

The West Wing Weekly
6.06: "The Dover Test"

[Intro Music]

JOSH: You're listening to *The West Wing Weekly*. I'm Joshua Malina.

HRISHI: And I'm Hrishikesh Hirway. Today we're talking about "The Dover Test." It's season 6 episode 6. It was written by Carol Flint and directed by Laura Innes, and it first aired on November 24th, 2004.

HRISHI: It's my dad's birthday.

JOSH: Nice.

HRISHI: Mm-hmm.

JOSH: What birthday or do you not want to date him?

HRISHI: Here's a crazy thing. I don't actually know.

JOSH: You don't know how old your dad is?

HRISHI: But the crazy part is that, I think maybe, nobody really knows.

JOSH: Including your dad?

HRISHI: In order to get my dad off to school, there is a possibility that they might have fudged his age, in order to just be like, "yeah, he's old enough to go to school".

JOSH: Huh.

HRISHI: And then that's just been his official age of record, but it's actually possible that he might be a year younger than he actually is.

JOSH: How about that? So they just really wanted him out of the house.

HRISHI: [laughing] Apparently. I just found this out, like recently. Because it was my dad's birthday not too long ago, and I asked, I said something to my sister about it, and she said, "well, you know, we don't actually know how old dad is".

JOSH: That's wild.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: I think I would find that unsettling.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Were I he.

HRISHI: [laughing] But I feel like I can, with great accuracy, say this was his 60 [mumbled] "something-something" birthday.

JOSH: Fair enough. Accepted.

HRISHI: In this episode, the United States peacekeeping compound is attacked, and an American soldier is killed and others are wounded. As the White House struggles to control the story, the father of the slain soldier speaks out against the mission. He's no fan of President Bartlet's. Meanwhile, Democratic Congressman Matthew Santos attaches the Patient's Bill of Rights he wrote to a Republican piece of legislation that effectively keeps the Democratic elements, while maintaining a Republican agenda; and Leo gets a lesson in life and business from his nurse.

JOSH: Very nice. What did you think of this episode?

HRISHI: I liked this episode. I think?

JOSH: [laughs] They're definitely elements I liked about this episode. I had a lot of quibbles along the way. I'm sure I'll get pilloried for quibbling.

HRISHI: Yeah, I've watched it twice. I'm so deep in it, but it's still relatively... no, I guess I've watched it three times now, because I watched it last month too once. I don't know, maybe the jury's still out.

JOSH: Fair enough. Maybe we'll, let's try to get to a verdict by podcast's end.

HRISHI: Okay, sounds great. This episode begins with the ceremony for the unveiling of the plans for the Bartlet Library. We are now deep into presidential legacy mode. There was some existential fretting about it in the last season, but now it's like, this is underway. They've chosen a location. It's a real location actually, the mill that they're, where they're setting this is a real place along the Merrimack River, that was built in the early 1800s.

JOSH: That would be cool actually, as a sort of *West Wing* amusement park, if they built President Bartlet's Library. Also, kudos to the art department, I like the replica that they built.

HRISHI: Yeah, that must've been so complicated.

JOSH: Kind of impressive for a one-off in a single cold open in one episode.

HRISHI: What I was thinking was they should have kept it and built an enormous tank for Gail to swim around in with that on the bottom.

JOSH: [laughing] That would be the least popular SeaWorld exhibit [both laughing]. A two thousand gallon tank with that in it and a single goldfish.

HRISHI: Speaking of SeaWorld...

JOSH: Sure.

HRISHI: Charlie is a calm sea sometimes.

JOSH: Ah, nice.

HRISHI: [laughs] I don't ever call him "C", I'm just; that was just my attempt at a transition.

JOSH: You use it. You can use a character for a pun.

HRISHI: Okay? Sure. So now let's go to "C" world. In this episode, Charlie's already on the job, his new job, as Special Assistant to C.J. But my first impression, we find this out in immediately in the first few moments of the cold open, but my first thought was somehow his job now is to be less efficient.

[West Wing Episode 6.06 excerpt]

TOBY: You'll take it directly to the...

CHARLIE: As the president's personal aide, I went straight to the president. As deputy special assistant, I alert C.J. and clear it with you.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And then Toby goes and takes it to the president like so there is just extra steps now.

JOSH: Not only that, but everyone prior to Toby uses the completely silly "the Secretary of Agriculture's in the Rose Room," rather than saying... and those are all private conversations where they could have, they could have even said, "hey, we lost a soldier in Gaza" but...

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: Or you know, "I need to talk to you" and then eventually Toby just goes up to the president, who is actually talking to other people and says, "Mr. President, I need to speak to you for a moment". Which seems to me as good a code. Maybe preferable to "the Secretary of Agriculture is in the Rose Room".

HRISHI: [laughs] It's true. It's right. Yeah.

JOSH: I need to talk to you for a second seems like a fine way to go about it.

HRISHI: Yeah. [laughs]

JOSH: [laughs] Have we had this discussion before, I can't remember.

HRISHI: No. Are you having, are you experiencing some déjà vu?

JOSH: We've been at this so long that now everything that occurs to me I'm sure I've convinced myself we've discussed already.

HRISHI: About the Secretary of Agriculture being in the Rose Room?

JOSH: Yeah, that's happened before right? Early on, wasn't there some sort of use of another silly code phrase or was it this exact phrase?

HRISHI: There was the signal.

JOSH: I know that, but I thought there was some other verbal relevancy. And I can't remember whether I made this point then too, the whole thing also reminded me of the fantastic scene in *The Court Jester* with Danny Kaye.

[The Court Jester excerpt]

(Danny Kaye's character) HUBERT HAWKINS: The pellet with poison is in the vessel with the pestle; the chalice from the palace has the true that is brew, err, the brew that is true. The chessel with the...

[end excerpt]

JOSH: I wanted it, I wanted this whole cold open to just descend into gibberish and then finally have Toby say "hey, I talk to you for a second?"

HRISHI: I thought the reveal was going to be, that actually it was the Secretary of Agriculture in the Rose Room with the remote bomb that had actually triggered the attack. [Josh laughing] They were just setting up an elaborate game of Clue.

JOSH: Fantastic. They could have done multiple endings.

HRISHI: Right, the Secretary of Agriculture is played by Tim Curry. [both laughing]

JOSH: Very nice.

HRISHI: So yes, Toby manages to cut through all the secrecy and the codes with a simple, "excuse me, Mr. President, can I talk to you for a second?" and then tells him CNN's reporting an attack on our peacekeepers compound in Darom.

JOSH: But would have been really fantastic is if "excuse me, Mr. President, can I speak to you for a second" was code for the Secretary of Agriculture is in the Rose Room. [both laughing]

HRISHI: Because nobody should actually know.

JOSH: That's right.

HRISHI: He's very shy. The Secretary of Agriculture is just really shy.

JOSH: Just doesn't like word to get out.

HRISHI: Yeah, [laughing still] or what if, even darker; code for the Secretary of Agriculture is in the Rose Room is there's been an attack on our peacekeeping compound [Josh and Hrishu laughing hard] and everyone panics. No, no, no – he's just shy.

JOSH: Oh my God, I want to see this version of *The West Wing*.

HRISHI: So Charlie says there are up to eight injured and one dead and then adds:

[West Wing Episode 6.06 excerpt]

CHARLIE: The peace mission's first casualty.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Ugh!

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: That was my first major quibble with the episode. So you go ahead.

HRISHI: Yeah. He says 'the mission's first casualty', which feels like not very Charlie. Just bit of editorializing and it does feel like editorializing because he says 'first casualty'. That's a strange choice of words as he says it but it sets up our moment right before the titles hit.

[West Wing Episode 6.06 excerpt]

C.J.: In our statement, when we say 'casualty', don't say 'first'.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: And here's the thing: I wrote down "This is a line of dialogue that is entirely for the audience's benefit and thus very clunky exposition".

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: And then I saw the line from C.J. and I thought okay, that's why they're setting this up.

HRISHI: Yes.

JOSH: But the Aaron Sorkin way to do that would have been just to lose the Charlie line and we would get it when she says don't say 'first', you know, we don't have to have heard that line. In fact, the whole thing would have been better had we learned as she said it.

HRISHI: Yeah. I thought the power of that sentiment, the idea that this is the first casualty and we don't want to make people feel like we are anticipating more. The power of that sentiment was diminished by the actual execution of these two lines.

JOSH: Yes. I completely agree and I'm surprised that wasn't something that somebody thought of or that they changed in the edit. Seems obvious to me.

HRISHI: But also reminds me of advice to give at weddings when you're introducing your husband or your wife: also don't say 'first'.

JOSH: [laughing] That's...yeah. That's very, very important. That's a great, great titbit.

HRISHI: I would also avoid 'current'. Say "Hello nice to meet you. Let me introduce you to my current wife".

JOSH: Not good.

HRISHI: Not so good.

JOSH: Well, we're still in the cold open. You mentioned Bradley's hair in an earlier episode.

HRISHI: Yes

JOSH: Funny, it clicked for me in the cold open. He's got kind of a Larry Fine from *The Three Stooges* thing going.

HRISHI: Oh, yeah?

JOSH: He's got a similar hairline and then just inexplicable tufts of hair kind of...[laughs]

HRISHI: But Larry's hair was a little more 'Fine' and, well, 'Curly'. [both laughing] How many 'Moe' of these can I come up with?

BOTH: [laughing]

JOSH: Wow! Wow! Bam! We should just stop this podcast right now. Go out on a high note.

HRISHI: Nope. I'm gonna 'Shemp' on going.

JOSH: You know what? I was trying to work that in in my way. I'll take it.

HRISHI: Yeah similar hairline, but the bristlier, hedgehog-ian quality is more present in Brad's.

JOSH: Indeed.

HRISHI: So after we come back from the main title sequence, Toby and C.J. are watching the news where there's a report that includes part of his footage. The statement that he made after they learned about the casualty. And C.J. says to Toby, "I like how you were leaning on the podium". But that's actually the opposite of the advice that Annabeth gave him in the last episode.

JOSH: That's right.

HRISHI: Right?

JOSH: I had the same thought. Yes.

[West Wing Episode 6.05 excerpt]

ANNABETH: You're literally hunching over. You need to lean back. Not too much – you don't want to look hostile and pugnacious.

TOBY: I don't?

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And as she was saying that in that episode, she like pushed him to sit upright and not lean over podium.

JOSH: Toby is getting mixed messages in terms of critique.

HRISHI: Yeah, so that's tough for him. His job's already tough, but now he's got to deal with two different sets of... I feel like he's already unsure of what to do with his body or with his voice and...

JOSH: True.

HRISHI: ...now he's getting two different people telling him two different things.

JOSH: It's hard to believe by now that they haven't found even a temporary replacement for Toby.

HRISHI: Yeah. There's an interesting, I think, dynamic. For me, I think the heart of this episode, in some ways is between the dynamic playing out of Toby and C.J. Let me go to this other moment later, when C.J.'s in the Situation Room. She has a frustrating exchange with a commander in the Situation Room.

JOSH: Indeed.

HRISHI: The commander played by Stephen Markle, and I found it frustrating because he's really condescending to her, speaking to her like she doesn't know anything, but at the same time, C.J. clearly has real gaps in her knowledge. So as rude and disrespectful as it is, she keeps giving him more ammo to work with you know, she says 'troop depletion' instead of 'force depletion', and she doesn't...

JOSH: [crosstalk] You don't want to give a military guy more ammo.

HRISHI: [laughs] Right. Exactly. Not if he's pointing his guns at you.

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: And she doesn't know what the protocol around why the number for the force depletion is left blank and she doesn't know what The Dover Test is. These are all things that the commander either expects her to know, or maybe he expects her not to know, but he has no patience with her and that part is a bummer.

JOSH: He's got an attitude problem for sure.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: In terms of briefing her and keeping her in the loop and trying to get her up to speed.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: He's not helpful.

HRISHI: Yeah. It's like his job is to get her up to speed but I think he feels like, Leo already knew this stuff and he just doesn't have time. This part felt true to Sorkin in a kind of *A Few Good Men* kind of way of like, "Look. I've got a job to do and you can either come along or not, but I have more important things to do than to make you understand why I'm doing the things I'm doing."

JOSH: Yes.

HRISHI: We know there is a difference between force depletion and troop depletion. He says, you know, force depletion he estimates it at a quarter percent to one percent, but it isn't just about people it's about munitions. He says it's about munitions, structures and aircraft, but C.J. keeps coming back to the troops which brings us to the name of this episode.

JOSH: "The Dover Test." C.J. also, let me just interject, has clearly worked on her mental math skills. We have indicated in the past that she seems to be innumerate, but she does some very quick mental math in this scene.

HRISHI: Right and she equates 1% to 200 troops.

[West Wing Episode 6.06 excerpt]

COMMANDER RUIZ: *Oh, this isn't a body count. The one per cent includes the entire military force strength – munitions, structures, aircraft...*

C.J.: *And troops?*

Commander Ruiz: *Oh, if you're going to be concerned about the Dover Test, it's too early to worry about that.*

C.J.: *The Dover Test?*

COMMANDER RUIZ: *(sigh) Erosion of public support based on the arrival of coffins at our air base in Delaware.*

C.J.: *I wanted to...*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: She says "air base?" [laughing]

HRISHI: She says "Delaware?" [laughing] The Dover Test is a real thing that refers to Dover Air Force Base and that base houses the DoD's Centre for Mortuary Affairs. It's the biggest mortuary under the Department of Defense and it houses a lot of remains like the victims of Jonestown and the crews of the space shuttles Challenger and Columbia, and it played a part in identifying the remains of military personnel in the 9/11 attacks. But while they're making reference to this Dover Test, I think the title of the episode, I think the real Dover Test here, is actually a test of Toby and his abilities to pull off the job of press secretary.

JOSH: So *The Tover Test* would have been the best of all possible titles.

HRISHI: [laughing] I can't believe they didn't go with that.

JOSH: I'm amazed. It seems so obvious; I mean or *The Dover Test*. They had a choice.

HRISHI: The test, I think is, you know, can you do the job of delivering the message of the administration? And it's this policy around the closing of access to Dover that's really putting him to the test. Right?

JOSH: I know that just about a year prior to this, President Bush's war in Iraq began and at the beginning of that there was some sort of ban on allowing images to go out of dead soldiers returning from Iraq. I remember that was a big public issue.

HRISHI: Right. What year was that, that that happened?

JOSH: Now I'm reading, "A Pentagon spokeswoman said the military wide policy actually dates from about November 2000, under Clinton, but it apparently went unheeded and unenforced." So they began to enforce this ban.

HRISHI: Oh, so it really is, they just lifted that directly for this episode.

[West Wing Episode 6.06 excerpt]

TOBY: *It wasn't a change. It was adhering to a policy already in place.*

(Journalist) TERRANCE SLIGH: But the administration...

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Yeah. It's the exact same thing. And after that goes kind of off the rails and Toby sort of lets it slip that there was this conversation and, he kind of reveals how the sausage is made a little bit, on this very touchy, sensitive topic and C.J.'s watching and she's just the can't believe what's going on and she finally sends Annabeth in there to pull the plug on it.

JOSH: Right. I like this sense too that, and she calls him on it explicitly, that he let his own opinion sort of seep into the briefing.

[West Wing Episode 6.06 excerpt]

C.J.: I buried my own opinions out there every day.

TOBY: What were you doing back there? Don't you have a White House to run?

C.J.: The briefing room is not your bully pulpit.

TOBY: I got rattled.

C.J.: Yeah, you got rattled, and your ambivalence toward policy came out. You had ambivalence toward the peace plan. Is that why?

TOBY: Are you questioning my loyalty?

C.J.: I am questioning your self-control! If you can't stick to our message – I don't care if that podium stands empty – I don't want you out there again!

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: In fact, not only did she bury her opinions out there every day, in this very instance, she thought it would be better to tell the press that they were going to start enforcing this policy. She wanted to make an announcement saying, "Hey, by the way...".

JOSH: Right, get ahead of it.

HRISHI: Yeah, this is going to happen. And I think that kind of speaks to the difference between the relationship that C.J. has with the press, I think, and the one that Toby has. You know, Toby keeps on having this sort of like 'what they won't know won't hurt them and it's better if they don't know and it's better if we don't tell the Press Secretary so she can't tell them': things like that. And I remember what Jay Carney told us when he was our guest, you know about just 'never lie to the press',

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: And I think C.J. at her core believes that. Sometimes she's had to hide certain things or omit certain things.

JOSH: Yeah, stonewall, but don't lie.

HRISHI: Yeah, and you know, here she gets a giant opportunity for a 'I Told You So' twice over because if they had listened to her and made the announcement, then they wouldn't be having this issue right now when there suddenly is, you know, that was six months ago was before this peacekeeping effort even was on the table, and if they had listened to that then they wouldn't be dealing with it now, when suddenly there is a dead soldier coming home.

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: But then she also gets to say 'I Told You So' in terms of like, "Look, I didn't say anything because that's my job" and that is the job and that's what you should be doing right now and you're not.

JOSH: Should we talk about Annabeth a little?

HRISHI: Sure.

JOSH: I almost found her refreshing in this episode in that she does not seem to give a [expletive deleted].

HRISHI: [laughing]

JOSH: ...about the humanity of it all. She's almost like a refreshing departure from our typical *West Wing* core hero. She's all about the optics and the politics of it. She's very down to business, I mean; it's interesting in the way they've written her.

HRISHI: You know what I've never made this connection until just now hearing you say that: Annabeth is like a redo of Mandy.

JOSH: Hmm. Well, I never thought of that.

HRISHI: Right? I mean she...

JOSH: That's interesting.

HRISHI: What you just said, that is exactly what Mandy was sort of in charge of and it didn't work.

JOSH: That's a very good point I think.

HRISHI: There's something about the way those two characters are written that I think Annabeth comes off- like despite that sort of against the grain kind of approach here...

JOSH: Mm-hmm.

HRISHI: Like you said, she seems refreshing and great and like, I really like her but when...

JOSH: Yeah.

HRISHI: ...when Mandy expressed those same kind of views, when she'd be like, "We have to be careful of the optics".

JOSH: Got her one-way ticket to Mandyville.

HRISHI: [laughing] Yeah, we just felt like, I think, everyone watching was like 'eurgh'!

JOSH: Yeah. Interesting, interesting. So I wonder if it's their- she has a different approach? I mean she has a very sort of no-nonsense businesslike approach to what she does.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: You know, I think Laura Innes gave her a moment in the hospital room at the end of the episode where she, we kind of see Annabeth's a little bit touched by the prayer going on between the wounded soldier and the president. So I think that was almost a little bit of a buyback of like, yeah, she was pushing for the photo op here, but now she kind of sees that this is a private moment, you know, that at least that's what I imputed to that quick reaction shot of her so it was a little you know, 'she's not evil'.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Or heartless.

HRISHI: It's funny, actually. I had been thinking about this other moment when C.J. and the president have this exchange where she asks him why he didn't become a priest and he said "because I met Abbey" and she's like "you couldn't say that in front of a microphone or you couldn't say that to the press" or whatever it is that she says. But I didn't think about the time when there's another moment where Mandy bemoans this great thing that the president does and she's like, "please let me send some press there". There's like actually a direct parallel, Annabeth is basically a redo of Mandy.

JOSH: It's a good epiphany.

HRISHI: Yeah, you know, she comes from TV and she groomed Taylor Reid, this sort of cable news pundit.

JOSH: Yeah, with that being the first bullet point in a resume gives you a sense of her approach to this industry, this profession.

HRISHI: Yeah, she is the media connection. That's what her job title is, she's Deputy Press Secretary for Media Relations I think.

JOSH: She also [laughs] has this insane moment in the hospital when she says to President Bartlet, this is, whatever, "PFC Martinez, did I pronounce that right?"

BOTH: [laughing]

JOSH: No, it's pronounced [random sounds]. Yes, my name is Martinez. Yeah, you nailed it on the first try. "Am I saying that right?" Yep. Martinez.

HRISHI: No, she mispronounced 'this' and 'president'. [laughter] Oh, man. She's the one who people are calling later. I mean, I don't want to jump too far into this yet.

JOSH: Jump away.

HRISHI: But when Donna is dealing with the press for her own story, the stuff is coming through Annabeth, you know, she's like, "oh somebody from CAA is calling me". She's really a media industry person. Not...

JOSH: [crosstalk] Showbiz vibes.

HRISHI: [crosstalk] ...a politics person, a little yeah. Yeah.

JOSH: Well is it time to talk about how absurd the concept of making a MoW of Donna's story is?

BOTH: [laughing]

JOSH: That was another one of my quibbles, or maybe it's larger than a quibble. Like what are they talking about? What's the story? She goes over there, she gets blown up, she comes back and then she has this, you know, supposedly moving thing where she's like "no, I'm not the hero, the soldiers were." Like, no kidding! You're not the hero. You're in a car that got blown up and that's horrible. But there's no story to make it a movie.

HRISHI: You don't think so? I think that it sustained several episodes of *The West Wing*. You couldn't think it could sustain a Movie of the Week?

JOSH: You know, a scene here and there about Donna who we already knew. What would the story be of a Movie of the Week?

HRISHI: I mean, I think you're maybe setting the bar a little too high for Movies of the Week.

JOSH: Perhaps so, I don't think so though. [laughs] I mean there has to be a story. I was trying to think, like well, what are the story points? She works at the White House, she went over there, and she got injured.

HRISHI: Mm-hmm. She was in the Middle East. She was there on a special mission. She put herself in harm's way, I mean they can gin it up beyond what we think...

JOSH: [crosstalk] I suppose.

HRISHI: [crosstalk] ...the story is.

JOSH: And then the even worse moment is when Annabeth says "you'd get paid for this but you'd have to leave your job". And she goes "oh forget about it. Wait, how much?" and then they both giggle like it's insane to even consider how much money. I would be like, "yeah, well, wait. Well, how much?"

HRISHI: Right. It's like, is it enough that I'll have to leave this job and also never take another job?

JOSH: Right, right!

HRISHI: Who do you think in this CBS movie of the week from 2004...

JOSH: Hmm?

HRISHI: Who do you think would have played Donna?

JOSH: Moira Kelly? I know that she was available.

HRISHI: [laughing in disbelief] Oh Josh!

JOSH: Um, Let's see. I don't know.

HRISHI: I'm gonna say, Elizabeth Banks.

JOSH: Mmm. Nice. I like it. Yeah.

HRISHI: Maybe she might have already been too big of a star at that point, but I feel like she might have been gettable.

JOSH: Yeah, I suspect so.

HRISHI: For a high-profile Movie of the Week.

JOSH: Or Elizabeth Berkley if Banks passed.

HRISHI: So let's back up for a second, with Donna. One thing that is not totally made clear, but I think you are meant to conclude...

JOSH: Mm-hmm.

HRISHI: ...is that the person who keeps calling Donna, the person that she keeps talking about, saying "oh this person is so persistent, it's a little bit embarrassing" and Josh sort of comes in and tries to like do this white knight thing, and like hangs up on the person, you know. I think that by the end, you know, you're meant to realize that it's actually not a romantic suitor at all; it's somebody who's trying to get Donna to do one of these media appearances either be in the movie or not.

JOSH: Yes, I believe you're right.

HRISHI: But to do one of the interviews, cause she's just finding out about the movie with Annabeth. But yeah, this is somebody who's trying to pressure her into saying yes to being on camera.

JOSH: Yes, I believe you're correct. But, so let's just do it now. How [expletive deleted] annoying is Josh's behavior in this episode towards her?

HRISHI: Unbelievable, but actually believable.

JOSH: You take the phone out of my hand and hang it up, buddy, we're gonna have a conversation about it after!

HRISHI: Yeah. He's really over the line. I said, just said unbelievable it but I don't think it's actually unbelievable. I think that this is Josh feeling threatened in their relationship like never before.

JOSH: Absolutely and responding like a high schooler.

[West Wing Episode 6.06 excerpt]

JOSH: Those are nice flowers. But come on – "I'm not going anywhere"? From a photojournalist?

DONNA: You read my card?!

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Yeah, I think in the wake of Colin, Donna gets these flowers and he assumes that they're from Colin and she's like, they're not from Colin and all of a sudden now he has to deal with the idea that not only has she, you know, gone off with this other guy. Maybe there's yet another person, you know, there's suddenly, it's a multitude of potential competition for Donna's attention and he knows that he, that at one time Donna was all about him, but he's blown it over and over again, and now she doesn't need him as much and she's demonstrating that.

JOSH: Right we get these little moments where he hasn't noticed things; though she's been off her crutches for two weeks, she doesn't like red wine. We get these little things, and even more so in Janel's performance, she just no longer lights up when he's in the room.

HRISHI: No. Yeah. She's over it.

JOSH: Which is great.

HRISHI: Yeah. I think the note that Janel told us when she first came on the program, which was that, like her approach to this character was to just act like she was just in love with Josh. With every word that she said, it's no longer the case. She is so over this dude, and now he's just annoying.

JOSH: Yeah and out of line.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Reading a personal note, that's not cool.

HRISHI: Yeah, and she's not charmed by it.

JOSH: At all.

HRISHI: He plays it like "oh, yeah, this isn't, I thought they were for me" he tries to joke around at it.

[West Wing Episode 6.06 excerpt]

JOSH: Who is this jerk? Some slacker from physical therapy? I'll kick his ass. You could thank me for my chivalry.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: But he can't read her expression, which you'd think he would be, you know, get some of these not so subtle cues now.

JOSH: Yeah, but it's in keeping with Josh Lyman hubris.

HRISHI: Yeah, I guess so. I do think that it's extended beyond that now though and it is, it's, he's in like, there's this weird survival, macho thing that's coming out that he's just overcompensating in a way and he doesn't know how to do it.

JOSH: Mm-hmm I think you're right.

HRISHI: But so when we find out about that Donna has this interview with *Dateline*, because Carol comes in and she asks her about it.

[West Wing Episode 6.06 excerpt]

JOSH: When am I doing Dateline?

DONNA: Never. I mean, I said no on your behalf. I'll follow up.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: She actually covers it up and she doesn't...

JOSH: Oh yeah, she lies to him.

HRISHI: She lies to him, yeah.

JOSH: I noticed that.

HRISHI: And I thought part of it might be just her being so against the whole idea of doing the interview and not wanting to even have to get into it and go into a debate with Josh about whether or not, but I think really it was just she's look, I'm sick of talking about it with this guy.

JOSH: Right. It's easier to just cut him out of the loop.

HRISHI: Yeah, and that I thought was a really telling moment too...that she's just like, you already overstepped into my life in ways that I don't want you there and I'm just gonna now start putting up walls between us. You know, Donna says she doesn't want to do the interviews. She doesn't think she deserves it. But she also says she knows they need better press and she goes and she says.

[West Wing Episode 6.06 excerpt]

DONNA: (sighs) the thing is...I wasn't heroic. I was in the wrong place at the wrong time. But the soldier who was just killed and the ones that were wounded – those guys chose that. They volunteered for a job they knew would put them in harm's way. That's heroic.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: So, what I don't understand is why doesn't she or why doesn't Annabeth, why don't they both come up with the idea of like, do the interview and say that. Like do the thing that they recognize would be one of the pros of her doing the interview, which is giving the Bartlet Administration some good press and also giving it like some humanity and some human connection to the troops.

JOSH: That's an approach that makes a lot of sense.

HRISHI: Yeah, and so the first time I watch this when, Annabeth is like "I've got it", I was like, yeah, she's going to come to this conclusion. And then instead it's like, "let's put the president in the room with..." So I was just like what you've got people wanting to interview Donna right now, and you're given...

JOSH: [crosstalk] Absolutely right.

HRISHI: [crosstalk] Give her the chance to sort of say her thing, which is that, it's not about me, which will also incidentally just make her look better, and it also make the administration look better and also deliver the actual message she wants to say; which is that these soldiers are the ones who ought to be highlighted.

JOSH: Indeed.

[Ad break]

HRISHI: What did you think about the Leo storyline?

JOSH: Interesting? I would say overall I like it.

HRISHI: Yeah. Mrs. Chakrabarty is played by Suleka Mathew.

JOSH: And she was quite good.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: I thought.

HRISHI: I thought so too.

JOSH: They're very good together and it's another refreshing departure from our standard locations and the kind of scenes that we see, so it's interesting to see Leo in recovery and developing this relationship with his caregiver. It's a little clunky, the whole I think considering going to Cultico, is that what it's called?

HRISHI: Yeah, Cultico.

JOSH: And his Indian caregiver. I mean it's a little coincidental and a little bit too easy, but if you give them that, it brings up some interesting issues that I saw. I'd say overall I liked it.

HRISHI: Yeah, we see Leo in his hotel again. You know, we've seen C.J. go there in our last episode and we already know that there's this thing of Leo's not eating and in this episode they kind of, they draw that out a lot more and he's got this fun kind of repartee with his nurse Mrs Chakrabarty.

[West Wing Episode 6.06 excerpt]

LEO: You may browbeat me into using the breath spirometer. You may mother me about wound care. You may dole out the Vicodin like my AA sponsor. You may even entertain me with nutrition lectures.

MRS. CHAKRABARTY: You need to eat.

LEO: You may not, may not offer fashion advice.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: He's getting ready and he's getting dressed like he's, if he's going to the White House. He's got the full outfit on and it's fun and everything is moving in this like ratatat kind of clip. But then actually gets kind of really sad quite quickly because she's like, "okay" and he's gonna go for a walk and she's like, "do you want me to come with you"

and he's like "no" and then she's like, "okay, you did 10 minutes last time try and go for 12". And you realize he's just walking the halls for exercise. Like he's getting dressed this way.

JOSH: Yes, it's a sad depiction of his current state of affairs and he kind of just rounds a corner and immediately has to catch his breath. He obviously doesn't even want to share with his caregiver the real state he's in. It is very sad. It's extra sad also I feel watching all these scenes knowing that John Spencer is not long for this world. It makes it very, very painful...

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: ...to watch but he is so good in these scenes. It's heart wrenching.

HRISHI: Yeah, he's great and I love that they've given this storyline to Leo. We find out that the reason why he's actually dressing up in the full suit and everything is actually a bit to like put on the appearance of a guy who's ready to go back in the world. He's at this fancy hotel wherever it is that he stays, and the fact is that he might run into people. It's basically like a networking opportunity and if he's wandering around the hallway looking like a professional, looking like himself, then he's kind of engineered the circumstances for what actually happens. He has this chance encounter, some old acquaintance from like big money capitalist world. And this guy sees him and he sees Leo and Leo's looking great, and he's looking, you know, he's on it and the guy says "oh, you know, if you think you should get back into it and if you don't go back to the White House, you should join the board of Cultico", and Leo kind of, he's being very coy about the whole thing and...

JOSH: Yes.

HRISHI: ...trying to like set up what he's gonna do and it's going really well until the nurse shows up and it's like this big wah-wah when she shows up in the background. [laughs]

JOSH: "Mom..."

HRISHI: [laughs] "Mom..." it's like, "I was about to make a move."

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Is Mrs Chakrabarty's wedding at the hotel?

HRISHI: No, I don't think so.

JOSH: How on earth does she get back with warm naan? [Hrishi laughs] Again, a micro quibble but, "What do you mean it's still warm?" The wedding was in the hallway?

HRISHI: You know, maybe she had it wrapped in foil before she transferred it to the other thing.

JOSH: I don't buy it. I'll run the experiment and get back to you in a future episode.

HRISHI: So this guy says...

JOSH: [crosstalk] It was a non-starter for me.

HRISHI: [laughs] All right. This guy who Leo is talking to, he brings up Cultico and it turns out Cultico was responsible for an incident in Haryana and this seems to be drawn from the Bhopal gas leak from the '80s.

JOSH: Yes.

HRISHI: There was a pesticide plant from this company, Union Carbide, and in the first three days over 5,000 people were killed and then in the aftermath over 25,000 people have died and the water supply is still dangerously toxic and people had no idea what they were being exposed to and...

JOSH: And people are still dying from it.

HRISHI: Yeah, still.

[West Wing Episode 6.06 excerpt]

LEO: A lot of folks...died there in '86. Cultico is a different company now.

MRS. CHAKRABARTY: It has a different name.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Union Carbide Corporation is still in business, they were bought by Dow Chemical and they are still in business. They were ordered to pay 470 million dollars to settle all the claims, which comes out to, the average amount that was actually given to each family of people who were killed, comes out to about \$2,200.

JOSH: How appalling is that?

HRISHI: Yeah. And Leo says, "you know, look, different people are in charge: people who helped clean up what happened", and she's not buying it. The whole feeling of their dialogue evaporates. After he talked to this guy and she knows that he's considering maybe he'll go work for them. I really liked the scene later, after she goes off to the wedding and she leaves him alone in the hotel. I thought this was a really nice moment, you know, he's clearly down. He's like, I think, having some crisis of conscience about Cultico and not sure what to do. He's also feeling, I think, shutout and far away from the White House in that moment. As the news plays in the hotel room and he's...

JOSH: Is that when he's lying on the bed and there up above him?

HRISHI: Yeah, yeah.

JOSH: There's some great shots that Laura Innes orchestrates in this episode.

HRISHI: Yeah. Exactly. It's that scene. While that's happening there's a Republican critique of the Bartlet peacekeeping policy that's happening and you know, some of the stuff that they're saying is some of the stuff that Leo himself had voiced, you know, as part of the reason why he had the fall out to begin with. But what I thought was really brilliant about the scene is that they bring back David St. James as Congressman Gibson to do this and I just thought it was such a smart move to bring him back. That's the guy, that character is the guy in "Bartlet for America" who finds Leo drunk.

JOSH: Oh, wow.

HRISHI: That's the guy who in the hearing, has the smoking gun that if they call on him...

JOSH: [crosstalk] I did not make that connection!

HRISHI: [crosstalk] Yeah, and so like if you're going to put anybody on TV while Leo's having this crisis of like "what do I do? Do I leave politics forever and go back to the private sector", whatever. It's just a great detail.

JOSH: Great little call back, yeah.

HRISHI: And they don't highlight it explicitly but it's really, I loved that.

JOSH: Good catch.

HRISHI: So then Leo later is in his hotel room and Mrs Chakrabarty comes back and she brings back the warm naan and then they have this debate.

[West Wing Episode 6.06 excerpt]

LEO: No one's forced to use biotech, they want it. These advances will feed the world.

MRS. CHAKRABARTY: People starve because they are kept poor.

LEO: So, now Cultico's responsible for third world corruption?

MRS. CHAKRABARTY: I didn't say Cultico.

LEO: Open markets redistribute wealth.

MRS. CHAKRABARTY: You're right.

LEO: Sure. There are blind spots in the corporate view.

MRS. CHAKRABARTY: Mm-hmm.

LEO: That's why I left the first time.

MRS. CHAKRABARTY: Mm-hmm.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And then as Mrs Chakrabarty's tucking him in, she's like, "yeah, they replace small farmers growing many seeds with monocultures."

JOSH: Monoculture.

HRISHI: "And we lose the means to feed ourselves", and then she kind of stands up and Leo's like "what?" and she goes, "you found your appetite", which I thought was like a little bit weirdly timed, because we already know that he's eating the naan and stuff like that. But I did kind of like this, you know, his reluctance to eat food, or his loss of appetite and then talking about this like farming, cultural and capitalism - the actual appetite that Leo has found again, I think this whole thing is just a metaphor for him.

JOSH: I like it, I like where you're going.

HRISHI: It's his appetite to do good in the world in the public sector.

JOSH: Well said.

HRISHI: And I think he's lost his way a little bit now, he's like come back to it. He had to have that dialogue. He had to make the rounds in the hotel as if he was looking for that stuff and he's kind of, he's remembered who he is. And somehow this nurse who knows Leo so well she's able to recognize it.

JOSH: But that's the thing, I think they do a very good job in their scenes together and in this scene in particular, what could have been a super-duper clunkified segment of the episode, it actually works because I think the writing is good and the performances are right on. Because this, you know, this substantive political conversation that they just sort of casually get into. You know, it could have been a very difficult buy and I like the way it was laid in and I like the sort of back and forth between the political and the personal. That's why I kind of like too and she leans over it almost looks like she's gonna kiss him good night.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: And she whispers one more, makes one more little point, and then she comes out and she goes kind of back into the personal and professional realm by mentioning his appetite as well, which I think is nice.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: They navigate the two worlds pretty elegantly.

HRISHI: Mm-hmm. I like the sort of resolution of this in the end too, when the next time we see him going for a walk, he's dressed casually and he invites her to go with him instead of, you know, the artifice and he's just like, "all right, let's do this, like you can go with me" and it feels like okay, yeah, he's come back to himself. He's lost the need to put on airs.

JOSH: Yeah, I will say I found it slightly unprofessional that when he was in the bathroom, she is like, "what did...did you fall in?" I don't think that what's...

HRISHI: [laughing] [crosstalk] But what if it's a legitimate concern? Maybe one of her patients fell in.

JOSH: Well, that was my feeling like, he actually might have! He might be in distress.

HRISHI: [still laughing] Yeah! Like that's why I didn't take it as teasing him.

JOSH: [crosstalk] Stop with the jokes already.

HRISHI: [crosstalk] I thought she was really... [laughing]

JOSH: [crosstalk] To me it was like something your mother says when you're a little kid, "Where are you? What did you do, fall in?" "Mom!". [laughs]

HRISHI: Yeah, I'd like to think that she just meant to genuinely.

JOSH: Ah, perhaps that.

BOTH: [laughing]

JOSH: Will was just pissy the entire episode. Pissed off and pissy.

HRISHI: Yeah, and I think that he's within his rights.

JOSH: I think so too, but boy you can feel how forcefully they're setting him up as a straw man in every possible way for the whole, you can feel where the season is going, where the series is going, and it's just going to blow over Will.

HRISHI: The only part that I thought was too much, where I was like, "Will, come on", you know and even this I'm like, yeah, okay, I'm on board, when he has this line:

[West Wing Episode 6.06 excerpt]

WILL: Forget patients' rights. With or without it, Russell is on his way to being the nominee, and God willing, our next president. So get on board or get out of my way.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Laying it on pretty thick.

HRISHI: All that stuff is fine. It's just the "God willing" part that I was like "God willing?" or is it, you know.

JOSH: Yeah. It's an odd choice of phrase.

HRISHI: Yeah. It certainly doesn't feel like he thinks that there's some kind of divine choice [laughs] by having him be the president. I think it's more like, I mean maybe he's just speaking for his own sake of his own career, "God willing I will win this thing that I've decided to set off on".

JOSH: Yeah. No, it's a little odd. Will seems to have made a pragmatic choice in working for Russell in addition to also seeing more in him than others seem to see, it's odd to hear him not couch it in practical terms, like "This is our best chance of, you know, staying in the Oval Office".

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: And invoking God is an odd choice.

HRISHI: Yeah, it did seem to go against the pragmatic nature of his decision.

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: That has been presented before. So this is all kind of setup because Matt Santos wants a meeting with Josh about the Patients' Bill of Rights and just a reminder – Santos is leaving Congress. Josh is still trying to get him to reconsider and run for another term which he would be pretty much guaranteed to win and they would just like to hold onto another, you know, they just want him to stay there. And Santos while in Congress had been trying to put forward a Patients' Bill of Rights bill and it died in committee. He says, but then there's this Republican-led one in the house that's also going around and he decided to hop on board with that. This whole subplot I think was kind of cool.

JOSH: I liked it too.

HRISHI: This is like where the *House of Cards/West Wing* Venn diagram overlaps, you know, the gaming the machine – gaming the machine?

JOSH: Yeah, no, the political manoeuvring. I mean, look, we know, we don't 'know', but we 'know' that Jimmy Smits is around to stay for a while, so it's time to beef up his CV with the audience and with some of the other characters and this is a good one for him. This is, he comes off as sophisticated and clever and successful.

HRISHI: Yeah, he's able to read the landscape so well that even though there is a Democratically lead bill for a Patients' Bill of Rights in the Senate that's been passed. He wants to put his name on Strickman's bill, the Republican bill, to give it the sort of the shine of bipartisanship, even though it's a bad bill. He even says it's a bad bill. They have, Santos and Josh have a confrontation about it and Josh says:

[West Wing Episode 6.06 excerpt]

JOSH: Strickman calls his bill Patients' Bill of Rights because it sounds better than... 'love letter to the insurance industry'. Patients can't...

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Right, and it's not going to be passed which is why he's comfortable associating with him, initially.

HRISHI: Right. But he feels like this will help keep the conversation going...

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: ...and this is an issue that's important to him and he says "I want to see these people keep talking". But Will is incensed because this is an issue that the VP wants to campaign on. He's already been campaigning on it and Josh has kind of cut his legs out from under him a bit by saying like, "yeah, that's fine". Like it feels like a tacit endorsement, even though it's definitely not an official endorsement.

JOSH: Right, agree to disagree is what the administration ends up putting out in some form and that's what essentially Santos was asking for. Just don't bust my balls too hard on this and that's problematic for Will and Russell.

HRISHI: But then it turns out that Will was right, you know, Will had thought – Josh had initially thought "oh, this is clearly you're setting yourself up to run for president by making these moves" and Santos is like "no, I'm definitely not, I'm leaving Congress", whatever. Will has the same suspicion. Josh took Santos at his word and he's like "no it's fine", but Will is more cynical about it and then when it turns out that Santos has been lobbying Democratic congressmen to jump on board to the Strickman bill, they start to get worried.

JOSH: Right. He's whipping votes.

HRISHI: Yeah, and Will brings this to Josh and suddenly I think Josh gets the sense that oh, he was either lied to...

JOSH: [crosstalk] Or played.

HRISHI: [crosstalk] ...or something's going on. Yeah, played. And I love this scene between Santos, Will and Josh in the hallway.

JOSH: I like it too.

HRISHI: Do you remember filming that scene?

JOSH: Vaguely.

HRISHI: What was that on location or was that on a set?

JOSH: No, I think that was on location, yeah, in some fancy building downtown.

HRISHI: Downtown LA or downtown DC?

JOSH: Downtown LA, I believe.

HRISHI: Oh, interesting. I totally bought it as the, whatever hallway of...

JOSH: Congressional.

HRISHI: ...of Congress, yeah. The scene is full of sharp statements and they're true. You know, like they're attacking each other but they're with true statements.

[West Wing Episode 6.06 excerpt]

SANTOS: It's not this bill you don't want. It's any bill. You'd let sick Americans suffer to help elect your candidate.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Yeah, that was, that is a rough thing to say to someone.

HRISHI: Yeah!

JOSH: On first meeting no less.

HRISHI: Yeah, and it's hard to argue with you know, like they do, they want the issue to be able to campaign on. It's something that he's built a lot of ground on.

JOSH: Yeah, well I think Will and Russell would say, they're not getting enough and you know until they get more they don't want to settle for less.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: But I mean, you know, he's getting called out in a huge way by Santos.

HRISHI: Yeah, and it's great. I mean Santos has a parry and, you know, a counter attack for everything that Will throws at him. Will says "Some of us are in this for the long haul, we're going to keep governing around here after you've gone" because he knows that he's out the door.

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: And Josh says, "This is getting your resume to the top of the pile, making pals in the private sector." Josh accuses him of, you know, that this is...

JOSH: Jockeying for a post-governmental job.

HRISHI: Yeah. He says:

[West Wing Episode 6.06 excerpt]

SANTOS: What the hell do you think I'm doing here?

JOSH: I think you'd settle for less on this bill to set up your next career move.

SANTOS: Settle for less. This is from the guys that are running Bob Russell for president?

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: It's rough.

JOSH: Very rough, I can feel it. When you've got Santos, Josh, multiple other writers, John Wells and the staff of 15. Just pummeling everything that Will stands for. It is a very unfair fight.

BOTH: [laughing]

JOSH: I just watched it and I was like, "oh my god, he's just so set up to take abuse". I felt a little bit sorry for Will.

HRISHI: Yeah. [laughs]

JOSH: I also thought the three of us look like Russian nesting dolls, in this scene.

HRISHI: [laughing]

JOSH: Little, bigger, biggest. And I think there's a great shot to end this scene as Santos walks away and a sort of perplexed and beaten down Josh and Will watch him exit. His kind of overcoat is still sort of flapping and covering them as he walks past the camera.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: ...and brushes by. It's just, it's a great...It's a great shot.

HRISHI: What I love about the sort of parting shot from Santos is especially, I think, hurtful to Josh Lyman because he says "This is from the guys that are running Bob Russell for president." He has just lumped Josh in with Will...

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: ...as being in the bag for Russell, like actively being part of his campaign. Whereas we know that that's not how he feels, like earlier Will had said, "you know, I can tell...you could you sound more miserable about the idea that Russell's the presumptive nominee" and I love that Josh has nothing to counter with on that and has to just let that sit. But then the bill comes back and it's not actually bad and Josh even calls it impressive and so he goes to see Santos to actually find out...

JOSH: Apologize.

HRISHI: And I think to try and see exactly how savvy the guy really is.

JOSH: "What were you doing here?" Yeah.

HRISHI: Because he asks him a question and actually, I think further maybe to Santos' abilities, he kind of evades the question a little bit.

[West Wing Episode 6.06 excerpt]

JOSH: What I'd like to know is if you let your own bill self-destruct and joined with Strickman, knowing there was an opening if you let them take the lead, or if it just started tipping that way and you went with it.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: I mean he's asking like way back even before this episode started, you know, where he says, "oh my bill died in committee." He's like maybe he actually even let that happen.

JOSH: Yeah. He wants to know "what kind of long ball were you playing?"

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: And he gives a semi answer, he even implies that Josh and Will helped him out, by making seem like a bit of a maverick and a guy who's not going to kowtow to his own party.

HRISHI: And not only that, he says:

[West Wing Episode 6.06 excerpt]

SANTOS: It didn't hurt the other day in the hall when you demonstrated my independence.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: But I feel like he actually set that up earlier. At the beginning he says:

[West Wing Episode 6.06 excerpt]

SANTOS: Well, I wouldn't mind if you let me keep my huevos when you eviscerate me in public for, uh, breaking ranks.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: They all played into his hands. He really played every part and he set up this idea that, he was planting the seed back then that at some point you're going to publicly yell at me.

JOSH: Right. And that's going to help me.

HRISHI: And it's going to help him.

JOSH: Right, yeah.

HRISHI: But even in that moment, he was like, he's like, you know, when you do this don't make it too embarrassing for me. I mean it is just so tricky.

JOSH: And I think the answer is he really did play him.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: But like any good gamesman, he's not going to give away all his stratagems. So he doesn't give a full accounting, but we can see Josh is impressed and intrigued.

HRISHI: Yeah, he, before that he's kind of you know, there's a little bit of playful back and forth between the two. But then when he finds out, he's like, "oh, don't tell me you're out of committee already" and Santos is like "oh, there's something coming to the president tomorrow". You can see Josh actually becomes a little awestruck. He stops joking around and he just gets serious and he says:

[West Wing Episode 6.06 excerpt]

JOSH: You're too good at this. You can't just walk away.

SANTOS: Watch me.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: But really what he should have said is "Obviously I'm not, I'm in the opening titles bitch".

JOSH: Ha-ha. Stay tuned.

BOTH: [laughs]

HRISHI: Whoa.

JOSH: I love the way; I love the way Jimmy talks. He's got his own, like this swagger and everything he says [Hrishi laughs]. It's just he can't say anything without being like super manly and kinda sexy.

HRISHI: [laughs] I think because this story line is what I was thinking of when I said I liked this episode. I do think yeah, there are some things here. I think I feel like I've sufficiently nit-picked the things that I wanted to nit-pick, but verdict is in I say I do like this episode. I love this part, this part feels like pure *West Wing* at its best.

JOSH: Yeah. I'm with you on that with an overall hearty thumbs up.

HRISHI: Yeah, and I like the Leo storyline too. I liked it medium-good.

JOSH: Mm-hmm yeah. I think I'm with you on all counts. There's a tiny little scene that I rather liked in this episode; two lines of dialogue and it's as President Bartlet and his Chief of Staff are in their limo driving to meet with the survivors of the attack.

[West Wing Episode 6.06 excerpt]

PRESIDENT BARTLET: I'm glad we're doing this.

C.J.: Me too.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: And that's it. That's the entire scene.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: It was so simple and it seems like the kind of thing they could have not bothered to write and shoot or then they could have edited out, but it really adds something and it's also, when you have great actors, sometimes seven words is enough. It's just a, it's a great little moment and it's in contrast, I think, to all the conversations that have gone on about photo op or no photos or cover this or how's it going to play and are we going to see him and it's just a real moment between the two main players here...

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: ...sharing a simple genuine moment. I liked it a lot.

HRISHI: Yeah. Hey speaking of C.J. again, I love the jacket that she's wearing. I loved her whole ensemble at the beginning of the episode when we're at the Bartlet Library ceremony.

JOSH: The cold open, yes.

HRISHI: It's the first time we've seen her at a sort of like a dressed up event since she's become Chief of Staff, and I think you can see that she is dressing differently...

JOSH: That's true.

HRISHI: ...than she maybe would have as press secretary, because you can see what Donna is wearing and what Margaret is wearing. Those outfits feel a little bit more in line with like the sort of fancy dresses that C.J. would wear before whereas here it feels like she's dressed for power.

JOSH: I think you're right.

HRISHI: I asked Lyn Paulo about it and she said that it was an Armani jacket and vintage glass pearls probably from the 1940s.

JOSH: Right on.

HRISHI: And part of the reason why I wanted to ask about this because it actually reminded me, even though this word would come years later, that outfit reminds me of another sort of important symbolic costume choice from *Game of Thrones*.

JOSH: Talk to me.

HRISHI: I don't know if you've gotten this far but, and there's no spoilers here, but just at the end of season 6, Cersei Lannister, she has this black and silver gown that she puts on that is totally different from everything. She's been, you know, she's worn red the entire series symbolizing, you know, whatever her the house that she's part of the Baratheon house. And then in the end she comes and she has this black and silver gown on and it actually looks a lot like what C.J. is wearing, I think, and in both instances there these like, in the *Game of Thrones* when certainly it's really this like overt statement of her own power.

JOSH: Also in early season 7 C.J. bangs her brother.

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: But...spoiler alert.

HRISHI: Spoiled so many things.

JOSH: Yeah. All right.

HRISHI: Last thing that I noticed is that Josh eats Red Vines.

JOSH: Oh, I didn't notice.

HRISHI: Yeah, when he and Will are talking about Santos' effort to whip votes, we see Josh eating a Red Vine out of a Red Vine 4 pound tub. Is that a weird thing to notice?

JOSH: Yes! I love those giant tubs.

HRISHI: I think that there are heated debates.

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: About Twizzlers versus Red Vines.

JOSH: I'm trying to look at them; I have to look at the them. I think I'm a Red Vine man. Twizzlers are shinier right?

HRISHI: I don't eat either of them.

JOSH: Of course you don't. That's why you brought up this whole thing.

HRISHI: But now you know for anyone who's wondering where Josh Lyman stands – he's a Red Vine guy.

JOSH: Mm-hmm. I believe I am as well.

HRISHI: There you have it – send your complaints to memos@thewestwingweekly.com.

JOSH: Weigh in. That does it for another excellent episode of *The West Wing Weekly*.

HRISHI: If we, well, we do say so ourselves.

JOSH: We done did. Thanks for listening. Thanks for Margaret Miller, Zach McNees and Nick Song for their invaluable help and expertise in making the show.

HRISHI: Thanks to Radiotopia from PRX: a collection of awesome podcasts including *The West Wing Weekly*, for being our network. You can find out about all of the shows on Radiotopia by visiting Radiotopia.fm.

JOSH: You can follow us on Twitter. You can follow us on Instagram. You can follow us out on the street, but we'll have you arrested and you can buy merchandise at thewestwingweekly.com/merch. You can leave comments at *The West Wing Weekly*. You can rate us wherever you're allowed to rate podcasts like iTunes and what else? We're going to do another Big Block of Cheese day.

HRISHI: That's right coming up we've got our fourth Big Block of Cheese day for the podcast and we'd love to answer any questions that you might have for a special bonus episode coming up later. If you have any questions for us, you know the drill, send us an email: memos@thewestwingweekly.com or you can tweet at us but it's maybe less likely that we'll definitely see it.

JOSH: So hit us up with your questions or comments and we will address them on the air. Some of them. The good ones.

HRISHI: [laughs] Okay.

JOSH: Okay.

BOTH: What's next?

[Outro Music]