if you'll notice, as soon as the shots ring out, he's saving himself [crowd laughs]. You're bringing C.J. out, and then just to save face, I kind of put my hand over her head [crowd laughs]. "I'm saving you too! I'm saving you too!" There's a very special relationship -

RICHARD: Sometimes the actor takes over the character. [crowd laughs]

JOSH: When are you going to start acting like you like me?

[Ad break]

JOSH: One of the most special relationships - and it is often implicit rather than explicit on the show - is Toby/C.J. That's my point. [crowd applauds]

RICHARD: I had a very different kind of affection for Will.

JOSH: That's true.

HRISHI: The second time that C.J., you know when shots rang out, that she's been pulled to the ground by the communications department. Because in season one, Sam pulls her down to the ground and then years -

RICHARD: I betcha I did it better. [crowd laughs]

JOSH: Who wore it better?

RICHARD: That was another theme, by the way was like the number of time people said, "I'm sorry you got shot at, again."

HRISHI: Right, Zoey says it -

RICHARD: To Charlie.

HRISHI: Yeah. And they bring it up during the card game that this is the second time.

RICHARD: I thought it was very interesting, Josh's PTSD from the last shooting, which earned him an Emmy, before Will got there-

[crowd boos/cheers]

JOSH: Richard won one without a shooting, he did it entirely on his own. [crowd cheers]

RICHARD: What did you say?

JOSH: I complimented you. Don't worry, you won't remember tomorrow. [crowd laughs]

RICHARD: I don't remember already. What the hell was I saying?

HRISHI: You were talking about that Josh's PTSD -

RICHARD: Yeah, and that it was alive in that story, and yet not really played. He kind of dismissed it the way someone would try to keep something under the table, and yet it was very much alive and it was again Aaron's way of expressing the love between Donna and Josh, that she was so concerned, "Do you need anything? Can I get you anything? Can I get you a water?" And he's saying, "I'm fine; I'm fine." I just thought that was beautifully done.

HRISHI: Yeah, the expression of concern that other people have for the characters in this episode is really sweet. That exchange between Donna and Josh and then Charlie busting into the Oval Office.

RICHARD: That was great.

JOSH: I loved that President Bartlet basically says, "Does Charlie know, because as soon as he does, he's gonna bust in here?" And then he does.

RICHARD: And Dulè was so great, rushing in out of breath and emotional. It was really beautiful.

HRISHI: And then Debbie also comes in, and she has some concern for the president's symptoms, just the way Donna had concern for Josh's symptoms, and I thought that was really sweet, but it was also a little bit sad for me, because now for the first time, this character has taken on some of the affection that Mrs. Landingham had for the president. I thought that was a little bit sad that this torch had been passed on to her.

JOSH: I like that she comes over to him and she says:

[West Wing Episode 4.20 excerpt]

DEBORAH: Thank you Mr. President. We're going to need to take your blood pressure in a few minutes.

PRESIDENT BARTLET: Yeah.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: She says it into his ear, but at full volume.

RICHARD: [shouting] Full volume! I was just thinking that! I thought the same thing!

JOSH: That's not whispering. That's speaking full volume right into someone's ear.

RICHARD: Where's your discretion? Where's your ability to lie? An actor who I love, and I just worked with again in a movie and who doesn't get celebrated so much, partly because some of the actors, especially when they're not in the big roles, who are so good, you forget that they're acting. And in this case, it's Michael O'Neill.

JOSH: Love Michael O'Neill. Ron Butterfield.

RICHARD: The Secret Service agent. And if you watch that scene when he comes in and takes control of the room, and gathers information and makes the call to crash the White House, he's so good.

JOSH: Michael O'Neill's wonderful. And I don't know, do you get *Scandal* here?

[crowd shouts 'yes']

JOSH: He's been playing Lonnie Mencken in the late episodes of the final season and he's fantastic on *Scandal* as well. One of the things that I love about that scene, and I'm glad you brought it up, when he makes the decision to crash, is that he makes the decision when Leo, this is after the shooting, they're all in the Oval, and Leo lets slip, or shares, that there have been multiple acts of violence around the world, and immediately upon hearing that, Butterfield makes the decision to crash. And I was thinking, maybe you should have told him this before. But I think, in fact, it's very realistic, in terms of, we know different people, and sometimes different agencies in the US government have a sometimes catastrophic failure to share information and post 9/11, we found out the FBI and the CIA and I guess the NSA, the National Security Agency, failed to share information, and it was a neat little microcosmic look at that.

HRISHI: With just one line.

RICHARD: And there was that moment when Joe, Matthew Perry, reiterates that, when he says, he's asking why we crashed if it was only a lone gunman. And Josh says something, and he says, "Because usually there are other incidents before you crash the White House." And Josh confirms that, which is also another way that Joe makes his way into the trust of Brad, thinking that he's one of us, even though he's a Republican.

HRISHI: He's bluffing.

JOSH: There you go. Another element of that scene that I love is that it's prior to our discovery explicitly that Joe is, in fact, a Republican, and there are some subtle, maybe, indications in their

conversation. He hears about the shooter, they have a suspect in custody, yes, is he white, is his first question. [crowd laughs] Not trying to paint with too broad a brush here, but ... [crowd laughs]

HRISHI: He does at least ask before he says it, "I'm not sure if this is racist, but..." [crowd laughs]

JOSH: Oh that's where you got it.

HRISHI: I was just quoting.

RICHARD: Are you a Republican?

JOSH: And then he says, "Do we think it was terrorism?" Josh says, "A guy took a shot at the White House." He says, "Well, I mean national terrorism." He says, "A guy took a shot at the White House; it's terrorism." I thought that was rather prescient in terms of we have a situation where we have a President of the United States who is very quick to call things terrorism before any information is in, if the act involves a Muslim or a person of color, but very slow on the draw when it comes to violence perpetrated by white people.

RICHARD: Or people with hoods. [crowd cheers]

JOSH: Or people in white, yeah.

RICHARD: There's a great line in the sequence with Joe, because Joe's answering all the questions right, a little quickly, but correctly really. Donna's asking how it's going in the hallway and he says, "Something doesn't feel right." He feels like "a really good baseball player in the other team's locker room for the first time." And that's a little seed planted for what we find out later. I just love how Aaron just plants, gives us these little clues, these seeds as to what's going to happen.

HRISHI: There's one part in their exchange I didn't quite understand and didn't feel like -

RICHARD: You're a harsh critic; I just want to point that out. [crowd laughs]

JOSH: Well there's no chance of Aaron employing Hrish. You and I have a shot at working for him again.

RICHARD: And we're clearly still vying for that as we speak. [crowd laughs]

JOSH: Also, do you need to step out and make a phone call?

RICHARD: No, I'm looking at notes.

JOSH: Ok, just want to make sure. Never mind. Question withdrawn.

RICHARD: I'm actually playing online poker. [crowd laughs]

HRISHI: Let me play the part that I'm talking about between Joe and Josh.

[West Wing Episode 4.20 excerpt]

JOE: Did you hear the shots?

JOSH: No, but I heard a brass quintet playing "The First Noel," so I just assumed somebody somewhere was locked and loaded.

JOE: You know, not for nothing, but the people that I talk to don't believe that story, and the people that you'd like don't care.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: So this is another indication that he's not actually playing for the same team but that's not my objection. I think that's fine if they're planting seeds like you said. But first of all, who knows about the thing with Josh and PTSD? Because my sense was that-

RICHARD: Yeah, I didn't get this at all.

JOSH: I was confused too.

HRISHI: They keep things with Stanley Keyworth pretty quiet. So I imagine that's private, I think that Josh would be private about it, so even when Josh himself makes the sort of off-handed comment about his PTSD, referring to it, one, it seems strange because he's basically saying something that Joe won't understand, but then, Joe picks it up and he does get it, and then I don't understand why Joe is so agro in his response. He says, "People don't believe that story." I'm not sure what the story is. That Josh was shot at? Because he was. Or that he has PTSD, and that people don't believe in PTSD? That music triggers the PTSD?

JOSH: The music. Right, how does he know that?

RICHARD: This is a subject on which I get very upset with writers and showrunners on my current show is a good example of that. Where they write something, and to continue the story of it, they don't understand that my character has no way of knowing this information. And I come in there with an opinion about a thing that the audience is fully aware of and I say, "I have no idea that this is even happening."

JOSH: "My character doesn't watch the show." [crowd laughs]

RICHARD: Well that's absolutely true. But this is an example of a character taking on, because they didn't want to play it, probably, and they wanted to be sure that we referenced it, in case we weren't thinking about it, that's why it's there. It's a writer's trick. And he used a character that wouldn't ever make that comment, to make that comment. It's the one criticism in four years I have of Aaron Sorkin.

HRISHI: I think also it feels like I'm supposed to be buying into the idea that I like Joe, that he's a likable guy but this feels like an unlikable moment, that he's mocking a gunshot victim's trauma right in front of him.

RICHARD: That's true, yeah.

JOSH: That said, I think, Matthew Perry, very good on the show.

RICHARD: It is Matthew Perry after all, so you're going to like him no matter what.

JOSH: Right, he carries a little Chandler charm with him wherever he goes. But, I think to his credit, this performance is very non-Chandler-esque.

RICHARD: I thought he was great. I was surprised. [crowd laughs]

JOSH: I wonder what that felt like.

RICHARD: No, Matthew is a very talented man. But I was surprised. [crowd laughs]

HRISHI: I want to go back to the special relationship, not the Tony Blair/Bill Clinton special relationship, but the C.J./Toby special relationship. I really like this moment when, after she's been shot at, and Larry makes the comment, "You're awfully upbeat for someone who's been shot at twice," C.J. responds, "We've dipped twice and eaten gefilte fish."

JOSH: We get a couple of good Passover references in this episode.

HRISHI: And then -

RICHARD: Suzy Cream Cheese?

HRISHI: "Suzy Cream Cheese, do not attempt the Haggadah." By the way, "Suzy Cream Cheese" is a Frank Zappa reference.

[excerpt from Frank Zappa's song, "Son of Suzy Creamcheese"]

*Suzy creamcheese, oh, mama, now
What's got into ya?*

Suzy you were such a sweetie
Yeah, yeah, yeah

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Oh, by the way, “Suzy Creamcheese”, who Frank Zappa is singing about, is a real person, so Toby Ziegler is talking about Suzy Creamcheese there, and her real name was Suzy Zieger, Z-I-E-G-E-R. Isn’t that weird?

JOSH: Oooh.

RICHARD: I didn’t know that.

JOSH: I gave you an ‘ooh’. By the way, so, the two Seder references are... she says something of blessing the soup. I think this has nothing to do with normative Judaism. But she mentions dipping twice, at the Seder we dip twice. We dip a green vegetable in salt water, symbolic of the tears of our ancestors as they worked under slavery and we dip the bitter herbs into charoset [*said emphatically*] as we say in Gaelic. Charoset, which is meant to look like mortar and bricks, and it’s wine and nuts.

HRISHI: For the Egyptian buildings-

JOSH: Right. Very good.

HRISHI: That your ancestors made.

JOSH: Well I don’t think there’s any archaeological evidence, but it’s in the book!

HRISHI: I appreciate that C.J. is trying to hang with her Jewish friends, making Passover references. I felt like I related very much to that. [crowd laughs]

JOSH: Sometimes you get a moment. Shouldn’t step on your jokes. You’ve heard of a crossover episode; this is a Passover episode. [crowd laughs]

RICHARD: I just thought she was coming onto me. [crowd laughs]

HRISHI: At this point, we’re really talking about the title of the episode and the ‘evidence of things not seen’ and the story that Will tells. We found out later that Will is off to Cheyenne to defend these guys who didn’t fire at what might have been an incoming North Korean missile and what, in fact, turned out to be a meteor. I think there’s this great view of this question throughout this episode and I think Aaron talks about this - it feels so weird every time I say Aaron, because I, unlike you guys am not on a first name basis -

JOSH: President Aaron.

HRISHI: Anyways President Aaron has a great view of this, where if you have a prime directive which is to follow orders, do you disobey them in order to do the right thing? It comes up a little bit with the Vicky Hilton subplot that was earlier and then here again with these guys. Are they in fact going to be court-martialed for saving a bunch of lives? For arguing-

RICHARD: This was our *Crimson Tide* episode.

JOSH: This is at the heart of *A Few Good Men* as well.

HRISHI: Exactly, yeah.

JOSH: Just this idea of whether you follow orders that you either have a moral objection to or, that you feel in this case, are going to lead to a nuclear war based on a mistake. And of course the inverse of what's being posited here is what if it really was an incoming missile and these guys decided not to fire.

RICHARD: It's *Failsafe*, the movie from 1964 on the same subject.

JOSH: That he remembers.

[laughter, some applause]

RICHARD: It was a good movie.

JOSH: It was a good movie.

RICHARD: It also is scarily present in our crisis at home in that many of us feel that we're going to have to rely on our military to disobey orders in order to protect our lives and the earth. Clearly there is a clear and present danger sitting behind the Oval Office desk and I am sure that the military brass have already had this conversation, "What do we do if he orders a strike on North Korea?" So it's a relevant - that's the word I was looking for, relevant - subject fifteen years later.

HRISHI: There's a little bit in "Isaac and Ishmael" where Abbey talks about the story of Abraham and Isaac. She doesn't get into this part, but the story of Abraham being asked to sacrifice his son by God and then having to go through with it. There's a similar kind of thing where he has these two different directives that he has to follow. Like doing the right thing and not killing his son or doing the thing he's supposed to be doing and following God's orders. And I think I'm going off topic here a little bit, but I think...

JOSH: Go, baby, go.

HRISHI: But that dilemma for Abraham is about faith and that is what C.J. is talking about here. She's talking about having faith, and what do you have faith in.

JOSH: It does help when an angel comes down and tells you the right thing to do.

HRISHI: What if that angel needs maintenance?

[laughter, oohs]

HRISHI: But so I think "Evidence of Things Not Seen" is this calling the bluff, is another way of talking about faith.

JOSH: I think there are lots of instances, I think part of what you were talking about where it was evidence of things not seen in the relationship and your decision to not play certain moments and let it sort of percolate subtly in the performances. I also think in that great scene that you mentioned between Zoey and Charlie, he keeps mocking Jean Paul, and finally, she says, "He's not like that." There's evidence of things we haven't seen, because we've been exposed only to his sort of his accent, and the ridiculous things he says, and that hair. And we learn from Zoey there's maybe a hidden depth there that we've not detected.

RICHARD: And the idea of faith, which is right for this episode, ultimately as President Bartlet, who has faith, that he can have a conversation about trust with the president and this is how we've avoided nuclear disaster for 60 years. Conversations like this. And he makes the leap of faith to tell him the truth. That yes, we were spying on [*jokingly unintelligible*] Glyn-is-khanal-stan, what is it, it's a real city?

HRISHI: Russia.

RICHARD: Thank you.

JOSH: I always forget about Russia.

RICHARD: And that they were spying on the illegal black market dissemination of nuclear arms and admitted, "Yes, we were spying on you, for that reason, because you're not, and we want to help stop this and this is the conversation that will begin a relationship of trust so we can avoid nuclear disaster." And that was a leap of faith. And then when the show ends with her holding the egg, and everyone being gone, and her saying, "Guys..." unnecessary, really, because she just needed to see it herself, you know? And the fact that these miracles of nature exist and that we just have to have faith in our existence on this earth and in each other. I'm reading maybe a little too much into it.

JOSH: [cross talk] No! Not at all!

HRISHI: [cross talk] No! I think you're exactly right.

RICHARD: It's a combination of Bill Clinton and watching this episode. I'm a little overwhelmed.

JOSH: Beautifully put.

HRISHI: One thing that I like that Aaron Sorkin does, whether you like it or not, is a fact of his writing, when he agrees with someone, when he is showing the debate between different sides of an argument, but there's also something like a card game going on, he gets to emphasize the point of the person he thinks is right by the person who wins the hand. And he does that with C.J. here at the end of this conversation with Toby.

[West Wing Episode 4.20 excerpt]

TOBY: We failed both on a mechanical and human level. So tell me again what you have faith in.

C.J.: Us.

TOBY: Why?

C.J.: Because with what little time he has, Will is going to Wyoming to defend one of these guys and I don't think it is failing on a human level.

TOBY: I've got ace high flush. Give me your money.

C.J.: I've got tens full of queens. Give me yours.

[end excerpt]

RICHARD: Don't you just want her? [crowd laughs/cheers]

JOSH: That's Oscar winner Allison Janney we're talking about. [crowd cheers]

HRISHI: Speaking of Oscar winners who have been on *The West Wing*. There's another person who won an Oscar who then joined the show. That was Marlee Matlin. She's Joey Lucas. And we'd like to bring her out. [crowd cheers]

JOSH: Welcome Marlee and Jack Jason. Marlee is in town shooting *Quantico*.

HRISHI: You may remember-

JOSH: And apparently they all get along well too because some of her friends are here. She's got a lot of support here.

***Jack speaking for Marlee noted as: Marlee [Jack]*

MARLEE [JACK]: What did you just say?

JOSH: I said that she's in town shooting *Quantico*, I think I'm allowed to say that. People know that.

MARLEE [JACK]: Yeah, yeah of course.

JOSH: And I said they are clearly also a nice cast because I know some of her friends are also here to support here.

MARLEE [JACK]: Yeah I have the cast here. Some of them are here. Where are you guys? Where are you guys? [woos from crowd] Where are you?

JOSH: They could be up in a room somewhere listening.

MARLEE [JACK]: Oh wait there's one there...Jake, Johanna, where's Blair? Blair Underwood is here, Jake McLaughlin is here, Johanna Braddy is here and you.

HRISHI: So you're shooting *Quantico*. You're going to be in the new season. Can you tell us a little bit about your character?

MARLEE [JACK]: So I'm, well, I'm a badass. [crowd cheers] A badass FBI agent. I'm a badass FBI agent and it's a first for network television to have a character like that to be deaf and to be playing law enforcement with a gun. But *Quantico* has been a lot of fun to work on and I won't say exactly - I won't say that it's better than *The West Wing*. I can't say that [crowd laughs]. However, I'm having as much fun as I did on *The West Wing* and I'm lucky to be working with a talented group of people and they're sitting right up there. And they're great actors. [crowd applauds]

HRISHI: Thank you so much for making time to come hang out with us.

MARLEE [JACK]: I'm really enjoying it so far. [crowd laughs]

HRISHI: We've also set up a mic here at the front of the stage and we thought while we have all these people here, if anybody in the audience had a question, we'd like to invite you to come up and ask whatever you want, but yeah you can come up to the mic.

JOSH: Yeah if anyone else has a question, if you want to line up. We'll take them one at a time. Go for it. Do you want me to get a picture of you asking the question?

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1: No, no. I'm preparing for something. So first of all, I was prepared for the three of you, but I wasn't prepared for Marlee. But I will say, my parents, both my parents,

were teachers in St. Joseph's School for the Deaf in Cabra, just outside of Dublin. You are a hero of them and the students they taught. [crowd cheers]

MARLEE [JACK]: Thank you, thank you so much.

JOSH: That's beautiful. [crowd cheers]

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1: So that's my unprepared comment. Totally unprepared, yeah. But I've got a compliment, a question and a request. So-

JOSH: Three parterer, people.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1: The compliment is "Sound Exploder" is fabulous [crowd cheers]. Absolutely amazing. The request is, I have tickets to go see *Hamilton* in June, and my wife [crosstalk] is going with me.

RICHARD: [cross talk] I'll go with you.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1: But she's not convinced it's any good. So I was wondering if you would convince her because I know you're a fan. That's why I had it on video, Joshua.

JOSH: I see.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1: And my main question is, and I think is on everybody's lips, Joshua: Are you ...

JOSH: Yes, I will marry you [crowd laughs]. Oh, go ahead.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1: No, no, it's bigger than that. Because we've all been listening to the podcast...

JOSH: I know where this is going.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1: Are you Jewish? [crowd laughs]

JOSH: Totally get the question, yes, yes I am.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1: Yeah, my wife's name is Suzanne, if you could convince her that *Hamilton* is worth going to, I would be so happy.

RICHARD: I'll try to keep this short. What's her name?

['don't cry!' from audience]

RICHARD: Yeah, don't cry, thank you.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1: My wife's name is Suzanne.

RICHARD: Suzanne, if you have a brain in your head, go see *Hamilton*. [crowd cheers]

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1: Thank you.

JOSH: Ah, there we go.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2: So I don't have a heartwarming story but I don't have a skeptical wife either, so it's ok [crowd cheers]. The thing that really bothered me about this episode was the catering for the poker game. You all get so excited, there's the squeezing of the bread, "Hey is it from this place?" "Yeah...of course it's..." I don't see anyone eating, I don't see anyone talking about eating, I don't see a big pile of crumbs on the table. I feel that I'm owed an explanation. [crowd cheers]

RICHARD: Toby has an excuse. He had gum. [crowd laughs]

JOSH: Will and Fiderer are serious poker players. You don't sit down to eat. You sit down to play cards. So I don't know about the others.

HRISHI: And Leo -

JOSH: I think Leo is having orgasms over the thinly sliced pastrami, why doesn't he eat it?

HRISHI: I think for Leo, squeezing the food is as far as he gets. [crowd laughs]

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2: I have a small follow-up question. I don't trust your egg. Can I have a look at it? [crowd laughs]

JOSH: Give him the egg.

HRISHI: We can't break the holy line of demarcation. [crowd laughs]

JOSH: Thank you. Anybody else? Wanna slide up? Can we get another white male? [crowd laughs] Oh here's one.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 3: I don't know how I follow these guys, but this one's for Richard. You mentioned your conversation with Dee Dee Myers. Did you tell Aaron Sorkin about that? Because there's a very similar storyline in one of the episodes. It's with Sam Seaborn, and they make a suggestion to him and he takes it to the president and it happens and then like "You've gotta tell me when that's gonna happen."

RICHARD: I think it's you, and I think it happens to Ainsley as well. First of all, I resent the fact that if I told Aaron Sorkin a story and he used it on another character. [crowd laughs] It's very likely that I told him that story because I've told the story a lot.

HRISHI: It happens with Charlie. He suggests a policy thing and then he uses it in the speech. I think the end of season one.

RICHARD: Ah yeah. Okay.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 3: Great, thank you.

RICHARD: You're welcome.

JOSH: Thank you.

HRISHI: I have a question for Marlee. We spoke earlier about Aaron leaving the show. When did you find out about that?

MARLEE [JACK]: That he was leaving the show?

HRISHI: Yeah.

MARLEE [JACK]: I think...[JACK to MARLEE: *No, no, when did he leave the show? When did you find out about that? Did you know about that?*] I'm deaf. I didn't hear anything [crowd laughs/applauds] Actually, in all honesty, being the guest star, I'm always the last to find out about anything. We just heard he was moving on or something like that.

JOSH: And you still acted on the show, post-Sorkin.

MARLEE [JACK]: Yes, I did, I did. And in all actuality, the flavor was different obviously. It was much different. I missed having Aaron on the set, always very passionate about the lines his actors would have to say. *The West Wing* was his baby.

RICHARD: To you, he was like that [crowd laughs]

JOSH: I still haven't met him [crowd laughs].

MARLEE [JACK]: I have more hair than you do, so obviously it didn't get to me as much as it did to you.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 4: Hi. This is just a general podcast question. I think Hrishy's probably the biggest fan, so it's for you. I've been re-listening to the podcast - as I'm sure everyone else has -

RICHARD: You're the one. [crowd laughs]

AUDIENCE MEMBER 4: As I've been re-watching the episodes.

MARLEE: I couldn't hear!

AUDIENCE MEMBER 4: Do you have a favorite, so my favorite podcast that I've re-listened to is the one with Emily Procter, "In this White House", where she talks about John Spencer walking her around his swimming pool with all the obstacles, it's so sweet. And "In Excelsis Deo" obviously is the other one. But do you guys ever re-listen to the podcasts you've recorded and do you have a favorite?

HRISHI: No, I can't even listen to them once. [crowd laughs]

JOSH: Is that true?

HRISHI: I have a very hard time listening to myself talk, so...

JOSH: I also have a hard time listening to you, [crowd laughs] but I do it so I can hear my half of the show.

HRISHI: I listen for your half of the show, too.

JOSH: But wait a minute, we at a certain point, I think, we've discussed the process. You know, we yammer at each other, we send it off to be transcribed, we do a little editing, and our fantastic producer Margaret Miller does, we will edit it on paper, then Zach McNees puts it together for us, and then at some point don't you listen to it all in order to see what notes you want to give on the further cut?

HRISHI: Yeah, and sometimes I'll bring it into ProTools. The problem is everyone except for me is a little more generous with letting me talk on the show. And so then before we put it out, usually I'll get Zach's edit and then I'll go through and cut more of myself out.

[crowd aw-s]

HRISHI: No, trust me, it's better that way. But so, I don't have a favorite episode of the podcast.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 4: Do you have a favorite guest, if you don't mind the follow-up?

[audience oohs]

JOSH: Well it's a dead tie. I would have pointed at Marlee as one of my favorites but she and Jack pulled off an insanely cruel practical joke when we had them, which we shared with you on the episode. So she plummets right to my very least favorite guest that we've had. And this guy's always pretty good.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 4: Thank you.

HRISHI: Thank you.

RICHARD: Nice cover.

HRISHI: I have another question.

JOSH: You're next.

HRISHI: Oh, okay. My question comes with a clip. This is a question for Jack, actually.

JACK: For me?

HRISHI: Yes.

JACK: [to Marlee] No, the question is for me.

MARLEE: Oh, oh.

JOSH: Is he allowed?

JACK: Yes, it's allowed. I mean, I said it's allowed. [crowd laughs] What's the question?

HRISHI: In this episode, there's a lot of simultaneous translation that's happening with the interpreter who's translating for the Russian president. He's in the same room as President Bartlet and he has to translate. Frequently, he interrupts the president. The interpreter is interrupting President Bartlet with President Chagorin's comments. And I was wondering if that, to you, felt like accurate protocol. If the person you are translating or interpreting for is interrupting the person, would you actually do that yourself?

JACK: For clarification, yes. [crowd laughs and appla

HRISHI: That was pretty good.

JACK: I never have to interrupt because then it would take the whole situation out of the context but sometimes interpreters will interrupt for clarification, obviously.

MARLEE: He does that all the time. All the time.

JACK: But I also allow myself to be corrected. I have no problem being corrected in public if I'm doing something wrong. A good interpreter tries to stay right down the middle.

RICHARD: I would conjecture to say that when you're talking to the Russian premier or president that you want to know when they interrupt you. The President and Leo would want to know when he's getting upset. Remember, the president kept saying, "He's yelling really loud at Leo right now." That's behavior. You'd want to interpret the behavior or I would want to know what the behavior is and the minute he starts to speak is more important to me than if I was interrupted.

JACK: There is a point with interpreters that I've seen often times who work in diplomatic circles that are just giving words; they're not giving emotions. With this person here, I have to be her, but yet I can't be me, but I can't be too much her. So interpreters walk a really fine line. If we're on a talk show, I can't let any space be there, I can't put in "you know"s. I've heard interpreters say, "You know, you know, you know." You cannot do that. But it's such a fine line. It's really a tough one to walk. But we've been doing this for 32 years, so it's...Jack is probably one of the most wonderful, handsome men I've ever had to work with. And he likes to hear himself say that.

HRISHI: I'm really curious though about that line where you said, "I can't be her too much."

JACK: No, obviously, since I'm a male voice and she's a woman, but people have said that I do a good job of making them believe that I'm her, yet I'm a guy talking for her. And I guess that must mean because I express her. I don't know. I don't know how to describe it. I don't know if that makes sense or not, what I just said, but that's how it works.

HRISHI: No, it makes sense. One of the things I really like in the portrayal of the interpreter, played by Robert Alan Beuth, I'm not sure how to say his name, but I like the way that his delivery, he doesn't quite leave this even-keeled cadence even as he's trying to express the more animated feelings of the Russian president. Here, I'm going to play this little clip.

[West Wing Episode 4.20 excerpt]

CHAGORIN [through the translator]: Mr. President...

PRESIDENT BARTLET: Peter...

CHAGORIN [through the translator]: Unless there was a typhoon.

PRESIDENT BARTLET: I understand. I meant... [covering the mouthpiece] He's yelling at me pretty loud now.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: But he is of course not yelling, but he still raises his voice. That balance is such an interesting and tricky one to try and strike.

MARLEE: He gets dramatic.

MARLEE [JACK]: He gets dramatic, Jack sometimes gets dramatic. [crowd laughs]

HRISHI: Ok, I think we have time for one more question, and it goes to you.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 5: There are many wonderful relationships on *The West Wing* and I'm just wondering, what's your favorite relationship on the show?

RICHARD: Mine was with the medic.

MARLEE: What? What? Me!

JOSH: You and Josh? It's a good one; it's definitely one of our favorites. We've talked about it as such.

HRISHI: I wish it had gotten more screen time, honestly.

JOSH: We wish it had developed more.

MARLEE: Yeah, me too.

HRISHI: Although...

JOSH: What was your favorite?

JACK: I kept getting pregnant, was the problem, that Marlee said, in real life.

JOSH: What's your name?

AUDIENCE MEMBER 5: Claire. The President and Charlie. [crowd applauds]

JOSH: The President and Charlie. Very good.

HRISHI: Yes.

JOSH: Oh look, you got applause.

JACK: Marlee said Mrs. Landingham and the president.

JOSH: So good.

HRISHI: I think the only reason why the lack of screen time between Joey and Josh was a little bit mitigated was because she was so obviously out of his league the entire time. You never felt like it was going to go anywhere. [crowd laughs]

JOSH: Too good for him.

HRISHI: Yeah. It never really worked.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 6: My name is Tonya, and I was press secretary to Tony Blair [crowd ooohs] and had the enormous pleasure of hosting John Spencer when he came to Downing Street when you were doing a premiere of the show and had to do a curious experience of having to write a brief for our Chief of Staff to meet the best Chief of Staff in the world. And he turned to me and said, "So, you're kind of like C.J." It was like, "I wish I had Aaron Sorkin writing my lines."

HRISHI: Thank you so much for coming out tonight. Thank you so much to everyone for listening. Thanks so much to our guests for joining us tonight.

JOSH: Jack Jason, and Marlee Matlin. The West Wing Weekly is a proud member of Radiotopia. You can find out about the other great Radiotopia podcasts at Radiotopia.fm. We'd like to thank Richard Schiff for being our guest tonight. We'd like to thank Margaret Miller and Zach McNees for their work on the podcast. We'd like to thank everybody at Vicar Street. We'd like to thank the good people of the Billions.

HRISHI: Corporation, yeah.

JOSH: And Andrew Morgan and everyone at AEG. We are gonna be out later selling some merch, or in Gaelic I think it's *mergkk*. What else do we usually say at the end? Oh, yeah ...

HRISHI: Ok.

JOSH: Ok.

CROWD: What's next?

HRISHI: Thank you.

[Outro Music]