

# A playlist of The Handmaid's Tale

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## ['Rolling Hills'](#) by Jill Scott

*Rolling Hills* by Jill Scott is a song about realizing the power you have as a woman. Not in a strong kind of way but in the sense that the use of your sexuality can be used to get you things and put you in places. In Gilead we see Offred use her sexuality to get herself things. On page (144), Offred thinks, “*I know I need to take it seriously, this desire of his,*”. Here she is talking about the Commander and his proposition to spend time together and be intimate. Pleasing the commander and going along with his wants could be a “Passport”, Offred calls it. She uses her sexuality and get's lotion. Despite this being something small and seemingly insignificant it carries a lot of meaning in the world of Gilead because the handmaids aren't allowed many luxuries. Another example of Offred using her sexuality to get something is the deal she strikes with Serena Joy. The deal to get pregnant by Nick and in turn get an image of her daughter. Even though it may seem to be just a picture, it can be argued that the knowledge of your child's well-being is invaluable. So, as Jill Scott says, “*There's power in the rolling hills,*”.

## ['Wicked Games'](#) by Chris Issak

Luke and Offred's relationship is only able to be seen through flashbacks. Offred thinks of Luke often, recalling their time together and their life in the time before. While certain aspects of their relationship are not always remembered positively, that doesn't take away from the fact that Offred uses her thoughts of Luke to escape. On page( 74), Offred, sits and listens to her heart beat after reminiscing about her time at the red center, training with the Aunts and other handmaids, there she flashbacks to her time with Luke, “*I'm in our first apartment, in the bedroom...Luke is there, behind me, I turn to see him. He won't look at me, he looks down at the floor, where the cat is rubbing itself at my feet.*” This memory isn't as pleasant as some but Offred would rather drift off into the rollercoaster of emotions that is their relationship than be alone in her room before Cora comes in. *Wicked Games* is a song with a soft medium tempo that expresses what it feels like to be so dependent on a person for their love and their affection. A feeling so intense it almost saves you. It's even written in the first line of the song, “*The world was on fire, no one could save me but you, It's strange what desire will make foolish people do.*” This can be applied to Offred's attachment to Luke even after all their time apart and how their desire to be together surpassed any morals about infidelity, since their relationship began with Luke already married.

Another lyric that really connects with Offred's current feelings and relationship about Luke, “What a wicked game you play, to make me feel this way, What a wicked thing to do, to

let me dream of you” Offred doesn’t know if Luke is dead or alive but her feelings are still strong and now in this present time in Gilead the only ways for her to “be with” Luke is in memory or in her dreams. It’s bittersweet.

### ‘Sixteen Men Swinging’ by Count Basie

In chapter 36, Offred and Commander take an adventure. Offred is presented with an outfit for the occasion and here is the description given on page(231), “ ...I take off my shoes and stocking and cotton underpants and slide the feathers on...and slip the thin sequined straps over my shoulder..” This description of the outfit and later when they enter the night club is reminiscent of a 20s fashion and speakeasy vibes. While that may not be the case, it's fair to assume that an aesthetic like this was intended to be picked up by the reader. *Sixteen Men Swinging* is such a lively song. It opens with a loud burst of different instruments and then gets quieter in the middle and then from there ends with a very loud climax. It’s a very lively song that was released in 1917 and fits the 20s party scene.

### ‘Emotions’ by Brenda Lee

In the world of Gilead, its citizens are taught to suppress their emotions. Society in itself is taught to suppress. It’s taught to suppress desire, and pleasure. It even goes so far that Offred is longing for any kind of connection because the way things are set up getting close to anyone is restricted and/or dangerous. On page (103), we get a glimpse into the way Offred feels after being under the Gilead government for some time, “ ...nobody dies from lack of sex. It's the lack of love we die from. There’s nobody here I can love, ...” She’s isolated and cut off from any kind of loving connection. *Emotions is* a song about the nuisance of feelings. How feeling a way about somebody or something can steal your every waking thought. The lyric, “why make me remember what I wanna forget,” is reminiscent of something we see Offred do a lot in the novel. With any down time she’ll find herself thinking of something from the time before or even her time in the Red Center. Another lyric that almost matches the flow of the book, “ you worry my days, you torture my nights,” can connect with how in almost every night chapter the reader is given a little bit of context from the past through Offred’s remembering. It tortures her with the thoughts of a better time or with how she’ll look at her situation in hindsight.

### ‘Cake’ by Melanie Martinez

Serena Joy is a troubled woman. She is seemingly muted by her role as the commander’s wife and now she has to welcome Offred to the home. A woman was sent to sleep with her husband and their child. Feelings of inadequacy are bound to be felt. She has been cast aside in her marriage for being “infertile”. Even Offred sees Serena Joy as a woman cast aside, “No flowers for you(SJ) you’re withered”pages (81-82). *Cake is* about a toxic relationship where

love is missing. In the song the character singing is in a sexual relationship but is cast aside after they are done. While it's not really clear to what extent how close the Commander is to her, it's important to note that as husband and wife they have a significant relationship that is sidelined when a new handmaid enters. The lyric, "I'm not a piece of cake, for youtube just discard, while you walk away," is something reminiscent of how much Serena Joy has been demoted in the marriage in a way.

Another way for this song to be applied is through the lyric, "If I'm just a piece of cake, Then you're just a piece of meat," and this is just a way of saying if you can use me for sex and be done with me, then I can use you. Offred and the commander's relationship is almost just like this. He wants her for a connection even it's pretend, " Not like that(about the kiss)... as if you meant it,"(140) and Offred uses his to get small things like lotion, the ability to read and write, which is a very big deal as she says, " Pen is envy"(196), and it serves as her way of getting a little piece of the old times back.

[PLAYLIST LINK](#)