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A Song for Offred

I'm Sorry and I love you -Ryan Adams

This is a song for Luke and Offred. Not Luke and whoever Offred was in the before time. Luke and; Offred. *I'm sorry and I love you* by Ryan Adams in 2020 is a song that reflects on a past relationship and mistakes made, talking about lingering feelings and persistent memories. In *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood, Offred is constantly reflecting on her past life, before the switch and more specifically, her husband, Luke. After that night with Nick, Offred spends the night thinking about what could have happened to Luke after they were separated. One of the possibilities being that he made it out and has met up with a group of revolutionaries. She thinks to herself, "Meanwhile I must endure, keep myself safe for later. What has happened to me, what's happening to me now, won't make any difference to him, he loves me anyway, he knows it isn't my fault." (106). This quote really aligns with the title and constant lyric in the song: "I'm sorry and I love you.". Offred feels ashamed of what has happened to her during her time in Gilead and therefore feeling the need to convince herself that Luke wouldn't be upset with her. That he understands the situation, he has to. One final thing that really connected this song to the story for me were the lyrics, "If i could see your face maybe it could erase the lies with the truth.", which very strongly connects to the book because Offred is distracting herself from her reality by creating all these different ones for Luke. If she could see him, and be in front of him then all of her stress would settle, she wouldn't have all these mixed thoughts in her head, she could "erase the lies with the truth."

Your Mind is Not Your Friend -The National (ft. Phoebe Bridgers)

This is a song for Offred's sanity. *Your Mind is Not Your Friend* by The National with Phoebe Bridgers as a feature, released in 2023 is a song that studies the idea of mind betrayal, how your mind always seems to go against you. Similar to *I'm Sorry and I Love You*, this song also reminds me of Offred's hope for freedom. The first few lines of this song go, "Your imagination is in an awful place, don't believe in manifesting your heart'll break " and these lines really match up well with the idea of

Offred almost forcing herself to be optimistic that someone out there does have a plan. That there is going to be an, 'after time' just like for her now, there is a before time. The second line, "don't believe in manifesting your heart'll break" really makes the reader/listener think about how this (for all we know) false hope she keeps making herself believe in ("It's this message, which may never arrive, that keeps me alive. I believe in the message" (106)), could be her last straw if she finds out it's not true.

For Emma -Bon Iver

This is a song for Nick and Offred. What happened, what could've happened and what may happen. *For Emma* is a song written in the form of a play, using a dialogue format to emphasize the two sides of a story: going through a break up. And although that might not necessarily be the case for Offred and Nick, I don't think the lyrics are too far off from their story. The first two lines in the song that made me really see a connection to Nick and Offred was, "For every life, forgo the parable." These lines reminded me of the moment when Nick goes to find Offred and they end up kissing and she thinks to herself, "Luke, you'd know, you'd understand. It's you here, in another body" (99). So in every lifetime, despite what is literally right in front of her, despite the rules and what is being told and shown to her, she still manages to find Luke and she still manages to be, "running home, running home, running home, running home" to him.

A second line in this song takes me back to, "What has happened to me, what's happening to me now, won't make any difference to him, he loves me anyway, he knows it wasn't my fault." (106). Because of this and what I mentioned in my previous paragraph I believe that Luke is Nick and Nick is Luke... at least in some ways. To Offred, they share the same soul. "With all your lies, you're still very lovable" is the sixth line in *For Emma* and goes perfectly with the quote from 106. Regardless of who they are and what their rules are in this world, Nick still went for it. Just like how Offred knows Luke could.

Happiness -Taylor Swift

This is a song for Serena Joy. *Happiness* by Taylor Swift is a post-break-up song. The song gives very mixed emotions, anger, sadness, missing the person you used to pass the hours with and now being

upset with them for leaving. Serena Joy is in a very tough position, feeling very insecure and jealous but at the same time knowing that these are the rules and this is technically what's best for her. "Serena Joy lets go of my hands. 'You can get up now,' she says, 'Get up and get out.' She's supposed to have me rest for ten minutes, with my feet on a pillow to improve the chances.... There is loathing in her voice, as if the touch of my flesh sickens and contaminates her...Which of us is it worse for, her or me?" (95) and "Try to touch me like that, when we're... when she's there. Did I? He said. You could get me transferred, I said." (162) remind me of this line in *Happiness*, "I hope she'll be a beautiful fool, who takes my spot next to you" Although Serena Joy is unaware of the Commander and Offred's relationship behind closed doors it is obvious that she is insecure about the ceremony and in a way having to 'share' her husband: being replaced. She can't make her feelings go away by being mean and punishing Offred, Swift sings, "I can't make it go away by making you a villain.

Desolation Row -Bob Dylan

This is a song for Gilead. The government, their beliefs. The people. *Desolation Row* by Bob Dylan is a song where he writes reality as he sees it, "a freak show, with all the grotesques on prominent [display](#)." In this eleven minute song there are countless connections to Gilead:

"Here comes the blind commissioner, they've got him in a trance

... Ophelia, she's 'neath the window for her I feel so afraid, On her 22nd birthday she already is an old maid

... Her profession's is her religion, her sin is her lifelessness

...Right now I can't read too good, don't send me no more letters, no, Not unless you mail them from Desolation Row"

Those are only a few of the lines I picked to show the relation between the song and place. From brainwashing, to becoming handmaids and being forced to become a surrogate, to losing the right to read and take in knowledge this song would fit perfectly into the book.

