

The West Wing Weekly
7.04: "Mr. Frost"

[Intro Music]

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

HRISHI: And I'm Hrishikesh Hirway. Today we are talking about "Mr. Frost." It's episode 4 from season 7.

JOSH: It was written by Alex Graves.

HRISHI: How about that?

JOSH: How about that? And it was directed by Andrew Bernstein.

HRISHI: Alex Graves, usually a director, first time writer –

JOSH: - and executive producer –

HRISHI: - and executive producer. And Andrew Bernstein was former first A.D., and now this is, I think this is his second episode that he has directed.

JOSH: Right, after 365 days. Great guy, terrific director. And, uh, also very cool to see Alex flexing new muscles and writing an episode. This episode aired on October 16th, 2005.

HRISHI: In this episode there are three major story lines which overlap in nice ways. First of all, there is the continuation of the leak. Margaret testifies in front of the senate committee. Everybody's gotten subpoenaed and Leo's subpoena in particular is going to be very bad for the Santos campaign. The second story line is the Santos campaign. It's education week and Santos discusses evolution and intelligent design in a way that trips up Vinick. Vinick had been briefed by Mr. Frost in a previous episode who leads us to the third story line which is the assassination of the Palestinian chairman Farad.

JOSH: Yes.

HRISHI: I thought it was nice the way the three story lines intersected. Sometimes we have talked about how the "A" plots and the "B" plots and the "C" plots don't necessarily feel like they are relevant to one another at all. This episode did a good job of tying them all together.

JOSH: Yeah, I agree. I was of two minds with this episode. Which I did think it was a very good episode and well directed by Andrew and I thought the dialogue by Alex was great. But in terms of – part of it felt to me like we didn't cover enough - not enough ground was covered. Maybe it's because I know that it's a zero-sum game and each of these episodes brings us that much closer to the final – well, I guess that's how every series works [laughs] – but I mean it's the fact that it's the final season – and so each episode feels more precious than ever. I guess I wanted a little bit more to happen, I felt, uh, I agree with you the way everything intertwined, the framework of it was all great and I thought the dialogue was great. But I wanted I guess something more revelatory. Of course we get the ultimate revelation in the final scene of this episode in terms of the *leak* plot. But I guess I wanted more to happen as things developed.

HRISHI: Yeah. I hear that. I like the plotting of the episode. I actually liked the way the story unfolded. There were some specific moments and sort of themes in the episode, some repeating things that happened in the episode that kind of made me laugh, in terms of writing. Not, like *bad* writing or anything like that, but just a couple of little motifs that repeated that made me chuckle by the end, which we will get to.

I found that in this episode there were a few moments where a character would sort of very succinctly sum things up for us. It was really helpful and clear but it was funny because it happened a few times when someone would just be like, would say a couple lines and it's like, "Yes! That's exactly what we're dealing with."

JOSH: [laughs] For instance?

HRISHI: For instance, when it comes to the sub-plot about evolution vs. intelligent design, Josh and Louise are talking on the side of a Santos rally happening at U Penn and Josh sums it up for us:

[West Wing Episode 7.04 excerpt]

[bell dings]

JOSH: The local board of education just held hearings on why intelligent design should be taught in classrooms alongside evolution, so local reporters are gonna want to talk about it...

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: So, you've set the stage for the rest of this episode.

JOSH: [laughing] That's true.

HRISHI: That rally at U Penn also made me laugh because the sound at the beginning of it does not make any sense to me. This is right after the opening titles and Santos is speaking:

[West Wing Episode 7.04 excerpt]

[applause]

SANTOS: Don't event meet the most basic reading levels. How long can we stay number one in high- tech jobs if we are declining in the percentage of bachelor's degrees....

[fade out with applause]

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: He's making an important point about one of his key policies. But the crowd is cheering like they are at a ball game while he is speaking. Like, not at stuff he's saying – they are just –

JOSH: - over it –

HRISHI: Clapping and screaming [laughs] just while he's talking. How can you hear what he is saying?

JOSH: That is odd.

HRISHI: That part was funny. They are enthusiastic but not very respectful.

JOSH: Enthusiastic but not too keyed in to what the candidate is actually saying.

HRISHI: Yeah. But, let's backtrack for just a second. Because we begin the episode with Margaret testifying. We get a title card that says we are 82 days away from the election and Margaret is in front of Senator Dresden who's leading the Senate investigation.

JOSH: As played by Mitch Pileggi, Walter Skinner from *The X-Files*.

HRISHI: Great to see him in this role.

JOSH: Great actor. I don't know if you notice though, his left eyebrow – maybe it's *off fleek*. If *on fleek* is a good thing, something bad and crazy is happening to his left eyebrow.

[Hrishi laughs]

JOSH: It has not- and I urge you all to go back and take a look.

HRISHI: I didn't notice that.

JOSH: This by no means detracts from his performance, he's quite an excellent actor. But someone just forgot to brush back the eyebrow. And I say this to impart possibly because I covet such eyebrows. I'm losing my eyebrows in my old age so mine couldn't be that unruly.

HRISHI: I'm with you. I'm very covetous of people's heavy brows. We are the scant of brow.

JOSH: Yeah, I know I am. So, eyebrows aside,

HRISHI: Eyebrows aside. He is talking to Margaret and these scenes are where I see what you are saying, Josh, about not moving things forward enough. I mean, they set-up some nice tension – I feel like they are giving us a sense of the urgency of the leak and maybe how the investigation is closing in on C.J. or just, you know, getting closer in on her.

JOSH: Mmmhmm.

HRISHI: But we do spend a fair amount of time of essentially on what is a recap – Dresden is just sort-of telling us what we already know and Margaret is confirming it.

[West Wing Episode 7.04 excerpt]

DRESDEN: You're aware of an article in the New York Times on July 14th of this year claiming the existence of a top-secret military space shuttle?

MARGARET: Yes, sir, I am.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Yeah, Exactly. Substantively not a huge amount occurs in this scene that otherwise feels tense because it's directed well and we get the mood and everything. And also later, throughout the episode, there is also a lot made of the dramatic import of being subpoenaed. But it seems kind of to be expected. I mean, they are all going to be subpoenaed. And it sort of gains steam at least later when we find that Leo has been subpoenaed and what that might mean for the Santos/McGarry ticket. But everyone else, I don't know, it doesn't seem like that big of a deal. Of course they are going to be subpoenaed.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: [chuckles] It's dealt with as if it's super dramatic.

HRISHI: Yeah, and likewise, these hearing scenes *feel* dramatic but the content isn't necessarily so revelatory.

JOSH: I agree.

HRISHI: So, we get our first taste of those hearings and then we are at U Penn with the Santos rally. After Josh sums up what the sub-plot is going to be, Ned brings over a round-up of press coverage and here's how things shake out: *The Washington Post* says that the Santo/McGarry roadshow is an effective blend of energy and experience – that's the quote. Cool!

JOSH: MmmHmm

HRISHI: Great. Then Josh tells us that *The LA Times* says Leo quote "actually looked life-like." Which is harsh.

JOSH: Rough. Yes.

HRISHI: I guess that's a compliment, but harsh. And then – and this is my favorite:

[West Wing Episode 7.04 excerpt]

ANNABETH: Post-Dispatch calls our "Education Week", "Boring Week."

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And I thought, "Wow - what a [expletive deleted] zinger, *Post-Dispatch*."

[Josh laughs]

HRISHI: I just hope that they have a medical team with them on the campaign so they can attend to the third degree burns they must be suffering after that.

JOSH: [laughing] Oh, snap! "Boring Week"

HRISHI: "Boring Week" [Josh laughs] And meanwhile, Leo is so bored by Santos' speech, he keeps checking his watch, which is not a good look and Josh notices it. And Annabeth actually has to take Leo's watch away.

JOSH: Yeah. She's not wrong, it's the- it's called for.

HRISHI: Yeah, absolutely.

JOSH: He should know better than that, Leo should.

HRISHI: And *meanwhile*, meanwhile, Annabeth and Leo

JOSH: What the hell?

HRISHI: [laughs] I – you know –

JOSH: What the what?

HRISHI: I don't know what to make of this. Nevermind the 22 year age gap between the two of them. Do you think the two of them have a vibe?

JOSH: No. Until the elevator scene where – uh –

HRISHI: Where Annabeth tells you they do have a vibe in fact

JOSH: Exactly – where we are informed [Hrishi laughs]. And I have to say, Leo seems genuinely also not to have known.

[West Wing Episode 7.04 excerpt]

ANNABETH: I just think it's better while we are spending so much time together, that we try to keep our distance whenever possible.

LEO: Keep our distance?

ANNABETH: Cause of the tension.

LEO: What tension?

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Yeah – exactly! [both laughing] I love that they both have two completely different takes on the thing and I don't know that Leo is just oblivious to just – and Annabeth is right. Or Annabeth is just wrong, but I think it's cute, no matter what's going on, I think it's cute.

JOSH: I'm not sure I can co-sign

HRISHI: Really? [laughs]

JOSH: I think theoretically it could be cute [laughs] I, but I've yet to – uh – see strong data suggesting it is cute.

HRISHI: I mean, the misunderstanding is cute. Sorry, just to make clear

JOSH: Yeah- I agree – I guess their potential romance felt a little icky in the elevator to me rather than cute.

HRISHI: No, no, no, I'm not saying that I think something between the two of them would be cute. I think the idea of the two of them misunderstanding where they stand with each other is cute.

JOSH: Yeah.

HRISHI: Which I guess requires some element of imagining the two of them actually being together.

JOSH: It does indeed. But, the interesting thing is, at least based on the elevator scene, is Annabeth seems to be the one who is interested [laughing] and Leo is the one who is just befuddled by it all.

HRISHI: Exactly. That's uh – yeah. But, you know there are just, there are some nice moments between the two of them before that and I didn't know that *that* was what this was leading to. There's a scene where they are getting on the airplane to go to DC and Annabeth asks Leo to help her with her bag and then they sit down and she takes a couple of anti-anxiety pills to help her with the flight. And the whole scene goes and I'm like – this is a nice little character moment but it was surprisingly, I thought, disconnected from the plot. I thought we were spending again some time here doing this – until – you know she washes them down with some champagne and I was thinking, "that's going to knock her right out" And then later we do see that she is completely zonked but she's holding Leo's hand – which is pretty cute.

JOSH: It was cute, that's true. That said, I have a couple of problems with the pills and alcohol scenario. First, around Leo it just felt a little bit –

HRISHI: - insensitive –

JOSH: A little bit brazen, yes, to be discussing your prescription pill and alcohol regimen for flying on the plane. You might want to keep that on the down-low. And, uh, then I also have a problem with her taking the pills without liquid, because that's not good for you.

HRISHI: Well this is what I don't understand. Because she says she washes them down with champagne and then she double fists two glasses of champagne. Why not just wait until she has the champagne if it's part of the thing anyway.

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: And take the pill with the liquid?

JOSH: And as I often caution my children, it's not good to take pills without liquid. No because you could choke on them, but apparently they can get stuck in the esophagus and that can cause inflammation and irritation. So people, don't do as Annabeth does, maybe don't take pills with alcohol altogether, but if you do need to take a doctor prescribed pill - take it with water.

HRISHI: And maybe even an over the counter pill: still take it with water.

JOSH: Sure. That's a good point.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: You're right. All pills. Even a Tic Tac if you don't like to chew Tic Tacs [Hrishi laughs] but you just, you know, take them with the water. It's funny that you say that. Speaking of taking it with water, this was a technique that I employed often on my honeymoon with my wife. We went to Italy and had a fantastic honeymoon and ate and ate and ate. I have a – I'm not meek in real life, I am – I can be confrontational. I like a good argument. In certain scenarios I get very meek and at a restaurant – if I'm full or if I don't love what I ordered, I feel terrible about leaving it there, so I would just take it with water.

HRISHI: What?

JOSH: [Laughs] Yeah. Like to get the rest down. Okay, I'm actually done and in slight physical discomfort, but I don't want insult anyone so I'm going to take the rest with water.

HRISHI: You know, it's not like the chef who created the recipe is necessarily going to see your plate?

JOSH: No, that's true. That is true. I just don't like I don't like that moment where the waiter either looks at you or explicitly says that "did you not like it?" I'm like, no – I ate everything. I took it with water.

HRISHI: [Laughs]

JOSH: No one's ever going to ask me whether I didn't like it – I will get it down.

HRISHI: Do you have a small stick that I can use to tamp down the contents of my stomach?

JOSH: [laughs] Yes. Human foie gras. [Both laugh] That's my, essentially, what I'm creating.

HRISHI: That's a lovely image.

JOSH: Thanks, yeah. Better than Annabeth and Leo together.

HRISHI: [laughs] Alright, let's move off of that then.

JOSH: Let's.

HRISHI: At the end of the rally, Santos comes and joins our group and finds out that Vinick is still hammering him on border issues but Josh says, look stay on message about education, as we know, this is the key policy issue for the Santos campaign and they are really trying to define their campaign, and really the race around that. I can't remember if we talked about this but in an earlier episode, Josh has a line that Eli Attie wrote where he says,

[West Wing Episode 7.02 excerpt]

JOSH: People think campaigns are about two competing answers to the same question. They are not. They are a fight over the question itself. Now Vinick.... [fades out]

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: I think this kind of plays into what we are talking about here. The Santos campaign really wants to make the presidential race about education and, you know, the future for our children, things like that. The Vinick campaign is trying to make it about national security.

JOSH: Security, sure. And border issues.

HRISHI: Yeah, that's really where the fight is. I asked Eli, actually, what he thought, say, the competing questions might have been in 2000 when he was working on Al Gore's campaign. He said that in 2000 he thought the question from the Gore side was "should we risk our hard-won peace and prosperity?" and the question as posed by the Bush campaign was, "Shouldn't we restore honor and dignity to the office of the President?"

JOSH: Huh

HRISHI: After 8 years of Bill Clinton.

JOSH: Right. That question may resurface sometime. Hopefully in the very near future.

HRISHI: I asked him what he thought the question should be in 2020.

JOSH: Oh good. And?

HRISHI: He said, "Had enough?"

JOSH: Nice.

HRISHI: Anyway, C.J. has been up all night. She's wired on a ton of caffeine and she's got a whole bunch of old timey music references as a result.

JOSH: [chuckles] That's right.

HRISHI: In rapid succession she makes a reference to "Ain't We Got Fun?"

JOSH: Mmhmm.

HRISHI: And later Charlie says, "We've got trouble..."

[West Wing Episode 7.04 excerpt]

C.J.: Trouble with a capital T and that rhymes with P and that stands for pool.

[end clip]

HRISHI: Which Josh, you might not know this but that's [Josh laughs] from a musical called *The Music Man*.

JOSH: Yes it is. I almost played that role, Harold Hill. In summer theater as a kid, but I decided to not do that.

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: But I would have been very good.

HRISHI: Then maybe you *do* know this. At first I thought: that's a stupid line. Trouble with a capital T and that rhymes with P [Josh laughs] and that stands for pool -

JOSH: I see, you had to look up the reference –

HRISHI: - And I was like, well let me watch the – let me listen to this song and find out the context and it turns out, that that's actually the point. He's trying to gin up some fake controversy-

JOSH: Mmmhmm

HRISHI: - to get people concerned about the introduction of a pool table in this town and it's really it's just built on nothing and so this is trouble with a capital T and that rhymes with P and that's trying to just connect the dots between trouble and this pool table and so my concern was unfounded

JOSH: That's right and I assume you went to Youtube and watched Robert Preston who played the role in the movie

HRISHI: Yeah, probably. I mean I don't like to kiss and tell.

JOSH: Fair enough.

HRISHI: And I also don't remember the guy [laughs]

JOSH: [Laughs]. Ok. He was great in the role.

HRISHI: And who is the other guy in the scene?

JOSH: Was it like Buddy Hackett?

HRISHI: Yes.

JOSH: It's Buddy Hackett as Marcellus Washburn, an associate of Harold Hill's.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Buddy Hackett whom you might remember from the Herbie the Love Bug movies.

HRISHI: I do remember the Herbie the Love Bug movies. That's how I learned that 8 in Spanish is ocho.

JOSH: Wow. You can't remember the Herbie the Love Bug movies from when they came out you're some sort of some sort of later revisit

HRISHI: Yeah, no, I saw them on T.V. in the '80s - in the ocho zeros –

JOSH: I saw them in the theater baby - ah, fair enough.

HRISHI: In the theater, look at that. They had theaters then?

JOSH: [laughs] Yeah you know what even as I said that I felt like I had [both laugh] opened up my head opened up myself to something like that. Hat tip for swooping in.

HRISHI: An old timey hat tip. [Josh laughs]. Like the ones those guys are wearing.

JOSH: Oh yeah.

HRISHI: Charlie also tells C.J. that Toby got served with a subpoena.

JOSH: Yes. I feel like this episode should have been called, "You Got Served."

HRISHI: Yeah. I mean it's true. Everybody on the White House staff keeps losing dance battles.

["You Got Served" movie excerpt]

"Tonight you suckers got served."

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Can we also have a supercut please of all the times that Leo talks about getting served in this episode? This is another thing that made me chuckle in this episode.

[West Wing Episode 7.04 excerpt]

LEO: I got served.

beep

LEO: I got served.

beep

LEO: Mr. President I've been served with a subpoena to appear before Congress.

beep

LEO: I've been served a subpoena to appear before the...

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Yeah you kind of feel like they ultimately should've anticipated that he was going to get served.

HRISHI: [laughing] But luckily we as an audience find out 4 times that he's been served with a subpoena.

JOSH: Right but that's again this speaks to this is I think your weakness of this episode all together, there's a lot of stuff that people don't seem to foresee that they ought to have as the cutting edge political operatives that they are. For instance, I think the whole, I like the dialogue

a lot and I like what Santos has to say when he's ultimately pinned down at that - I don't know where is her – at a school or –

HRISHI: Yes –

JOSH: a little town, yeah, about intelligent design. But it defied credibility to me that Louise and Josh and Ted/Ned and Santos hadn't spent 3 and a half minutes putting that answer together. Like, you're definitely going to get asked this let's come up with what you're going to say. And that's just how these people work on the campaign trail and instead they replayed it as like it literally - I think Josh actually says, "I'll be damned."

HRISHI: I know, I mean not just on the campaign trail really any time any group of people are going to do anything together in public there's some small discussion of like well what do you think we should say? [laughs]

JOSH: Of course! And especially when there's a big one that as a potential gaffe that he's made already

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: And we can argue about how big a gaffe it is. But he's certainly going to be asked again, there's going to be follow up, and we have to come up with an answer. And of course you know there's also there is a good answer, in fact he gives one but it's exactly what they would have formulated as an answer. So it's a little bit more dramatic to kind of have an "I'll be damned" moment.

HRISHI: Yes.

JOSH: I just don't, I don't buy it

HRISHI: Yeah I mean they don't even need to formulate it because Santos has it in his head he can to say "I'm going to say this" and they'd say "great that'll be fantastic"

JOSH: Yeah, "I'll be damned, that's a good answer." [both laugh] There's also another weird movement we've heard about Farad, and the bombing, and the attack and then Josh says, handing a piece of paper to Santos -

[West Wing Episode 7.04 excerpt]

JOSH: Russia's waiting, here's the draft of the Farad state-

SANTOS: I know what I am going to say, Josh. What do we know?

LEO: Farad's dead. Suicide bomber.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: So that just doesn't make sense. Here's a draft of what you are going to say, I know what I'm going to say – and then his next question is what the hell is going on [laughing] and it turns out he doesn't even know that Farad is dead. So he can't possibly know what he's going to say, he hasn't even been briefed yet. It's a really weird little thing. I think somebody would have said

this dialogue doesn't make any sense. Or, you know, alternatively is just an all too human moment for Santos is just annoyed by Josh and he doesn't know what he's going to say but like don't stick the statement in front of my face and so he just says I know I'm going to say, and then we realize he really doesn't at all.

HRISHI: Yeah. You're exactly right. Here's one thing I really like about the Farad storyline and the way that we are given the information. What we first hear is that there's been a bombing and they don't know if he's dead or alive then everybody assembles in The Situation Room and very shortly after, I mean we're only in the Sit Room for a minute and a half, Kate finds out that Farad has in fact died. And you know there's another way they could have done this where there's a bombing and Farad dies and that's where we start, but here they get a chance to kind of have two bites at the apple. They've got a way to kind of ratchet the tension up just with the bombing and then ratchet it up again once they find out that he has in fact been killed. You know or that he succumbed to his injuries and I thought that was really smart to be able to sort of meat out those 2 different inflection points.

JOSH: Yeah, I agree with you.

HRISHI: One thing I did not like so much about that part is that, and again I felt like it stretched credibility, is that Kate tells C.J. about this by turning on the news and MSNBC has the whole story. You know they're like this is what's happened this is what's going on. They know before the Chief of Staff of the White House, in fact they seem to know before the White House at all and that's how C.J. finds out. And then she's talking to Leo when this happens and he asks what happened she just says, "Find a T.V." I'm like, like poor guy. Can you just say, "Farad Bombing."

JOSH: Could you bottom line it for me? Maybe he's just a huge no spoiler alert kind of guy and so she just wants him to watch it before or she ruins it for him. You know, there's another moment later on where CJ and Kate are in The Situation Room and they've not yet been briefed and C.J.s like what's that big red rectangle up on the map? Oh, you know the President of Kazakhstan has been assassinated. And they go, why didn't you open with that when I came in the room I had to notice the thing and ask you about it I thought that was odd too.

HRISHI: And Slattery didn't even think she would know who the President of Kazakhstan would be.

JOSH: I know he gives her a look like "Ooooh, you should go on Jeopardy. [both laugh] Look at you."

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Yeah. But it didn't seem like such a minor world event that he hadn't even bothered to mention it.

HRISHI: Right. I mean they're right there in The Situation Room. That qualifies as some kind of situation.

JOSH: Yeah, exactly. And in fairness this is pre-Borat so I guess Kazakhstan was of lesser importance [both laugh]. Well, I mean they were technically on the map before that, but no offense anybody - just kidding.

HRISHI: [laughing] That's offense to a lot of people. You know who would be offended most of all in this episode is Mr. Frost.

JOSH: Mr. Frost, yes. Oh wait, I want to say one other thing too about there's one I think terrific moment, great piece of acting and directing, and possibly written into the script as well - I wouldn't know - but a great piece of physical acting from Martin Sheen as President Bartlet on his way and you know he's kind of held it together in The Situation Room dealing with the news.

HRISHI: Yes.

JOSH: And as he walks out there's just a great piece of physical acting and you know director and a writer have to know sometimes when to just hand over the reins and let an actor fill a moment and just what he does physically is very wonderful. It's unclear whether it's his emotional state, his physical state, some combination of the two. He goes out comes back and he sits down and there's just something to me incredibly compelling about that end of the scene.

HRISHI: Yeah me too. I watched that scene a few times.

JOSH: Yeah.

HRISHI: Ok, so let's talk about what actually has happened. Again, Kate sums it up for us very succinctly.

[West Wing Episode 7.04 excerpt]

[bell dings]

KATE: At 9:33 pm Jerusalem time Palestinian Chairman Farad was on his way back speaking at a University in the West Bank when a vehicle charged his motorcade and exploded. Several...[fades out]

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Just really helpful, you know –

JOSH: Just the facts, ma'am.

HRISHI: One thing I also wanted to mention about the Sit Room scene is I think it looks great. I feel like in season 7 now the image quality of the show has caught up to modern standards.

JOSH: Ah, interesting.

HRISHI: You know going back and watching season one. You know the lighting, of course the set, all the elements of the production were very well done for the time but the difference between 1999 and our modern technology is pretty great in terms of what the image looks like. Now I look at that and I think this could be a T.V. show that was made now, even though it's you know 14 years old, it looks as good as anything that's on T.V.

JOSH: So you're saying technical advancement has ground to a halt and that's maybe because we're not educating our kids.

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: And that's why you're running in 2000.

HRISHI: Yeah, but do you notice that?

JOSH: I don't think I consciously did but now that you mention I think I subconsciously did.

HRISHI: I think the light is really beautiful and the color is really beautiful. We mentioned that in the episode that Alex Graves directed recently as well, but I felt it here especially in that Situation Room scene. So you - you made a little reference to this already that Louise calls Ned, Ted -

JOSH: Yes

HRISHI: She says she doesn't like his head.

JOSH: She says it rhymes.

HRISHI: Poor Ted.

JOSH: Yeah. And she's already called him Elmer Fudd Jr. or something like that in an earlier episode. She got, uh, I like unexplained, focused animists like - uh - Michael Scott hates Toby on *The Office*.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: With a white hot passion although it's really never made clear to what he objects and it's a little bit like this Louise/Ned dynamic where it's just, whatever. He's just under her skin, she does not like him.

HRISHI: There's a moment where Ronna comes and tells Louise and Josh that they got a bunch of phone calls from sort of the ACLU and people who are upset about what Santos has said

[West Wing Episode 7.04 excerpt]

LOU: Where there any positive phone calls?

RONNA: A couple but mostly they think he's either pandering or worse

JOSH: Or that he believes in Intelligent Design.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: When he says that, "or that he believes in Intelligent Design," his attitude there and he does this hand motion. Where he kind of like makes this little claw thing and everything about it reminds me so much of Daniel Levy as David Rose in the show *Schitt's Creek*.

JOSH: Interesting!

HRISHI: Have you watched that show?

JOSH: I love Schitt's Creek and it's one of, it's an example of a show that I really did not like at first. I watched the first couple episodes and it's filled with you know Catherine O'Hara and would-be Toby Ziegler, Eugene Levy people that I love and I just didn't quite work for me. But my wife just kept watching and watching and saying this is fantastic you got to try to jump back in and now I love that show.

HRISHI: Well like *Parks and Recreation*, I think that that's a show that really figured itself out by season two when they decided to make their characters extremely likable instead of unlikable as they were in season one. I feel like there's a huge shift in the sort of unwritten –

JOSH: Shifts creek.

HRISHI: [laugh] Exactly.

JOSH: Yes I agree that I think that's what it is too although I, on the merits, don't have any problem with characters being unlikable whatever that I think that is the shift that did make this series work because they've become quite lovable.

HRISHI: Yeah. because I felt the same way.

JOSH: And you really root for them and care about them.

HRISHI: Yeah I had the same reaction that you did for the first few episodes. I was like I don't think this show's for me. But other friends watched and said it's just it's so great you have to watch and then I did and I loved it and I saw everything. And one of the one of the things that's incredible about the show is the characters are so specifically drawn and so well articulated that you can see this little moment in *The West Wing* when Bradley Whitford does this little thing and it is so clearly the character of David Rose.

JOSH: I have to go back and take a look.

HRISHI: Yeah I thought that was fun.

JOSH: it's funny that is the hand gesture because there's a lot of very specific hand gesture work in *Schitt's Creek* but it's very funny. Annie Murphy as Alexis, the daughter, uses her hands kind of brilliantly with that character. It's a great ensemble it's one that is a terrific comedy ensemble.

HRISHI: Yeah right but so we were talking about the gaffe –

JOSH: *The West Wing*?

HRISHI: [laughs] Exactly. What Josh calls a God gaffe. In fact, again Josh sums it up for us really nicely.

[West Wing Episode 7.04 excerpt]

JOSH: When asked if he believes in Intelligent Design he responds, "I believe in God" that sounds like yes. That sounds like... [fades out]

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: He's got the crux of the story line tightly buttoned up for us.

JOSH: MmmHmm.

HRISHI: So Santos makes a statement about Farad and he's not supposed to take any questions. Josh tells him not to take any questions. But then he does get questions. He gets one about evolution in the curriculum and he bucks it, right?

JOSH: MmmHmm.

HRISHI: He says here where this is the board is question the teaching of evolution he says that's a state matter and I don't think is the right time. But then he gets another question. You know *The West Wing* loves this, right? Politician starts to walk away you know, dismissing, no more questions but then there is one more question.

JOSH: Someone hooks them.

HRISHI: And then they turn around and so another reporter says, "Congressman can you tell us if you believe in Intelligent Design?" more, you know more direct. Santos turns around he says:

[West Wing Episode 7.04 excerpt]

SANTOS: I believe in God and I like to think he's intelligent.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: What do you think Josh? Is that a gaffe?

JOSH: Well these days it would be a pronoun gaffe to be sure.

HRISHI: He should have said YOU believe in God and YOU like [both laugh]

JOSH: I don't know. I don't know what caused pronouns, or what's acceptable. I think it's a slight gaffe not to have elaborated further on the spot. I do get why Louise and Josh would think he has to further elucidate what he's saying and make clear that he's not suggesting that his beliefs should be part of any kind of school curriculum and what he goes on later to say, I think, needs to be said. So I agree that it is a small gaffe or a potential gaffe were he not to address it further.

HRISHI: Right and especially if you are Josh in this scenario and you don't know that he has a terrific answer up his sleeve.

JOSH: Yeah. I would be worried.

HRISHI: Yeah. Santos says, "I believe in God and I like to think that he believes in mic drops" and so then he leaves.

JOSH: [laughs] Boom. Yeah and I also get, sort of, I think what I, if I recall correctly what Louise's take is which is that this is a little of something, a little pet treat to his swath of voters who are also of the faithful and that there might be an upside to it.

HRISHI: Yeah, I think that's exactly what Santos sees and understands and when you watch this episode again I feel like you can almost see the glint in his eye when he says,

[West Wing Episode 7.04 excerpt]

SANTOS: Still hammering me on borders?

LOU: Jackhammering.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: I feel like in that moment you can see Santos starting to formulate this plan which is really kind of like the counter punch to what we saw Vinick do in the previous episode.

JOSH: Exactly.

HRISHI: Where he's going to go after the Latino vote in this really explicit way. This is a much more I think subtle and more effective way of doing it. It feels more authentic because Santos is talking about his own faith while putting the Vinnick campaign on their back foot.

JOSH: I agree and that's what I most like about this episode. It is subtle and it is a response to Vinick sort of victories on the right and the left from the previous episode and it's clever of Santos to realize that he can score on the right and the left here by proclaiming himself to be a man of faith himself, and by further developing the point that, none the less, we have something called separation of church and state and not to be part of a scientific curriculum because faith isn't science.

HRISHI: Right. Santos manages to be respectful of those people in the, in the classroom and all people who might want intelligent design taught in schools while still disagreeing with them and reaffirming his own faith in the process of being pro evidence based science for - in the curriculum. It's kind of like a Pete Buttigieg move.

JOSH: Hmm. Yeah, no, I would say you know there could be a further point to be made but it would reduce the political upside to Santos, which is that intelligent design really just is sort of an attempt at pseudo-science. Which is just sort of couch religious tenets of faith in the language of science. You know there is a sort of, I think, the whole phrase "intelligent design" I think is an attempt to make it sound scientific or just make it sound like something even slightly other than what it is which is just faith, a concept of faith, the idea of creationism. He, I think wisely, you know doesn't take a battering ram to the attempts to teach intelligent design as if it's science.

HRISHI: Right, I agree.

JOSH: He's subtle about it.

HRISHI: Yes absolutely. Although they certainly weren't thinking of me when they came up with the term intelligent design, it feels like it's the kind of term that would be aimed at someone like

me. Because it has a Trojan horse way of sneaking in a faith based argument for creation as someone who is not a believer in a, you know, theistic God but I am a believer in there is some awesome stuff out there in the world like things are awesome and I mean that literally. Like, they should fill you with awe when you look and marvel at what exists around you, all kinds of amazing things. But that doesn't make me think of some kind of deity necessarily being behind it. They're trying to sneak that in and I'm like, "intelligent design, yeah let me learn more about that."

JOSH: Right but if you learn too much about it, it reduces down I think to creationism.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: I mean I'm no expert but I think that's ultimately what it is and so it is a sort of a side door into pseudo-science.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: Whats say we take a quick break and come back later.

[ad break]

HRISHI: Ok. Let's talk about Mr. Frost.

JOSH: Let's.

HRISHI: I had to make sure that Mr. Frost was not the name of Arnold Schwarzenegger's character in Batman & Robin. That's Mr. Freeze.

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: His name is Charles Frost. Do you know who else is named Charles Frost?

JOSH: No.

HRISHI: Charles Christopher Frost. He's an American botanist who discovered multiple species of fungi.

JOSH: Hmm. Did you know this off the top of your head?

HRISHI: I didn't. I was just, when I was looking things up about Mr. Freeze, came across that.

JOSH: You can't see me right now but I gave you the, "Oooh, C.J. knows the President of Kazakhstan" look.

HRISHI: [laughin] That's right, that's right. No, I thought it was interesting because that means the one in our show deals with the Sit Room and the real one deals with the mushroom.

JOSH: Boom! Ahh, I knew you were aft - worth it!

[both laughing]

JOSH: I knew we were going on a trip somewhere.

HRISHI: They both seem like “fungis”

JOSH: Ooooh, he's got a follow up.

[laughter]

HRISHI: Charlie is doing an absolutely terrible job of subbing in for Margaret.

JOSH: True.

HRISHI: As the person who's screening calls for C.J. because Charles Frost keeps calling C.J. to tell her what we later find out is *extremely* urgent information about the Farad assassination and Charlie can't figure out who he is, what he's calling about. I mean there's like this weird comedy of, oh there's somebody who briefed Vinick who seemed really crazy. Who's that? I don't know. What was his name? Hey there's a guy named Mr. Frost who's calling you. What does he want? I don't know. Find out, you know, like...

JOSH: I just couldn't agree more. I think if Margaret were on the job that the President of Kazakhstan might be alive today.

HRISHI: Right?

JOSH: Yeah I think definitely Charlie's involved. I mean not, you know, on purpose but he's responsible for the man's death.

[Hrishi laughs]

JOSH: That's what I'm saying.

HRISHI: Wow. You often say that your favorite episode of The West Wing is the one where Charlie died, but maybe it's the one in which Charlie killed.

JOSH: Boom.

HRISHI: But really Charlie....uh

JOSH: He's off his game.

HRISHI: Just ask one follow up question. Just ask one question. What is this call in regards to?

JOSH: Oh, a multi assassination conspiracy? Let me put you right through.

HRISHI: Yeah. Anyway so but- but eventually Charles Frost sneaks into C.J.'s office, I guess because he's a spy.

JOSH: Yes.

HRISHI: Or an analyst, rather. And he tries to tell her his theories and C.J.'s annoyed by the whole thing and she asks Kate how does this person, you know, even get through when he's under your purview. Nobody really seems to take him seriously.

JOSH: True.

HRISHI: But Kate even says,

[West Wing Episode 7.04 excerpt]

KATE: Frost is a good analyst. He knows the region better than anyone but he's also wrong as often as he's right.

C.J.: Is he still brief...[fades out]

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And this is like her justification for why people have been dismissing him.

JOSH: Yeah.

HRISHI: But just stop and think about that for a second. He knows the region better than anyone. Ok, so maybe you should listen to him.

JOSH: So there's no one better to go to.

HRISHI: Right. And he's also as wrong as often as he is right. So there's a 50/50 chance –

JOSH: Exactly what I thought!

HRISHI: - that the president of Kazakhstan is going to be assassinated and it's gonna to be linked to the Palestinian Chairman being assassinated. Like maybe those are all odds that are worth investigating.

JOSH: No, I agree with you. I had the same thought. Like, Ok, so there's nobody more qualified and it's as likely to be correct as wrong [both laugh]. Wait, what? Get that man in here immediately!

HRISHI: Kate also says, “we have no intelligence to support that theory.”

JOSH: Well maybe because you haven't talked to this guy.

HRISHI: Yeah, I mean because he is certain of it and not only that - he's right. So, where is his info coming from? Does he not have intelligence that he can share with them? Or is he psychic? I don't know. I feel like Kate Harper and her department need some intelligence design.

JOSH: Mmmm ... Very nice. [laughs] You're not wrong. You're not wrong. People, a lot of people are having not their best day at work.

HRISHI: Yeah, But, anyway, Frost tells C.J. that she hasn't been getting the information that actually, this is a carefully organized act and there are more coming. It seems pretty dire and in some ways C.J. reacts to him as if –

JOSH: He's big block of cheese guy –

HRISHI: - and she's got a block of cheese crackpot.

JOSH: Yeah.

HRISHI: Yeah. But this is not, “hey let's have a wolves only highway” this is...

JOSH: Right. Which, by the way, I think has proven to be a substantive and worthwhile idea.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: Because as people, people are constantly sending me stories about wolf only highways.

HRISHI: Well there was that arctic fox that they discovered...

JOSH: You mean Brad Whitford?

HRISHI: [laughs] The was an arctic fox who walked 2700 miles, over 2700 miles, as sung about by The Proclaimers. To go from northern Norway...

JOSH: [singing] and I would walk 27 thousand more...

HRISHI: [laughs] Thank you. He went from Norway to Canada over 4 months.

JOSH: Wow. That is impressive.

HRISHI: Anyway, but this isn't that. This is a guy who works in the intelligence community who says you should pay attention to this and yet even when C.J. gets that notification, when she sees the red box and Slattery tells her, “Yeah, Issetov has been killed.” She says,

[West Wing Episode 7.04 excerpt]

C.J.: I want you to tell me everything you can about the assassin as soon as possible. Somebody get our ambassador to Kazakhstan and I want the regional office of Unocal on the phone now.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Because he has also predicted that the regional vice president of Unocal is gonna be killed as well. What she does not say though is also maybe get that guy who told us about all this stuff.

JOSH: That's a good point that's. That because now they're only, he's only 60/40 right. But, that still does not get him a meeting.

HRISHI: Yeah. So, poor Mr. Frost.

JOSH: Indeed. I like to see John Aylward who plays Barry.

HRISHI: Yes, Barry is Leo's lawyer or hopeful lawyer. He needs someone for his hearing and again Barry does a great job summing up the situation for us.

[West Wing Episode 7.04 excerpt]

[bell dings]

BARRY: So a candidate for the vice president with a history of alcoholism and heart disease was working inside the White House during when a major breach of national security occurred. That is going to be dropped off at the press infested Hart building with his lawyer to testify before a republican congressional committee investigating a democratic administrations failure to competently protect the presidency.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: He sums it all up.

JOSH: Yes he does. Well I like to see him because for the first time I got the dramatic import of one of our team being subpoenaed. Like, now I get the stakes and I like the way it was written and acted.

HRISHI: Right. Well because previous to that the stakes had been sort of stated at a level of "the press is going to have a field day with this"

JOSH: MmmHm.

HRISHI: But this is really where we find out what a danger, just the *fact* of the subpoena to Leo, is going to be really bad for the campaign. Leo has talked about the suicide bomber, you know he says, how do we protect ourselves from a guy dressed in dynamite? And Barry turns that around on him and says,

[West Wing Episode 7.04 excerpt]

BARRY: Well we could talk about protecting you, but as far as the Santos campaign is concerned, you're just a guy dressed in dynamite.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Mmhm. Dynamite, exactly. It's good dialogue in that scene. I also really like John Aylward. I would work with him subsequent to *The West Wing* on a pilot by David Kelley called *Legally Mad*. I was so sad this one didn't go. it was a legal show, and there was music and singing involved and ...

HRISHI: What?

HRISHI: Yeah. Kristen Chenowith was on it, Hugh Bonneville, Tom Hollander, Kurt Fuller, it was a fantas - and John Aylward, and I. it was a just a fantastic cast and sadly didn't go.

HRISHI: Ah, man. I'm looking at it right now.

JOSH: Yeah. *Legally Mad*.

HRISHI: Explain the singing in it.

JOSH: I don't really remember. [laughs] Um, I didn't do any singing in the pilot although I think down the line I would have – I was hoping to get a musical number or two. I can't really remember how it all worked cause I'm old and it was a long time ago.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: It was a lot of fun and the actors were so good.

HRISHI: So, in terms of how dangerous Leo is to the Santos campaign, we get it reiterated from Toby.

[West Wing Episode 7.04 excerpt]

TOBY: Leo can't pull up to the Hart building in a limo. Vice Presidential candidate can't testify, it will be the end of the Santos campaign.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: So we know that and the president knows, but we also now know that Toby knows this too. The stakes have been explicitly stated and here we have it being said by Toby himself.

JOSH: Mmm Hmm.

HRISHI: Which is what's helped set up the end of this episode. You're still thinking about *Legally Mad*, aren't you?

JOSH: [laughs] I want to find a description that explains the signing. But never mind. I'm back, I'm back.

HRISHI: So now you know, we know it, the President knows it, and we know now that Toby explicitly knows it as well.

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: And that sets up what will be the end of this episode.

JOSH: Which is succinct?

HRISHI: Yes.

JOSH: And compelling. I like, I like how it's handled.

HRISHI: And by rules of three, it finishes the set up about needing a lawyer that's been introduced.

[West Wing Episode 7.04 excerpt]

C.J.: Have you gotten a lawyer?

LEO: You don't need a lawyer if you haven't done anything wrong.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Of which I think it's said twice in this episode and it just struck, struck me as astonishingly naive in both instances.

HRISHI: Yeah, Leo says it to C.J. and then C.J. repeats it to Toby. Which is why, you know, Toby and actually confesses to C.J. by saying, "I got a lawyer." But yeah, it is naive and not only that we've already dispensed with this in *The West Wing*.

JOSH: Sure.

HRISHI: In Manchester part one, Oliver Babish tells Charlie that he's gonna need a lawyer.

[West Wing Episode 3.01 excerpt]

BABISH: OK so you're going to need a lawyer.

CHARLIE: Actually, Mr. Babish, I don't think I need one.

BABISH: You do.

CHARLIE: I think I'll be fine.

BABISH: Really?

CHARLIE: Yeah.

BABISH: He's going to ask you about everything you have seen and heard since you started working at the White House.

CHARLIE: I can answer those questions truthfully.

BABISH: Then he's going to call you back a month later and ask you the exact same questions, if your answers change even a little they can prosecute you for perjury. Are you prepared to describe every conversation you ever had with the President? Whether he asked for an aspirin? Whether his hand quivered? This is NFL football.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: So, how is it that Charlie knows this but somehow we've forgotten this lesson? Also, all these people have law degrees they really know that they need a lawyer.

JOSH: Of course, yes.

HRISHI: If you feel like it's a silly thing but it all is in service to set up this last moment with Toby and C.J., because in a similar way to the Farad assassination, you get couple of chances to have Toby drop the news.

[West Wing Episode 7.04 excerpt]

TOBY: I got a lawyer.

C.J.: What?

dramatic pause

TOBY: I got a lawyer.

[end clip]

HRISHI: And then you see it on C.J.'s face, like she knows what he's...

JOSH: That means.

HRISHI: Yeah, sure. And then we end with Toby saying,

[West Wing Episode 7.04 excerpt]

TOBY: I did it.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: I did it.

HRISHI: And I thought that was, that was smart. You know, you get to have this reveal in a few stages instead of Toby just saying, "I am the leak." You know, he kind of, you get a softer entry point by, kind of calling back this comment that Leo made and then C.J. repeated.

JOSH: Yes, I agree with you. Except I don't love the phrase softer entry point but. [laughter] I'm not comf-, I'm not comfortable with that. Let me ask you this, we both have known now for so long that it is in fact Toby. Do you remember what your initial reaction was? Had you come to expect it by now? Or long before this? Or were you surprised? Or what was your take, do you remember? Because I know you didn't, you didn't just watch it this week.

HRISHI: No, but that's the thing. I found out that it was Toby before I ever watched these seasons.

JOSH: Yeah I forgot, that's right.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: I'm curious to know that I feel like I can't have that I don't have the fresh eyes and I can't remember you know what I thought when I first read that script. I want to know and I'm curious to know how it played with audiences.

HRISHI: I think that if I had watched this in real time, I would have really suspected that it was not C.J. by this point.

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: You know that because it had been dragged out for so long in such a way where the show is pointing us at C.J. I think I'm a sophisticated enough T.V. watcher that I would have recognized it for the red herring that it was.

JOSH: Yeah, fair enough. I'm sure you're right. Do you think you would have come up with Toby?

HRISHI: I don't know that. I'm not sure about my gut says yes, I would, I would have figured it out like I would've seen his reactions and...

JOSH: How about your heart?

HRISHI: My heart says, "don't be arrogant, you don't know."

JOSH: [Laughs] How about your kidney? Which of course has a very special place in your heart.

HRISHI: [Laughs] Is that why I have such bad digestion problems?

JOSH: It might be. Ask Dr. Trump.

HRISHI: [Laughs] Anyway, this is how the episode ends, and we're going to get more about this clearly because the ramifications are huge, as we've been talking about it for so long. But that's all we get in this episode. More to come later. In the meantime I think let's move on to this moment that I really liked right before this. This sort of cross-cutting between the President at the Kennedy Center and Santos in the school classroom.

JOSH: Yes, and the poised oboes as in each scene.

HRISHI: Yes, like the oboes were played with poise?

JOSH: And I'm just realizing now that that was sort of there's layers and layers of meaning as didn't we decide the Toby's the sad oboe? Many, many seasons ago on this very...

HRISHI: Yes, that's right. And you're the triangle.

JOSH: I liked how Andrew Bernstein directed these scenes, and you know there's there are musicians in each but I was struck by maybe I can and I can remember that it's the oboists or there's some kids who are super-duper ready to play their instruments even though they're not playing them right.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: I was obsessed in the way they were holding them.

HRISHI: Yeah. You know there's this really nice contrast between the President who is reading the names of the dead in Jerusalem as a tribute to them and as tribute to his friend Chairman Farad. He says he would have wanted a moment to recognize them. And he reads their names, you know, they are students. Some of them were Israeli, some of them were Palestinian and while he's saying that Santos is in this classroom and Santo says,

[West Wing Episode 7.04 excerpt]

SANTOS: Was the universe designed by God? That's up to everyone in this country to decide for themselves because the framers of our Constitution believed that if the people were to be sovereign and belong to different religions at the same time then our official religion would have to be no religion at all.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: They really don't beat the horse of religion in the context of the bombing and I really appreciate that. Nobody ever says, "oh well this is religiously motivated." Because, of course, you don't need to say that and it's so complicated and nuanced but we know that religion is at the heart of that.

JOSH: Right, yeah, very good point.

HRISHI: And so I thought there was a soft landing for this line as well, as something that could also hit too hard or early on with a thud because they didn't do that it was really elegant.

JOSH: I agree. I appreciate the subtlety.

HRISHI: And then the parallels between what's going on with the President, what's going on Santos, is made more explicit by the school orchestra and then you know, and then this Mozart recital happening at the Kennedy Center.

JOSH: I think we hear the Kennedy Center Orchestra and that was probably a good choice.

HRISHI: [laughing] Right. That's right. They're playing...

JOSH: It would have been be kind of funny though if we heard a really [expletive deleted] elementary school-

HRISHI: [laughs] But they do cut between the two, so maybe, you don't know, at the Kennedy Center they're playing serenade number 10 in B flat major by Mozart, maybe they're playing that at the classroom too but we don't know.

JOSH: Oh, we hear the classroom's music?

HRISHI: We don't hear the classroom's music...

JOSH: Oh yeah, exactly

HRISHI: We see them performing while the music from the Kennedy Center is being played.

JOSH: Right, exactly. I think they probably made the wise choice on which music to play, although it's making me think of when I was a kid my aunt and uncle had a record of this full orchestra that was incredibly terrible. Like it was a comedy record of orchestra music played badly and it's really, really funny. I've gotta to see if I can find that anywhere.

HRISHI: My God that is, has there ever been, like I'm just thinking about how expensive that must have been to record a full orchestra.

JOSH: [Laughs] I got to find out the story behind that, because...

HRISHI: I can only imagine that they were really thinking exactly of you when they made that record.

JOSH: I think I found it already. The Portsmouth Sinfonia. Here is an article about it. "What is what is it about objects of the terrible works of art that so captivates? Such utter artlessness cannot be faked but it can, composer Gavin Bryars found, be deliberately orchestrated to quite enjoyably terrible effect. In 1970 Bryars staged a 3 day talent show at the Portsmouth School of Art with comedians, ventriloquist, musicians, etc. His own entry was the Portsmouth Sinfonia, now rightly known as the world's worst orchestra.

[music clip from the Portsmouth Sinfonia]

HRISHI: Um. Well that kind of undercuts the earnest of the [laughing] of the last point that I'm trying to make about this episode which is that this is a really nice scene that, that I think really it's sort of *The West Wing* at its finest connecting these two different worlds. You know, both the federal and the sort of the - the grander side of that the President inhabits and those sort of, the local side that Santos is speaking to. You know, you've got the young and old and small and large, all sort of connected through these questions of faith and freedom and government and it's just, it's really beautiful.

JOSH: Yeah, but I like that terrible orchestra. [laughing] No, very well said, very well said. All good points and thank you for staying on subject. [laughing] All right we've done it again, Hrishi. We're one step closer to the end of *The West Wing Weekly*. I mean every time we've ever done an episode we've been one step closer.

HRISHI: Exactly.

JOSH: I will reiterate that point. I did get that. I get the math. Yeah, I missed the halfway point. I was wrong about that but I understand, I understand basic math. But, you know, another one in the can.

HRISHI: Thanks so much for listening, Josh thanks so much for talking.

JOSH: Do you really mean that?

HRISHI: I do, I mean it really sincerely.

JOSH: Thanks right back at you, friend.

HRISHI: If you want to leave a comment for us go find an envelope, open it up, yell your comments into it and then don't mail it.

JOSH: Right, and then follow us on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook.

HRISHI: You can also get *West Wing Weekly* merch, if you want, at theWestWingWeekly.com/merch.

JOSH: And for the first time we're offering a little bonus code.

HRISHI: That's right we're offering a 20 percent discount on challenge coins. If you'd like to get one you just have to use the code WestWing20 at check out.

JOSH: That's WestWing20. *The West Wing Weekly* remains a proud member of Radiotopia at PRX. Radiotopia is a procession of pithy podcasts that you can find at radiotopia.fm.

HRISHI: After you take an avalanche of Advil from all that alliteration, with liquid of course, wash it down. Please join us in thanking Nick Song, Margaret Miller, and Zach McNeas for helping us to make this episode and indeed this podcast.

JOSH: They are the best. Best in the business. OK.

HRISHI: OK

Both: What's Next?

[Outro Music]