

What Is Left Unsaid

Levanter (English ver.) - Stray Kids

Specific lyrics *Levanter* by Stray Kids closely reflect Offred's interactions with her memories of her loved ones. It follows their journey of letting go of the past that has continually pulled them back so they can move on and accept reality. The song and the novel emit an air of loss and yearning for what has passed and can no longer be. Though the song develops a hopeful tone, which differs from what Offred feels currently, the initial tone of the song conveys a similar message to how she operates. In the song, the lyrics "I know I gotta let go/With no regrets you're already gone" demonstrate Offred's memory of Luke. She has several fates for him laid out in her head, yet she knows regardless of where he is, she will never be able to get him back. Her memories of him slowly fade as she thinks about him less and less.

When recounting all the things she believes happened to Luke, she says "The things I believe can't all be true, though one of them must be. But I believe in all of them, all three versions of Luke, at one and the same time." (106) She tries desperately to hold onto his memory as if the only thing that keeps her going in the beginning of the book. She can't let go of him because it would tell her all hope is lost, though she inevitably gives up and thinks of him less and less. She doesn't want to accept the fact that she's most likely dead, so she creates other probable fates that give her some peace of mind. This is quite similar to the song as her soul and will to live fade the more she loses him and gets closer to the truth.

Offred reflects earlier in the book on her daughter as she is reminded of her during her bath. She emphasizes "She fades, I can't keep her here with me, she's gone now. Maybe I do think of her as a ghost, the ghost, the ghost of a dead girl,..." (64) She has disregarded her daughter as a presence in her life, like the song, and no longer dwells on what could have been or what is happening now. She resolves to think of her as she was in the past, as someone dead, because it is easier than facing that she can never see her daughter again.

lovely - Billie Eilish feat. Khalid

The song *lovely* by Billie Eilish and Khalid resembles how Offred feels as a Handmaid. The song has the vibe of someone held captive inside their own head by the external problems

they cannot escape. They have no outlet for their emotions, a product of their own making or of the system they are in, so they end up self-destructing under the pressure of their emotions building up. After meeting with the Commander and being requested to play Scrabble and kiss him, Offred goes back to her room and has a violent breakdown. It presents itself as an eruption of laughter, which she is not allowed to express, so she can't get caught doing it without being thought crazy. "I crawl into the cupboard, draw up my knees, I'll choke on it. My ribs burst while holding back,...I'll burst. Red all over the cupboard,...oh to die of laughter." (146) All of her feelings presented at once, so she had no choice but to let them out, like a broken dam. A mere giggle, let alone hysterical laughter, would get her in trouble since her only purpose in this society is to produce children, so she had to put herself in the cupboard to protect herself and release her feelings while isolated. These culminations follow the same progression as the song, where the person wants to feel something and find a connection but they can't because they are alone, left to fall apart at the seams with no hope of recovering. After Offred falls apart, she just has to go on and act like everything is fine because she can talk to no one and has to focus more on surviving.

Clarity - Zedd feat. Foxes

Clarity by Zedd and Foxes illustrates a story comparable to Offred's relationship with Luke before they were caught trying to escape. There is an element of risk and taboo explained in the song, like the beginning of Offred and Luke's relationship, where Luke had an affair with her. They would always go back to each other, despite the circumstances rightly keeping them apart, such as Luke's wife in *The Handmaid's Tale*. Offred reminisces on Moira, specifically how she would react to the Commander and his requests, as she reacted when Offred first told her about Luke. "She disapproved of Luke, back then. Not of Luke but of the fact that he was married. She said I was poaching, on another woman's ground. I said Luke wasn't a fish or a piece of dirt either...I said I was in love." (171) Her emotions take precedence over what is right or what is best for her, like the person in the song. Her selfish needs, even when called out by her friend, are unrecognized by her as an issue, though the secrecy caused her pain and she was later reminded of her hidden past when she was taken to the same hotel by the Commander. Her affection for him was initially quick and private meetings in a non-descriptive hotel, and he took up all of her attention. Even though she can no longer be with him after she is taken away and his

outcome is unknown, she tries to hold onto his memory for as long as she can, until she eventually gives up on him.

Kiss You - One Direction

When you look beyond the catchy melody of *Kiss You* by One Direction and observe it through the lens of Gilead, its resemblance to the men, specifically the Commander, is uncanny. The song talks about their wish to impress the girl they like so they can receive affection in return. They are doing whatever they can and trying to validate her feelings, even if it is a temporary relationship. The Commander called for Offred to come to his office privately through Nick. Once there, he asks her to play Scrabble and requests “I want you to kiss me...Not like that,...As if you meant it.” (139-140). He craves affection from her because he doesn’t receive any from Serena Joy, but he is asking her under duress because it is bad for her whether she agrees or refuses. There is a clear power imbalance between them, but he tries to have to grace of giving her some liberties, though they are not true freedoms.

He uses her as an ego boost and a source of praise, reflected in “Tonight I have a little surprise for you,...Something you’ll like.” (229). He is trying to use his abilities to get closer to her, stepping over countless boundaries and escalating with his actions. The riskier he gets, the worse the consequences will be for Offred if they get caught, but this doesn’t matter to him. He tries to seem nice by helping her gain some autonomy, but his intentions are purely for his own benefit and gain. He is always asking for her opinions, mostly affirmative ones, to give off the illusion that she is mostly a willing participant, similar to the chorus of the song, where they too are trying to accelerate the progression of the relationship.

When She Loved Me - Sarah Mclachlan

When She Loved Me by Sarah Mclachlan follows a person who has lost a connection with someone close to them. They were inseparable and reliant on each other, but one of the party has moved on, leaving them alone and abandoned. The lyric “So the years went by/I stayed the same/But she began to drift away/I was left alone” creates the same emotions as when Offred’s daughter was taken away. She could not control the separation and it affected her emotions and mental health. To deal with the pain of her daughter being taken away, she had to think of her as dead. When Serena Joy brings her a photo of her daughter, she realizes that she no longer has

any importance to her. "Time has not stood still. It has washed over me, washed me away, as if I'm nothing more than a woman of sand,...I have been obliterated for her. I am only a shadow now...A shadow of a shadow, as dead mothers become. You can see it in her eyes: I am not there." (228) Though Offred had imagined her daughter dead in her head, seeing her as she is growing up without her makes her realize how inconsequential her existence is to her daughter's life. She is a distant memory for her daughter, even though Gilead only began a few years ago. The reality is finally setting in for her that her daughter can move on without her, which isn't what she wants. Knowing that she is not remembered saddens her, but there is nothing she can do about it. She is left on her own to know that her own daughter might not even remember she ever existed. The song has a similar story, where the subject is pushed to the backburner by someone so close to her, who was a dear companion but now no longer remembers her.