

---

# *On Writing*

---

February 2003

Volume #18

Published by  
The Writers Guild of America, East, Inc.

---

Editor  
**Arlene Hellerman**

Copy Editor  
**Shelley Wolson**

Designer  
**Stan Kaufman**

Advisor  
**Marc Siegel**

---

President                   **Herb Sargent**

Vice President           **Warren Leight**

Secretary-Treasurer   **Gail Lee**

Executive Director      **Mona Mangan**

All correspondence should be addressed to

*On Writing*

The Writers Guild of America, East  
555 West 57th Street  
New York, New York 10019  
Telephone: 212-767-7800  
Fax: 212-582-1909  
www.wgaest.org

---

Copyright © 2003 by the Writers Guild  
of America, East, Inc.

## **A Note from the Editor**

In a previous issue of *On Writing*, Walter Bernstein said:

There's a wonderful story, which is probably apocryphal, which I love. When Samuel Morse sent the first wireless message—from Boston up to Maine, something like that—Thoreau was out at Walden Pond. Some friend of his came running out with the news about this great invention, this wireless message they had sent. And Thoreau just looked at him and said, 'But what did it say?' And that's always stuck in my mind. It's always been so important to me: What am I saying? Why am I saying it?

Aaron Sorkin does not have a political agenda when writing an episode of *The West Wing*—the various sides of a political argument are less important to him than the process of crafting words into an active debate.

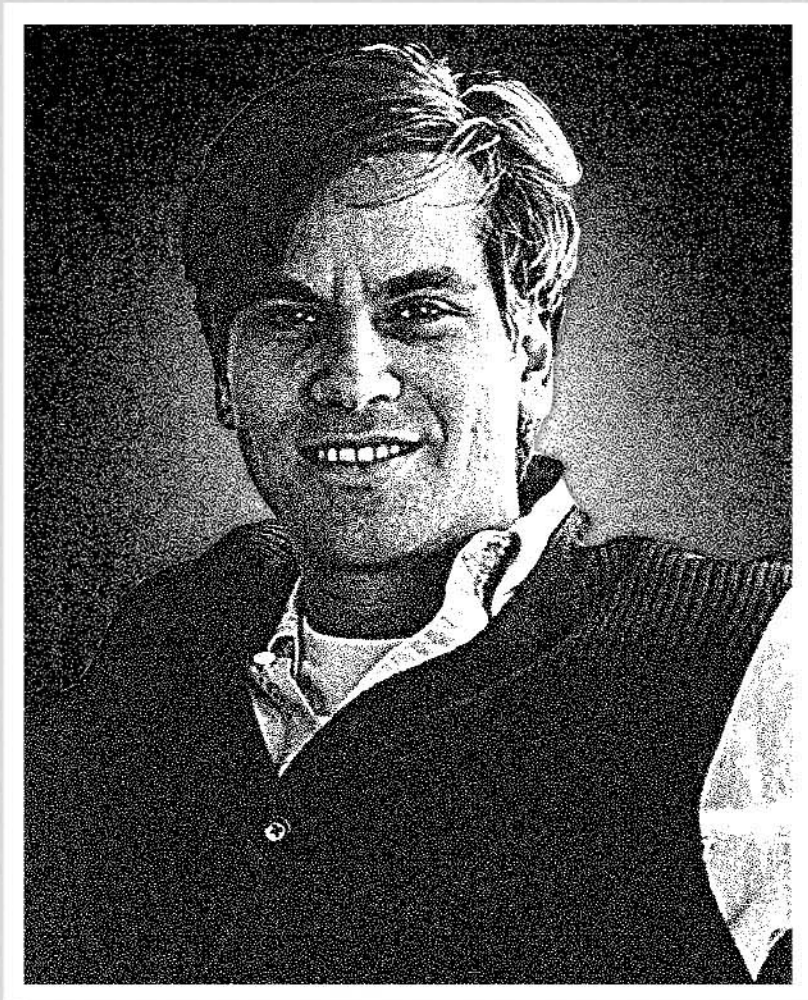
While *The West Wing* may not be political in a partisan sense, it is significant in terms of its impact on popular culture. Rather than preaching particular ideas, the characters on *The West Wing* engage in dialogue that compels the television audience to engage in thought.

In this issue, we look at Aaron Sorkin's *The West Wing*.

*The West Wing* pilot script is published courtesy of Warner Bros. It was originally published in *The West Wing Script Book* by Newmarket Press, along with five other episodes of the show.

We are printing it here just as it appears in *The West Wing Script Book*, with the exception of one correction made in the text on the script's page 58.

**Arlene Hellerman**



**Aaron Sorkin**

## August 2002

**ON WRITING:** The pilot begins with the characters—Sam in the bar, Josh up all night, C.J. at the gym—and the stories unfold through them. What did you start with? What was your initial impetus?

**SORKIN:** That’s a good question. Intention and obstacle are really kind of the drive shaft of anything that I’m doing. And so I started with a problem: A guy said something on television yesterday that he shouldn’t have. I added a couple of other problems to that: Cuban refugees are on their way, another one of our characters had inadvertently slept with a call girl the night before, and so on. And simply because I wanted to keep the president out until the last few minutes, I added the bicycle accident. Once I had the bicycle accident, I had a way to introduce all the characters, which is to say they’re all getting a page saying “Potus is in a bicycle accident.”

**ON WRITING:** “Potus” is the abbreviation for the President of the United States.

**SORKIN:** Right. And then I have the trick of Potus for the end of the teaser.

**ON WRITING:** You’re talking about when the woman who Sam picked up at the bar says, “Tell your friend Potus he’s got a funny name.” And Sam says, “He’s not my friend, he’s my boss....”

**SORKIN:** So I started with that and just—it’s a bit like walking along with a flashlight. You can only see as far ahead of you as the flashlight will go. And you walk a little further, and then you see a little further.

**ON WRITING:** Were there characters that you knew you needed?

**SORKIN:** I really didn’t think of it that way. I didn’t say, “I need a sweet guy and a surly guy, and I need a clever girl and a sexy girl....”

**ON WRITING:** What about in terms of jobs within the White House? Did you say, “I need a chief of staff, I need a communications director....”

**SORKIN:** I knew there was going to be a chief of staff, someone closer in age to the president. And I knew that the others would be a generation behind. And it’s

really just a matter of, instead of telling an audience who a character is, showing them what he wants.

**ON WRITING:** Did you draw from *The American President*? In *The West Wing Script Book* you say the idea for the show came about when you were sitting in your basement with Akiva Goldsman, and he pointed to the poster of *American President* and said, “That should be a pilot.”

**SORKIN:** Right.

**ON WRITING:** *The American President* was a little bit Clinton Administration-esque. Was this a little like that?

**SORKIN:** Other than the notion of a youthful energy and that they’re both Democrats, there’s really nothing. Both Bartlet in *The West Wing* and Shepherd in *The American President* are entirely fictional presidencies. There aren’t any characters that are meant to be people from real life.

**ON WRITING:** You talked a bit about how you came up with the stories for the pilot—how did you plot them out? Did you think about it from act to act, or did you plot out each story straight through?

**SORKIN:** I mostly thought about it from act to act. I knew that there would be the scene with the leaders from the Christian Right at the end, I knew about Bartlet’s speech that he’d make. I didn’t know much else. And so it was just a matter of going into your room by yourself and writing.

**ON WRITING:** That sounds daunting.

**SORKIN:** I just finished episode four of this season. It is.

**ON WRITING:** There were a couple of changes from the shooting script. For instance, the introduction to Mandy changed. Originally it was Mandy unpacking boxes with her assistant—which was taken from an early draft of *The American President*, wasn’t it? There was a scene where Sydney Wade was unpacking boxes—

**SORKIN:** Yeah, that’s right. We shot the scene with Mandy and her assistant unpacking boxes and we didn’t like it.

**ON WRITING:** And then, did that box scene eventually end up in an episode of *West Wing*—where Donna is wading through a room full of boxes when the White House papers were subpoenaed?

**SORKIN:** That’s a much different version of the box scene, but yes.

**ON WRITING:** Do you save things and reuse them?

**SORKIN:** Boy, I love when I can do that. My favorite thing in the world is when I write a script and it’ll be six or seven minutes long, and I’ll cut an entire story from the episode. And I’ve already got a head start on next week.

**ON WRITING:** I want to talk about the difference between the pilot and the series. How long did you have to write the pilot?

**SORKIN:** Well, comparatively, an eternity. I thought about it for a few months. I wrote it over Thanksgiving.

**ON WRITING:** You mean you wrote it in four days?

**SORKIN:** Yeah, four or five days over that Thanksgiving holiday. But it was the thinking about it for a few months that was important. Now I have eight days.

**ON WRITING:** So then how did that feel when you started the series?

**SORKIN:** You mean suddenly being at a breakneck speed?

**ON WRITING:** Yeah.

**SORKIN:** Like it was at a breakneck speed. And that's why we all still feel like it's early in our first season. Because the pace is hectic to say the least. I said earlier that I just finished writing our fourth episode of the season, but we started shooting it on Friday. In other words, we started shooting it before I finished writing it. And in hour television, you're supposed to have the script done eight days beforehand so that there can be a full prep period. So all the crews here are working like crazy and just doing an amazing job.

**ON WRITING:** Are you behind all season?

**SORKIN:** Yeah.

**ON WRITING:** So you don't have time to rewrite or reshoot.

**SORKIN:** We pretty much shoot my first drafts.

**ON WRITING:** Then when you see it, do you say, "Oh God, there's a million things

I could've done?" Or do you just let it go and move on?

**SORKIN:** Well, you always see it and—look, you always want every show to be as good as your best show. And you see it and there are things you wanted to do better. But mostly you're very proud of what you did, and mostly you're thinking about the next episode.

**ON WRITING:** I want to ask about getting to the heart of a scene. When you start writing a scene, and then you kind of realize, "Oh, this is what this scene is about—"

**SORKIN:** That happens often. And in fact, when I first started writing *A Few Good Men*—I did, I don't know, 20 drafts of *A Few Good Men* maybe. I was constantly rewriting *A Few Good Men*.

Because it was just what you described. It was a continual discovery of, "Hang on, the rest of this is nonsense, this is what the scene is about, this is what the story is about. Why do I need 38 pages of this kind of thing? Let's go back and do it again."

And on *The West Wing*, when I find myself in the middle of a scene that's just kind of slogging along, I realize it's because I don't know what the scene is about, or more to the point, the scene isn't about anything. Somebody's got to want something, something's got to be standing in their way of getting it. You do that and you'll have a scene. And you can put as

much gravy on it as you want. You can do the fun writing.

**ON WRITING:** It's interesting, though, sometimes it seems, rather than just communicating something with action or immediately saying, "this is what these characters want," a lot of the scenes seem to be about revealing information or the unfolding of an issue.

**SORKIN:** You know, one of the things that is trickier for *The West Wing* than for a hospital show, or a cop show, or a lawyer show is exposition. Exposition in those other areas is easier. Which is to say you can wheel a gurney into an emergency room and say, "This guy's got a bullet wound and he's bleeding from here, and he's losing this and this needs to happen now." And we have now all the information that our characters have, and we get to watch them act.

**ON WRITING:** Right.

**SORKIN:** The same thing on a lawyer show: A man slipped in a pothole and he's suing this guy for that. And that's exposition. The fact of the matter is that in the White House, unless somebody's just shot at you, the thing that you're talking about has been going on for a while already. And all the characters know much more than we do about it. So one of them isn't going to be explaining to the other one how Social Security works. Unless you're going totally

in that direction, like C.J. saying, "Sam, I don't understand the Census at all, you have to explain it to me."

**ON WRITING:** Which is tricky.

**SORKIN:** It is tricky.

**ON WRITING:** Because then that's saying that C.J. doesn't understand that.

**SORKIN:** Right. And every once in a while you can do that. But you can't go to that well very often. So you have to find other ways of doing it.

**ON WRITING:** For instance, there was an episode about a church shooting last season, and there was a sequence of scenes between Bartlet and Hoynes, the vice president. In each of those scenes, there's a back and forth about gun control and the gun lobby. And it's a lot of very informative and engaging debate about the issue—

**SORKIN:** And you can do that as long as there's an action to the scene, which is Bartlet wants Hoynes to go to Texas and make this particular argument, and Hoynes doesn't want to go. You can sit there forever and have them arguing about gun control and that crappy thing you said to me four years ago—they can get into whatever you want, because there's a reason for them to be standing there. And there's going to be a winner and there's going to be a loser.

**ON WRITING:** So as long as you have the underlying motivation—

**SORKIN:** It's the drive shaft.

**ON WRITING:** The other thing about that sequence is, in the last act you get to what this argument is *really* about which is Bartlet is pissed off at Hoynes for outing him about the MS—

**SORKIN:** Well, always with Bartlet and Hoynes there is an underlying tension that's personal. Whether it's the fact that we found out in the first season that Hoynes made Bartlet beg, basically, to have him on the ticket, outing him on the MS.... You know, it's great when there's something personal there and it isn't just the issue.

**ON WRITING:** So you have the underlying motivation and then you make it personal sometimes when you need to.

**SORKIN:** Yeah, because we're not watching a show about gun control or the Census, we're watching a show about these people.

**ON WRITING:** I want to ask about how the characters have evolved. For instance, Hoynes is not as much of a bad guy as he was.

**SORKIN:** Actually, it was never my intention that Hoynes be a bad guy, just that he lives in a gray area and he's not one of the gang. He's not entirely to be trusted, and he's not entirely trustful of them.

**ON WRITING:** Was there a dramatic reason for Hoynes to be an outsider?

**SORKIN:** Well, because everybody else is

an insider. You just look for any point of friction.

**ON WRITING:** So that was something you knew you could sort of keep going back to?

**SORKIN:** Yeah. Once you have a point of friction it'll work for you.

**ON WRITING:** What about Leo? He started out so infallible—correcting *The New York Times* crossword puzzle—and he's become so much more vulnerable.

**SORKIN:** They are all infallible when it comes to *The New York Times* crossword puzzle and things like that. It's other things. It's getting the girl, dealing with their kids, dealing with their wife, dealing with their father. That's where they have problems.

**ON WRITING:** I see. There's a coffee table book about *The West Wing* with pictures from the show and interviews with you and the cast, and in it, you say that you don't plan ahead with the series.

**SORKIN:** I seldom plan ahead, not because I don't think it's good to plan ahead, there just isn't time. Right now all I've got on my plate is episode five of this season. I can't think about how we get to Episode 15. I just have to do this. Sometimes—like this year where we have an election in November—you can. These episodes are all about running for president.

**ON WRITING:** I want to ask about Bartlet's campaign. In a *New Yorker* piece last year, you said one of the things you're doing with Bartlet's reelection is having him campaign on his intelligence, rather than dumbing down for popular opinion.

**SORKIN:** Yeah. And I don't want anyone to mistake this as Gore-Bush or Dukakis-Bush, or Clinton-Dole. Again, these aren't meant to be real people. They're who they are. But one of the stories that really interested me in the last election was how hamstrung Gore was by the perception of his arrogance—he was seen as a know-it-all, as the smartest kid in the class. And being the know-it-all, smartest kid in the class were negatives somehow. Rather than, in a president, we would want to have the smartest kid in the class. So that's what I'm dramatizing in this election.

**ON WRITING:** So it's the story you're drawn to, not necessarily the political situation.

**SORKIN:** That's right.

**ON WRITING:** But other than something like Bartlet's reelection, there isn't a lot of planning ahead.

**SORKIN:** It's also that I don't like making decisions until you have to make them. In other words, I don't like talking about, how many brothers and sisters does Bartlet have, are his parents still alive? Why don't you get to an episode where, if you have a

really good story for Bartlet and his father then, well, now his father's alive, that's the way it is from now on. But if you want to tell stories about sort of the ghost father, and living with the idea that Bartlet's father never liked him, well, now he's died. It wasn't until I wrote *Two Cathedrals*—the second season finale—that we knew that Bartlet's father was physically abusive.

**ON WRITING:** Talk about how the idea of Bartlet's MS emerged out of a conversation with Stockard Channing.

**SORKIN:** Stockard had done an episode of the show as the First Lady. We didn't know much about her except she was a lot of fun. She took me out to lunch and said she really liked doing the show and wanted to do more and started asking me questions like, "Who do you think this character is?" And those aren't questions I can answer. I can only answer, what do they want? And before Stockard had asked me out to lunch I had thought it'd be fun to do an episode where we see Bartlet do what all of us have had to do from time to time, which is, you're confined to bed, you're sick and you have to watch television during the daytime. And I don't imagine he had ever before seen a soap or a *Sally Jesse Raphael* kind of show, or a rerun of *Green Acres*. And I thought it'd be fun to just be cutting there once in a while and doing a scene



with him up in the bedroom. So, as Stockard was talking to me at lunch, the thought just crept into my head that she's a doctor. Well, how do we know she's a doctor? You don't just want her saying, "By the way, as you know, I'm a doctor." You want there to be a reason.

**ON WRITING:** Right.

**SORKIN:** And so I just somehow saw her coming into the room because what everyone else thinks is the flu she knows could be worse. And she sends everyone out, and I just saw a scene in which she's examining him. She takes out a stethoscope and a blood pressure thing, and she's looking at his eyes and checking things and asking him questions. And we start to learn a secret. And that's how it happened.

**ON WRITING:** So characters are evolving through the stories as you need them?

**SORKIN:** That's right.

**ON WRITING:** I want to ask about the four-act structure. Do you think of intensifying the action at the end of each act?

**SORKIN:** Well, on broadcast television because there are commercials, like it or not, there are these four times in the script that you have to go out. And I want to know what I'm writing towards in the act, what's going to be a good moment to go out on. You don't want to go crazy with it, you don't want to hear the *As the World Turns* organ there as someone says, you know,

"I'm your brother!" But you do want the audience to feel, as they're going into the Nokia commercial, "Oh no, come back. Oh God, I don't even want to go to the kitchen, I don't want to go to the bathroom. I just want to stay here because I don't want to miss the beginning of the act."

**ON WRITING:** It seems you break a lot of rules and you play with structure—

**SORKIN:** I don't break the real rules. I break the fake TV rules.

**ON WRITING:** What are the real rules versus the fake TV rules?

**SORKIN:** The real rules are the rules of drama, the rules that Aristotle talks about. The fake TV rules are the rules that, not good TV execs, but dumb TV execs will tell you: "You can't do this, you've got to do that. You need three of these and five of those." Those things are silly.

**ON WRITING:** In a lot of *West Wing* episodes the plot is unfolding through conversation. For instance, with a character like Lord Marbury, it's as if you say, "Here's the situation, now we're going to really examine it. We're going to come back, we're going to revisit it and spend time with this." Rather than just give you a beat that ups that ante and then moves on.

**SORKIN:** Well, that's interesting.

Because I think what you're describing is what kind of draws me to an area like this

in the first place, which has nothing to do with politics. I'm really not a political animal at all. Politics isn't my thing. But I grew up with very smart people—my family and my friends all excelled academically and were all very articulate, interesting people. And what I had was just kind of an ear. And I grew up loving the sounds of debate and the feeling of, "I never looked at it that way." And the idea that even though somebody believes one thing, they are capable of playing devil's advocate and taking the other position. So when I'm writing Lord Marbury and Leo arguing about something, the fun of it for me is going back and watching this tennis match. I like the sound of debate is all it is. It's not that I'm interested in the subject of the debate or declaring a winner at the end. So often with the consultants—for instance, I'll say to Dee Dee Myers on a particular subject, "Tell me what you think, but also tell me what the really smart person in the room who disagrees with you is going to say."

**ON WRITING:** Also, you come to television from playwrighting, which is really moving everything forward with words.

**SORKIN:** That's right.

**ON WRITING:** I want to go back to asking about structure. *Sports Night* was a half-hour show, did you think of it as a three-act structure or a two-act structure?

And going from the three-act structure of film to the four-act structure of television—  
**SORKIN:** Well, remember I started with the two-act structure of plays. Going to the three-act structure of film was the hardest transition. Because I just didn't understand what the second of three acts was supposed to be when I first started doing it. All I knew in plays were two acts. From time to time, *Sports Night* would have a three-act structure. Rather than a teaser and two acts, it would really be three acts—that teaser would be lengthy.

**ON WRITING:** Is that because you got used to writing films?

**SORKIN:** It's just because, with *Sports Night*—look, a half-hour show is 21 minutes long. And those characters on *Sports Night* could talk. And sometimes they weren't the easiest stories to set up. It wasn't *Laverne & Shirley*, it wasn't, "I got my hand glued to a bowling ball." So you just started writing and it was many pages before you found your way to, AND SMASH CUT TO MAIN TITLES.

**ON WRITING:** So do you think of *West Wing* as two acts divided into—

**SORKIN:** You know, the truth is—

**ON WRITING:** —You don't think that way?

**SORKIN:** I think of it any way I have to for that particular episode. It won't always start the same way, in fact, it hardly ever will.

Something will get me started. I have a good joke for the beginning, I have a thing I want to get to with one of the stories.

**ON WRITING:** You have a way in.

**SORKIN:** Exactly right. And chances are I'll come to a point pretty early on in the writing process when I'll have gotten lost. I don't have the compass there on me anymore. And that's when I'm thinking, all right, what is this? What am I doing? And I may say, "You know what, this isn't four acts, this is one act. This is a 41-minute thing that we're doing." Or it may be that I'm saying, "You know what this is, this is a comedy that I'm writing. It needs to have a comedy pace." And whatever it is that I know now about the thing, I'm just going to get both my hands around it and try to use that knowledge as best I can.

**ON WRITING:** Can you talk about the difference in character development from a play or a film to a TV series?

**SORKIN:** When you say character development, I don't know what you mean. I feel like you're talking about, do I grow their hair longer?

**ON WRITING:** I guess in terms of how well you have to know them. For instance, when you do a movie or a play, do you have to know those guys inside out to be able to write about them?

**SORKIN:** There is no inside out. You have to remember that the properties of

characters and the properties of people are two entirely different things. You and I both had experiences when we were six years old that are still somehow affecting us now. A character like Bartlet, or Josh, Toby or Sam in *The West Wing* was never six years old. They were born at the age that they were in the pilot. They were never six years old, unless I am telling a story that involves something that happened to them when they were six. Now they're six years old. But people who talk about, "I want to know what this character had for breakfast last week before I can play the scene," I respect what they're doing, I don't understand it. The character didn't have breakfast a week ago. Characters don't have breakfast—people do.

**ON WRITING:** And that relates to when Stockard Channing asked about who her character is and you said you could only answer what the characters want.

**SORKIN:** Listen, you can talk about who a person is, but who a person isn't actable and it's not writable. If I tell an actor "play smart," I don't know what they're about to do. I don't know what that looks like. Nor can I write smart. What I can write is, here's a character who wants to get this money and here's the way he's going about it: the tactics, the things that he's doing to overcome this obstacle.... If he's very smart the words that come out of

his mouth can have a ring of intelligence to them. But you can't make those words come out of his mouth unless he wants something. You can't just have him stand in front of an audience and give a dissertation on Einstein's Theory of Relativity. You've got to want something.

**ON WRITING:** And also, as you said, that sets up everything else.

**SORKIN:** Yeah.

**ON WRITING:** So basically it doesn't matter if it's a movie, a play or a TV series....

**SORKIN:** Writing in a movie, a play, a TV series are all the exact same thing.

**ON WRITING:** Would C.J. react to a situation differently than Bartlet?

**SORKIN:** Possibly. But only when I want her to. When it suits my purposes. If I want to tell a story about a woman reacting to the severe oppression of women in a certain Middle Eastern dictatorship, then I'm purposefully having C.J. react differently than Bartlet would. But if I wasn't interested in telling that story and I was interested in telling a different story about women in the Middle East, I would have no problem having C.J. and Bartlet react the exact same way. In other words, I don't sit there and think, oh shit, C.J. wouldn't do this. C.J. would do whatever I make C.J. do. Don Scardino directed *A Few Good Men* on Broadway, and there was

this moment during rehearsal one time when an actor came up to him and said, "I don't think my character would do this." And he just said, "I think you're playing the wrong character." Of course he would do it—it's right there in the script.

**ON WRITING:** In *The West Wing* coffee table book, you talk about the way Gary Trudeau writes a joke in *Doonesbury*. Can you explain that?

**SORKIN:** In most cartoons, or framed cartoons, the punch line comes on the last line in the fourth frame. Oftentimes Trudeau's punch line will be the penultimate line, with the final line being a throwaway, some kind of back to business thing. Once you tuck the joke in there it's much more amusing. It's much less like a rim shot joke. And it's something I've always loved and have managed to steal outright.

**ON WRITING:** And it's more conversational.

**SORKIN:** That's right. We're shooting one right now. One such joke even as we speak. Josh is looking at an electoral map with the red states and the blue states and the up-for-grab states. And he just observes, "When do you suppose Georgia got so far out of reach?" And he thinks about it for a moment and says, "Was it when we burned it down?" And that's the joke. But Sam says, "I was about to say...." and buries it in there.

**ON WRITING:** What do you do about fictionalizing factual information? Does it help or hinder the writing process that you can draw from current events?

**SORKIN:** Well, that's a big question when you're writing anything. It becomes trickier with a show like *The West Wing*, and I'll try to explain what I mean. As a fiction writer I'm not a journalist, and I feel no responsibility to the truth at all. My job isn't the truth, my job is to captivate you for however long you give me your attention. That's not to say that gives you a license to be irresponsible and to pass something off as real—if you're going to do that, you'd better be certain that the audience understands it's fiction.

On *The West Wing*, it's a fictional world but it's a parallel world. Any statistics that I quote, whether they're on cancer or funding for the arts, are real. I don't do a statistic unless it's real. On the other hand, the people are entirely made up. No one is based on anyone in real life. Also, on *The West Wing*, because it's a parallel universe, you have to be careful about things that remind people it's a fake world. And mostly what I'm talking about are contemporary references. To begin with, I don't use actual names of people in government. Nobody says, "Get on the phone with Ted Kennedy." Once you say, "Get on the

phone with Ted Kennedy," then Martin Sheen seems like a fake president. Because that's a real senator, fake president. But it goes beyond government. Nobody says, "Hey, did you see N'Sync last night?" Because in the world where N'Sync is a teeny-bopper group, George W. Bush is the president. You have to search for those things that have fallen into a kind of historical public domain. And it's indefinable, but you know it when you hear it and know it when you see it. The Beach Boys you can reference, because they've been around for a bunch of presidents.

**ON WRITING:** Right.

**SORKIN:** It's why these guys like Gilbert & Sullivan so much. You can't talk about Mel Gibson, but you can talk about Alfred Hitchcock.

**ON WRITING:** One more question: Do you miss writing other things?

**SORKIN:** Well, I love writing *The West Wing*. And you're always going to not be doing something. But I love writing *The West Wing*, and in due time, I'll write other things. ♦

---

## Aaron Sorkin

### Films

*The American President*, 1995  
*Malice\**, 1993  
*A Few Good Men*, 1992

### Television (Executive Producer/Creator)

*The West Wing*, 1999–present  
*Sports Night*, 1998–2000

### Plays

*Making Movies*, 1990  
*A Few Good Men*, 1989

### Awards

*The West Wing*  
 22 Emmys (including Outstanding Writing for a Drama Series for three consecutive seasons)  
 Golden Globe Award for Best Television Drama Series  
 Two consecutive Peabody Awards for Broadcast and Cable Excellence  
 Two Humanitas Prizes  
 TCA Awards for Best Drama Series, New Program of the Year and Program of the Year  
*Sports Night*  
 Two Emmy Awards  
 TCA Award for Best Comedy Series  
 Viewers for Quality Television Award for Best New Comedy Series  
 The Directors Guild of America Award  
 The Humanitas Prize  
 Genesis Award

*The American President*  
 Golden Globe nomination  
*Malice*  
 Edgar Allen Poe Award nomination (Mystery Writer's Association of America)  
*A Few Good Men* (film)  
 Four Academy Award nominations  
 Five Golden Globe nominations including Best Picture and Best Screenplay  
*A Few Good Men* (play)  
 Outer Critics Circle Award for Outstanding American Playwright

In 2001, Aaron Sorkin won the Writer of the Year Award from the Caucus for TV Producers, Writers, and Directors and the Phoenix Rising Award. He was also the recipient of the Producers Guild Award, in addition to the People for the American Way's Spirit of Liberty Award.

He is a founding member of the Playwrights Unit of Playwrights Horizons.

\*co-credit

THE  
WEST WING  
PILOT



The West Wing pilot script courtesy of Warner Bros.  
The West Wing, characters, names and all related indicia  
are trademarks of and © Warner Bros.  
(s02)



"Pilot"

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 INT. FOUR SEASONS HOTEL/GEORGETOWN - NIGHT 1

The well-dressed and powerful are having after-dinner drinks in the crowded hotel lounge. We hear snippets of conversations as the camera finds its way around the room.

A woman we'll know later as LAURIE, dressed sexy and having a drink with a girlfriend, whispers an order to a WAITER, who in turn makes his way over to the bar.

WAITER

Two Absolut martinis up, and another Dewars rocks.

We find SAM SEABORN at the bar with a REPORTER (BILLY).

SAM

I don't think we're gonna run the table, if that's what you're asking.

BILLY

It's not.

BILLY

Deep background. I'm not gonna come close to using your name.

SAM

You're not gonna come close to getting a quote, either.

BILLY

Why are we sitting here?

SAM

You sat down.

BILLY

Is Josh on his way out?

SAM

No.

BILLY

Is he?

2.

SAM  
No.

BILLY  
I know he's your friend.

SAM  
He is.

BILLY  
Did Caldwell say--

SAM  
Billy, I'm not talkin' about this.

BILLY  
Who do I call?

SAM  
No one.

BILLY  
Just tell me who to call.

SAM  
Well you could call 1-800 BITE ME.

BILLY  
Sam--

SAM  
He's not going anywhere, Billy, it's a non-story.

BILLY  
Okay. You're lying now, aren't you.

SAM  
That hurts, Billy. Why would I lie to a journalist of all people.

BILLY  
Why do you keep looking over my shoulder?

SAM  
Why?

BILLY  
Yes.

SAM  
'Cause Alger Hiss just walked in with my secret pumpkin.

3.

BILLY  
What the--

SAM  
There's a woman over there. I think  
she's looking at me.

BILLY  
Really?

SAM  
I don't know. I never know if they're  
looking or not.

BILLY turns 180 degrees in his seat to look at LAURIE.

BILLY  
Yeah, I think she was.

SAM  
I wanna thank you for the casual way that  
you did that just now. She probably  
didn't notice that.

CUT TO:

2     **EXT. AFFLUENT STREET IN CHEVY CHASE - DAWN**     2

The sun is just beginning to rise over a large Tudor.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
Also in the news this morning. Twenty-  
five cars jumped the tracks spilling  
twenty thousand gallons of sodium  
hydroxide...

CUT TO:

3     **INT. LEO MCGARRY'S DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS**     3

LEO MCGARRY is eating breakfast and working on the crossword.  
His coffee cup is re-filled by a MAID. We hear a telephone  
ringing.

LEO  
Seventeen across is wrong. It's just  
wrong. You believe that, Ruth?

MAID  
You should call them.

LEO  
I will call them.

4.

Leo's wife calls from the kitchen--

MRS. MCGARRY (O.S.)  
Telephone, Leo.

LEO  
I'm in the shower.

MRS. MCGARRY (O.S.)  
It's Potus.

LEO puts down the coffee cup and heads to the phone.

LEO  
(into phone)  
Yeah?

CUT TO:

4 INT. HEALTH CLUB - DAWN

4

C.J. CREGG is running on a treadmill while doing her best to have a pleasant conversation with a nice-looking MAN.

C.J.  
You can have a normal life. You'd be amazed at how normal I can be. See, it's all about budgeting your time. This time, this hour, this is my time. Five a.m. to six a.m. I can workout, as you see. I can think about personal matters. I can meet an interesting man.

C.J.'s beeper goes off--

C.J.  
The trick is--

MAN  
Your beeper's going.

C.J.  
What?

MAN  
I think your beeper's going.

C.J. checks her beeper, something she hasn't quite mastered doing while running on a tread mill, and goes flying off the tread mill.

5.

5 INT. JOSH LYMAN'S OFFICE - PRE-DAWN 5

JOSH sleeps at his desk and is awoken by something. Beeping. He picks his pager up off his desk, hits a button and looks at the message. He punches some numbers into his phone and waits a moment.

JOSH  
(into phone)  
Yeah. This is Josh Lyman. What's going on...

6 INT. THE REDEYE - DAWN 6

All the shades are down and all the lights are off in the cabin except the one over the coach seat occupied by TOBY ZIEGLER. He's got a lap-top, some papers and a cup of coffee spread out in front of him as he works away.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT (V.O.)  
We ask at this time that you turn off all electronic devices, stow your tray tables and return your seat backs to the full and upright position. We will be landing shortly at Washington Dulles Airport.  
(over dialogue)  
...and we'd like to thank you for flying with us today...

A FLIGHT ATTENDANT (a different one) stops at TOBY's seat.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT #2  
Sir, I need you to turn off your computer.

TOBY  
I'm just about done.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT #2  
I need you to turn off your laptop, sir, it interferes with our navigational systems.

TOBY  
You know, when you guys say that it sounds pretty **ridiculous** to most people, right?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT #2  
Sir--

Another FLIGHT ATTENDANT walks up--

6.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT #3  
Mr. Ziegler? A message was just patched  
up to the cockpit for you. I'm not sure  
I've got it right. "Potus in a bicycle  
accident"?

TOBY  
You got it right.

TOBY takes out his cell phone--

FLIGHT ATTENDANT #2  
You can't use your phone until we land,  
sir.

TOBY  
We're flying in a Lockheed Eagle series  
L1011. It came off the line 20 months ago  
and carries a Sim5 Transponder tracking  
system. Are you telling me I can still  
flummox this thing with something I  
bought at Radio Shack?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT #3  
You can call when we land, sir.

The FLIGHT ATTENDANTS move on--

TOBY  
(raising his voice a little)  
Also, I never got my peanuts.

CUT TO:

7 INT. LAURIE'S BEDROOM - DAWN

7

The digital clock on the night table turns over to 5:20 a.m.  
as we pull back to reveal LAURIE, the woman at the hotel bar,  
sitting up in bed and smoking a joint. SAM steps out of the  
bathroom having just taken a shower.

LAURIE  
How're you doing, Sam?

SAM  
Let me tell you something. The water  
pressure in here is really impressive.

LAURIE  
I know.

SAM  
You could run hydraulics in there.

7.

LAURIE  
(re: the pot)  
You want some?

SAM  
I'm fine.

LAURIE  
I'm wasted.

SAM  
And probably free of cataracts.

LAURIE  
I get that. That's funny.

SAM  
Thank you.

LAURIE  
(remembering)  
Oh wait. I'm sorry--your message--your  
pager went off while you were in the  
shower. I hit the button because I  
thought it was mine.

SAM takes a look at the message as LAURIE recites it--

LAURIE  
"Potus in a bicycle accident. Come to  
the office."

SAM starts getting dressed.

LAURIE  
I memorized it just in case I erased it  
by accident. These things look exactly  
alike. Anyway, like I said, I'm totally  
baked. But, uh, no, it's not like I'm a  
drug person. I just love pot.

SAM  
Uh... Laurie, I have to go.

LAURIE  
You're kidding me. It's 5:30 in the  
morning.

SAM is throwing on his shirt and jacket.

SAM  
I know this doesn't look good.

8.

LAURIE  
Not that good, no.

SAM  
You know what? I really like you and if you give me your number, I'd like to call you.

LAURIE  
Stay right here and save yourself a call.

SAM  
It's not that I don't see the logic in that, but I really gotta go.

LAURIE  
'Cause Potus was in a bicycle accident?

SAM  
Yep.

LAURIE picks up the pad and pen from the night table and scratches out her number. She stands up and places it in SAM's hip pocket as she plants a kiss on him.

LAURIE  
Tell your friend Potus he's got a funny name and he should learn how to ride a bicycle.

SAM  
I would, but he's not my friend, he's my boss. It's not his name, it's his title.

LAURIE  
"Potus"?

SAM  
President of the United States. I'll call you.

SMASH CUT TO:

MAIN TITLES

END OF TEASER



9.

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

8 **EXT. THE WHITE HOUSE/NORTHWEST EXECUTIVE ENTRANCE - MORNING** 8

As LEO approaches the entrance, a MARINE GUARD at parade rest comes to attention and opens the door. LEO breezes by and into--

9 **INT. THE WHITE HOUSE/NORTHWEST LOBBY - CONTINUOUS** 9

LEO passes through a metal detector--

SECURITY OFFICER  
It's a nice morning, Mr. McGarry.

LEO  
We'll take care of that in a hurry, won't we, Mike?

SECURITY OFFICER  
Yes sir.

LEO's immediately met by an aide (BONNIE) with some papers.

BONNIE  
Don't kill the messenger, Leo.

LEO  
Oh why the hell not, Bonnie.

BONNIE  
Five minutes?

LEO  
Please.

LEO starts walking through the corridors of the West Wing of the White House. Office doors are open along the hallways and staffers walk in and out. CNN and C-SPAN are on monitors.

LEO  
Hey, Emma.

EMMA  
Good morning.

LEO  
Wilson?

WILSON  
Hey, Leo.

10.

LEO  
Joe.

JEFFREY  
Jeffrey.

LEO  
Whatever.

LEO pops his head into an outer office and calls to the back.

LEO  
(calling)  
Josh!

10 INT. BULLPEN — CONTINUOUS

10

DONNATELLA MOSS, Josh's assistant, sits at her computer behind LEO. Donna is devoted to Josh and hates admitting it.

DONNA  
Good morning, Leo.

LEO  
Hey, Donna. Is he in yet?

DONNA  
Yeah.

LEO  
Can you get him?

DONNA  
(shouting)  
Josh!

LEO  
Thanks.

JOSH shows himself in the office doorway and indicates that he's on the phone and he'll be just a second.

DONNA  
I heard it's broken.

LEO  
You heard wrong.

DONNA  
I heard--

11.

LEO  
It's a mild sprain, he'll be back later today.

DONNA  
And what was the cause of the accident?

LEO  
What are you, from State Farm? Go do a job, would you.

DONNA  
I'm just--

LEO  
He was swerving to avoid a tree.

DONNA  
And what happened?

LEO  
He was unsuccessful.

11 INT. JOSH LYMAN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

11

JOSH  
(into phone)  
Yeah, that's fine. Just don't do anything until you talk to justice. Okay. 'Bye.  
(hangs up)  
Hey.

LEO  
How many Cubans exactly have crammed themselves into these fishing boats?

JOSH  
It's important to understand, Leo, that by and large they're not fishing boats. You hear fishing boats, you conjure the image of, well, a boat, first of all. What the Cubans are on would charitably be described as rafts. Okay? They're making the hop from Havana to Miami in fruit baskets basically, let's just be clear on that.

LEO  
We are.

12.

12 INT. PRESS BULLPEN - CONTINUOUS

12

JOSH

Donna's desk, if it could float, would look good to them right now.

LEO

I get it. How many are there?

JOSH

We don't know.

LEO

What time exactly did they leave?

JOSH

We don't know.

LEO

Do we know when they get here?

JOSH

No.

LEO

(pause)

True or False: If I were to stand on high ground in Key West with a good pair of binoculars, I'd be as informed as I am right now.

JOSH

That's true.

LEO

The intelligence budget's money well-spent, isn't it?

JOSH

Tell him to send in the Coast Guard, Leo, come on. I understand, but they're never gonna make it to our territorial waters.

LEO

Thank you.

JOSH

What if the DEA suspected they had drugs?

LEO

Does the DEA suspect there were drugs?

13.

JOSH  
We can make a phone call.

13 INT. LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

13

LEO  
Josh--

JOSH  
If the DEA or Navy-Intel thought the Cubans were bringing in drugs, wouldn't we have to go out there and search those rafts with, you know, guns and blankets?

LEO  
You look like hell. You know that, don't you?

JOSH  
Yes, I do. Listen, Leo, did he say anything?

14 INT. CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

14

LEO  
Did he say anything? The President's pissed as hell at you, Josh, and so am I.

JOSH  
I know.

LEO  
We gotta work with these people. And where the hell do you get off struttin' your--

JOSH  
I know.

LEO  
Al Caldwell's a good man.

JOSH  
Al Caldwell wasn't there.

LEO  
I'm saying you take everyone on the Christian right, dump `em into one big pile and label `em stupid. We need these people.

JOSH  
We do not need these people.

14.

LEO  
Josh--

JOSH  
We need Al Caldwell, we want Al Caldwell,  
we do not need John van Dyke and we do  
not need Mary Marsh.

LEO  
And I think there shouldn't be instant  
replay in football but that's not my  
call, now is it.

JOSH  
It was stupid.

LEO  
Damn straight.

LEO takes off down the hallway--

JOSH  
I was right, though.

LEO  
(over his shoulder)  
Like I don't know that.

CUT TO:

15 INT. OVAL OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

15

Leo steps into the outer office where MRS. LANDINGHAM, the  
President's secretary, is at work with BONNIE.

MRS. LANDINGHAM  
Oh, Mr. McGarry, have they done an x-ray?

LEO  
Yep.

MRS. LANDINGHAM  
Is anything broken?

LEO  
A four-thousand dollar Lynex Titanium  
touring bike that I swore I'd never lend  
anyone.

MRS. LANDINGHAM  
I don't understand, how did he--

15.

LEO  
He's a klutz, Mrs. Landingham, your  
President's a geek.

MRS. LANDINGHAM  
Mr. McGarry, you know how I feel about  
that kind of talk in the Oval Office.

LEO  
I apologize.

MRS. LANDINGHAM  
Just in this room, Mr. McGarry, is all  
I'm asking.

LEO  
Yes. Oh, Bonnie, call OEOB and set up a  
briefing for the Vice-President... let's  
coordinate with Katy Simons' office on  
the appointments.

BONNIE  
Should I get everybody in?

LEO  
Yeah.  
(to his secretary)  
Margaret, please call the editor of the  
*New York Times* crossword and tell him  
that Khaddafi is spelled with an "H" and  
two "D"s' and isn't a seven letter word  
for anything.

MARGARET  
Is this for real or is this just funny?

LEO  
Apparently it's neither.

16 INT. LEO'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

16

The Chief of Staff gets a nice office. A platter of pastry  
and coffee is on the table as the Senior Staff members start  
to filter in for their morning meeting.

Eight or 10 staffers sit around the room with a few aides  
standing nearby. From time to time, a secretary will slip in  
and hand someone a written message to be glanced over.

C.J., who we met earlier at the health club, is the White  
House Press Secretary and enters with TOBY ZIEGLER, a rumped  
and sleepless Communications Director. They join SAM, the  
Deputy Communications Director.

16.

Throughout this scene, LEO will drift in and out of full participation as his attention is from time to time taken by some papers in front of him or an item in the newspaper. In other words, nothing going on here is an emergency.

C.J.

Is there anything I can say other than the President rode his bicycle into a tree?

LEO

He hopes never to do it again.

JOSH enters with DONNA...

C.J.

Seriously, they're laughing pretty hard.

LEO

He rode his bicycle into a tree, C.J., what do you want me--"The President, while riding a bicycle on his vacation in Jackson Hole, came to a sudden arboreal stop."--What do you want from me?

C.J.

A little love, Leo.

LEO

(to SAM)

What do you know about the Cubans?

SAM

I don't know any more than Josh. Somewhere between twelve hundred and two thousand Cubans began embarking from a fishing village 30 miles south of Havana.

STAFFER

Where are they headed.

JOSH

Vegas.

SAM

Miami, though it's not clear how sophisticated their navigational equipment--

JOSH

Navigational equipment--"That way is North" I think is pretty--



17.

C.J.

Josh--

JOSH

C.J. if one of those guys could throw a split-fingered fast-ball we'd send in the U.S.S. Eisenhower.

C.J.

That's not entirely true.

TOBY

Oh for God's sake forget the journey, okay. The voyage is not our problem.

C.J.

What's our problem?

TOBY

What to do when the Nina, the Pinta, and the Get Me the Hell Out Of Here hit Miami.

LEO

Sam?

SAM

We can't send `em back. They'll go to jail if they're lucky.

TOBY

We'll get whacked in--what--at least--

SAM

--three Congressional districts. Dade County--

TOBY

--those seats are gone.

JOSH

Not to mention the fact that it's wrong.

SAM

Plus that.

JOSH

What about Texas?

SAM

I wouldn't worry about it.

18.

LEO  
(to SAM)  
Keep Josh in the loop on this throughout  
the day.

SAM  
Me?

LEO  
Yeah.

SAM  
The thing is, my day's a little tight--

TOBY  
Deal with it.

SAM  
And I'm happy to, it's just that--

LEO  
Sam--

SAM  
I'm just saying isn't this more of a  
military area?

LEO  
Military?

SAM  
Yeah.

TOBY  
You think the United States is under  
attack from twelve hundred Cubans in  
rowboats?

SAM  
I'm not saying I don't like our chances.

TOBY  
It's mindboggling to me that we ever won  
an election.

LEO  
Pat Thomas wants to call up the Guard.

JOSH  
He shouldn't.

SAM  
He's right.

19.

C.J.  
You send in the Guard and you create a  
panic situation.

TOBY  
I agree with Josh and I agree with C.J.  
and I agree with Sam. And you know how  
that makes me crazy.

LEO  
Yeah, I do.

TOBY  
They're running for their lives. You  
don't have to start a game of Red Rover  
with Castro, but you don't send in the  
National Guard. You send food. And you  
send doctors.

JOSH  
Sam, see that INS is working with the Red  
Cross and the Centers for Disease  
Control.

SAM  
I got my guy from CDC on the phone right  
now--

LEO  
Go talk to him.

SAM  
(over)  
Talk to him.

SAM exits down the hallway--

LEO  
Moving on. Let's talk about Josh...

CUT TO:

17 INT. PRESS BRIEFING ROOM - DAY

17

A dozen or so REPORTERS are standing and sitting about, mostly  
talking to each other. A few are in the back on laptops and  
cell phones. BILLY is holding court with three of them.

BILLY  
Al Caldwell scares the hell out of the  
President and Josh knows it.

20.

REPORTER #1  
He's not gonna fire him.

BILLY  
He's got no choice.

REPORTER #1  
Billy, the President's not gonna fire  
Josh Lyman.

BILLY  
He doesn't have a choice. Listen, I had  
drinks with Sam Seaborn last night.

REPORTER #1  
And Sam said that the President was gonna  
fire Josh?

BILLY  
He needs these people. He's gonna have  
to give `em Josh.

C.J. steps up to the podium with some papers.

C.J.  
(calling for them to sit)  
Folks. Folks.

Two AIDES begin passing out press packets--

REPORTER #1  
Billy what do you--

BILLY  
He doesn't have a choice.

C.J.  
Good morning. Dr. Randal Haymen,  
H-A-Y-M-E-N, Chief of Orthopedics at St.  
Johns' Hospital, has diagnosed the  
President with a mild sprain in his left  
ankle, sustained while cycling into a  
large Cypress tree. The details can be  
found in the pool report that Linda and  
Suzanne are distributing, along with pool  
photographs of the President resisting  
the help of a Secret Service agent and  
then falling down again. By all means,  
enjoy yourselves. Item number 2--

REPORTER  
C.J., has the President--

21.

C.J.  
It's a light day, Chris, let's just get through this and then I'll take a couple of questions. Item number 2: The Association of Retired--

18 INT. JOSH'S OFFICE - DAY

18

JOSH is at his desk, playing the same videotape back and forth, only now we can see what he's watching. He's on a Sunday morning roundtable show called Capital Beat with a moderator and well-groomed woman named MARY MARSH.

JOSH (ON TV)  
None of your business. Look, if thirty-eight states--

MARY MARSH (ON TV)  
No. Well, I can tell you that you don't believe in any God that I pray to, Mr. Lyman. Not any God that I pray to.

JOSH (ON TV)  
Lady, the God you pray to is too busy being indicted for tax fraud.

And just as MARY MARSH starts to explode, JOSH stops the tape, rewinds it and starts to play it again.

MARY MARSH (ON TV)  
No. Well, I can tell you that you don't believe in any God that I pray to, Mr. Lyman. Not any God that I pray to.

JOSH (ON TV)  
Lady, the God you pray to is too busy being indicted for tax fraud.

JOSH stops the tape, rewinds it and starts to play it again.

JOSH (ON TV)  
Lady, the God you pray to is too busy being indicted for--

JOSH looks up. DONNA's standing in the doorway with a cup of coffee. JOSH stops the tape.

DONNA  
You shouldn't have worn that tie on television. It bleeds.

22.

JOSH  
I don't think it was the tie that got me  
in trouble.

DONNA  
Yeah, but I've told you a zillion times.

JOSH  
What's that?

DONNA  
It's coffee.

JOSH  
I thought so.

DONNA  
I brought you some coffee.

JOSH  
What's goin' on, Donna?

DONNA  
Nothing's going on--

JOSH  
Donna--

DONNA  
I brought you some coffee.

JOSH  
Close the door.

DONNA closes the inner office door.

JOSH  
Donnatella Moss. When did you start  
working for me?

DONNA  
Mmm, during the campaign.

JOSH  
And how long have you been my assistant?

DONNA  
A year and a half.

JOSH  
And when was the last time you brought me  
a cup of coffee?

DONNA thinks...

JOSH

It was never. You've never brought me a cup of coffee.

DONNA

(picking up the mug)  
Well, if you're gonna make a big deal out of--

JOSH

Donna, if I get fired I get fired.

DONNA

Do you think he's gonna do it?

JOSH

(beat)  
No.

There's a knock at the door--

TOBY (O.S.)

It's Toby.

DONNA

(quietly)  
You won that election for him. You and Leo and C.J. and Sam.

TOBY (O.S.)

Open the damn door.

DONNA

And him.

DONNA opens the door.

JOSH

Thanks for the coffee.

DONNA

You're welcome.

She goes back to her desk.

TOBY

Donna brought you coffee?

DONNA

(over her shoulder)  
Shut up.

24.

TOBY steps into the office.

JOSH  
What's up?

TOBY  
What'd I tell you before you went on the  
air yesterday?

JOSH  
You said don't get cute with Mary Marsh.

TOBY  
I said don't get cute with Mary Marsh. I  
said Al Caldwell is not to be treated  
like some revival tent clown.

JOSH  
Al Caldwell wasn't there.

TOBY  
He sure as hell was watching.

JOSH  
Look, I already took Leo's morning  
beating, what do you want from me?

TOBY  
I want you to keep your job.

JOSH  
How?

TOBY  
I'm gonna make a suggestion which might  
help you out. But I don't want this  
gesture to be mistaken for an indication  
that I like you.

JOSH  
I understand.

TOBY  
(carefully)  
In preparation for the Sunday morning  
radio address on family values--

JOSH  
When did that get on the schedule?

TOBY  
Listen to me for one sec.



JOSH  
When did it get on the schedule?

TOBY  
It's the regular Sunday morning--

JOSH  
Yeah, but when did we schedule family values?

TOBY  
We scheduled it, Josh, after your smug, taunting, you know, calamitous performance on *Capital Beat*.  
(beat)  
America for Better Families, the AAF and Al Caldwell, Mary Marsh, I invited them all for coffee this afternoon along with a couple of speech writers to talk about--

JOSH  
What they want to hear.

TOBY  
Yes.

JOSH  
Yes, sir. Yeah, if you listen carefully, you can hear two centuries of presidents rolling over in their--

TOBY  
Come to the meeting.

JOSH  
No.

TOBY  
Come to the meeting and be nice.

JOSH  
Why?

TOBY  
So C.J. can put it in the papers.

JOSH  
Al Caldwell's friends with bad people. I think he should say so for the common good, screw politics, how `bout that.

26.

                  TOBY  
You don't run social policy for this  
Government, how 'bout that.

                  JOSH  
Toby--

                  TOBY  
I'm in charge of the message around here.  
It's my job to tell the President that  
the best thing he can do from a p.r.  
standpoint is to show you the door.  
                  (pause)  
Come to the meeting. Be nice. Keep your  
job.

                  JOSH  
                  (pause)  
Yeah, I'll be there.

TOBY turns to leave--

                  TOBY  
Oh, take a look at this.

TOBY takes out a small newspaper clipping--

                  JOSH  
What's that?

                  TOBY  
One of the kids from the newsroom clipped  
that from the *Journal* this morning.  
Guess who's leaving Lennox/Chase to start  
consulting in town?

JOSH looks over the article...

                  TOBY  
She's leasing offices downtown. She  
starts today.

                  JOSH  
Who is she working for?

                  TOBY  
I'm checking it out.

JOSH looks at the picture a moment longer...smiles...

27.

JOSH  
That's a good picture of her.

FADE OUT.

END ACT ONE

28.

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

19 **EXT. WASHINGTON STREET - DAY**

19

MANDY is driving, a little too fast, in her BMW convertible and talking on her cell phone. She cruises through a red light.

MANDY  
 (into phone)  
 Bruce... Bruce... Bruce, I may have just gotten back into the business this morning, but I didn't come by way of a turnip truck, you know what I'm saying? You phaff me around on this and I'm gonna get cranky right in your face. Now I was your source on 443--big fat by-line above the fold--I think it's time we play what've you done for me lately.

MANDY sees the flashing red LIGHTS of a POLICE CAR in her rear view mirror. She doesn't register a reaction, but simply pulls to the side and keeps talking on the phone.

MANDY  
 (into phone)  
 I don't want to hear that you're gonna try, Bruce, this isn't gym class. I said, gym class... gym class. Bruce... Bruce... Bruce. Because it's important in gym to try, but it is not necessarily-- Look. Bruce, it was a simple metaphor.

A POLICE OFFICER gets out of the cruiser and starts toward Mandy's car.

MANDY  
 Now listen up! You're misinterpreting me and you're misinterpreting the Senator and bush-league reporting is beneath even your newspaper.

POLICE OFFICER  
 You know you ran a red light back there.

MANDY  
 (to the OFFICER)  
 Hold on.  
 (to BRUCE)  
 Bruce, please. You huckle me around like this, I'm gonna make you cry like a girl.

29.

POLICE OFFICER  
License and registration, please.

MANDY  
(to Officer)  
Just a second.  
(to Bruce)  
I'm telling you--

POLICE OFFICER  
License and registration now, please.

MANDY  
(into phone)  
Listen, I'm under arrest. I'm gonna have  
to call you back, Bruce.

CUT TO:

20 **EXT. THE WHITE HOUSE/ESTABLISHING - DAY** 20

CUT TO:

21 **INT. ROOSEVELT ROOM - DAY** 21

A meeting among LEO and two ECONOMIC ADVISERS is just breaking up.

ECONOMIST #1  
Uh, they're two and a half percent in the  
third quarter at the end of the fiscal  
year.

LEO  
That's fine, but the President's gonna  
look at the WBO revenue analysis and say  
that economists were put on this planet  
to make astrologers look good.

JOSH slips into the room--

ECONOMIST #1  
Leo.

LEO  
Luther. Ballpark. One year from today.  
Where's the Dow?

ECONOMIST #2  
Tremendous. Up a thousand.

LEO  
Fred. One year from today.

30.

ECONOMIST #1  
Not good. Down a thousand.

LEO  
A year from today at least one of you is  
gonna look pretty stupid.

ECONOMIST #2  
Can we go now?

LEO  
(ushering them out the door)  
Oh, go. Get out.

The ECONOMISTS say their good-byes and leave as SAM slips  
in...

SAM  
We have a storm system moving into South  
Florida.

LEO  
See, with any luck the Cubans'll turn  
around and live to defect another day.

JOSH  
Yeah, 'cause they're probably all tuned  
to the National Weather Service, but  
that's not what I'm here for.

LEO  
What's on your mind?

JOSH  
We've gotta look at the whole field for a  
minute, 'cause I think we're about to get  
tagged.

LEO  
With regard to what?

JOSH  
Reelection.

LEO  
Oh, we're not there yet.

JOSH  
Don't let Lloyd Russell push us around on  
Medicare or medium range missiles.

31.

LEO  
You're taking Lloyd Russell too seriously.

SAM  
His numbers are starting to get interesting.

JOSH  
Hollywood likes him. He can raise money.

LEO  
We're not there yet.

JOSH  
30 second hypothetical: You're Lloyd Russell, newly-crowned prince of the white suburban woman, the upper-middle class black man, the teacher's union... you're no friend of the sitting President. What do you do?

LEO  
Put together an exploratory committee.

JOSH  
Who do you get to run it?

LEO  
You.

JOSH  
I already got a job.

LEO  
For the moment.

JOSH  
Who do you get?

LEO  
Well, if I could get Mandy to leave nine hundred thousand dollars a year at Lennox/Chase, I'd get Mandy.

JOSH  
You'd be smart.

LEO  
Hey, come to think of it, you think she'd be interested in his job?

32.

JOSH  
You're in luck.

LEO  
She in town?

JOSH  
Just got here today.

LEO  
What's she doing?

JOSH  
Working for Lloyd Russell.

It takes LEO about two seconds to take this in...

LEO  
(calling)  
Margaret! Get me Senator Russell's  
office on the phone.

JOSH and SAM stand there.

SAM  
Is that the same suit you wore yesterday?

JOSH  
Yeah.  
(beat)  
You?

SAM  
Yeah.

CUT TO:

22 INT. DINER - DAY

22

A real joint. The lunchtime crowd has thinned out. At one table, two female COLLEGE STUDENTS are gazing over at a table off-screen.

STUDENT #1  
I think it's him.

STUDENT #2  
It is.

STUDENT #1  
Okay, I'm going over there.



33.

The two students grab a magazine from their table as we FOLLOW them over to where JOSH and MANDY are sitting.

STUDENT #2  
Excuse me.

STUDENT #1  
We're sorry to interrupt your lunch--

STUDENT #2  
We're juniors at Florida State--

STUDENT #1  
We're with this poly-sci group--

STUDENT #2  
Anyway--

STUDENT #1  
Anyway, we just wanted to say that we think you're excellent, and could we have your autograph.

She puts down a copy of *George* magazine, featuring Josh on the cover.

JOSH  
Sure.  
(nodding over with his head as he writes)  
Oh, this is Mandy Hampton. She's excellent, too.

STUDENT #1  
From the campaign.

STUDENT #2  
Didn't you guys used to be a thing?

STUDENT #1  
Jennifer!

STUDENT #2  
Sorry.

JOSH  
She used to steal money from me.

STUDENT #1  
Really?

JOSH  
Yeah. Thanks for stopping by.

34.

STUDENTS #1 AND #2

Thanks.

JOSH

Sure.

As the STUDENTS go back to their table they ad lib good-byes.

JOSH

See 'ya.

MANDY

Listen. You called me. What do you  
wanna know? Is Lloyd gonna run?

JOSH

I really don't care one way or the other,  
he's a lightweight. I just--

MANDY

You don't like him.

JOSH

Not when I can't use him, no. I just  
wanna know how much trouble he's gonna be  
on the budget surplus.

MANDY

You should get to know him.

JOSH

I have enough friends.

MANDY

Not these days you don't.

JOSH

Jeez, Mandy, it's not like these people  
were in our camp to begin with.

MANDY

Right, Josh, and they've been waiting for  
you to trip over your mouth and you  
handed it to them. It's Christmas morning  
for Mary Marsh.

(pause)

You're a Fulbright Scholar, are you  
honestly the only adult in America who  
doesn't think you're about to be fired?  
Do what Toby's telling you to do.

JOSH

Did you just call him Lloyd?

MANDY  
Who?

JOSH  
Senator Russell.

MANDY  
When?

JOSH  
Just now. You said "What do you wanna know? Is Lloyd gonna run?"

MANDY  
I don't remember. What does it--

JOSH  
It's unusual for you that you'd call a Senator by his first name to a third party.

MANDY  
A third party?

JOSH  
You know what I'm saying.

MANDY  
No, but as long as one of us does--

JOSH  
You're dating Lloyd Russell.

MANDY  
(beat)  
Yes.

JOSH  
(pause)  
Wow. That's great.

MANDY  
Are you gonna freak out?

JOSH  
No, no, no, not at all.  
(pause)  
It's just I always thought he was gay.

MANDY  
No you didn't.

36.

JOSH  
I did.

MANDY  
He's not gay.

JOSH  
Are you sure?

MANDY  
Very sure.

JOSH  
He always seemed effeminate to me.

MANDY  
He happens to be very athletic. Plenty masculine.

JOSH  
I think he's a woman.

MANDY  
Josh, take me seriously.

JOSH  
I do.

MANDY  
The *New York Times* is gonna release a poll in the next few days that brings your unfavorables up to 48%.

JOSH  
(beat)  
This is the first I'm hearing of it.

MANDY  
You'll have it in about an hour.

JOSH  
Where'd you get this?

MANDY  
We don't play for the same team anymore.

JOSH  
Wait a minute. One minute you're giving me career advice, the next minute you're telling me we don't play for the same team.

37.

MANDY  
I'm just gonna be here a while. And I  
want you at your fighting weight when I  
start bitch-slapping you guys around the  
beltway.

The waitress brings their food...

JOSH  
You and Lloyd Russell, huh?

MANDY  
(beat)  
Yeah.

CUT TO:

23 INT. LEO'S OFFICE - DAY

23

As LEO speaks on the phone, a few STAFFERS will come in and  
out to leave something on the desk.

LEO  
(into phone)  
Seventeen across.  
(beat)  
Yes, seventeen across is wrong.

C.J. comes in...

LEO  
(into phone)  
You're spelling his name wrong... What's  
my name? My name doesn't matter. I'm  
just an ordinary citizen who relies on  
the *Times* crossword for stimulation. And  
I'm telling you that I met the man twice.  
And I recommended a pre-empted Exocet  
Missile strike against his Air Force. So,  
I think I know how to--

C.J.  
Leo.

LEO  
They hang up on me every time.

C.J.  
That's almost hard to believe.

LEO's begun gathering up some things--

38.

LEO  
What do you need?

C.J.  
*Nightline* needs someone for the East  
Asia--

LEO  
Send Naomi. What else?

C.J.  
There might be a press leak on A-3-C-3.

LEO  
That was Hutchinson. What else?

C.J.  
Leo...

LEO  
Please don't ask me about Josh.

C.J.  
I was gonna ask--

LEO  
I honestly don't know anything.

C.J.  
You know the President.

LEO  
So do you.

C.J.  
You know him better.

LEO  
I've known him 40 years, C.J. And all I  
can promise you is, on any given day  
there's really no predicting what he's  
gonna choose to care about.

C.J.  
Yeah.

LEO  
I'm sorry. I'm late.

LEO exits, leaving C.J. for a moment before we:

CUT TO:

39.

24 INT. BULLPEN - DAY

24

SAM is walking along a corridor with his lunch tray, being followed by two STAFFERS.

STAFFER #1  
You can't use those stats.

STAFFER #2  
The assault stats.

STAFFER #1  
The assault stats are wrong.

SAM  
We got 'em from your office.

STAFFER #2  
We got them from HUD.

SAM  
And they're wrong?

STAFFER #2  
Even if they were right, don't use them.

SAM  
Well, A) Let's make `em right. B) Why can't I use `em?

STAFFER #2  
The 76-year-old grandmother.

STAFFER #1  
Every time we use those assault stats Carr and Gilmore come back--

SAM  
Who's the 76-year-old grandmother?

STAFFER #2  
Every day, 17,000 Americans defend themselves with a gun--

SAM  
That's flatly untrue.

STAFFER #2  
--including a 76-year-old grandmother in Chicago who defended herself against an intruder in the middle of the night.

SAM's secretary, CATHY, slips in during the following...

40.

STAFFER #1  
Just don't use the stat.

SAM  
The 76-year-old grandmother doesn't defend herself with a modified AK47 Assault Rifle, Larry. Unless she's defending herself against Turkish rebels.

CATHY  
Excuse me.

SAM  
Oh, you guys know my assistant Cathy?

STAFFER #1  
We talk a lot on the phone.

CATHY  
Yeah hi.  
(to SAM)  
I need you for just a second.

SAM  
Uh, right.  
(to the STAFFERS)  
Call me at the end of the day.

SAM and CATHY talk on the way to SAM's office...

25 INT. WEST WING HALLWAYS - CONTINUOUS

25

CATHY  
Leo's wife called.

SAM  
That woman hates me.

CATHY  
Yes.

SAM  
What'd I do?

CATHY  
You tried to hit on her at a party fund raiser.

SAM  
Yes. I meant recently. I meant why did she call.



41.

CATHY  
She wants you to--

SAM  
For the hundredth time, I didn't know who she was. How much longer am I gonna be crucified for that?

CATHY  
Well, a little while longer. Anyway--

SAM  
I, I, I would think most women would be flattered--

CATHY  
Yeah, I think Leo was especially touched that you--

SAM  
What'd she want?

CATHY  
She was supposed to give a tour to some students from her daughter's fourth grade class. She can't make it and she wants you to do it.

SAM  
I can't.

They walk into the offices of the White House communications staff--

CATHY  
You have to. They wrote essays.

SAM  
No really, I can't. I'm not a good tour guide. I don't know anything about the White House.

CATHY  
You wanna call Mrs. McGarry and tell her that?

SAM's pager BEEPS--

SAM  
Oh God, please let this be a national emergency.

SAM picks up a phone and punches in a number off his pager.

42.

A WOMAN picks up...

WOMAN (V.O.)  
Cashmere Escorts.

SAM  
(beat)  
Hi. You paged me?

WOMAN (V.O.)  
Who is this?

SAM  
This is Sam Seaborn.

WOMAN (V.O.)  
I'm sorry. There's been a mistake.

SAM  
Who's this?

WOMAN (V.O.)  
Cashmere Escort Service.

SAM  
(a little worried)  
Okeydoke.

SAM hangs up...

SAM  
(to CATHY)  
Page me.

CATHY  
Where you going?

SAM  
I'm standing right here. Page me and  
punch in the number.

CATHY does as she's told. SAM watches his pager. Nothing.

CATHY  
You switched pagers with someone.

SAM  
A woman's about to call me. She's not  
gonna know why. Put her through.

SAM goes into his office and closes the door.

43.

26 INT. SAM'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

26

The phone BEEPS. SAM picks it up--

SAM  
(into phone)  
Hello?

LAURIE (V.O.)  
Hello? You paged me?

SAM  
(into phone)  
Laurie?

INTERCUT WITH:

27 INT. LAURIE'S APARTMENT -- SAME TIME

27

LAURIE (V.O.)  
Who's this?

SAM  
(into phone)  
It's Sam.

LAURIE (V.O.)  
Hiii.

SAM  
Sam Seaborn.

LAURIE (V.O.)  
(happy)  
Yeah, you called me.

SAM  
(into phone)  
Yeah. Uh, actually, you called me. And that's because, uh, you have my pager. And I have yours.

LAURIE (V.O.)  
(beat)  
Oh.

SAM  
(into phone)  
Yeah. Look. Listen, can I come by and see you real quick?

LAURIE (V.O.)  
Yes.

44.

SAM  
Thanks, good, okay.

CUT TO:

28 INT. A WEST WING LOBBY - DAY

28

A few REPORTERS are waiting around for C.J., who turns a corner and approaches.

MALE REPORTER  
--A full four columns above the fold.

FEMALE REPORTER  
You better be wrong.

C.J.  
Guys, I don't have a lot of time to answer questions right now.

CHRIS  
C.J., has--

C.J.  
But that shouldn't stop you from asking them anyway. Chris?

CHRIS  
Has the President had any reaction to Josh on the show?

C.J.  
None that I'm aware of.

CHRIS  
Do you know--

C.J.  
Seriously, that's it. I'll get you wheels-down time when I've got it.

C.J. walks past Toby's office and is intercepted.

TOBY  
They're picking up the scent.

C.J.  
Billy is. The rest of `em are picking up Billy's scent.

TOBY  
Josh is gonna come to the coffee.

45.

C.J.  
Keep him cool.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

46.

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

29 **EXT. LAFAYETTE PARK - DAY**

29

LEO is walking along with AL CALDWELL.

LEO

This President is a deeply religious man,  
Reverend, I don't need to tell you that.

CALDWELL

No.

LEO

His work with the Southern Baptist  
Leadership Conference, his work with the  
Catholic League--

CALDWELL

He's spoken at my church.

LEO

Yes, he has, and he also spent eight  
months traveling around the country  
discouraging young women from having  
abortions.

CALDWELL

Hang on, he never said any--

LEO

He does not believe that it's the  
Government's place to legislate this  
issue, but that's never stopped him from  
playing his role as a moral leader,  
something which cost him dearly in the  
campaign and you know that.

CALDWELL

Why does he insist on demonizing us as a  
group?

LEO

Because your group has plenty of demons.

CALDWELL

Every group has plenty of demons.

47.

LEO  
You don't have to tell me about it,  
Reverend. I'm a member of the Democratic  
Party.

CALDWELL  
Then why does the White House suddenly  
talk like everyone in the Christian right  
is the same?

LEO  
Forgive me, Al, but when you stand that  
close to Mary Marsh and John Van Dyke,  
it's sometimes hard not to paint you all  
with the same brush.

CALDWELL  
I need John and Mary for political  
muscle.

LEO  
I don't think you do, but I recognize  
you're in a tough spot.

CALDWELL  
I'm not looking for a Holy War, Leo.

LEO  
I know you're not, Al. And I think that  
you and I can keep this from escalating  
beyond a petulant woman being angry about  
getting her hair a little messed up on  
TV.

CALDWELL  
There you go again.

LEO  
What?

CALDWELL  
It was not a little deal.

LEO  
No one's saying--

CALDWELL  
If I make sure of nothing else, I wanna  
make sure you take this seriously.

LEO  
You don't think we're taking this  
seriously?

(MORE)

48.

LEO (cont'd)  
24 hours ago, the President ordered me to fire Josh Lyman. I've been trying to talk him down from it ever since. He's getting off the plane in ten minutes, it's 6-to-5 and pick `em whether Josh still has a job, now I don't know how much more seriously we can take it.

CALDWELL  
Well, it's regrettable.

LEO  
Yes, it is.  
(beat)  
Anyway, I'm glad Toby organized your meeting this afternoon.

CALDWELL  
So am I.

The two men stroll a little farther in silence, the Northwest Executive Entrance of the White House coming INTO VIEW, as we:

CUT TO:

30 INT. LAURIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

30

As LAURIE, in jeans and a sweatshirt, answers the KNOCKING at the door. SAM is standing there in his overcoat.

SAM  
Hi.

LAURIE  
Hi.

SAM  
Can I come in?

LAURIE  
Sure.

LAURIE lets SAM in the door. SAM stands there awkwardly for a moment.

SAM  
This is a nice apartment.

LAURIE  
You saw it last night.

SAM  
Yeah, and I really like it. It makes very good use of space.



49.

LAURIE  
Thanks.

SAM  
The way the ladle hangs from peg boards.

LAURIE  
The ladle didn't actually come with the apartment. It's mine.

SAM  
Right.

LAURIE  
Yes.

SAM  
Uh, can I ask you something?

LAURIE  
Am I a hooker?

SAM  
No, no. What I was gonna say is this: Is it possible, that in addition to being a law student and part-time bartender, that you are what I'm certain would have to be a very high-priced call girl? I, by the way am making no judgments. The thing is, with my job--

LAURIE  
Yes.

SAM  
Yes?

LAURIE  
Yes. I'm sorry. I shoulda told you. I wanted you to like me.

SAM  
I do.  
(pause)  
I have to go.

He waits a moment, then moves to the door...

LAURIE  
Sam?

SAM  
Yeah?

50.

LAURIE  
My pager.

SAM  
Oh. Right.

They exchange pagers...

LAURIE  
Thanks.

SAM  
Listen, I don't know how often you get  
up--

LAURIE  
Sam. Go. You don't know who I am.

SAM  
It's just that there are people who'd pay  
a lot of money to try--

LAURIE  
I know.  
(beat)  
Go. It's okay.

SAM turns and goes. LAURIE closes the door behind him as we

CUT TO:

31 INT. WEST WING CORRIDOR - DAY

31

A group of visitors, AL CALDWELL, MARY MARSH, JOHN VAN DYKE  
and several of their assistants and staff people are walking  
briskly toward a STAFFER who's waiting at the door.

STAFFER  
Reverend Caldwell, if you all would just  
step in here.

The group goes into the mural room as CATHY passes by and  
looks into the Roosevelt Room. Several nine-year-olds are  
waiting patiently with their teacher, MALLORY O'BRIAN.

CATHY  
Excuse me. Hi. We're gonna be just a  
minute so why doesn't everybody have a  
seat.

MALLORY  
Alright, everybody. Nicely and quietly  
take a seat.

51.

CATHY continues on as we

CUT TO:

32 INT. JOSH'S OFFICE/CORRIDOR/LOBBY - DAY

32

DONNA is standing in front of Josh, holding out a fresh shirt and tie.

JOSH  
No.

DONNA  
Put it on.

JOSH  
No.

DONNA  
Put it on.

JOSH  
No.

DONNA  
You've been wearing the same clothes for 31 hours now, Josh.

JOSH  
I am not gettin' spruced up for these people, Donna.

DONNA  
All the girls think you look really hot in this shirt.

Josh looks skeptical, but he's not taking any chances. Josh grabs the shirt and tie. We FOLLOW DONNA out into the corridor--

DONNA  
(calling out)  
Bonnie?

BONNIE  
Yeah?

DONNA  
Tell Toby he's changing his shirt.

BONNIE  
Right.

52.

As DONNA peels off, we continue to the lobby where CATHY meets SAM as he enters--

CATHY  
You're late.

SAM  
I'm having kind of a weird day.

SAM and CATHY begin walking to the Roosevelt Room.

CATHY  
Leo's daughter's class is waiting with their teacher and a couple of parents in the Roosevelt Room.

SAM  
I don't know what to say to them.

CATHY  
You're supposed to tell them about the building and its history. Do you need anything?

SAM  
I need someone to tell me about the building and its history.

CATHY  
Just fake it.

SAM  
I can't fake it.

CATHY  
Of course you can fake it.

CUT TO:

33 INT. ROOSEVELT ROOM - DAY

33

A dozen fourth-graders, dressed in their White House best, are sitting patiently along with their teacher, MALLORY O'BRIAN, and two parent-chaperones.

SAM and CATHY pull around the corner and stop outside the door.

SAM  
Which one is Leo's daughter?

CATHY  
What does it matter?

53.

SAM  
I want to make a good impression. What does she look like?

CATHY  
I don't know.

SAM  
Okay, I'd just like to thank you for all your help.

CATHY  
Sure.

SAM goes inside--

SAM  
Hi, I'm sorry to be late.

MALLORY  
Mr. Seaborn, Mallory O'Brian.

SAM  
Hi.

MALLORY  
And these are the fourth graders at Clearlake Elementary School who wrote the best essays on why they wanted to visit the White House.

SAM  
Well that's just great, why don't we get started.

Throughout this, the nine year-olds will be transfixed by Sam, without actually understanding a word that he's saying. Mallory and the parents will grow slightly concerned.

SAM  
My name is Sam Seaborn and I'm the Deputy Communications Director. What does that mean exactly? Well, to begin with, I'm a counselor to the President. Mostly on domestic matters, though generally not security related. I work with Toby Ziegler, the Communications Director, and C.J. Cregg, the Press Secretary, on crafting our message and getting it out through the electronic and print media.  
(MORE)

54.

SAM (cont'd)

And while my functions here are generally perceived to be politically skewed, it's important to remember that it's not the DNC, but rather your tax dollars that pay my salary. So I work for you whether you voted for us or not.

There's an awkward silence in the room before--

MALLORY

(pause)

Mr. Seaborn, maybe you could give us some history.

SAM

Sure. I graduated law school eight years ago and started working at Dewey/Ballantine--

MALLORY

Actually, I'm sorry to interrupt, actually I meant a history of the building.

SAM

The White House.

MALLORY

Yes.

SAM

Sure. The White House, as you know, was built several years ago. Mostly, if I'm not mistaken, out of cement. The room we're in right now, the Roosevelt Room, is very famous. It is named after our 18th president, Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The chairs that you're sitting on today are fashioned from the lumber of a pirate ship captured during the Spanish-American--

MALLORY

All right. Kids, I need to speak to Mr. Seaborn. Sit tight for a second.

SAM follows MALLORY into the corridor--

34 INT. CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

34

MALLORY

Hi.

55.

SAM  
How ya doin'.

MALLORY  
I'm sorry to be rude, but are you a moron?

SAM  
In this particular area, yes.

MALLORY  
The 18th president was Ulysses S. Grant, and the Roosevelt room was named for Theodore.

SAM  
Really?

MALLORY  
There's like a six foot painting on the wall of Teddy Roosevelt.

SAM  
I shoulda put two and two together.

MALLORY  
Yes.

SAM  
Look. The thing is, while there really are a great many things on which I can speak with authority, I'm not good at talking about the White House.

MALLORY  
You're the White House Deputy Communications Director and you're not good at talking about the White House?

SAM  
Ironic, isn't it.

MALLORY  
I don't believe this--

MALLORY starts to go back in--

SAM  
Wait a minute. Please. Could you do me a favor. Could you tell me which one of those kids is Leo McGarry's daughter?

MALLORY

Why?

SAM

Well, if I could make eye contact with her, make her laugh, you know, just see that she's having a good time, it might go a long way to making my life easier.

MALLORY

These children worked hard. All of them. And I'm not inclined at this moment to make your life easier.

SAM

Ms. O'Brian, I understand your feelings, but please believe me when I tell you that I'm a nice guy having a bad day. I just found out the *Times* is publishing a poll that says a considerable portion of Americans feel that the White House has lost energy and focus. A perception that's not likely to be altered by the video footage of the President riding his bicycle into a tree. As we speak, the Coast Guard are fishing Cubans out of the Atlantic Ocean while the Governor of Florida wants to blockade the Port of Miami. A good friend of mine is about to get fired for going on television and making sense, and it turns out that I accidentally slept with a prostitute last night. Now would you please, in the name of compassion, tell me which one of those kids is my boss's daughter.

MALLORY

That would be me.

SAM

You?

MALLORY

Yes.

SAM

Leo's daughter's fourth grade class.

MALLORY

Yes.



57.

SAM  
(pause)  
Well this is bad on so many levels.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

58.

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

JOSH, C.J., TOBY, DONNA and a few AIDES walk briskly through a doorway and into--

36 INT. WEST WING CORRIDORS - CONTINUOUS 36

As the group makes its way toward the Mural Room.

C.J.  
She's gonna try and bait you, Josh, you understand what I'm saying?

JOSH  
Lloyd Russell. Yeah that'll last.

C.J.  
Are you listening to me?

JOSH  
(repeating)  
They're gonna try and bait me.

C.J.  
They want you to say something arrogant.

JOSH  
Well I don't need baiting for that.

This is said as they turn into the open doors of

37 INT. THE MURAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS 37

CALDWELL, MARSH, VAN DYKE and the AIDES have already been at the coffee and whatnot.

TOBY  
Hi. Hi. Good afternoon. We apologize, we're running a bit late today.

CALDWELL  
Good afternoon... How's the President's health?

C.J.  
It's a mild sprain--Everyone greet each other.

They all say their hellos...

TOBY

Everybody sit, sit, sit. We're happy you all could come talk with us today. As you know, the President makes a usual Sunday morning radio address, and in a few weeks he's scheduled--

CALDWELL

Toby, if I can interrupt for just a moment. Uh, the goals and spirit of Christian and Family oriented organizations, while embraced by a great and growing number of Americans, have been met with hostility and contempt by their Government. Now, yesterday morning, on the television program *Capital Beat*, that contempt was given a voice and a face and a name.

(to JOSH)

I'm referring of course to you, sir.

JOSH

Yes, I know, and I'm glad you brought that up.

CALDWELL

I'm surprised at you, Josh. I've always counted you as a friend.

JOSH

And I'm honored by that, Reverend. First, let me say that when I spoke on the program yesterday, I was not speaking for the President or this administration. That's important to know. Second, please allow me to apologize. My remarks were glib and insulting. I was going for the cheap laugh, and anybody willing to step up and debate ideas deserves better than a political punch line. Mary, I apologize.

MARY MARSH

(beat)

Good then. Let's deal.

TOBY

I'm sorry?

MARY MARSH

What do we get?

60.

TOBY  
For what?

MARY MARSH  
Insulting millions of Americans.

TOBY  
Well, like Josh said--

MARY MARSH  
I heard what Josh said, Toby, what do we get?

TOBY  
An apology.

MARY MARSH  
Sunday morning radio address. Public morals. School prayer or pornography, take your pick.

TOBY  
School prayer or pornography?

JOHN VAN DYKE  
It's on every street corner.

TOBY  
I've seen it Mary--

MARY MARSH  
Condoms in the schools.

TOBY  
What?

MARY MARSH  
Condoms in the schools.

TOBY  
Well, that's a problem.

MARY MARSH  
What?

TOBY  
We have a Surgeon General who says they dramatically reduce the risk of teen pregnancy and AIDS.

MARY MARSH  
So does abstinence.

61.

JOHN VAN DYKE

Show the average American teenage male a condom and his mind will turn to thoughts of lust.

TOBY

Show the average American teenage male a lug Wrench and his mind'll turn--

C.J.

Toby--

MARY MARSH

School prayer, pornography, condoms. What's it gonna be?

TOBY

We're not prepared to make any sort of a deal right now.

JOSH

Sure we are. Mary, I--

MARY MARSH

(to Josh)

My read of the landscape is that you're cleaning out your desk before the end of business today, so I'd just as soon negotiate with Toby if it's all the same to you.

CALDWELL

Mary--

MARY MARSH

(to CALDWELL)

Please allow me to work. It was only a matter of time with you, Josh.

JOSH

Yes.

MARY MARSH

That New York sense of humor was just--

CALDWELL

Mary, there's no need--

MARY MARSH

Reverend, please, they think they're so much smarter. They think it's smart talk. But nobody else does.

62.

JOSH  
I'm actually from Connecticut, but that's  
neither here nor there. The--the point  
is, Mary, I--

TOBY  
She meant Jewish.

A stunned silence. Everyone stares at Toby.

TOBY  
When she said "New York sense of humor,"  
she was talking about you and me.

JOSH  
You know what, Toby, let's not even go  
there.

CALDWELL  
There's been an apology, let's move on.

JOHN VAN DYKE  
I'd like to discuss why we hear so much  
talk about the First Amendment coming out  
of this building, but no talk at all  
about the First Commandment.

MARY MARSH  
I don't like what I've just been accused  
of.

TOBY  
I'm afraid that's just tough, Mrs. Marsh.

JOHN VAN DYKE  
The First Commandment says "Honor thy  
Father."

TOBY  
No it doesn't.

JOSH  
Toby--

TOBY  
It doesn't.

JOSH  
Listen--

63.

TOBY

No, if I'm gonna make you sit through this preposterous exercise, we're gonna get the names of the damn commandments right.

MARY MARSH

Okay, here we go.

TOBY

"Honor thy Father" is the Third Commandment.

JOHN VAN DYKE

Then what's the First Commandment?

And from the doorway, a MAN, standing with the help of a cane, speaks.

MAN

"I am the Lord your God. Thou shalt worship no other God before me."

The man is PRESIDENT JOSIAH (JED) BARTLET, Democrat of New Hampshire, and a direct descendant of one of the signers of the Declaration. A few paces behind the Bartlet is his personal aide, CHARLIE. A few SECRET SERVICE can be seen out in the corridor.

BARTLET

Boy, those were the days, huh?

EVERYONE is standing--

CALDWELL

Good afternoon, Mr. President.

BARTLET

Al. What have we got here, C.J.?

C.J.

Well, we've got some hot tempers, Mr. President.

BARTLET

Mary.

JOHN VAN DYKE

Mr. President, I'm, uh, John van Dyke.

BARTLET

Yes. Reverend.

64.

JOHN VAN DYKE  
May I ask you a question, sir?

BARTLET  
Of course.

JOHN VAN DYKE  
If our children can buy pornography on any street corner for five dollars, isn't that too high a price to pay for free speech?

BARTLET  
No.

JOHN VAN DYKE  
Really?

BARTLET  
On the other hand, I do think that five dollars is too high a price to pay for pornography.

C.J.  
Why don't we all sit down.

BARTLET  
No, let's not, C.J. These people won't be staying that long. May I have some coffee, Mr. Lewis? Al, how many times have I asked you to denounce the practices of a fringe group that calls itself The Lambs of God?

CALDWELL  
Sir, that's not up to me--

BARTLET  
Crap. It is up to you, Al.

LEO and SAM, with CATHY in tow, appear in the doorway and slip quietly into the room.

BARTLET  
You know, my wife, Abbey, she never wants me to do anything while I'm upset. Thank you, Mr. Lewis. Twenty-eight years ago, I came home from a very bad day at the State House. I tell Abbey I'm going out for a drive. I get in the station wagon, put it in reverse and pull out of the garage full speed. Except I forgot to open the garage door.

(MORE)



BARTLET (cont'd)

(beat)

Abbey told me not to drive while I was upset and she was right. She was right yesterday when she told me not to get on that damn bicycle when I was upset, but I did it anyway, and I guess I was just about as angry as I've ever been in my life. It seems my granddaughter, Annie, had given an interview in one of those teen magazines and somewhere between movie stars and makeup tips, she talked about her feelings on a woman's right to choose. Now Annie, all of 12, has always been precocious, but she's got a good head on her shoulders and I like it when she uses it, so I couldn't understand it when her mother called me in tears yesterday. I said "Elizabeth, what's wrong"? She said, "It's Annie." Now I love my family and I've read my Bible from cover to cover so I want you to tell me: From what part of Holy Scripture do you suppose the Lambs of God drew their divine inspiration when they sent my 12 year-old granddaughter a Raggedy Ann doll with a knife stuck through its throat?

(pause)

You'll denounce these people, Al. You'll do it publicly. And until you do, you can all get your fat asses out of my White House.

Everyone is frozen.

BARTLET

C.J., show these people out.

MARY MARSH

I believe we can find the door.

BARTLET

Find it now.

The group exits the room in a slow, quiet and awful manner.

CALDWELL

(quietly to LEO)

We'll fix this, Leo.

LEO

See that you do.

66.

They're gone. BARTLET has gone out the side door, through an adjoining room and into the Oval Office. The staff begins recovering from this last moment and following the President.

JOSH  
Okay, can I just say that, as it turned out, I was the calmest person in the room.

C.J.  
Way to stay cool.

TOBY  
I'm not in power to auction off the Bill of Rights.

JOSH  
I thought you were gonna take a swing at her there.

TOBY  
She was calling us New York Jews, Josh.

JOSH  
Yes, but being from Connecticut, I didn't mind so much.

We follow them into

38 INT. OVAL OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

38

JOSH  
You, C.J., on the other hand... you were brilliant. I particularly liked the part where you said nothing at all.

C.J.  
I'm sorry, Josh, I was distracted. All I could really think about was Lloyd Russell and your girlfriend.

SAM  
Mandy and Lloyd Russell.

JOSH  
I'm puttin' an end to that.

BARTLET  
"Hello, Mr. President. Did you have a nice trip, sir? How's the ankle, sir?"

During this, MARGARET, LEO's secretary, brings him a note which he'll read over.

67.

BARTLET

It seems to me we've all been taking a little break. Thinking about our personal lives or thinking about keeping our jobs. Breaks are good. It's not a bad idea to take a break every now and then. I know how hard you all work.

LEO slips BARTLET the note.

BARLET

There was this time that Annie came to me with this press clipping. It seems that these theologians down in South America were all excited because this little girl from Chile had sliced open a tomato, and the inside flesh of the tomato had actually formed a perfect Rosary. The theologians commented that they thought this was a very impressive girl. Annie commented that she thought it was a very impressive tomato. I don't know what made me think of that.

During that story, BARTLET glances at the note he was handed and now tells the rest of the group about it.

BARTLET

(matter-of-fact)

Naval Intelligence reports approximately twelve hundred Cubans left Havana this morning. Approximately 700 turned back due to severe weather, some 350 are missing and are presumed dead, 137 have been taken into custody in Miami and are seeking asylum.

(beat)

With the clothes on their back, they came through a storm. And the ones that didn't die want a better life. And they want it here. Talk about impressive. My point is this: Break's over.

LEO

Thank you, Mr. President.

SAM

Thank you, sir.

The meeting's over too. Impressed by their boss, perhaps in a way they haven't been for a while, the group extend a simple "Thank you, Mr. President./Thank you/Thank you, sir/etc."...

68.

and disperses through various doors. BARTLET calls to Josh who's almost out the door--

BARTLET

Josh.

JOSH turns around...

BARTLET

"...too busy being indicted for tax fraud?"

(beat)

Don't ever do it again.

JOSH

(quietly)

Yes, sir.

JOSH exits the Oval Office as BARTLET calls out--

BARTLET

Mrs. Lanningham. What's next?

We PULL BACK on this scene as MRS. LANDINGHAM begins to run through the President's schedule...

MRS. LANDINGHAM

Governor Thomas and the Majority Leader have asked to be conferenced in and the group from NASA is assembling for their photo-op. At seven o'clock you have, uh, cocktails...

This scene continues MOS for a moment before we

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF SHOW