

The West Wing Weekly  
6.07: "A Change Is Gonna Come" (Live from SketchFest)  
Guests: Mary McCormack and Roman Mars

[Intro Music]

HRISHI: Live from SketchFest at the Marines Memorial Theatre...

JOSH: Semper fi!

HRISHI: ...this is *The West Wing Weekly*. I am Hrishikesh Hirway.

JOSH: And I am Joshua Malina. And this is the latest I have ever been awake.

[Audience laughter]

HRISHI: Thank you all for coming. Thanks so much for being here past your bedtime.

JOSH: Late Show!

HRISHI: Thanks so much to everyone from SketchFest for inviting us back. We have an exciting show for you--today we're talking about Episode 6:07 it's called "A Change Is Gonna Come."

JOSH: The teleplay by John Sacret Young and Josh Singer. It was directed by Vincent Misiano and it first aired on December 1, 2004--my 8th wedding anniversary.

HRISHI: Whoo Hoo. [audience claps]

JOSH: YEAH!!

HRISHI: Here is a little bit about what happens in this episode: President Bartlet is supposed to go to China for a summit, a huge diplomatic mission. And Josh has been organizing it, but the whole thing threatens to unravel when the president accepts a flag of the Taiwanese Independence movement. Meanwhile, the primaries haven't started yet, but the battle for the nomination definitely has. Hoynes returns with his book *Full Disclosure*, plus Vice President Russell squares off with the person widely seen as the favorite: Governor Baker of Pennsylvania.

JOSH: *That...*is not the episode I watched...

[Audience laughter]

JOSH: But we're here, so let's do it.

HRISHI: The title of the episode comes from a Sam Cooke song of the same name. And at the end of this episode there is a Medal of Arts ceremony that is posthumously honoring Sam Cooke.

JOSH: They make a big deal about who the surprise musical guest is going to be, then give it away really early.

HRISHI: Yeah. In the title. The plot is kind of, you feel like it is only for the characters because we know right away who the surprise musical guest is.

JOSH: That's right.

HRISHI: When the episode first aired, the title of it "A Change is Gonna Come," you know showed up on the title screen the way you would normally see it. But, I don't know if any of you noticed this, but if you watch it on Netflix or if you download it from iTunes, instead of that it just says "Change." And I don't know why they changed it, but they changed it from "Change." They changed it to "Change" from "A Change Is Gonna Come" when it comes. It reminds me of this scene from *Cheers* that I still think about years later after I've seen it. I don't know if you've seen this, but Woody says he is gonna, he's running for city council and he wins:

[Cheers Episode 11.25 excerpt]

*WOODY: [reading a prepared speech to practice] "I believe I was elected to the city council as an agent of change. And I fully intend to live up to that pledge. I will make change."*

*FRASIER: No, change "change" to "a change."*

*WOODY: What?*

*FRASIER: No, see in here, you make change. There, you make a change. So just make the change. Change, "make change" to "make a change." Oh, just change it!*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Could be our next podcast.

HRISHI: Just us saying the word change over and over again.

JOSH: Yeah, I was thinking more an episode by episode look at *Cheers* but we could just do that one snippet of dialogue I suppose.

HRISHI: Speaking of secret special guests that aren't a secret at all--

JOSH: But are special.

HRISHI: But are special, yeah. Shall we bring out our special guest for the evening?

[cheering]

JOSH: James Taylor, folks!

[laughter]

HRISHI: For her first time on the podcast please welcome Mary McCormack.

[cheering]

MARY: Hi!

JOSH: Very exciting. Commander Kate “Bangs” Harper. Do you know that that’s what you were dubbed by--

MARY: Yeah, because everytime I would come to work you to say ‘They are saying such mean things about your bangs.’ I would say “I don’t read those comments,” and he’s like “Oh look!”  
[Audience laughs] Every day!

JOSH: There’s nothing mean about it, they’re just acknowledging them.

MARY: They were aggressive bangs. I liked ‘em though. When I went back and looked at the episode I thought they were super style-y.

JOSH: That’s great. Yeah.

MARY: But they told me to grow ‘em out.

JOSH: Is that true?

MARY: Yeah.

HRISHI: Between seasons five and six?

MARY: Yeah, oh, well, when I joined the show I was pregnant. I mean that’s why I am always behind furniture and I am behind everything. And I just got fatter and fatter. And then I left for three episodes. I was supposed to be gone for I think four or five episodes. And I got a call from maybe Chris or Alex, our producing directors. And they said “Oh, how are you feeling? How’s the baby?” and I said “Oh, she’s so sweet.” She was five days old. And I said “She’s so cute.”

JOSH: This was your first child?

MARY: My first baby, yeah. And she was five days old. And I had been with the show, you know, *The West Wing* was sort of my new family, so I was so excited to tell them about her and bring her in, and they said "Well, how good do you feel?"

JOSH: Ha ha ha.

MARY: And I said "I'm Irish, I feel pretty good." And they said, "Well, we had sort of a problem." They had hired someone to come in I think as the new C.J., the new press secretary, and she didn't work. She like didn't do "West Wing Speak" they said, that she didn't speak fast enough. Like, she just didn't. There's a certain rhythm--

JOSH: They time you on that on your first day.

MARY: They really do! They really do.

JOSH: You either qualify or you don't.

MARY: And so they said do you mind coming back early. So I went back to work when she was seven days old.

JOSH: Wow.

MARY: But, I was, I was.. I looked it. I mean, it's gross. And this is that episode.

JOSH: [cross talk] And you guys still have no relationship.

MARY: The episode we're looking at today. No, yeah. I messed her up good. She knows what my priorities are and that's what's important.

Josh: [cross talk] She was really committed to the show.

HRISHI: Let's back up to when you first joined the show.

JOSH: [cross talk] Your origin story.

HRISHI: Yeah, how did you end up on *The West Wing* in the first place?

MARY: Well, I don't know how. I mean, John Wells called me and said "Would you like to be on *The West Wing*?"

JOSH: You had worked with him before.

MARY: I had, I had done some *ER* episodes, a bunch of *ER* episodes.

JOSH: I feel like you were still doing *ER*

MARY: Well, I did some *ER* episodes I'm told I am like a Red Cross worker,

JOSH: [cross talk] Because I remember being mad and jealous.

MARY: and I played a worker for the Red Cross we did a big Congo

JOSH: Line

MARY: Conga Line, we did Conga Line. And I was first

JOSH: Great episode, a really great episode.

MARY: No, it was a Congo line, a story line. And I did *The West Wing* and then I went back and did some more *ER*.

JOSH: He likes you.

MARY: Thank God. But I did come clean. I was only like five day pregnant, and I felt so awkward. I hadn't told my Mom, but I felt weird negotiating with him and sort of saying I would do this and then showing up and being like "hey..."

JOSH: Ha ha ha.

MARY: So, I just him. I was like... I think that Michael knew, my husband. And that was it. And John Wells, Michael and John Wells. But I felt at least I had come clean, he knew what he was getting.

JOSH: And he was fine with it.

MARY: I said you can hide it or we can write it in, I don't mind. And he said "Oh no don't be silly, we don't mind at all." I am sure his face said something else on the inside.

JOSH: As long as you grow out your bangs.

MARY: As long as you grow out the bangs. No, he didn't make me do that until- so I think I started growing them out soon after I started the show they were like "This is not gonna, you don't look at all like you should be in charge of security."

JOSH: Given what Brad's hair looks like in season six...

[Audience laughs]

MARY: [cross talk] Good point.

JOSH: ...It is astonishing that they would say anything to you.

MARY: But women are held to a different standard, I don't know if you've heard.

JOSH: Yeah, I have heard.

[Cheering]

Mary: Just getting started.

JOSH: Did you know how many episodes you were going to do? Did John describe the character or did it just all happen as it happened.

MARY: No. I think he did tell me how many episodes, and I think he told me the character. Yeah.

HRISHI: And what was the initial description of the character? How did you first understand what you were walking into?

MARY: I don't remember how much I knew before I got the scripts. But I knew it was national security. I think he told me I would be the Deputy NSA.

HRISHI: Had you been watching *The West Wing*? Were you familiar with the show?

MARY: Yes, and I knew some of the actors, but I mean I was nervous to show up because it was so good, and I mean everyone was, it was like a dream job, and I was really scared my first day. Terrified. But it's such a warm group, it was a nice welcome.

HRISHI: Yeah, and you did three episodes in season five...

MARY: Yes.

HRISHI: That arc. Did you already know that when season six was going to start you would be-

MARY: [cross talk] Fatter. I would be fatter.

HRISHI: Part of the regular cast?

MARY: I was a lot fatter. At that time that I would be?

HRISHI: That I you would become a regular.

MARY: I think I knew that I was going to be a regular from the start.

HRISHI: You did.

MARY: Yeah, I think that was part of the...

JOSH: [cross talk] You were a great shot in the arm to the cast.

MARY: Oh, that's nice.

JOSH: From the get go.

MARY: We had a lot of fun. I mean we, yeah, I mean it is the best job I've ever had. We would sit on set, you know, and it was pre-cell phones as well.

JOSH: How do you think your current employers feel about that?

MARY: Huh?

JOSH: We'll get to *The Kids Are Alright* but-

MARY: I mean, they have a lot to live up to those little kids. We just hung out on set, no one went back to to their trailers, we hung out and made so much noise that often they'd be be acting and they'd be like "Please, guys, you gotta shut up." Like they couldn't do their jobs because we were all [blathering noise]. It was so much fun. And still they are like family, I mean that cast is my family.

JOSH: We do still get together.

MARY: We do, a lot.

JOSH: We did a fundraiser at your house recently.

MARY: Recently, yeah. We call and everyone comes and it is really nice.

JOSH: That's true. We like any excuse to get together.

MARY: Yeah, we love each other.

JOSH: There's something I read: I went to the WestWingWiki, which I guess is like a kind of wikipedia for *The West Wing*. And did I know this? Deputy National Security Advisor Kate Harper: multiple husbands?

MARY: You know, TV's weird because you learn things as you go. Right? Like you sign up and you know the name of your part and then like a week in you're like "Oh, I didn't know I was gay. Alright. I guess I wouldn't have played anything different." I mean you do find out, I found out very late in the game that I had a bunch of ex-husbands. Which doesn't really fit the profile I knew of her but maybe it does, I don't know.

HRISHI: Well we haven't gotten to that detail so I feel like it's really wrong to discuss it, but I do like that detail. Because I think it goes with the uh-

JOSH: [cross talk] Classic Hrish.

HRISHI: Liking the detail?

JOSH: Uh, just not feeling right about anything. [Audience laughs] And when we are just talking about a TV show. Don't get me wrong, I admire it. I aspire to it. I don't understand it.

HRISHI: I think Kate Harper is like this former super spy. I like the way that she is presented

MARY: Ex- CIA

HRISHI: Yeah, and now she has a desk job. But I think she was probably married to her work and she was in these really intense combat situations and I think people who have lived those kind of intense situations maybe they are really good at some things, and much like our characters in *The West Wing* that we already know, they might not be so good at the personal stuff.

MARY: Or maybe she married really bad guys and it is their fault. [Audience cheers] You never now, that's all I am saying. You just never know. You never know.

JOSH: Now you just know you have a well you can dip into at any point tonight. It's not really fair.

HRISHI: Should we jump right in?

JOSH: [Cross talk] Sure. I was just gonna say this, quickly: Quiz for anyone in the room. Does anybody know who the current Deputy National Security Advisor is?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: No one?

JOSH: It was no one until recently. Good guess with this administration. Apparently a couple of days ago Charles Kupperman or Cooperman has been tasked to fill the spot. Mira Ricardell had been pushed out by Melania, we know that story right? So apparently someone has finally been tapped for the spot.



HRISHI: Jumping way ahead, speaking of nothing, the-

JOSH: [Cross talk] What, wait? Wow, the rules really change for you. [Audience laughs] A second ago you didn't feel comfortable discussing her husbands.

HRISHI: [Laughs] The national medal of the arts is, as we mentioned, one of the things that is happening in this episode.

JOSH: Quick Quiz! To whom has Trump awarded national medals of the arts?

AUDIENCE: No one!

JOSH: Right, the same person that has been Deputy National Security Advisor.

HRISHI: Yeah, and it goes on. Do you know how many medals, for the national medal of technology, how many of those have been awarded?

AUDIENCE: None!

HRISHI: And there is also the national medal of the humanities. Yeah.

JOSH: Can you imagine not doing the easiest, most fun part of the job? Awarding cool people that you want to meet. It is like, I guess, how can you give Ted Nugent, how many awards? [Audience laughs] And then who are you going to bring in to cover his songs? I guess you figure that if you can't get anybody to show up.

HRISHI: Alright, so, this episode begins with Hoynes on TV

JOSH: HOYNES!

HRISHI: And he's promoting *Full Disclosure*, and he's being interviewed by Diane Mathers. Do you all remember Diane Mathers? We've met her before.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: She interviewed Zoey Bartlet

HRISHI: That's right, she interviewed Zoey Bartlet.

JOSH: You're not wrong. May-thers or Math-ers?

HRISHI: Math-ers? May-thers?

JOSH: It doesn't Math-er.

[significant audience groan]

JOSH: You can groan, I don't care.

HRISHI: Hoynes says he is just there to promote his book and he does in fact tell her this:

[West Wing Episode 6.07 excerpt]

*HOYNES: And, yes, Diane, I would. I would like to return to public life. I think I can make a contribution.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: So he's, you know, he's tacitly implying that he is gonna run for President. It's kind of his announcement even though he's saying he's not going to. His book has just come out, he's promoting the book, he's on TV, somehow they are watching the TV but he is also on the phone for C.J. and then one scene later he is in a car with Josh. And the point is that he is making moves. He's really, he's busy.

JOSH: He's got a super power. He can beam himself anywhere.

HRISHI: And he sent Josh a copy of his book with an inscription on the front that says "Time to lead." So then when Josh gets in to the car, in this like shady, dark scene, he gets into this mysterious car and he says "I have no idea why I am here," despite that inscription. And then Hoynes then says "Yes, you do." And then I think he must have played Josh a clip from season one saying this:

[West Wing Episode 1.22 excerpt]

*HOYNES: You know something Josh, sometimes I wonder that if I listened to you two years ago would I be President right now? Do you ever wonder that?*

*JOSH: No sir, I know it for sure.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: There is a lot of heavy breathing in that scene. I'm saying Brad and Tim Matheson maybe not in the greatest of shape. I think they were both sitting.

HRISHI: He says "I don't know why I am here," and the Vice President says, the former Vice President "Yes, you do," then it just kind of leaves it hanging and we go to the titles. It is kind of a non swell.

JOSH: That's true.

HRISHI: And that's how we get into this episode.

JOSH: Huzzah! Feigned enthusiasm. You took time away from me in the credits.

MARY: I know. I'm sorry.

JOSH: I mean, welcome to the credits, don't get me wrong. But you cut into my time.

MARY: I'm sorry. But then we dated.

JOSH: Spoiler alert.

HRISHI: So many spoilers.

[Audience laughs]

MARY: It seems like these people know?

[Audience laughs]

JOSH: But, yeah we did. Yeah, I know. We're like three years into doing the podcast and we still have this ridiculous approach.

HRISHI: I haven't seen all the episodes yet.

JOSH: Yeah, exactly. We don't want to spoil it for Hrishi, that's really what it is. [Audience laughs] But it used to be that we were worried about the listeners. But is there anybody here to hasn't seen every episode of *The West Wing*? [audience member raises their hand] Get out. Get out now. Oh, so interesting. Are you up to this episode specifically?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yep.

JOSH: Seriously? Ok, well. We will tread lightly

MARY: Sorry. We date.

JOSH: I mean, clearly the chemistry was already there. If you're not feeling it wafting off the stage now you're missing something.

HRISHI: I'll tell you one thing you all missed that I wish you could have seen backstage. Mary was trying to invite Josh to this app and Josh said that he was looking forward to downloading it so that he could decline her invitation. [Audience laughs] And then she leaned over and tried to smack the phone out of his hands. [Audience laughs]

JOSH: That's true. Which by the way she was unsuccessful in the attempt because I know her I was holding my phone like a vice.

MARY: [cross talk] which is incredible, I can't believe it. Like a death grip.

JOSH: That was one of the stupid things that we would do around set. We would whap each other's sides. You have little printed sides, I think we have even discussed this on the podcast.

MARY: [cross talk] On set, yeah. In fairness... You must have discussed it.

JOSH: We would whap it out of each other's hands.

MARY: You started it, I think.

JOSH: Oh probably.

MARY: Yeah, and literally like sometimes people had a lot, like sometimes Allison would have tons, or people had a lot to say. You know, they got it smacked out once and you gotta bend down and pick it up and you usually laugh a little bit.

JOSH: [cross talk] And I'd usually kick them in the ass.

MARY: And then he would do it again. And you're like "oh, that's not" and then he would do it again and again until you were laughing again. Finally, you gave into it. We all just gave into it.

JOSH: [cross talk] You're trying to laugh at yourself. Get past annoying to funny.

MARY: But there were times that people were really mad, like teary eyed. Pissed.

JOSH: Whom did you know coming into the show? Bradley?

MARY: A little. And Allison from New York theatre and stuff.

JOSH: And you would subsequently do a Broadway play with Bradley.

MARY: After *The West Wing*, well many years after, Brad and I did a play together.

JOSH: For which you would be nominated for a Tony and he would not.

MARY: And he would not, that's right. [Audience cheers]

JOSH: That's what I was working towards.

MARY: And I had excellent hair in that as well.

JOSH: Yeah. Was that a tremendous amount of fun to do?

MARY: So much fun that was a farce called *Boeing, Boeing*, which is, there is nothing like doing a farce. That is right up my alley. Stupidest, made me so happy. I mean that was a great, great job. We laughed a lot.

JOSH: And to work with Brad again.

MARY: Well, yeah. It was a great play. No, I love Brad.

HRISHI: Were you and Allison both in *Private Parts*, the Howard Stern movie?

MARY: Allison and I were in *Private Parts* together. Not together in the same scene. And then Richard Schiff and I was on a show called *Murder One* and Richard Schiff did an episode of that. And then we were also in a movie called *Gun Shy* together. And then we were also both in *Deep Impact*. So *The West Wing* was our fourth job together.

JOSH: Wow.

Mary: Oh! And then he did *In Plain Sight*, so we have done five.

JOSH: And then!

MARY: That's a lot of Schiff if you know him. That goes a long way.

JOSH: And one of the many Naders of my career you offered me a job on *In Plain Sight* which was very nice of you.

MARY: We were happy to have you. He came down and did an episode and then stayed for a long time.

JOSH: Yeah, that was awesome. That was great. I needed the work.

HRISHI: Charlie, it turns out, has been replaced as the body man to the President by a guy named Curtis. And then we have this moment I guess this still before the titles, the president says that he can't tie his tie. And Charlie tells him that he also can't tie a tie. But then by the next time we come back to the scene the bow tie has been tied.

JOSH: [cross talk] Can you a tie a bow tie?

HRISHI: So one of them was lying. No, I can't.

JOSH: I'm disappointed in you. I mean, I can't either [Audience laughs] but I feel like you should be able to. I always go to YouTube. Like any rational person.

HRISHI: I think this could be one of those situations where you try and say that you don't have a skill so that your boss doesn't find out because if you reveal that you actually do know how to do that thing and you don't want to do it then you're going to be stuck being the person doing that job and maybe for Charlie it is tying bow ties.

JOSH: Yeah, I like that there is also backstory that he doesn't just go to Abbey because she will just cut it in half. [Audience laughs] So he's really in a bind, really on his own.

HRISHI: So the beginning of this episode all happens on a Friday night, but then after the titles we come back.

JOSH: [cross talk] Shabbos.

HRISHI: And it turns out we are safely out of Shabbos and it is Thursday morning. And Josh is chipper and he is speaking Chinese as he comes in and you can almost hear Donna saying

[West Wing Episode 1.02 excerpt]

*DONNA: It's going to be an unbearable day.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Ha, ha, ha. I just got it. That's not from this episode.

HRISHI: It is not from this episode. It's a call back.

JOSH: He's clever.

HRISHI: And as we saw, starting in the previous episode 6.06, Donna is seeming like she is pretty over it with Josh. And she pretty much tells him straight up here that she is no longer charmed by him.

[West Wing Episode 6.07 excerpt]

*JOSH: You used to love it when I couldn't dress myself without you.*

*DONNA: I used to love peppermint ice cream too, but now those little pieces that get stuck in your teeth in a way that I find irritating.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Apropos of which, has anyone tried McConnell's peppermint ice cream?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yes!

JOSH: Thank you, one person. It's incredibly delicious. But it doesn't have those little peppermint things that get stuck in your teeth. It would have been perfect for Donna. That's all. I encourage you to try it.

HRISHI: Kate and Toby are in a meeting with representatives from the Chinese delegation to advance this huge meeting in China between President Bartlet, aka POTUS, and Chinese President who I like to call POTPROC: President of the People's Republic of China. POTPROC. [Audience laughs]

JOSH: Oh ok, so it wasn't a racial slur. I was a little nervous. [Audience laughs]

HRISHI: No, it was more like *POTUS hoc, ergo, POTPROC*

JOSH: Nice. I should have known he was working towards something. [To Mary] Do you have any memory of shooting this episode?

MARY: Yeah, I have some memory of it.

JOSH: You do?

MARY: But when I re-watched it, that first scene where Toby and I are meeting with the.

JOSH: [cross talk] You watched it on the big screen?

MARY: Right here, I came early. You know, they receive a call towards the end of the meeting?

HRISHI: Yeah.

MARY: Obviously that the president has accepted this independence flag, right? And we, Toby and I, both sort of don't understand the call. But then in the next episode I'm speaking fluent Chinese. [Josh laughs] Again, that's tv! I can say it still, my line

HRISHI: [cross talk] Oh, so you

JOSH: Bring it!

MARY: [speaks in Mandarin] [Audience cheers] which, I said it all the time because I had my little tiny baby in the back of the car and when I would say it to her she would just smile from ear to ear. I think because the music of it was so different than English.

JOSH: That's unbelievable. There isn't a single line in English from *The West Wing* that I still remember.

MARY: Right?! Well, that's the only line I remember. But it is incredible, because not only do I speak Chinese, I say "There is a problem with the compressor. But the President would really like to get off of the plane. Do you have a hydraulic lift?" Which is pretty specific. [Audience laughs]

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: There's also, I thought it was funny, there's that moment where Toby says, "I thought they couldn't get phone calls in here."

HRISHI: I think cell phones aren't supposed to work in here and Kate says they don't.

JOSH: Right, so there's like one or two ways to go when you have a plot point that doesn't make sense. One is just let it go and hope that nobody notices, the other is to "Go didn't think that would work." "Yeah, me neither."

MARY: [cross talk] Hang a lantern

JOSH: Yeah. They went with the latter.

HRISHI: I checked with our White House insider, Eli Attie, just to make sure. Like, "There's no actual cell phone, [cross talk] like, scrambling technology that only works in parts of the White House, right?"

JOSH: [cross talk] Scrambling?

HRISHI: And he said "No, it was just a little piece of fiction for the show." And I just thought it was a nice way of showing that they are sitting at this table and they are supposed to be discussing this like equals but that little but that the phone isn't supposed to work but the Chinese have figured out a way around their scrambling system shows that actually they're not playing at the same level. I like that. And then in terms of not understanding the language, my interpretation was it that the two of them were both surprised, Toby doesn't understand, but then I figured that Kate, international super spy...

MARY: Right. And I also spoke a ton of languages. By the end of my run on *The West Wing* I was a good polyglot. I mean, I spoke quite a bit. But you're right, they cut out of the scene in time, but I definitely played it, because I didn't know at the time that I spoke Chinese, I definitely played it. I mean I would have done a different face.

JOSH: You didn't realize at that point that you spoke Chinese and had six husbands.



MARY: Yeah. Well, that would have changed my face further. Yeah.

HRISHI: But before the phone call comes, Toby can barely even stand listening to the delegates talk about the stuff they are supposed to talk about.

JOSH: I wasn't quite sure why either, it seems like it would be interesting to me.

MARY: I agree.

JOSH: They're putting meals together and how the ceremony is going to work and he's like "Get me out of here."

MARY: I know, so negative.

JOSH: So Richard!

MARY: I just did peace in the Middle East and I still had a good attitude about menu planning. I wasn't above menu planning and you know I did a pretty big thing with the Harper plan. I don't know if anyone noticed.

JOSH: Yeah, you're not wrong.

HRISHI: But he runs out to C.J. to try and get out of it. He says...

[West Wing Episode 6.07 excerpt]

*TOBY: They're deliberating on breakfast in Beijing, they're picking fortune cookies.*

*C.J.: I always thought fortune cookies were an American invention like pizza and the frisbee.*

*TOBY: You have to get me out of there.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: So, first of all, C.J., pizza is not an American invention. But fortune cookies are! There's some dispute over the origins but a widely accepted version is that they were first made right here in San Francisco. By the bakery Ben Kyoto and served at the Japanese tea gardens in the early 1900's.

JOSH: And this is what I found. I found that in 1983 San Francisco's court of Historic Review considered the case of whether the fortune cookie's origin lay in Los Angeles or China or San Francisco. And an actual federal judge from San Francisco ruled in favor of San Francisco. [Audience cheers] And the story I read said that was in part because the evidence considered

included a fortune cookie with the following fortune: “San Francisco judge who rules for LA, not very smart cookie.” There you have it. [Audience laughs]

HRISHI: It’s a good story. We’ve got good guest stars in this episode, including Philip Baker Hall.

JOSH: Oh, I love Philip Baker Hall.

HRISHI: And he comes back as his---

JOSH: And McConnell’s peppermint ice cream! Have you guys seen *Hard 8* since we last mentioned it on the podcast? [one or two people cheer] Great movie. The same person who loves this episode. You’re my girl.

HRISHI: He comes back as for a second episode as Senator Matt Hunt who is sort of a John McCain inspired character, or at least that is how he is introduced to us the first time and I think I could see it here, too. He was first in “An Khe” and he’s not excited about Josh’s China summit. He seems to be the only one at first because everyone seems to agree that things are going smoothly. But because Taiwan isn’t on the agenda he’s upset. And he thinks that China is going to make a stink about American arms sales to Taiwan. I kind of find the Matt Hunt subplot in this episode a little bit useless. Because it is sort of like “He’s mad!” and Josh has to deal with it and Josh ends up like “Actually we should let him speak.” And they are like “No, let’s not let him speak.”

JOSH: He’s little bit more like a plot device.

HRISHI: And that’s it. He shows up and then he disappears. And it isn’t like he’s impacted the plot really at all.

JOSH: He nudges it along a little bit. He’s more of a device than anything.

HRISHI: I guess he adds like one more complication to Josh’s plan. Right? But I don’t know that we actually needed it because the stuff with the flag that we’re about to discuss seems like it is enough of a kerfuffle on its own terms. But, you know, nice to see Philip Baker Hall.

JOSH: Great actor. McConnell’s peppermint ice cream. [Audience laughs]

HRISHI: Ok, so Kate, we’re guessing, tells Toby what the phone call actually was because Toby comes in and tells C.J. this is what they said. And Carol also comes to C.J. with a question about the flag from the gaggle. And I am also confused, at this point, as to who Carol works for.

JOSH: She’s like kind of in Will World. Like we know who Will works for but they just kind of float around kind of in the ether of *The West Wing* because John Wells can’t quite fire them. He can’t bring himself.

HRISHI: And also she is coming to C.J. with a press question, which isn't supposed to be her domain.

JOSH: It doesn't quite make sense.

HRISHI: At this point the Bartlet administration needs a new organizational chart.

JOSH: Yeah, I think that is true.

HRISHI: And so she comes in and she has gotten this question about the flags, but Josh comes in the room and Josh has done his homework about everything related to this Chinese summit and he knows about the flags. Here's what he says:

[West Wing Episode 6.07 excerpt]

*JOSH: A flag?*

*CAROL: A green flag, from the Taiwanese delegation.*

*JOSH: You're kidding, right?*

*CAROL: Was that funny?*

*JOSH: A green flag?*

*CAROL: Green with a red flower.*

*JOSH: No, no, no, no, no.*

*C.J.: Josh!*

*JOSH: The Chinese are going to freak out.*

*CAROL: Isn't the Taiwanese flag red and blue?*

*JOSH: Yes, no. There is no Taiwanese flag. There's the flag of the Republic of China commonly used in Taiwan, which is red and blue. The green one is the original flag of the Taiwan independence movement.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: You don't have that "No, no, no, no, no" isolated, do you?

HRISHI: I do. I do, you want to go back to that, do you?

JOSH: Let's ponder this for a moment.

HRISHI: Ok, ok.

JOSH: There might be some casual racism here.

[West Wing Episode 6.07 excerpt]

*JOSH: No, no, no, no, no.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Understand, I am not accusing Josh Lyman of casual racism but Bradley Whitford.

MARY: I don't get the racism. What race?

JOSH: Why that delivery? Was that supposed to be an Asian accent?

MARY: No! What are you talking about? What Asian person talks like that? "No, No!"

JOSH: Why is he talking like that?

MARY: I didn't get Asian. I just got weird pronunciation of "no," right? Like a weird, like maybe Italian? [cross talk] Like New York Italian, like Brooklyn.

JOSH: [cross talk] It's an odd choice.

MARY: Not this, more like "nah, nah, nah, nah, nah."

JOSH: I think that we can agree that it doesn't work.

MARY: Ha. Fair enough.

[West Wing Episode 6.07 excerpt]

*JOSH: No, no, no, no, no.*

[end excerpt]

MARY: Yeah, it's more mine. It's more like DeNiro.

JOSH: More importantly: can it be made into a ringtone?

[West Wing 6.07 Episode excerpt]

*JOSH: No, no, no, no, no.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: I literally never answer my phone so it would be perfect. One more time.

[West Wing Episode 6.07 excerpt]

*JOSH: No, no, no, no, no.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Maybe it's Italian. I don't know.

HRISHI: Look, Josh Lyman is not the only person who knows about flags. You know who else knows about flags? Our other special guest. He's the creator and the host of the podcast *99% Invisible*. He is the co-founder of Radiotopia the home of *The West Wing Weekly*. He did a TED Talk in flag design that has been viewed over 5 million times. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Roman Mars.

[applause]

HRISHI: Roman. We're in San Francisco, we're talking about flags. We had to bring you in.

ROMAN: Of course.

HRISHI: Ok, we want to do this little vexillological sidebar.

MARY: I wanted to use that word first. Darn it.

HRISHI: Let's start with first Kate breaks this down for C.J. Here's what she says:

[West Wing Episode 6.07 excerpt]

*C.J.: So that's the flag that we got. That's China. What's this one?*

*KATE: Republic of China.*

*C.J.: This is China, that's China.*

*KATE: Republic of China, People's Republic of China. Banned in China, used in Taiwan. Used in China, banned in Taiwan.*

*C.J.: What's this one?*

*KATE: Taiwan's majority party.*

*C.J.: So which party flies the Taiwanese flag?*

*KATE: The Taiwanese flag--not so popular among the Taiwanese.*

*C.J.: And they don't change the flag because...*

*KATE: Chinese would declare war.*

*C.J.: Good reason.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Some visual aids. This is gonna work great on the podcast by the way. [Audience laughs]

JOSH: This is where we will just play that Brad clip over and over. [Audience laughs]

HRISHI: Before we get into the specifics of our flag controversy here, Roman, what can you tell us about good flag design?

ROMAN: Alright, so, there are five principles to good flag design. One is that it has to have no words, no seals, no lettering of any kind. Has meaningful symbolism, has usually two to three basic colors. It has to be easy enough to remember that a child could draw it from memory. And it has to be either unique or have some shared symbolism with other flags like it. Those are the five principles of flag design.

HRISHI: What do you think about *this* guy?

ROMAN: Good flag. That's the People's Republic flag, it's five stars. Five is an important number in Chinese. So then the big star is about communism and the four stars that radiate away from it are the four different classes of people. Yeah, I know. I didn't think that there were any in communism. But there are! So there is the peasant class, the worker class, the bourgeoisie, and the petite bourgeoisie, represent the four.

HRISHI: Nice that they all get their own star.

ROMAN: [laughs] It is nice.

HRISHI: It's kind of sweet. So this flag, the communist flag, flies in the People's Republic of China, on the mainland. Here's this flag, the Republic of China.

ROMAN: Right. Good flag. So the original flag, it was just the canton. So the area at the top in the left hand corner, it is called the canton. The rest of it is called the field. Ok. For the podcast audience, the canton in the United States flag is the blue part with the stars and the field is the part with the stripes. So the twelve spikes around the sun represent the months, the white usually is for like freedom and democracy and the red is for the red earth of communism, actually.

HRISHI: I wanted to get a little bit of background on this stuff and I asked an expert in Chinese history to tell me a little bit more. This is she:

[Audio clip]

*REBECCA: I'm Rebecca Nedostup and I am a historian of Modern China and Taiwan at Brown University.*

HRISHI: And she told me a little bit about this flag.

*REBECCA: In 1949 with the communist revolution and the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the Republic of China, the flag with the white star in the blue sky on the red ground, fled to Taiwan and continued to claim sovereignty over all of China from its base in Taiwan.*

HRISHI: I think there's a narrative that we maybe kind of understand here incorrectly in America that there's China and then there's Taiwan and that China has dominion over both and that the people in Taiwan just want to be independent. But actually this flag symbolizes a government that fled to Taiwan after the communist revolution and Mao won. They went to Taiwan and set up shop there and said "Actually, we rule all of China, even though we lost." It would be like if the Confederacy, after the Civil War was like "No, no, no, we still won and this is now the seat of government for the United States.

JOSH: I do that after every argument I lose. [Audience laughs] I respect that approach.

HRISHI: That's also when, here I'll let Rebecca say it:

*REBECCA: It's also why Kate goes on to say why people in Taiwan don't so much like like it either. Because it also represents to a lot of people in Taiwan a government coming in from the outside.*

HRISHI: It's not a native Taiwanese flag. And so this flag and so the flag gets introduced in this episode the Taiwanese independence flag is sort of in contradistinction to this Republic of China flag. This guy.

ROMAN: Yeah, that's a nice one.

MARY: That's a beautiful flag.

ROMAN: Yeah, I like it.

MARY: That's a great flag.

JOSH: I like it.

ROMAN: So this is the hearts in harmony flag. They call it in the chrysanthemum flag, it's really four hearts bisected and it represents the different races of people on Taiwan, on the island of Taiwan. The vexillological feature that I love is this center white stripe. It's called a Canadian pale. So if you can imagine a Canadian flag with the maple leaf they kind of invented that extra-wide white thing in the middle of the flag. It's beautiful. I know I can't remember the names of the different- , does she know the meaning of the different symbols of the hearts?

HRISHI: Yeah, the different ethnic groups that are represented by the four hearts. Here she is again:

*REBECCA: The indigenous people of Taiwan, meaning people who preceded ethnic Chinese migration to Taiwan, and Hakas, Fujinese or Haklos people, and so-called Mainlanders, meaning the people who came with the Nationalists after 1949.*

JOSH: I was going to ask. I suppose it varies, but what is the proper process of designing and...

ROMAN: Well this one was a contest actually, from 1996 or 1994.

HRISHI: 1996

ROMAN: 1996, yeah.

JOSH: And who decided?

ROMAN: I don't know.

JOSH: Phone-in vote, like *Idol*.

ROMAN: Phone-in, yeah, like you chose just like *American Idol*.



HRISHI: I mean here is what Bernard tells Charlie. Bernard comes back by the way. [Audience cheers]

JOSH: Played once again by Paxton Whitehead, whom I pronounced dead the first time we discussed him. That was one of many low points on this podcast for me. He's still alive by the way. Great actor.

HRISHI: He is still alive. In fact, he found out that Josh pronounced him dead on our podcast. And he had this reaction:

[Clip excerpt]

PAXTON WHITEHEAD: *What is a podcast?*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: [laughing] I thought we were going to get "No, no, no, no, no."

HRISHI: So Bernard comes back. His bad attitude has somehow landed him in the White House's equivalence of the evidence room. I feel like they are following cop show demotion rules. And here's what he tells Charlie:

[West Wing Episode 6.07 excerpt]

*BERNARD: The independence flag, nicknamed the eight petal chrysanthemum flag, rather unimaginatively I'd say.*

*CHARLIE: Yeah, have you seen it?*

*BERNARD: Oh yes, the flag itself is a magnificent specimen. An original hand-sewn relic that was entered in the island-wide flag competition. It was chosen over 186 other designs. That was in 1994.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And just because it is Bernard I take a special amount of pleasure in saying, "Actually, Bernard, the four-hearted flag was devised in Taiwan in 1996, in the 'New Flag, New Anthem' campaign, not in 1994 and the flag was selected after a wide competition in which 187 flags were entered. So there." What about the green? What does the green symbolize in the flag?

ROMAN: I mean, usually it is earth and the ground. I mean that's pretty much what it is.

HRISHI: Wasn't the red in the other one also the ground?

ROMAN: Yeah, you know. [Hrishi laughs] I mean, the thing about flag symbolism is that you see a couple of stripes and say “this is about the harmony of two things...” I don’t know. They just kind of throw it out there. If you ever want to... one of my favorite flags is the flag of Chicago. It’s beautiful, it has six-pointed red stars. Not only to each of the stars represent a different significant moment in Chicago’s history, but each of the points of the stars represent like progress and ingenuity, and stuff like that. It’s all just a bunch of nonsense [laughs]. The funny thing about this one, actually, is that I wouldn’t think of this really as the independence flag.

HRISHI: Right, this is really more sort of a historical artifact. And in the timeline of our show it is more likely that if someone wanted to proclaim Taiwan’s independence symbolically they would have used this flag.

ROMAN: Yeah, so this is just a map of Taiwan. In the middle of a Canadian pale.

JOSH: So does that get a low grade from you?

ROMAN: Ok, so, here is my rule about flags: Any flag that special meaning and is used is a good flag. If a flag is not used, the design criteria is a good way to make sure that is flag is used. Good design means that people will fly it and people will use it. But there are a lot of flags that break those rules that are perfectly great. People love them. Like the Brazil flag, for example, has words on it. I don’t know where the little stars on the orb are, like I couldn’t redraw it. But [expletive deleted] it. The Brazil flag’s great. So that’s a great flag because people love it. So if the independence movement, I see this on t-shirts and protests and on signs and stuff. It’s great. I personally don’t love map flags. There’s a couple of other ones, Cyprus has an outline of a map of the island. And Kosovo, strangely, has a map of it. I like maps on flags but I like them stylized. So, for example, the city of St. Louis has a really good flag that I think we’re gonna show. So this is the city of St. Louis. The *fleur de lis* represents the French origins of St. Louis, and then the river is the Missouri river, the confluence of the Missouri river and the Mississippi river going out to the Mississippi. So it is kind of a map, but it’s not really a map. And I think that makes a better flag, personally.

HRISHI: So one of things about this flag, I asked the professor, Rebecca Nedostup, why they don’t use this one, why they use the chrysanthemum flag instead, which is certainly a prettier flag. And we came up with a theory that maybe using this flag would have actually been too politically hot button for even the show to use. Even in this fictional context it was safer to go with something historical and not so contemporary.

ROMAN: That makes total sense to me. Also it is prettier.

HRISHI: Better TV. It is for TV. That brings me, by the way, to the unveiling of the official *West Wing Weekly* flag. [Audience cheers]

JOSH: It is loaded with symbolism.

HRISHI: Which I tried to follow the five rules as closely as possible. Here we go.

JOSH: The sixth rule being “sell it in the lobby for five bucks.”

HRISHI: That’s true, you can get one of these in the lobby afterwards for five bucks on paper. It’s our official flag. It’s a minimalist version of our logo. It’s got the White House, it’s got the seven stars for the seven days of the week because we are *The West Wing Weekly*, and also the seven seasons of *The West Wing*, the four columns...

JOSH: The seven classes of West Wing Weekly listener. [Audience laughs]

HRISHI: [laughing] Can you guess which star is...

JOSH: Hrishi will now describe them to you.

HRISHI: I’ll tell you one of those stars represents the *petite bourgeois*. [Audience laughs]

HRISHI: The four bars on the White House also double for the four pillars of the show which are when Sorkin set it up.

JOSH: The bars behind which we hope our current president will one day peek out. [Audience cheers] There’s a lot of symbolism on this thing.

HRISHI: And the two horizontal bars are supposed to be the two hosts.

AUDIENCE: Awww

JOSH: Hrishi’s on top, as he should be.

HRISHI: I called top bunk. My favorite thing, though, about this flag? It has a flag. So go see Lindsey after the show if you want to get one of these. Like I said, they are five bucks.

JOSH: We can sign it for you, but then it will have letters on it and be a far less acceptable flag.

HRISHI: That’s against the rules.

JOSH: Am I wrong or did you turn me on to Eddie Izzard?

MARY: I did. [Audience cheers] And I think through *Dress to Kill*, when he shot it here, and he did it here first.

JOSH: That’s right, this incredible live special of his *Dress to Kill* concert. It was taped at the Orpheum theatre. And it includes this piece:

[Eddie Izzard Audio Clip]

*EDDIE: That's how you build an empire: we stole countries with the cunning use of flags. Just sail around the world and stick a flag in them. "I claim India for Britain" and they go "You can't claim us, we live here. 500 million of us." "Do you have a flag?" " We don't need a bloody flag, it is our country. You bastard." "No flag, no country. You can't have one. That's the rules that I've just made up."*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Please give a big round of applause to our friend Roman Mars, for taking us to school. Let's take a quick break and we when come back we will have more about this episode...

[Ad break]

HRISHI: Ok, now back to our show. So meanwhile there is a little shoving and a jockeying for position between Vice President Russell and Governor Baker, who is played by Ed O'Neill. [Audience cheers] He makes his first appearance.

JOSH: I just want to know if he wants to put his hand down the front of his pants. Just very subtly in the background would have been funny.

HRISHI: He is Governor Baker from Pennsylvania and he's coming in for a photo op with the president whose lending his 25th amendment letter to an exhibit at the museum at the national constitution center. And he's a big threat, along with Hoynes, potentially to the Russell campaign. But I got a little confused. I thought that Governor Baker was going to be from California, not Pennsylvania. Because in 6.05 he'd been introduced as an idea before Ed O'Neill actually appeared this way:

[West Wing Episode 6.05 excerpt]

*JOSH: Hollywood support is all going to Baker. He's raised enough money out there to start green lighting movies.*

*WILL: Governor Baker hasn't declared.*

*JOSH: But he's still a front runner. I mean, no offense to your guy.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Right, doesn't that make it sound like he might be the Governor of California? He's raised so much money? No, oh. Ok.

MARY: Out there, I dunno. You don't talk about Pennsylvania like "out there" if you're in DC.

JOSH: They needed you on the staff of the show.

HRISHI: Ok, well, nevermind. Will ends up getting Vice President Russell to crash the photo op.

JOSH: Oh please, all you Will fans. Just kidding.

HRISHI: It's a pretty good move, he kind of brushes off Toby when he tries to ask permission to get Russell in and then when Toby won't give it to him he just sends him in anyway. And the president is kind of not too pleased with either of these guys. Baker wants the photo op all to himself and Russell wants to get in there and the president is like "You're both in, fine. You're both babies." And he doesn't want to deal with it ever again.

JOSH: Yeah, he doesn't dress down Will though, which is nice. I mean it is clearly Will's idea but he dresses down Russell and puts Russell in his place.

HRISHI: That's how he thinks about the job himself, right? Like it is why he never wants to have anybody speak for him. We learn when Sam goes in to do Josh's job, he doesn't let anyone else fall on his sword, so I think he expects the same thing of other people. So it makes sense that he would take Russell to task and not Will.

JOSH: I guess so. How did you like working with Martin?

MARY: Oh, I love Martin. I love him. And he was so welcoming. I think my name helped. He would call me Irish.

JOSH: [cross talk] I was going to ask how long it took him to learn your name.

MARY: He liked my name. Mary Katherine. He was into that whole McCormack nonsense. He learned my name; he was still calling Allison "the tall one." He'd be like "Mary" and I was there like a week.

JOSH: I got a lot of "Hey you"

MARY: Yeah, you were "Hey you." No, I loved him. I held a rosary, he gave me a rosary to hold while I was having Margaret, he was really into it.

JOSH: Oh, is that true? That's sweet.

MARY: Yeah. He is sweet. I thought so.

HRISHI: I like that they work in that part of Martin Sheen's personality. He can't remember Curtis' name in this episode.

MARY: Yeah, it is good that they worked that in. But Martin is incredible though. You remember how we'd come back to work on a Monday and everyone is like "What'd you do?" "What'd you do?" and everyone did, you know, silly stuff: "I went to a movie" "I went to the park" and he's like "Ah, I got arrested." Remember? Like, a lot.

JOSH: That's true. He walked the walk, for sure.

MARY: He's really incredible, yeah.

HRISHI: I love the way that he plays the scene when C.J. first comes in to ask him about the flag,

[West Wing EPISODE 6.07 excerpt]

*C.J.: I just thought if you are reconsidering our policy on Taiwan...*

*PRESIDENT BARTLET: Did I say that?*

*C.J.: Sir, this type of thing is right up your alley, to-*

*PRESIDENT BARTLET: C.J.! I must have gotten enough trinkets to buy back Manhattan this morning. I honestly didn't see the damn thing. Are we through?*

*C.J.: Yes sir, thank you Mr. President.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And there is a good precedent for why C.J. might think that this is some sly move on the president's part because we all know he's done this before. He did it with Ritchie.

[West Wing Episode3:17 excerpt]

*PRESIDENT BARTLET: I don't know Leslie, I think we might be talking about a 22-caliber mind in a 357-magnum world.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Where he had his hot mic moment and he played everyone. But he's not acting coy now and I love that moment of performance by Martin Sheen where he's trying to sort of be casual about accepting the flag and saying "Did I say I was going to change policy? It's not a big deal" but you can hear this desperation kind of inching into his voice. We don't know the full story yet as to why that's happening.

JOSH: Yeah, I think it is very clever. Of course, even though I have acted in it and have seen it before I had no memory of what the story line was. So even at this moment where he seems to get mad at C.J. and insist that he didn't see it I was like, "Oh, you saw it..." But I think what is actually very clever about it is later one we are going to get a great scene at the end where he makes himself very vulnerable to Abigail and tells her the truth. But he actually admits it way earlier in the episode. He says to her that he didn't see it, to C.J., in anger and not admitting exactly why. And that sounds like he is saying it was just an oversight. There's a lot of layers going on. It is very good writing.

HRISHI: Yeah, I love that part. And here is that part that you were talking about. Here's when he speaks to the First Lady at the end:

[West Wing Episode 6.07 excerpt]

*PRESIDENT BARTLET: I didn't see the flag.*

*ABBEY: What?*

*PRESIDENT BARTLET: The green flag, I didn't see it. I couldn't tie my tie. I haven't been able to focus or see out of my right eye since early yesterday morning. I didn't see the flag.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: That scene got to me.

MARY: Yeah, it is so moving.

HRISHI: And it ends up retroactively casting that opening scene with Charlie, that cute bit about the tie in this totally different light because it turns out the reason why he's doing that is because he couldn't tie it as a result of his MS. And that just makes it more heartbreaking than had it just been this little jokey moment between the two of them. So now the ramifications of the disease which have been obviously been on people's minds in the past, are now affecting things outside of just his own personal life, outside of just his own health. Here's something where, because of this lack of focus, he's caused an international incident. Everything is threatened about this China summit and really the diplomatic relations between the Republic of China, the People's Republic of China and the US because of this and because he didn't come clean about what he can't do. It's super sad.

JOSH: Yeah.

MARY: It's so moving too, with the lyrics of that song.

JOSH: It doesn't hurt to have James Taylor.

MARY: It never hurts to have James Taylor singing, but also the lyrics are so sad because the change finally coming to his body. You know, he's put it off and put it off and now it is inevitable. It's so moving.

HRISHI: I think maybe the saddest part to me is not even his confession to the first lady but the fact that Leo comes back into the White House for the first time since being stricken at Camp David having a heart attack. He comes back and they have this moment of reunion and the president doesn't tell him what happened.

MARY: He almost tells him.

[West Wing Episode 6.07 excerpt]

*PRESIDENT BARTLET: Leo... ah, nothing.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: That's a fantastic scene too because it is the first time that we've seen real awkwardness.

MARY: [cross talk] He chickened out.

JOSH: We've seen them fight, we've seen them argue at times. But something just doesn't click between them, like "Oh, Leo!" even that there is sort of a faux warmth like "Eh, it's you!" It's sad to see them not quite mesh. And, of course, just the fact that he doesn't tell him what's going on. He was the guy he'd tell everything to.

HRISHI: I love how rich that is because that's a moment between the two of them you can't really appreciate unless you watch the episode a second time. Because the first time you haven't yet learned this thing about him not being able to focus out of it. But besides these consequences there are also consequences close to home because we find out that Josh has the summit taken away from him by C.J. And this is something that has been his baby this entire time, he's been working so hard on it. Even Donna, who is sick of him and we know she is sick of him, she defends him to C.J. and says "He's really been making sure that this thing is going to go as well as possible." But he gets benched because of this thing that has absolutely nothing to do with him.

JOSH: He didn't blow it.

HRISHI: No, the flag and Senator Hunt and he handled the Senator Hunt thing even, but now it gets taken away from him and it feels like that's gonna have, you know, Josh's relationship to the White House, with C.J. as Chief of Staff is already tenuous and so to take this way, and for a reason that is not his fault, is damaging an already damaged relationship. And the only person that is making Josh feel wanted is Hoynes.



JOSH: Yeah, they are definitely teeing up the decision for Josh and why he might consider despite having said earlier in the episode that he doesn't want to have anything to do with it.

HRISHI: Yeah, absolutely. They are setting the table. So at the beginning when he says "I don't want to have anything to do with Hoynes," you're like "Yeah, of course he wouldn't. Why would you?" But it is in flash back. It is a nice device to use to flashback this way because, in the end, when we get back to Friday night, we realize that Josh's attitude towards the Vice President and the potential job offer might be quite different because of all the stuff that has happened and all of the things he has lost.

JOSH: I am trying to remember why, even though I wasn't in the scene, I didn't go to work the day that James Taylor was there.

MARY: I said the same thing! I'm an idiot.

JOSH: [cross talk] I was going to ask you. You weren't there?

MARY: I had like a seven-day old. At least I have that excuse. I had a seven-day old and I was up all night nursing, but still I should have been there.

JOSH: I had young children, too.

MARY: But there is no excuse for not being there.

JOSH: And I was there for them from the beginning. [Audience laughs] But I can't believe I didn't go and see James Taylor play live.

MARY: Just for the record I brought Margaret, I didn't leave her. She was in my trailer. Actually I brought her to set, I would nurse her on set.

JOSH: That I remember.

MARY: In fact, I remember saying a line once and they said we should cut, and I said "I think I got it right, I know I got that line right." And they are like "we should cut" and I just had, like, huge milk rings. [Audience laughs] And eventually on set they just had a rack of like ten of the same shirt. I would just change them right there because I went through them.

JOSH: That's weird because they did the same thing for me. [Audience laughs]

MARY: I know.

HRISHI: Well, now, I have to cut the twelve questions I had for you, Josh, about seeing James Taylor play live.

JOSH: Oh, no. I'll still answer them! He's good that James Taylor.

HRISHI: He's clearly beloved by *The West Wing* because this is the second James Taylor appearance, sort of. Aimee Mann, when she was on for "College Kids" she sang "Shed a Little Light" which is a cover of a James Taylor song. And now I guess they just can't have full James Taylor so they bring James Taylor on and he has to do a cover of a song. But it's not only Aimee Man who's covered James Taylor in *The West Wing*:

[West Wing Episode 6.07 excerpt]

*MARGARET: [singing] come-ah, come-ah, come-ah, come come. Yeah, yeah, yay. Come-ah, come-ah, come-ah, come come you come running to meeeeeeee.*

*C.J.: Morning, Margaret.*

*MARGARET: Good morning.*

[end excerpt]

[West Wing Episode 6.07 excerpt]

*Josh Lyman: No, no, no, no, no.*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: For reference, if you don't know, this is what Margaret was trying to sing.

[James Taylor Clip]

*Come-ah, come-ah, come-ah, come come.  
Yeah, yeah, yeah.  
Come-ah, come-ah, come-ah, come come  
They'll come running to me.*

HRISHI: James Taylor is well loved. I did think that he was an odd choice for a musical guest to honor the legacy of Sam Cooke.

JOSH: How come?

HRISHI: He's...

JOSH: I ask the hard-hitting questions

HRISHI: I'm just trying to find a diplomatic way of saying it.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: He's white.

JOSH: That's a very diplomatic way to say it. Fair enough.

HRISHI: I mean there is an opinion among some that not only is James Taylor white, he is possibly the whitest musician there is. He's the musical equivalent of Mr. Roger's cardigan. [Audience laughs]

JOSH: Wait a minute. Hang on. I like Mr. Rogers, that's all.

HRISHI: I like Mr. Rogers, too! I'm just saying if the cardigan got up and played a song it would sound a lot like James Taylor. [Audience laughs]

JOSH: Alright, I'll accept that.

HRISHI: But, here's the thing, "A Change is Gonna Come," the song by Sam Cooke, actually was originally inspired by Bob Dylan. So, how much of a complaint can I really have? None. I withdraw my complaint. Here's something from the New Yorker about the origins of that song: "In a story that has come to symbolize the ways in which American popular music intersected with and helped sustain the civil rights movement, Sam Cooke was motivated to write "A Change is Gonna Come" by another 60's anthem: Bob Dylan's "Blowin' in the Wind," when he first heard that song he was so carried away with the message and with the fact that a white boy had written it that he was almost ashamed to not have written something like that himself. So he wrote "A Change is Gonna Come" to try and do his version.

JOSH: It's a great song.

HRISHI: It is a great song and James Taylor, you know, acquits himself well. Here he is:

[West Wing Episode 6.07 excerpt]

*James Taylor [singing]:  
I was born by the river, in a little tent.  
Just like a river I've been running ever since  
It's been a long, long time comin'...*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And then that song comes in and takes off its shoes and changes into something more comfortable.

JOSH: This is where we do little scraps now.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: What we've got left. This is where, when we're on FaceTime, I'm begging him for us to be done. [Audience laughs]

HRISHI: I'm like "Do you have somewhere to go?" and he's like "No, I just want it to be over."

JOSH: No, I just want to stay here and not be doing this anymore. [Audience laughs] Which is not how I feel now. I'm delighted to do this. Let's do every scrap we've got.

HRISHI: So, here's one: Charlie finally wins his tug of war with Bernard by enlisting Richard Squire from the Council's Office, who's played by Michael Kostroff, who is the slimiest lawyer for the Barksdale Crew in *The Wire*. That was fun.

JOSH: I knew I recognized him. This whole episode reminded me of the moment soon after Trump was elected before he took office [audience murmurs]-- hiss away, please! Zach, bring up the levels!

[AUDIENCE HISSES]

JOSH: Anyway, I don't know if you remember but Trump took a call from the President of the Republic of China

HRISHI: Oh, right.

JOSH: A congratulatory call from Tsai Ing-wen, I hope I am pronouncing that correctly. And it was the first time since 1979 that a US President had directly communicated with the President of the Republic of China. It was a bit of a kerfuffle if you will. Even before he took office.

HRISHI: Yeah. That's right! Because it directly goes against the change in policy made by Carter that America's diplomatic relations would be with Beijing. That we would adhere to this idea of one China and recognize their--

JOSH: [cross talk] Right, and so it was from 1979 until Trump was just like "Hello!" [Audience laughs] It's not a tough buy to imagine just someone taking the call versus accepting a gift you don't notice.

HRISHI: Yep. There's a nice example of life imitating art that followed this episode because there is an exhibit at the National Constitution Center in the episode, and then this episode prompted an actual exhibit in the National Constitution Center about this episode!

JOSH: How far up your own ass can you crawl?

HRISHI: Oh my gosh. It features props from *The West Wing*, like a copy of the script from this episode, and they have the signed letter from President Bartlet [Audience laughs and cheers] invoking the 25th amendment, the pen [Audience laughs] that he used to sign it with.

JOSH: Nobody has ever visited this exhibit.

HRISHI: And it turns out that the museum's cameo was the idea of Philadelphia native Josh Singer, who wrote this episode. Or, who is one of the two writers on this episode.

JOSH: Yay. That is correct.

HRISHI: Mary, when was the last time that you watched this episode? Had you ever watched this episode before?

MARY: I don't remember if I watched it at the time.

JOSH: When's the last time that you watched \*an\* episode of *The West Wing*?

MARY: I mean, a long, long time ago.

JOSH: When it was on, probably.

MARY: Yeah, when I was on it probably. And I'm not even sure I was watching it then just because I was sleep deprived.

JOSH: Do your kids ever watch it?

MARY: So they're watching it now. So when I said I would I could up and do this, yeah, they are really into it. I have a 14, 11, and 7. The 7 is less into it, but she's still watching. She gets most of it but the 14 and 11 are way into it.

JOSH: I've got a 20 and 16, including one who worked on the podcast, and they don't watch it. [Audience laughs]

MARY: Oh, wow.

JOSH: She watched one episode and said "I don't think I need to watch this show to do this job." I was like, "Honey, if I don't, you certainly don't!" [Audience laughs]

MARY: I think it is odd for my kids. For my 14 year old, watching her watch it, because you know even though she was alive when, obviously, Obama was president, she was too little to really have a concept of that. And so all she has known is Trump, and our feelings about Trump and the election, and that's her conscious sort of representation of what a president is. So this is pretty eye-opening. It is pretty eye-opening. She's into it.

JOSH: Well maybe it will inject a little hope into the equation.

MARY: Yeah, I mean it is hard for them to know that what is going around right now isn't normal when it's all they know.

HRISHI: And how about for you? What is it like for you to watch the episode again?

MARY: For me it was sweet to watch it again, because it was such a happy time in my life. It was such a sweet time. I mean I joined the show and everyone was so warm and welcoming. I had a great part and I was pregnant with my first baby. You know, It was such a sweet time. And then coming back with her and everyone would just hold her all day long and I would nurse her in the hair and makeup trailer. And I still had a great part. It doesn't get much better. And my hair was terrific.

JOSH: You had no part, no part at all.

MARY: I had good hair, and a new baby, and a great part. Simple girl. Simple girl.

JOSH: And one last thing: why do Toby and Josh have to disparage nine meat soup? That sounds so good.

HRISHI: Yeah? Let's hear about it.

[West Wing Episode 6.07 excerpt]

*TOBY: I couldn't stomach any more haggling over the nine meat soup.*

*JOSH: Nine meat soup?*

*TOBY: It is on the menu for the dinner in Shanghai.*

*JOSH: Beef, chicken, pork...*

*TOBY: You don't want to go there.*

[end excerpt]

[Audience laughs]

JOSH: That's casual racism. You finally got there.

HRISHI: You were watching that and you were like

[West Wing Episode 6.07 excerpt]

*JOSH: no, no, no, no, no!*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Actually I was trying to think: are there nine kosher animals?

HRISHI: And? Are there?

JOSH: I don't know. I think in fact there are. I am going to make that soup.

HRISHI: Right now?

JOSH: Yeah, I gotta go.

HRISHI: Because our show is over.

MARY: Josh?

[Laughter]

HRISHI: Mary has just knocked Josh's notebook and notes all off the table

JOSH: I had it coming. Fair enough, fair enough.

MARY: But now I will pay. I'm happy and scared.

JOSH: Oh that's for sure. My revenge will be swift and terrible.

MARY: It won't be swift. He plots for months!

JOSH: That's true.

HRISHI: Mary, thank you so much for joining us here in San Francisco.

MARY: Thanks for having me.

HRISHI: Roman, are you back there still?

JOSH: Thank you Roman!

HRISHI: Thanks so much to Roman Mars, once again, give him a round of applause. Roman, come on back out here. Say "Hi!" Roman Mars. Listen to Roman's podcast if you don't already.

If you don't already, you're crazy. Go watch his TED Talk on flag design. It's fantastic. Roman is @RomanMars on Twitter. Mary, what's your Twitter handle?

MARY: @MaryCMcCormack

HRISHI: @MaryCMcCormack

JOSH: And tell us a little about what you're doing now.

MARY: I'm doing a television show called *The Kids Are Alright* on ABC.

JOSH: The kids are alright.

HRISHI: Watch that.

MARY: Yeah, watch that.

HRISHI: Thanks to all of you for coming. Thanks, Josh, for coming, too.

JOSH: Thanks for inviting me.

HRISHI: *The West Wing Weekly* is a proud member of Radiotopia. Thanks, Roman, for making that happen. From PRX, it is a fine collection of extraordinary podcasts and you can learn all about them at [radiotopia.fm](http://radiotopia.fm)

JOSH: We want to thank Margaret Miller, Zach McNeese, and Nick Song for their help in making this episode of the podcast. [Audience cheers] Right on.

HRISHI: Thanks to everyone at SketchFest, thanks to all of you. You can talk to us afterwards.

JOSH: Come see us in the lobby.

HRISHI: We'll be hanging out in the lobby and... OK.

JOSH: OK.

AUDIENCE: What's next?

[Outro Music]