

The Handmaid's tale

Section 5 (pg. 176 -213)

Brief Summary/Analysis

Chapter 24

- Offred reflects on her relations with the commander. Offred feels that she enjoys the company that the Commander gives her. Suddenly she wants to laugh out loud and realizes that she can't because the room that she is in is accessible to all of the members. So she goes to the closet "the most conserved place given to her" and randomly laughs.
- In this chapter, Offred expresses her feelings towards the commander and states that she looks forward to a friendship of some sort.
- The chapter ends with the word 'opening' which might mean that she is opening to a new somewhat more happier life and the old life she had, the miserable lonely life is about to be over.

Chapter 25

- The chapter starts of with a horrifying surprise for Cora as she thinks that Offred has killed her self because she was found sleeping on the closet floor from yesterday night. When Cora sees her alive she relief herself but has dropped and ruined her morning breakfast. Offred already feeling sick from the "Birth Ceremony of Janine" doesn't mind and only asks for the toast. Offred talks about the beauty of summer, fertility and the garden, signifying for the first time a bit of happiness. Offred talks about his meetings with the commander and games of scrabble and him letting see out dated magazines while he watches her. Offred acknowledges that her new relationship with the commander means more than a meeting between a handmaid and her master.

→ After asking, the Commander gets her lotion, he watch as she lather on the lotion which shows a bit of lust that the commander has for Offred and shows there relationship as a mistress. She starts to question the meaning of their meetings.

Chapter 26

- Once again the ceremony comes up, but now Offred is emotionally involved and is afraid that Serena might find out that she is more than a handmaid to her husband. When the commander tries to touch Offred's face during the ceremony she is afraid and moves her face to the other side.
- During the ceremony's now, Offred and the Commander feel awkward because they have to act like they don't know each other; the Commander also states that his wife doesn't understand him anymore, which kind of gives Offred a weakness of Serena's joys relationship.
- The way the Commander behaves with Offred during the meetings and the ceremony shows how Offred has become a mistress in this triangle.

Chapter 27

- Offred and Ofglen go shopping for groceries again; they pass by the church, the wall and then the university library which is now the police headquarters. Then the go stand in front of the "Soul Scroll" which is known as computerized factory for prayers. While looking through the shatterproof window, Offred and Ofglen see each other for the first time in a different manner and Ofglen asks when "Do you think God listens to these machines?" (pg.), Offred answer opens Ofglen more and they both admit that they are not believers of this society. Offred also learns there is a underground society that Ofglen is involved in. as both of handmaids walk back to their houses glad they opened up to each other, a black van with a eye on it, stops and violently takes a man off the streets and into the van.

- Knowing that Ofglen is also a nonbeliever gives hope and a sense of life to Offred because now she knows that her perspective of Gilead's society is similarly to that of some others.
- The ending of the chapter is sharp as it reminds Offred that the smile that exists on her face because of Ofglen is once again reinforced with the idea of the power of Gilead's people holds.
- Another interesting thing was the mentioning of the world's natural resources being extinct, which were the whales.

Tropology

Symbolism- Flowers

- **"I would think, Maybe you appreciate things more when you don't have much time left. I forgot to include the loss of energy. Some days I do appreciate things more, eggs, flowers"** (pg. 210) Offred's appreciation for flowers and eggs depicts that she wants to and needs to get pregnant or otherwise she will be sent to the colonies. The joy and freedom that Offred has NOW will be taken away from her.
- **"She'd like me pregnant though, over and done with and out of the way, no more humiliating sweaty tangles, no more flesh triangles under her starry canopy of silver flowers."** (pg. 214) the flowers symbolize Serena's hope for Offred to quickly get pregnant so she can be moved to another family. This quote also shows that even though Serena has so much more power than Offred she still has to count on her and has to face the humiliation of receiving a child from this handmaid who she hates so much.

Symbolism- Clothes

- **"No need for modesty, in my nightgown, long-sleeved even in summer, to keep us from the temptations of our own flesh."** (pg. 201) Clothing which can say a lot about a person,

in this case symbolize sexuality, femininity, unity and identity. The quote states that Gilead's society wants them to cover their flesh, so no men of Gilead is tempted towards them. The handmaids all wear red and in this case this shows unity and their identity.

Perspective

Offred

- After meeting with Ofglen, Offred has hope, all of sudden she has found some excitement in her life through the commander and now her, **"I am so excited, I can hardly breathe..."** (pg. 211) even though Offred was given a hope it is automatically shattered when a man is abducted from the streets by the Gilead's authorities. This "taking away" scares Offred and gives her relief that it wasn't her.
- So far in this section, her new relationship with the Commander has given her a desire to live, she laugh absurdly in the closet because she feels happy about her situation with the commander, she also enjoys the unconscious pain that she is bring to Serena Joy, meaning Serena joy doesn't know about the meetings so far.

The Commander

- The most powerful male character in this novel so far is the Commander, and he represents the authority or power of Gilead. Him meeting with Offred shows that he is unhappy with his life, he can't find love or friendship from his wife, the commander is showing a need towards Offred, trying to caress her during the ceremony and watching her while she looks at the magazine or puts on lotions shows, how Offred has become amusing to someone, in this case, the Commander. The commander who was kept "hidden or conserved" in the first sections has started to open up and we see that he isn't a bad guy, he sympathizes with Offred for using butter as a moisturizers but in a

humorous way, he still doesn't realize the pity in this situation where they have to hide scrapes of butter to keep them self's protected from dry skin.

Gilead's society

- Having a computerized store "Soul Scrolls" that prints out demanded prayers really shows how important religion is to Gilead society, also the printing of "desired prayers" bring that idea of manipulating the prayers so they are biases and beneficial to Gilead's society. "toneless metallic voices repeating the same thing over and over" (pg 167) shows the reader how controlling and committed the society is so people of Gilead will pray and another thing I felt was that the machines have taken away the beauty of the religion, like the machines were there to only monitor the environment.

Predictions/Questions

- I wonder what Nick gets out of the meetings that he arranges for the Commander and Offred, because I mean he probably is doing it for a reason, for getting some goods from the black market or receiving some sort of freedom from the Commander.
- Will Serena Joy find about the meetings between the handmaid and the commander or does she already know and has decided to live with the fact?