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### The Commander's Complexity

In the book *The Handmaid's Tale*, by Margaret Atwood, women are purposely left powerless by the society of Gilead until they have successfully conceived. Throughout the events of this book, I had always wondered how Gilead had come to this corrupt atmosphere for women that would only benefit men. However, the more I had read into this book the more I saw that the men hadn't been as benefited as I believed, as maybe they are now greedy for more. Near the end of chapter 32, the Commander and Offred had just finished a game of scrabble and got into somewhat of philosophical conversation pushed by the Commander's intoxicated wants. He had suggested that it was too easy for men to receive sex and there was no intimacy attached to it. He then asked for Offred's opinion as she refused to share it, "What I think doesn't matter." (211) What had been shared next shouldn't have surprised me, but it did. It almost seemed like the Commander came the closest to ever confessing? To me, it didn't seem like there was any other logical reasoning for why he would asked Offred his opinion on what they had been doing for the past while, and what made it weirder was the author going against literature rules with dialogue in books and forgetting about quotation marks.

This made the whole section really confusing to me and also questioning the author's intentions for this structure. It was almost as if Offred's mind had been disorganized and off about the situation so the way it came out into the book was a symbolization of that, and I could understand why. After being asked what she thinks of her connection with the Commander, knowing no matter what she says she will remain powerless, he says, "You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs. - We thought we could do better. - Better never means better for everyone, he says. It always means worse, for some." (211) Me, I had never seen a phrase like the first quote but I'm all too familiar with the second one. The second one just means that something being better is subjective, since everyone has different preferences on what they want in life. Gilead is a good example of this, since the men are able to have much more power and have all the sex they want without worrying about the feelings of the woman they conceived with: men having the "better" in this situation. For women, their rights and power are stripped away from them and are only valued as someone who is able to get pregnant. But even with this, not all women would've wanted the same thing and maybe some women might have liked this change, having the quote apply in a different perspective with Gilead as well. With the first quote, the more I looked over it alone without the context, it seemed like what was being said is that it's impossible to achieve something without there being consequences. However, why exactly would the Commander say something like this right after asking Offred what she thinks of the relationship between them?

During a discussion within chapters 35-39, it had been said that the Commander is a complex character and I agree with that to the fullest. The Commander makes many actions that would have to be backed up by theories and not so much straight evidence from the text that reasons it. With this phrase he said about having to sacrifice bad side effects when trying to achieve something, what exactly was he referring to? Had he still been on the topic of men wanting more than sex now, admitting to him being one of those men and also admitting to the fact that pursuing Offred wouldn't be for the "better" of everyone? Does he acknowledge that his

wife and the system would be angry with him while he tries to achieve a connection with Offred? With all of this too, why had he been attracted to a handmaiden in the first place and why Offred out of everyone? Why is it so easy for him to proceed to pursue Offred, his actions throughout the whole book so far not pointing to caring about any consequences?

The Commander is a complicated character, and I will only be able to make theories to come to the reasonings of the actions he makes. Maybe it could all just be that he craved intimacy so much that he was willing to fall in love to rebel against society and cheat on his wife. Maybe it could all be too easy for us as the readers, and just that Offred could be so oblivious that it affects the point of view for the readers making us view the Commander this way. It could all be so simple, only if we had some communication about Offred herself as well as the Commander himself.