

The West Wing Weekly
6.05: "The Hubbert Peak"

[Intro Music]

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

JOSH: And I'm Joshua Malina.

HRISHI: And today we're talking about episode five from season six. It's called "The Hubbert Peak."

JOSH: Welcome to a new year of *The West Wing Weekly*. This episode was written by Peter Noah. It was directed by Julie Hébert and it first aired on November 17th, 2004.

HRISHI: Here is my synopsis. In this episode, Josh learns about quote "web logs" after crashing an enormous SUV into a Prius. Annabeth, like wingman at a bar with a single friend, tries to help Toby up his briefing game. Charlie is forced out of his prestigious White House job by his ex-girlfriend but it's actually an act of kindness, possibly. Leo's removed from the action but exerts some power and love from his hotel room as he insists that C.J. plays chess with the president to keep an eye on his executive brain function.

JOSH: This is your work, right?

HRISHI: Yes.

JOSH: That was exquisite. [Hrishi laughs] I see, so we're gonna try in 2019. I wish you had warned me.

HRISHI: I'm, you know, at least for the first week before it all peters out.

JOSH: Coming in strong.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Hashtag start strong.

HRISHI: Hashtag sputter out quickly.

JOSH: That's right. Web log.

HRISHI: Web log.

JOSH: He's so nerdy.

HRISHI: Well as you mention, this is November 2004.

JOSH: In fairness.

HRISHI: So I give latitude to the show for doing a little explaining as to what a blog is.

[West Wing Episode 6.05 excerpt]

TOBY: Every news organization in this country surfs these blogs now. This will be everywhere.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Here's a little context on web logs. Blogger.com was purchased by Google in 2003. So it had really, they'd been around for a long time but I feel like they'd really entered the public consciousness, you know in the early 2000's, it's still new enough that you can understand where this is coming from. It just sounds silly now. But like we've talked about this in previous episodes, *The West Wing* feels so timely, so often the biggest area of weakness is technology.

JOSH: Yeah that's right. It's the one thing that really can be counted on to change [cross talk] over time in this universe.

HRISHI: [cross talk] Right. Yeah political--

JOSH: --morass and gridlock can be counted on.

HRISHI: That's timeless. Well we start the episode off with Josh looking at a car, a Prius, in one of the most ridiculous cold opens ever. Colds open.

JOSH: Colds open, please.

HRISHI: Sorry, one of the most ridiculous colds open in series history.

JOSH: Ridiculous because of what happens?

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Because Josh can't drive?

HRISHI: The whole thing is just ridiculous. So he's looking at a car, he's at a dealership, he's looking a Prius, he talks to the salesman, he spouts some wonkiness about fuel numbers.

[West Wing Episode 6.05 excerpt]

SALESMAN: And with gas prices at an all-time high.

JOSH: They're not, actually. The record high was in 81.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Then he decides he's not going to test drive it but he does want to test drive this huge SUV. He's like it's just cool. Whatever, okay fine. Josh is a dork, we know that. But then he talks to Donna on the phone while doing the test drive, which is just dumb, and then he's like I'm gonna put it in my hands free set while he's still moving.

JOSH: Mmhm.

HRISHI: I mean he drives like someone who does not know how to drive and then he acts like someone who doesn't know how life works.

JOSH: [laughs] You're not wrong.

HRISHI: I feel like we've seen Josh be impetuous, and short tempered, and short sighted, and arrogant, but this is the first time I feel like we've seen Josh just be stupid.

JOSH: Yeah, he comes off pretty bad.

HRISHI: Yeah and I didn't like it.

JOSH: Yeah. Well I think this episode all together has a lot of build up and not enough pay off.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: I feel that way about a variety of things in this episode.

HRISHI: Ok, well let's get into it.

JOSH: Ok.

HRISHI: Because for me, later on the episode Kate finds out about this incident. She says,

[West Wing Episode 6.05 excerpt]

KATE: This is hilarious but not actually funny.

JOSH: See and I'd say since it's mostly expensive and embarrassing it's funny but not actually hilarious.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And I'd say it's not funny and also not hilarious.

JOSH: [laughs]

HRISHI: I would say...

JOSH: I think that's a problem. It has the makings of something that should be funnier and more enjoyable to watch.

HRISHI: Yeah, I would say it's contrived and also not actually worth it.

JOSH: I think so too. I could see pitching this idea and a room full of people going oh that's going to be really funny or that's going to be really great and it ties into this and it will work and we'll make the thing out of it. But it doesn't quite, somehow lift off is never quite achieved.

HRISHI: Which was the previous episode and which worked really well.

JOSH: Ding ding.

HRISHI: I can't even see the pitch. You try and pitch it to me in the most compelling way because I can't come up with it. [Dramatic music and Hrishi does movie trailer voice] Josh test drives an SUV and hits a Prius and irony abounds.

JOSH: [laughs] Well I think my problem now is with your, that voice.

HRISHI: [cross talk] That's the only way I could pitch this.

JOSH: [cross talk] Because it's hard to pitch it anything. I think if you did Citizen Kane with that voice I'd be like you know what that sounds terrible. I don't wanna see that.

HRISHI: [laughs] You don't remember when I said [Dramatic music and Hrishi does movie trailer voice again] Josh, it's two guys talking about *The West Wing*, one of them was on the show.

JOSH: That is how you convinced me ultimately to do this.

HRISHI: And it worked so.

JOSH: Yeah that's true.

HRISHI: So it does work.

JOSH: I take it back

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: No I think the idea of someone in the administration, say Josh,

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: you know, smashing into a Prius with an SUV and causing an optics issue for the Bartlet administration, I don't know it sounds like it could be funny or interesting or a good little hook to get us into something but it doesn't quite work.

HRISHI: Mhmm.

JOSH: Maybe you're right maybe it is just conceptually the credibility of it is too silly.

HRISHI: It's a cliché that I, I think they have a name for it, it's Prius ex machina.

JOSH: [laughs] Oooh ohh man. Hashtag start strong.

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: [laughs] There you go, Prius ex machina. You're not wrong.

HRISHI: In that scene where Kate says that it's funny but not hilarious, or hilarious but not funny rather, she'd been talking about rats that can detect bombs. The Gambian giant pouched rat. Then later in the conversation Josh makes a *Princess Bride* reference sort of. Did you catch that?

JOSH: What does he say?

HRISHI: Well then Kate introduces the next topic she says "did you ever hear of the Hubbert peak?" and Josh says "does it have to do with gradations of mirth or are we back on rats of an unusual size?"

[Princess Bride excerpt]

WESTLEY: Rodents of unusual size? I don't think they exist.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: Speaking of,

HRISHI: Yeah?

JOSH: Is it Gambian pouched rats?

HRISHI: Gambian giant pouched rat.

JOSH: My son is lobbying to get a Vietnamese potbelly pig. So if anybody out there can advise me yay or nay whether this is a terrible idea. We have three cats. He's big pitch is based on they get along well with cats apparently, they can be trained to use a litter box and they won't grow to enormous size. I'm not sure I'm convinced about any of those three things. But I do kinda like the idea of getting a pig.

HRISHI: I'm looking at a picture and this is not a small animal.

JOSH: It isn't huh?

HRISHI: No, it's enormous.

JOSH: Oh. [laughs]

HRISHI: Actually. [laughs]

JOSH: I haven't done the research yet.

HRISHI: A lot of people, I think, end up getting potbellied pigs because they start off really small and cute, not realizing how big they get and then they have to give them away.

JOSH: Yes, that's exactly how I was gulled into parenthood.

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: [laughs] They start out small and cute and my God what they turn into and I can't wait to give them away.

HRISHI: [laughs] Kate says you ever hear of the Hubbert peak? And Josh says yes I'm watching it right now.

JOSH: [laughs]

HRISHI: I, as I've already indicated, found certain thing annoying in this episode. I did not like some of the dialogue. I didn't like things like "does it have to do with gradations of mirth" like people talk about how when Sorkin was writing *The West Wing* that everybody's really smart and they spoke really quickly. And you know, imagine all these people who are very smart working in the White House. Maybe we've discussed this already, I think maybe in fact we have.

But the smartness, it came from the ideas, not from their vocabulary. Like actually if you go back and you watch the Sorkin episodes there aren't a lot of fancy SAT words being deployed left and right, and when they are there's usually some spotlight being put on them.

JOSH: Point being made out of it.

HRISHI: Yeah like acalculia.

[West Wing Episode 2.03 excerpt]

PRESIDENT BARTLET: Anybody know what the word 'acalculia' means?

SAM: It's the inability to perform arithmetic functions

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: People talk really quickly but it feels like human beings more or less. But this does it have to do with gradations of mirth, there was another line from C.J. early on when she first runs into him.

[West Wing Episode 6.05 excerpt]

JOSH: How's your weekend?

C.J.: What weekend? Oh you mean that two day period where the giant mountain of briefing material evades your domicile instead of your office, finally and completely obliterating whatever desperate and pathetic distinction you've labored mightily yet foolishly to try and maintain.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And that's ridiculous, and most ridiculous though is domicile.

JOSH: I feel you with that one.

HRISHI: Like even if you wanted to make this like joke about oh a weekend you mean that time, this where the dialogue in this episode bugged me. See also, the Undersecretary of Whimsy and Caprice.

JOSH: Yeah, I didn't love that either. Especially as it was supposed to be like that's how he's won them over, the press corps is back in his hand with that one.

HRISHI: I would say see the Undersecretary of Trying too Hard and Wordiness.

JOSH: [laughs] Yeah I think, I think you have a point. It kinda makes the characters a little bit

annoying because you're like uh they're those people.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: They're like me, just trying to use big words [Hrishi laughs] for no reason. I hate that.

HRISHI: It just didn't feel...

JOSH: Organic?

HRISHI: Organic yeah. Or Sorkanic.

JOSH: Very good.

HRISHI: I feel like I've spent a lot of time listening to these characters speak for the first four years with a certain vocabulary or mannerisms and this feels out of character, not just with the characters but also with, I guess like with humanity.

JOSH: A simulacrum if you will of [laughs]

HRISHI: Uhhmm

JOSH: See I'm doing it and I'm commenting on it.

HRISHI: [laughs] But you can use some, I mean I also appreciate people deploying a big word but I just uh, it just doesn't feel like how you'd do it.

JOSH: They're gonna be all gerschwantble around it.

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: I was hoping something funnier would come out.

HRISHI: I like it.

JOSH: I thought something sounding like a word would come out. Oh well.

HRISHI: Did you say guschwampel?

JOSH: I might. I know it's Germanic in origin but I'm not exactly sure what I just said.

HRISHI: Ah. Okay but my issues were not only semantic.

JOSH: I hate, I will not stand for anything antisemantic from you!

HRISHI: [laughs] Ummm.

JOSH: I protect my people.

HRISHI: Josh tells C.J. in the same opening that he does not wear pajamas.

JOSH: Offt.

HRISHI: He says I don't wear jammies and then C.J. says she's trying not picture him in those jammies. She gave him, C.J. gave Josh pajamas

JOSH: [gasps]

HRISHI: after he was shot! And she has seen him wearing them. Remember there was a whole joke about how they were way too big but he wears them anyway. He asks who did you think I was? Wilt Chamberlain? You know, something like that. It's been on the show. We've seen it. There were [cross talk] jokes about it.

JOSH: [cross talk] Oh! Damn you're good! Yeah that's a missed op-- I mean it's not only it flouts what the bible of the show has taught us but that actually could have been an opportunity for something funnier than him saying I don't wear pajamas, I BOUGHT YOU PAJAMAS!

HRISHI: Right!

JOSH: That could have actually been really funny instead of this weird quasi-sexual

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: banter they're having.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: That was a more nuanced catch than the really explicitly odd moment when Leo says,

[West Wing Episode 6.05 excerpt]

LEO: The Vicodin helps.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: I was like have you guys watched this show?

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Have you met Leo? That's the dialogue they gave him?

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: That was a weird moment.

HRISHI: Yeah and then the line afterwards was like you wash it down with some vodka and mwah.

JOSH: [laughs] Hatchacha! What happened there? Like, how come nobody said wait, wait a second Leo has a problem, wait do you guys watch *The West Wing*?

HRISHI: [sighs] Yeah.

JOSH: That was a loud one.

HRISHI: Really I mean like the pajama thing, if you wanna make those jokes, just have them be between other people, Josh and C.J. are really the only two people with whom you cannot have that conversation.

JOSH: You're right.

HRISHI: It's a notable moment from the canon.

JOSH: I wish I would once catch something like that.

HRISHI: [laughs] You got the Vicodin thing.

JOSH: Yeah, ok, there you go.

HRISHI: Yeah, here's another interesting thing about this episode. New ground being covered. Will Bailey's wearing a brown suit.

JOSH: That's true. Is that the first time ever

HRISHI: As far as I can remember. I can't think of anybody else wearing a brown suit at any point except for Toby who wears them often.

JOSH: I was just zeroed in on how thin I used to be. [laughs] Because I've gained quite a lot of holiday weight. So I just enjoyed all my appearances in the show like yeah, look how thin little face and that big brown suit.

HRISHI: The brown suit was slimming.

JOSH: Big brown suit. Maybe I'll buy one. But if I wore a brown suit now I would just look like the [expletive deleted] emoji.

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: [laughs] Not at the risk of being too hard on myself.

HRISHI: That emoji is smiling though.

JOSH: That is true. Maybe I should give it a shot.

HRISHI: Ok, so.

JOSH: Yes.

HRISHI: Josh, he crashes the SUV into the Prius and then I'm just, I'm sorry that this is just a complaint fest but this is what this episode has inspired in me.

JOSH: Fair enough.

HRISHI: Josh once again learns that the internet is not something to be trifled with.

JOSH: That, I will say that I have enough memory of what came before in Lemon Lyman.

HRISHI: Yes.

JOSH: That I was like dude have you learned nothing?

HRISHI: And the answer is no.

JOSH: [laughs] That's right.

HRISHI: I believe that he's learned nothing though and so it's less about like an unbelievable moment in the plot and more just like look we've already watched this, like we've already seen what happens.

JOSH: We've been there before, right.

HRISHI: Donna says,

[West Wing Episode 6.05 excerpt]

DONNA: *That gossip blog, District Scene.*

JOSH: *How did she get this?*

DONNA: *Someone at the dealer I guess.*

JOSH: *It's not the end of the world, it's a web log it's not the Washington Post.*

DONNA: *Josh Lyman's office.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: It's a web log.

HRISHI: But he hasn't told anybody, or I guess he told Kate, but he didn't tell C.J. or Toby, both of whom when they learn about it from the blog they are understandably upset and think that he's being silly for not having revealed it earlier so they could do some kind of damage control.

JOSH: Did you pause and read the blog?

HRISHI: I did not.

JOSH: Because it maybe, this is just, it would actually be accurate, but there's a, just a giant typo. Telling the story, it says "the family was complete in shock."

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: And I thought are they trying to go like hyper realistic, like this is the level of journalism you find online or was somebody just hitting the Vicodin before they wrote up what we're going to see onscreen? The family was complete in shock.

HRISHI: [laughs] Yeah, yeah. Let me read you a little something from the internet about blogs.

JOSH: Sure.

HRISHI: From *Wikipedia*, an obscure source that I found online, they have an entry on blogs and it says, "by 2004, the role of blogs became increasingly mainstream." That's the year that we're in in this episode, 2004. "As political consultants, news services, and candidates began using them as tools for outreach and opinion forming. Blogging was established by politicians and political candidates to express opinions on war and other issues, cemented blogs' role as a news source. Even politicians not actively campaigning began to blog to bond with constituents. Israel was among the first national governments to set up an official blog."

JOSH: Although in Israel they're called golbs as they go right to left. Or I guess they're sgolb. You wouldn't put the s on the other end.

HRISHI: Right. [laughs] Okay, then I was looking at this section for political impact. "An early milestone in the rise in importance of blogs came in 2002, when many bloggers focused on comments by U.S. Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott. Senator Lott, at a party honoring Strom Thurmond, praised Senator Thurmond by suggesting that the US would have been better off had Thurmond been elected president. Lott's critics saw these comments as a tacit approval of racial segregation, a policy advocated by Thurmond's 1948 presidential campaign."

JOSH: I remember this.

HRISHI: You remember this in 2002? Yeah.

JOSH: Indeed I do yeah.

HRISHI: "This view was reinforced by documents and recorded interviews dug up by bloggers." For example, *Talking Points Memo*. Talking Points Memo now, TPM is very much considered a legit political news source but in 2002 I guess like *District Scene*, maybe it was seen more as like a fringe news source.

JOSH: Yeah, that's back when the Russians were just starting all those blogs.

HRISHI: Right. [laughs]

JOSH: Presumably.

HRISHI: Although Lott's comments were made at a public event attended by the media, no major media outlets reported on his controversial comments until after blogs broke the story.

JOSH: The blogosphere broke the story!

HRISHI: Yep. They also broke the Dan Rather story where he said that President Bush's military service record was in conflict with accounts that were accepted--

JOSH: Reality.

HRISHI: And it turned out that the documents were forgeries and you know, and that led to Dan Rather's resignation. So Josh does not disclose this and then they find out. And then he decides to call up the blogger and yell at her and yeah and then she starts just transcribing what he's, I mean, it's just so dumb. Josh is just so dumb in this episode.

JOSH: He is dumb! He's a dumbass in this episode

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: It did kind of amuse me the idea of saying this is off the record and then having the conversation and as he's saying it it's going up online. It did kinda, I thought it was clever the way it played out like schmuck! Look it's already up!

HRISHI: It's already up yeah. That was funny.

JOSH: And I think you see, wasn't there a little moment where they discuss how you spell scurrilous.

[West Wing Episode 6.05 excerpt]

JOSH: To use this incident to imply otherwise is scurrilous and irresponsible, cheap and easy irony from what I can only surmise is a cheap and shallow person. I said this was off the record.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: And then I think you see it going up and misspelled.

HRISHI: [laughs] Yeah exactly.

JOSH: Like she's in such a hurry to get the thing posted I thought that was actually a great little touch.

HRISHI: Yeah I guess I was a little bit confused about Josh's knowledge here. Because he knows the website. He knows *District Scene*. Not only does he know the scene, he knows that the creator, writer is a woman. Because Donna says that gossip blog *District Scene* and he says how did she get this? But then he decides to call her up and uh.

JOSH: Nonetheless.

HRISHI: Yeah. Anyway hubris wins out in the end as always.

JOSH: Hubris peak. This may be the peak of Josh's hubris.

HRISHI: Wow I like it. There are some, I think there are some other jokes that are funny in this episode too, in addition to the you're not gonna post this, she's posting right now, there are some good jokes I thought about Toby being bad as the press secretary.

JOSH: Yes, when he looks for some sort of endorsement of his progress from Josh.

[West Wing Episode 6.05 excerpt]

TOBY: On scale one to ten, ten being C.J., one being a chimp throwing feces where do I rank?

JOSH: They're getting better.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: [laughs] That was great.

JOSH: There's also something cute about Richard just in the whole mode of he's clearly vulnerable,

HRISHI: Yes.

JOSH: and a little bit of a deer in the headlights but he also doesn't really want to take someone's advice as much as he realizes he desperately needs it. It's just an enjoyable zone to see Richard Schiff play around in.

HRISHI: It's true. Yeah the Toblerzone.

JOSH: [laughs]

HRISHI: I also liked this when C.J. says,

[West Wing Episode 6.05 excerpt]

C.J.: No one, and I don't mean this unkindly, no one is anxious to have you keep briefing.

TOBY: Just curious, how would you have put it if you had meant it unkindly?

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: [laughs] That was funny. I also like when Toby, having had one of his briefings with Annabeth asks Josh,

[West Wing Episode 6.05 excerpt]

TOBY: Hey how do you get women?

JOSH: Huh?

TOBY: Smart and funny? Right?

JOSH: Plus I've got that boyish thing.

TOBY: *I don't have that.*

JOSH: *Yeah.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: There's something extra funny to me when there's another layer of like its true like it's funny to me to imagine Richard and Brad having this conversation because obviously it's funny with the characters because it's true of the two of them.

HRISHI: [laughs] *Yeah.*

JOSH: Brad has the boyish thing, Richard does not. I like that extra layer of like he's being good natured and self-deprecating.

HRISHI: *Yeah that was really funny. Do you agree with Annabeth's assessment that the press briefing is more of a seduction?*

JOSH: I, no, I don't love that analogy, although I think there is some truth to C.J.'s kind of, I think that is a little bit of her magic was that--

HRISHI: *The charm and disarm.*

JOSH: Yes and that they all kinda fell in love with her. I think there's, I don't know if that is the best approach for Toby, it doesn't just work for anyone but I think she's on to something about how C.J. interacted with the press corps.

HRISHI: One thing that I love about *The West Wing* is the idea that people are experts at things, that they're really good at something, you know that like Josh is really good at political maneuvering and like knowing what the political ramifications are and how things play out who's representing what district or what special interest, or that Sam and Toby are brilliant speech writers, that the president is like a brilliant mind. I love all that stuff. That Margaret is like runs Leo's office like a Swiss watch and in that same way I love that Annabeth just knows exactly what she's talking about.

JOSH: *Mmm.*

HRISHI: *In terms of how to make him better. Like to even take somebody like Toby and shape him into a good press secretary or at least somebody who's getting better. I love watching that part, all that stuff was great.*

JOSH: *I thought you were gonna go elsewhere and say that's why you don't like seeing C.J. become the Chief of Staff like all these specialists start leaving their area of expertise and doing*

something new.

HRISHI: Oh that I wouldn't like that?

JOSH: Yeah I thought maybe, what we are seeing is Toby is expert at what he normally does and yet here he is trying to do press briefings.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: C.J. is the, you know, master press briefer and now she's moved on to something else.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: They're kinda leaving their fields of specialty.

HRISHI: I mean one of the things that is nice about the C.J. part, as well with Charlie's storyline, is the possibility that people can be good at multiple things.

JOSH: Well for sure, I guess what I thought you were saying is, you know, in an administration like this you can get your specialist [cross talk] and why even try to promote them out of, or move them laterally or up a rung, when they're just so great at what they do? You can just get somebody else.

HRISHI: [cross talk] Right. Yeah, yeah.

JOSH: Yeah, no, I think part of the fun now is seeing someone as capable as C.J. navigating a new position.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: And I think she's doing great in the job and it's interesting to see how she does and see her get her feet and get more confident and start running the show.

HRISHI: Yeah exactly and I enjoy that part. But yeah, just in terms of here's Annabeth she's new to us but we, even in the previous episode, we got a taste of it, of her acumen and understanding and here we get to see even more. She gives these real pointers to Toby and you get to see them actually take effect. I love the understanding that it shows of Toby even from somebody who's watched him from afar and how easily she is able to digest those qualities and then turn it into advice on how to make something better.

JOSH: Yeah.

HRISHI: Because it's one thing to be able to criticize somebody and say this is what you're doing wrong and another thing entirely to be able to say this is how you could make it better.

JOSH: Yeah. Also it's fun to watch. I think Kristin's very good in the role. She physicalizes it. There's something, without pushing it, there's something in her physicality. One first of all just in her face, her eyes naturally, she's got these big gorgeous eyes and without like popping them open they just do pop and it's just such a great contrast to Richard's who's got kinda a more heavy lidded kind of. They just have different vibes, different energies and I like how for most of the episode she's just walking ahead of him and kinda knows like a duckling he's gonna kinda run behind.

HRISHI: Yeah, yeah.

JOSH: So I love just physically how she embodies expertise and confidence in what she has to say and who she is. She just kinda walks the walk in a way that enjoy watching and their two energies sort of contrasting and bumping up against one another are fun to watch.

HRISHI: Yeah I noted something about her eyes too. I'm glad you mentioned that because there's a part where they're in Toby's office and they have this exchange.

[West Wing Episode 6.05 excerpt]

ANNABETH: You want my help?

TOBY: Not if it involves make up, wardrobe or alternative facial hair strategies.

ANNABETH: Body language.

TOBY: What about it?

ANNABETH: Projecting comfort and command.

TOBY: I don't do that?

ANNABETH: One might say.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: But while she says that line, "one might say", in response to him, her eyes sort of dart back and forth as she's saying the line one might say like she doesn't know exactly where to look and it really sells the line.

JOSH: Huh.

HRISHI: It's this incredible little performance [crosstalk] that changes it completely and I love that.

JOSH: [crosstalk] Great little choice. I'm remembering too, Kristin was a delight and really so much fun to have on the set and to be around from the get go. And I don't know exactly where in the chronology of the show this happened but I was aware of her, she'd been on Broadway and this and that, and I think *Music Man* at that point and she'd won a Tony for *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* and so I certainly knew of her but early on she invited me and maybe everybody, probably everybody, to a concert she was doing at Disney Hall. So first of all I was like oh wow she sells out Disney Hall? And I got there and indeed it was sold out and then it was like a, it was just a moment where I realized oh my God, like who she is because you know there was like an announcer "ladies and gentleman Kristin Chenoweth". This is just as it started and she walked out, the entire place got onto its feet like it started with a deafening standing ovation.

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: And I was like wait a minute! Kristin is an enormous star. [laughs] Like I had no idea the following and the fervent nature of her audience. I was just like, she just walks out and gets a huge standing ovation at Disney Halls [crosstalk] like oh okay.

HRISHI: [crosstalk] Yeah. Man.

JOSH: She's a star.

HRISHI: You don't even get a standing ovation from me when we start this show.

JOSH: That's true.

HRISHI: I'm gonna change that 2019 standing ovation for Josh.

JOSH: I'd appreciate it. 25 pounds from now, when I drop the weight but yeah. And she is incredible and an amazing vocalist.

HRISHI: Yeah I find her delightful and I'm excited about her being on the show.

JOSH: Remember in particular I'm a big fan of Bernstein's *Candide* and there's an incredible song, an aria, called "Glitter and Be Gay" that Cunegonde sings and it's this like unbelievable, I don't have the musical words to describe it but incredible range.

[clip from *Glitter and Be Gay*]

JOSH: All these incredible high notes and she had an amazing choreographed routine that was really funny that she was doing as she was singing this really vocally difficult song and I was blown away.

HRISHI: That was what she did at Walt Disney Hall?

JOSH: That was one song that she sang that I was just like holy moly she can do anything.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: She's a dynamo. Now that we've said all the good stuff about it, that storyline which I enjoyed watching all along was another aspect of the episode that I thought failed to really pay off and I think perhaps it's because of what you've already noted about some of the dialogue. This transformation we are meant to experience of Toby in front of the press corps, sort of finding his feet and getting his mojo and getting a couple of laughs. It wasn't everything I wanted it to be.

HRISHI: Yeah. Yeah.

JOSH: And think maybe it's because the dialogue was a little bit lead in there, a little, you know, I didn't feel swept up the way they were.

HRISHI: He's getting better.

JOSH: Yeah that's what I thought at the end and what you really want is, you know, *Pygmalion*. You want to see that she's absolutely transformed this guy.

HRISHI: Yeah. Vietnamese potbellied *Pygmalion*.

JOSH: [laughs] Maybe instead of getting a pig I'll just play *My Fair Lady* for him.

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: You're not even gonna understand the connection but trust me this is basically the same thing.

HRISHI: [laughs] Exactly. Okay, here's a joke that I actually thought was subtly done. I liked it. Maybe it wasn't that subtle to anybody else but it took me a second, I was like ah I like it, I get it. And they didn't make a big deal out of it being a joke, you know, that nobody stopped to say it's funny and hilarious, whatever.

JOSH: Yes, I like when things are thrown away [cross talk] rather than made a meal of.

HRISHI: [cross talk] Yeah. Yeah. This was one that was thrown away. Toby comes into C.J.'s office, Will's there already and Toby announces that "the House just defeated the CAFE standards amendment." The CAFE standards are the Corporate Average Fuel Economy regulations in the US. They were first enacted by congress after Arab oil embargo.

JOSH: Mid 70's.

HRISHI: In the 70's yep, in 1975 is when they passed it. The embargo itself was '73 to '74. And it basically, it's the standard that sets an average fuel economy that cars have to meet. It's called Corporate Average Fuel Economy but it's known by this abbreviation CAFE.

[West Wing Episode 6.05 excerpt]

TOBY: The House just defeated the CAFE standards amendment.

C.J.: Already?

WILL: They limited floor debate to twenty minutes.

C.J.: So the car companies won't have to raise miles per gallon from venti to grande.

TOBY: Actually it's the other way round but something like that yeah.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And at first it kinda slid by me but then I realized she was making a cafe joke!

JOSH: Yes.

HRISHI: It's a Starbucks joke about the CAFE standards amendment.

JOSH: I think there's a layer in there that I didn't really get either.

HRISHI: I like it. It's more clever than it is funny but I like it. I really dig it, and they didn't make a thing out of it and I applaud them for that.

JOSH: Uh huh. Very nice. Now am I wrong or I believe Trump is dialing back the CAFE standards that were established under the Obama administration.

HRISHI: Oh my God, there is the ultimate ai-yi-yi in this episode. Josh says, in the context he's talking about the possibility of Russell getting the nomination and then losing the election, but he says

[West Wing Episode 6.05 excerpt]

JOSH: Republican administration, GOP congress, they'd dismantle everything we've accomplished in eight years.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Yes, I wrote that down, I wrote Trump ai-yi-yi.

HRISHI: And specifically in this episode where they're talking about the CAFE standards.

JOSH: This is bingo right on the nose.

HRISHI: Yeah, the Obama administration did a lot of research and made very aggressive recommendations for what the CAFE Standards should be and the Trump administration has undone them, setting the standards to be a much lower level for, as far as people can tell, with no evidence or research done at all.

JOSH: I think in addition the Obama administration had granted a waiver to California to impose stricter standards still.

HRISHI: Yes. Right.

JOSH: And Trump is wiping that out.

HRISHI: Yeah, despite Republicans be supposedly all for states rights, in this case California can not set their own agenda when it comes to the kind of regulations they want to enforce. California and I believe 13 other states and DC have stricter regulations than elsewhere in the country and the Trump administration are saying no it's gonna be federally mandated across the board and they're going to freeze them at the rates that I think they were set for 2020, something like that.

JOSH: I think rolling back standards will lower the cost of new cars though. Maybe that's part of the angle that somehow benefits consumers or something like that.

HRISHI: Yeah I don't think that there's no reason for it.

JOSH: No good reason is what you mean.

HRISHI: [laughs] Yeah.

JOSH: There are reasons behind them.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: There are reasons behind everything he does.

HRISHI: It's going to be more expensive, there's a, you know, you can measure how much it costs in terms of what you're saving the cost of the carbon that you're saving in actual dollars and yeah it's more expensive for everyone basically to have better emissions standards but if

we don't act aggressively right now the whole world is gonna, you know, descend into cataclysm by 2045 so the idea that people shouldn't be doing everything possible.

JOSH: Yeah, I do completely agree with you but there are also interesting things, and loopholes and the way things happen. First I like electric cars very much, my first electric car was a Fiat 500e. Chrysler in response to these CAFE Standards created the Fiat 500e, the all electric Fiat and then sold at a loss, each one I read somewhere lost the company 9 or 10 thousand dollars. They build it as a compliance car and then we both, right? I drive a Chevy Bolt and in all fairness I have to admit I own gas guzzlers as well, my main driving car though is a Chevy Bolt which is all electric. You recently bought a hybrid?

HRISHI: Yes, and I've been driving the same 2001 Honda minivan for a very long time because uh-

JOSH: Because you're in a band.

HRISHI: [laughs] And also because [cross talk] the carbon footprint of getting any new car, even an electric car or a hybrid, the offset carbon footprint was not beneficial enough to counteract having a new car.

JOSH: [cross talk] We get it! Did you crunch the numbers?

HRISHI: Basically that car is not running so well so I had to make a choice. And was partly influenced by your ownership of electric cars and I love what the president says at the end of the episode. He says that the market is going to sort of dictate things to some extent.

[West Wing Episode 6.05 excerpt]

PRESIDENT BARTLET: Sales had their best month ever this year. Prius is expanding its production 50%. The markets are doing what markets do. It's sorting itself out messily and with contradiction. Better fuel economy is an idea that just has to reach its tipping point.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: So he's doing a sort of laissez-faire pitch there that there's these sort of dialectic swings between opposing sides and he's definitely right in some ways and he continues to be right because 1. Electric vehicles are growing in popularity. I read a thing that said they grew by 54% to about 3 million in 2017 and by 2030 the international energy forecasts there will be 125 million electric vehicles in the world.

JOSH: Wow.

HRISHI: But that is a tiny percentage [cross talk] of the overall market and in the meantime SUVs and crossover, the sort of smaller version of the SUV is one in three cars sold now and

that is triple their share from a decade ago.

JOSH: [cross talk] Oh sure. Wow.

HRISHI: The thing is gas is still not so expensive that people are turned off from buying a car as big as a crossover.

JOSH: I know, well I'm all for jacking up the tax on gas.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: And then also one of the things I've gotten into this debate or argument with people saying you know, ah your electric car, in the creation of the battery [cross talk] you know and burn-- in other words like the net benefit to the environment is nothing. I've read enough to know that it also depends how the electricity that your car uses is produced.

HRISHI: [cross talk] Right, exactly, yes

JOSH: There's electricity that's created by coal and the burning of coal and of course that releases greenhouse gases into the atmosphere

HRISHI: Okay so the president's talking about this idea that better fuel economy is this idea that just has to reach a tipping point. He's saying he's going to veto the omnibus transportation bill, even though they're gonna lose it, he's gonna veto it, it's gonna get overwritten, they know it. They don't have the votes. But by doing so it's gonna advance the debate and I think it's the right move. In this recent forecast from the international energy agency, here's the thing that they said "The uptake of electric vehicles is still largely driven by the policy environment. The 10 leading countries in electric vehicle adoption all have a range of policies in place to promote the uptake of electric cars." They said that "government policy remains critical to making electric vehicles attractive to drivers, spurring investment and helping carmakers achieve economies of scale." So you know, the president's like yeah the market's gonna do what it's gonna do and it's going to do it messily and with contradiction but also you need to have the government nudging things in the right direct because--

JOSH: Yeah sure, fostering an environment.

HRISHI: Yeah. They even say in the episode it's not just about that. Josh has this meeting and is told,

[West Wing Episode 6.05 excerpt]

CONGRESSMAN AUREN: Seatbelts, airbags, the first fuel economy standards, the auto industry had to be dragged kicking and screaming into all of them.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: So you know, they go with the recommendation, they don't just lose a vote, we lose out on national debate so he vetoes the bill and I think it's the right move.

JOSH: I do too. I was just gonna say, I'm gonna promote electric vehicles, they're surprisingly enjoyable to drive. I feel like that's the big secret of electric vehicles, that people don't know.

HRISHI: You know I haven't had too much fun driving my electric vehicle, but it's my fault entirely. I've like gamified it in my head.

JOSH: No you have to unplug it.

HRISHI: [laughs] No I just want to, I wanna get so much, I wanna squeeze every drop of energy out of the thing by driving it as efficiently as possible. So you know, I'm constantly looking at the settings where, you know, when you're braking the energy comes back to it.

JOSH: Yes, regenerative braking it's easy to gamify it.

HRISHI: Yeah. [laughs]

JOSH: I'm surprised they haven't made it more of a, literally, a video game in your dashboard trying to see yeah. No, well that is commendable and you'll get over it eventually [laughs] but yeah, I used to do that quite, I used to do that a lot too. The best thing about regenerative braking and owning or leasing an electric vehicle is that you'll be on your way to work and you'll be like yes! Traffic!

HRISHI: [laughs] Yeah so I haven't given this car, which is still very, very new to me, a chance to do anything fun because I have it in whatever, environmental economy mode.

JOSH: Sure, well I suggest hitting sport now and again at a traffic light when you're next to a sports car and you will blow them away off the line. You know after about a second and a half [laughs] they can [cross talk] blow past you if they want to. But off the, right off the line, electric's got a great advantage.

HRISHI: [cross talk] They come charging back to you.

JOSH: I interrupted you, what were you saying?

HRISHI: Oh I was describing the person when I, the salesman, said to me you put it in EV mode or whatever the thing is called econ mode, he said it becomes a brick. [laughs]

JOSH: [laughs]

HRISHI: And that's largely how I've been operating it.

JOSH: And I thought actually it was a good bust the description of the guy Will wants Josh to call on the Vice President's behalf.

[West Wing Episode 6.05 excerpt]

JOSH: You know Hersh has a hybrid, typical Hollywood, drives his Prius right up to his private jet.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: That's right on and I think probably very accurate description of many people in Hollywood.

HRISHI: Absolutely. I have actually been witness to that very thing. I dropped someone off at their car. They had a hybrid SUV they were parking at Van Nuys airport and then taking a private jet. It's like you see the--

JOSH: Wow, literally the very thing.

HRISHI: Yeah, that very thing.

JOSH: As happenstance would have it I saw the Toyota Mirai today for the first time which is an FCEV, Fuel Cell Electric Vehicle. It runs on hydrogen. I ran into a friend today and he had one.

HRISHI: And we've got hydrogen technology represented in this episode.

JOSH: Yeah that's right and actually the only emission of this Toyota Mirai is water.

HRISHI: Really?

JOSH: Because H₂O is created in [cross talk] the process and it think there's a button that [raspberry noise] kinda like playing the trumpet.

HRISHI: [cross talk] Right yeah. In the combustion?

JOSH: It's got like a little spit valve.

HRISHI: [laughs] It's a car that pees.

JOSH: There you go.

HRISHI: On that note, let's take a quick break.

[Ad break]

HRISHI: This gathering of alternative energy sources people brings us some great guest stars.

JOSH: Yes.

HRISHI: A lot of oh that guy or that lady in the case of Rachael Harris.

JOSH: Well I'm a huge fan of Wally Langham.

HRISHI: Yep.

JOSH: Or Wallace Langham, I guess as he's known in the credits, who played Terry Anders in this episode. Not sure why he got a last name. Impressive for that scene.

HRISHI: He's the one who repped solar.

JOSH: Yeah, very good, he's the solar guy and he of course has done many, many things including he played Phil in *The Larry Sanders Show* and I got to know him when I was in that show. He's just a lovely guy and a terrific actor. He was also in *The Social Network*.

HRISHI: That's right he was also in a bazillion episodes of *CSI*.

JOSH: Yes, that's right of course.

HRISHI: And then Rachael Harris is there representing wind.

JOSH: Uh hmm.

HRISHI: Another familiar face from a lot of things. Yeah it's great.

JOSH: And they were all good. That scene verged on big block of cheesiness. Right? I mean they were kinda, a little eccentric. I liked their style, I liked that they were all taking shots at each other's source of renewable energy and I thought the substance of what they had to say was interesting.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: But also was an interesting aspect of this episode that as somebody in the press room later accuses the administration, it is in fact a hastily convened piece of optics in that we actually see C.J. call for it. "Get this thing together so we have a press release by the end of the day" and the press is on to that fact.

[West Wing Episode 6.05 excerpt]

KATIE: Isn't this hastily convened task force just an attempt to counteract the symbolism of a White House senior staffer totaling a hybrid while driving one of the most fuel inefficient passenger vehicles sold in the world?

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And then Toby has his thing about the Undersecretary of Whimsy and Caprice but then Mark says this alternative energy summit isn't going to fool anyone and I think Toby actually has a good response here.

[West Wing Episode 6.05 excerpt]

TOBY: Good. Then maybe we can stop thinking of it as something intended to fool people and start thinking of it as a way to maybe get something done.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: He does take this sort of idea of yeah it was something that was done partly for optics or maybe entirely for optics and the thing is the recommendation out of that does carry weight. We see Josh carries the message of the meeting into the Oval Office.

JOSH: Yeah I was put off a little bit at first by the fact that Josh seems to not be taking it seriously at all. He's kinda taking it as something he just has to go in and suffer through and then sort of Toby goes out and kind of puts a very positive spin on it but it feels completely like spin, then you're right it's salvaged in the end by the fact that he has actually gleaned something from this kooky meeting we've seen.

HRISHI: Yeah. I mean it's not even that positive a message that he takes away from it. He says to the president the fuel alternatives are even less ready than you thought but the president says ok so then we have to change this so that alternative fuels can get developed.

JOSH: Right, right, it actually leads to something and an attitude of wanting to get something done for real.

HRISHI: Yeah. I'm really curious how the green new deal is going to succeed or fail up against the Trump administration's policies. Like this is a showdown that I am looking forward to. I'm glad that it's a battle that is actually going to be fought.

JOSH: I agree.

HRISHI: Let's talk about Charlie for a little bit.

JOSH: He gave him the résumé.

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: [laughs]

HRISHI: He already has had a great dynamic with C.J. this season. We saw on the last episode you know as you commented that you liked that moment when he actually physically walks her around to Leo's old door to say hey look you have this, your own entrance into the Oval Office. He kind of shows C.J. the ropes a little bit and then in this very significant way C.J. kind of returns the favor because it turns out the president is insisting that Charlie leaves his job because he made a promise that he would once he graduated and Charlie gives her the résumé and she says ok come work for me.

[West Wing Episode 6.05 excerpt]

C.J.: You're smart, responsible, you know the president, why wouldn't I hire you? The title's a little gaudy but it mostly means you'll do whatever's needed to be done. A catch-all, but grown up policy stuff.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And you can see Charlie, it's a possibility that had just not ever occurred to him.

JOSH: Yeah it's a very sweet reaction from Dulé.

HRISHI: He's been going around asking people to ignore his résumé. He's just doing it perfunctorily to please the president and he says "I don't know what to say, can I think it over?" and I like C.J.'s response, "not really!" Like you idiot, this is a great idea.

JOSH: [laughs] Say yes! Yeah, I was torn, I got caught up in the moment, certainly emotionally and it's a very sweet scene between the two of them. But there's a part of me kinda felt like so now he's going to be her assistant.

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: Part of me felt like a demotion and the president's going to be like you're still here? And now what you do it for her? Maybe I'm being a little bit jaded but I'm curious to see, because of course I don't remember, whether he's given a new portfolio and greater responsibility and that will indeed be a step up and a promotion.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Because otherwise it feels like some weird loophole where he's like well I don't work for

you anymore, yes I'm still here.

HRISHI: I think Charlie takes her at face value as I do too when she says grown up policy stuff that he'll be working on.

JOSH: Policy.

HRISHI: And I like that they've set this up too, not just in the previous episode but earlier in this episode there's a little moment when C.J. and Charlie are in the Oval Office and C.J. says "Mr. President I want to remind you about the reception in the East Room the Girls' National Field Hockey Champions you have to be there" and Charlie says I'll get him there and the president says.

[West Wing Episode 6.05 excerpt]

PRESIDENT BARTLET: I'm noticing a distinct slackening of awe, a certain lack of trembling in my presence.

CHARLIE: Yes sir.

C.J.: Yes, Mr. President

[end excerpt]

JOSH: [laughs] Yeah that's a great moment. I thought that was very funny and classic Martin.

HRISHI: Yeah, I think the C.J./Charlie team is a really great one and I'm looking forward-

JOSH: Look forward to seeing more out of them together.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: How about the chess of it all?

HRISHI: Oh yeah, then there's this plot line that gets introduced first at a distance by Leo saying C.J. has to insist that the president plays chess.

JOSH: Sort of a cryptic import put on this whole chess game.

HRISHI: And at first I thought it was a code for something like oh he needs to make sure he takes his medicine or something like that but then it turns out it's actual chess. Literally it's chess and we find out that there's a very real reason why Leo would play chess with the president. And I thought that was really interesting.

JOSH: Did you take it as to keep him sharp or to keep track of whether he's still sharp?

HRISHI: I think it's to keep track of whether he's still sharp.

JOSH: I do too but I kept thinking like you know well why don't you just, as you mentioned he has the occasional MRI and has these frequent checkups, why don't you also have some sort of cognitive testing? Why do you have to do this extra thing of chess. Make sure he's not making horse sounds when he moves the knight.

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: Why don't they just have a doctor, you know, do some sort of cognitive testing, as they supposedly did with our current commander in chief.

HRISHI: [laughs] Here's what Leo says.

[West Wing Episode 6.05 excerpt]

LEO: The president gets regular physicals and because of the MS rather more regular MRI's and neuro-physical tests but MS is a disease of the central nervous system. It can affect cognition, perception, reasoning, judgement, what the doctors actually term executive function. As President of the United States, this needs to be monitored on a weekly basis. You need to get president to play chess.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Or those same doctors who are testing the other stuff, am I wrong? Isn't there a little bit of that? Like why, I mean we get a lovely scene with the chess at the end which I liked but there's a part of me goes why isn't that part of his medical regimen?

HRISHI: I guess I think the thing that Leo's talking about, perception, reasoning and judgement are maybe hard to quantify in a short visit with a doctor.

JOSH: I guess but I mean even if chess were the best thing then doctors would be like I'm sorry now you have to sit down and play chess with me. [laughs] There's got to be, either they have something that's better than that or the doctors would be doing some sort of chess thing. The doctor's just like I'm sorry we cannot track it in any way so I hope you come up with something.

HRISHI: I have more important patients than you Mr. President.

JOSH: [laughs]

HRISHI: But then that becomes part of the job. I understand what you're saying but I like the idea that it's a less formal way of checking in and making sure things are alright and that's part

of the job of Chief of Staff. That the protection of the president extends in these small ways too, or not so small ways.

JOSH: No you're entirely right and I think the reason I ultimately bumped on it was that I buy that it was a subtle way for Leo to keep an eye on his friend and boss but it ends up becoming such an explicitly, sort of clunkily done thing that I felt bad for the president.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: She's like oh no, you're gonna sit here and you're gonna play chess. It's almost as if she's gonna treat him like a child

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: It's not like a subtle thing, again it's like nope we gotta test you and make sure you don't you know throw the pieces against the wall [laughs] and make sure-- I don't know. By the end I kinda think it won me back but at the moment that she just kind of brought this stranger in,

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: and was like no you're gonna sit down and play chess. There was no nuance, it wasn't subtle. It was kinda like oh God you're really manhandling the guy.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Why don't you just say to him then look we're doing this because we want to make sure you're still sharp because something's going on.

HRISHI: Yeah that's true, you're right. I mean with the dynamic, it's so different when it's with Leo and the president and they're doing this thing and I'm sure, even though Leo certainly gets his ass kicked every single time, it's a private, even intimate moment between two friends, whereas now it's a game that C.J. doesn't even play.

JOSH: She, right, exactly, she doesn't even play so it would have been nice maybe to see him, for him to say this is what I did, you've got to come up with your own version of this.

HRISHI: Yeah. Exactly yeah, and then she and the president work on the crossword together instead or something like that.

JOSH: Yeah there you go yeah.

HRISHI: But instead yeah it's this manufactured thing and she has to bring a stranger into this like uncomfortably intimate moment of like I am your friend and I am testing your brain, by the way, here's this guy!

JOSH: Yeah a stranger, exactly that's what it is, it's like I got the sense that it was this subtle and bonding thing that Leo did with him and it just becomes just this really clunky handling of the president.

HRISHI: Yeah Roger Quast from Hud, it's like wow congratulations for getting in that room.

JOSH: No kidding.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Oh is this the first time, we had the line, I'm not even sure who says it because I wrote it down stupidly without noting which character.

[West Wing Episode 6.05 excerpt]

WILL: This administration's had seven years to make better fuel efficiency a priority

TOBY: Seven years.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Is this the first explicit information relayed to us that we've lost a year? That we're in season six and year seven? Like isn't there a time, time has been lost or isn't there some sort of Bartlet be quickening that's happening?

HRISHI: In season one we are not at the beginning of the administration.

JOSH: No, but aren't we in the first year?

HRISHI: I think we're at the end of the first year. Let me think, so if "In Excelsis Deo" is the very first Christmas, is that first Christmas of the? I mean that's how gonna measure things by Christmas episodes because those are fixed in time.

JOSH: Right so that's the end of the first year?

HRISHI: If that's the first year, then yes, by season five that's Christmas number five so here we should be doing "Mambo Number 5."

JOSH: [laughs] ["Mambo Number 5" plays] A little bit of Charlie in my life, he gave him the knife.

HRISHI: [laughs] We'll figure it out. Or maybe the person who said seven years was, they misspoke?

JOSH: Yeah that's also entirely true, I don't even know which character it was anyway.

HRISHI: We didn't talk about this yet, Elisabeth Moss comes back.

JOSH: Yes and there appears to be a date in the offing.

HRISHI: Yeah I liked Charlie's attempt to ask her out, that was cute and-

JOSH: sweet

HRISHI: Like old fashioned screwball comedyish.

[West Wing Episode 6.05 excerpt]

ZOEY: Are you asking me on a date?

CHARLIE: I think you do.

ZOEY: What's a date?

CHARLIE: So far it isn't anything, you haven't said that you'll go.

ZOEY: Sure.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Zoey has suddenly, like, gone from this kid to this is a woman.

JOSH: Yeah.

HRISHI: This is like a proper lady.

JOSH: I had the same thought.

HRISHI: She looks very respectable and mature and such a huge difference from pre-Georgetown Zoey.

JOSH: True.

HRISHI: It's almost like time has passed and people have gotten older.

JOSH: [laughs] Does that do it for another episode of *The West Wing Weekly*?

HRISHI: That does it for another episode of *The West Wing Weekly*.

JOSH: It do.

HRISHI: I hope you have enjoyed it. If not you can leave a comment for us on our web log, thewestwingweekly.com. You can also tweet at us, I'm @hrishihirway, Josh is @joshmalina and we're collectively @westwingweekly on twitter. We're also on Instagram and on Facebook and you can leave us comments there too and if you're a russian trollbot we'll like it.

JOSH: Happy new year and many thanks to Zach McNees, Margaret Miller, and Nick Song, without whom we could not make this podcast.

HRISHI: Or maybe we could but it would certainly be worse.

JOSH: That's true. I wonder what would happen though if we made it without me. Might be better! [both laugh]

HRISHI: What would that be? Just me in monologue?

JOSH: It would just be substance [laughs] No, no, very little color commentary.

HRISHI: That's all I'm here for, I'm just showing up for the color commentary.

JOSH: We remain in 2019 a proud member of Radiotopia. Thanks to everybody who gave to the stickeriffic fundraiser. Radiotopia is a collection of fine, fine podcasts that you can listen to for free. To find out more about them go to radiotopia.fm

HRISHI: Ok.

JOSH: Ok.

HRISHI & JOSH: What's next?

[Outro Music]