

College English

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It felt like I was approaching a disaster when I read further into the book. The Commander has a type of affection for Offred, and it has been clearly shown that there is a type of affair going on. However, the Commander may be using this to his advantage. The relationship reminded me of Stockholm Syndrome. There, the handmaids serve one purpose, to give birth, they are viewed as “merely a usable body”. Life in the house is miserable, and this is further proved when Moira escapes. Offred gets some ideas of inspiration from her. Still, at the end of Chapter 23, she has really strong thoughts about the Commander, “I think about how I could approach the Commander, to kiss him, here alone, and take off his jacket, as if to allow or invite something further, some approach to true love, and put my arms around him and slip the lever out from the sleeve and drive the sharp end into him suddenly, between. I think about the blood coming out of him, hot as soup, sexual, over my hands.” (pg. 139-140)

In the following chapter, Offred has a more affirming thought about her situation, “But that’s where I am, there’s no escaping it. Time’s a trap, I’m caught in it. I must forget about my secret name and all ways back. My name is Offred now, and here is where I live.” (pg.143) This quote stood out to me because many chapters before in 18, Offred had come up with many scenarios in her head of Luke’s fate: death, capture and torture, and escaped. She had so much hope and faith that Luke had successfully escaped and would come back for her any day, “The message will say that I must have patience: sooner or later he will get me out, we will find her,

wherever they've put her. She'll remember us and we will be all three of us together. Meaning I must endure, keep myself for later.' (pg. 106) In this moment, we see Offred's determination to keep herself, because she knows or at least hopes that Luke will come for her and save her. But then going into chapter 24, we see her thinking that there's no escape, that she has to forge her secret name- her real name and everything back. I know that this can just be her mind breaking from all her time and treatment there. That maybe she was starting to lose hope and that Luke really didn't have the fate that she had hoped for him. However, because this occurred after her interaction with the Commander, I believe that there was more to this.

Looking into the Scrabble game between the Commander and Offred, Offred gets a feeling that she rarely gets, especially with the Commander, "We play two games. *Larynx*, I spell. *Valence*. *Quince*. *Zygote*. I hold the glossy counters with their smooth edges, finger the letters. The feeling is voluptuous. This is freedom, an eyeblink of it." and "I win the first game, I let him win the second" (pg.139) In the previous chapters, it has been established in Offred's mind on what freedom looks like, what she wanted to have happened to Luke, "I also believe that they didn't catch him or catch up with him after all, that he made in, reached the bank, swam the river, crossed the border, dragged himself on the far shore, an island, teeth chattering; found his way to a nearby farmhouse, was allowed in, they were friendly, not the sort who would turn him in, perhaps they were Quakers, they will smuggle him inland, from house to house, the woman made him hot coffee and gave him a set of her husband's clothes." (pg. 105) However, this is the moment when Offred feels "freedom". A moment created by the commander. She had a false sense of "freedom" and in that freedom, she believes that she has choices. That is why she allowed him to win the second game. The commander's actions pushed her to believe that

something else was what she needed to feel certain things such as freedom. He has made her believe that her “freedom” lies in places such as his office and not beyond the walls and rivers.

The following day after their Scrabble game, Offred realizes what her new relationship with the Commander could mean and leads to as it was forbidden, “Now of course it’s something different. Now it’s forbidden, for us. Now it’s dangerous. Now it’s indecent. Now it’s something he can’t do with his Wife. Now it’s desirable. Now he’s compromised himself. It’s as if he’s offered me drugs.” (pg.139) knowing the power and influence and power that the Commander has, Offred knows that it would be her who would be truly destroyed if things went down. She knew what her new “relationship” with the Commander has allowed, but also what he could do if she ever upset him.