

The Bathroom Bandit

Why do people disobey rules? For some, it's because of disagreement while others might do it to make a statement or send a message. In the Handmaid's Tale, the system of laws that rule over handmaids, marthas, commanders, etc. are designed to oppress and confine people to a lesser value. Regardless of gender, the range of freedom under this system is limited. This system is called Gilead.

In my art piece, I depicted the scene in which Moira (left), a handmaid, holds a sharp object to Aunt Elizabeth's (right) neck while she bends down to inspect a toilet. I drew a cracked line between Moira and Aunt Elizabeth to indicate that the rules and culture of Gilead have been shattered. I strategically added this detail to my art piece because it is strictly forbidden in Gilead for a handmaid to do such a thing, especially to someone who has authority over them; Aunt Elizabeth. In addition to this, those who disobey the rules of Gilead are destined to face serious consequences. In chapter six, it is revealed that those who do not follow the rules of Gilead may be executed and hung from the brick wall that separates Gilead from the outside world. Knowing the harsh nature of Gilead, it's very bold of Moira to violently threaten Aunt Elizabeth.

I decided to make Moira and Aunt Elizabeth faceless because of how I interpret the society of Gilead. Faces are a symbol of self identity because none are the same. Everyone's face is unique. As I mentioned before, Gilead is an oppressive system that strips people of their personal identity and self expression. For example, handmaids are often required to stay silent, not interact with each other, and give their bodies to men. Even the men under the rule of Gilead are confined to a single role. And if these jobs are not fulfilled, serious consequences await. Freedom is very limited to everyone under Gilead. For these reasons, I made Moira and Aunt Elizabeth faceless because self-identity is something that is irrelevant in Gilead. It doesn't matter who you are, man or woman, your sense of self is useless.

Above all reasons I've listed, I made this art piece because of its significance in the Handmaid's Tale. This scene is the first moment in the book where an act of intentional rebellion occurred. Moira used violence to leverage power against Aunt Elizabeth which led to her escaping the dull society of Gilead. Although it is not specified what happened to Moira after she left Gilead, it is certain that she escaped. For other handmaids who want to escape, Moira symbolizes a beacon of hope and a chance of freedom. The blade in which Moira holds up to Aunt Elizabeth's neck, can also be a symbol of hope. Without it, and its potential to cause violence, Moira would not have any power above the Aunt. My art piece isn't just a recreation of a random scene, it's the depiction of a major pivotal moment in the Handmaid Tale that symbolizes the impact of rebellion.

