

Love v Gilead

This section is from chapter 35 of the Handmaid's Tale, when Offred is revisiting/rethinking her old love life. She mentions that love comes and goes, similar to pain. In my own life I've found that to be true, a lot of times when you are in a relationship or at least the beginning, the first 6 or 7 months, you can so easily get caught up in strong emotions and truly convince yourself that this person is someone you want to be with. Similarly to Offred looking back on a feeling that once felt so strong but slowly fades is truly like pain. Pain can so easily take over your whole life, for a minute or two but a day later it's a forgotten feeling, like it never happened. Offred also talks very specifically about the feeling of looking back on a relationship, she says "You would look at the man one day and you would think, i loved you and the tense would be past, and you would be filled with a sense of wonder because it was such an amazing and precarious and dumb thing to have done (Pg 226) " The author, Margaret Atwood uses a very specific choice of words when describing the feeling of looking back at a past relationship, amazing, precarious, and dumb. These words almost contradict each other but in my experience, love can be almost something of a contradiction, something that shouldn't happen but somehow happens, something that's just as good for you as it is bad. Love is the only thing that I can think of that can be amazing, precarious and dumb at the same time.

The idea of love is something that I have struggled with my whole life, is what I'm feeling love? Is this feeling something that will last? Questions like these have plagued my mind throughout every relationship that I have been in, and I'm still unsure if I actually know the answer to any of those questions for any of the relationships that I've been in. The feeling of doubt accompanies questions like this which is something that Offred also experiences. She describes an experience in which she wakes up in the middle of the night and turns over to look at Luke sleeping, she says "when the moonlight was coming through the window onto his sleeping face, making shadows in the sockets of his eyes darling and more cavernous than in day time, and you'd think, Who knows what they do, on their own or with other men? Who knows what they say or where they are likely to go? Who can tell what they really are?(Pg 226)" My understanding of love and relationships is that these doubts and questions will always be in the back of your mind but can eventually fade over time as trust continues to build, which leads me to wonder if Offred ever really trusted Luke even after having a kid with him and eventually getting married to him. Does she trust him? how does this lack of trust translate into her current position, does it influence her relationship with the commander? Does she worry that just like he had an affair with his ex wife, could he be doing it to her?

For me the inability to trust or lack of trust has always been one of the reasons a relationship hasn't worked out. Lack of trust causes you to doubt everything. Just like how love can cause you to act without reason, doubt can cause you to do the same thing. The conversation Offred is having within her head as she looks at Luke is something I've had hundreds of times, constantly second guessing myself and my partner. I feel some sort of

sympathy for Offred because I understand what it's like to wonder what's really going on in your partner's head.

After reading this section I feel like I think of Offred as more human. So far throughout this book, she is portrayed as someone who is emotional but we never really know the emotional intricacies of her relationship with Luke, in this section Atwood essentially opened up Offred's heart for us and shows us what she's really like and what she thinks on the inside, she gives us something we can connect to, something we can sympathize with, and something we can truly understand even in the craziness of their collapsing world. She is no longer just a two-dimensional character, but a three-dimensional person that we can actually relate to.

