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### **Little Do They Know**

In Chapter seven of “The Handmaid’s Tale” by Margaret Atwood, Offred has a flashback to when she was a little girl and her mother took her to a park, “she said we were going to feed the ducks. But there were some women burning books, that’s what she was really there for. To see her friends; she’d lied to me, Saturdays were supposed to be my day” (38). It is not said how old Offred was in this flashback, especially since she kept asking herself, “How old was I?” (38), and never giving an answer, but I would guess that she was around six years old. Feeding ducks at a pond is something that a kid around that age would enjoy doing. Despite being a young child, Offred knew that she was being deceived, and by her own mother.

When you’re a little kid, and your parents take you somewhere with only adults, they often assume that you’ll be easily entertained so that they don’t have to give you their complete attention. But they don’t consider the unfairness of them being able to chat with their adult friends while you’re left alone. I can think of countless instances as a child when I was with my mother and we were at an event like dinner, but I was the only kid there. I could make it through most of these instances, but it was usually towards the end that I would start tugging on my mom’s clothing, wanting her attention and letting her know that I was ready to leave, so that I could be her main focus. She would tell me, “One moment honey, I’m in the middle of talking to someone”, but she’s been talking to someone for a while now. After she said that would be when I might have started to whine and cry, and then I would get a stern talking to about my behavior at this event that she brought me to where there are no other kids and not many ways to amuse myself. It’s not that my mother didn’t give me enough attention as a little girl, it’s just that these types of moments were difficult, for whatever reason. Maybe I got too much attention and wasn’t used to being left to entertain myself. But these were the types of moments where I felt betrayed, as Offred did.

The real reason that Offred's mother took her to the park was more than just to see her friends. They were there to burn pornographic magazines. That is not why Offred was there, but one of the women asked if she wanted to throw one into the fire, first getting permission from her mother, "If she wants to, my mother said; she had a way of talking about me to others as if I couldn't hear" (38). This is another example of parents underestimating the abilities of their young kids. They presume that their child doesn't know enough to understand that they are being talked about, so they just do it right in front of their kid. In some cases it's true, but in others it's not. I can remember when I started to figure out that I was being talked about right in front of my face, by my mother to her friends. It felt more annoying than hurtful. I would get upset at her for it later, — when no one else was around so that neither one of us would feel embarrassed — expressing my annoyance in the appropriate tone of voice. It took her some time to remember not to speak about me, in front of *me*, but she eventually got it. Though, issues similar to that still come up today.

This past summer I started babysitting. One of the families that had contacted me wanted to meet up so that I could get to know them and their kid, and so they could meet me. The parents were explaining everything about their child to me while he was right next to them. I remember glancing back and forth from the parents to the kid, feeling weird about the fact that they were talking about him while he was right there, and wondering if he understood what they were saying. Parents think it's okay to do things like that because they think they know what their kid can and cannot comprehend. But there is an age when their child will start to understand. Is it right to talk about your child right in front of them because you know that it isn't something they're fully aware of? It may be convenient to do so, — not having to lean in and whisper to the person or pull them aside to talk about your child — but it's not always okay.