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Brass Hooks



"I saved the cupboard until the third day. I looked carefully over the door first, inside and out, then the walls with their brass hooks – how could they have overlooked the hooks? Why didn't they remove them? Too close to the floor? But still, a stocking, that's all you'd need. And the rod with the plastic hangers, my dresses hanging on them, the red woollen cape for cold weather, the shawl. I knelt to examine the floor, and there it was, in tiny writing, quite fresh it seemed, scratched with a pin or maybe just a fingernail, in the corner where the darkest shadow fell: 'Nolite te bastardes carborundorum.'" pg. 52

This artwork is meant to be a visual representation of the cupboard Offred was looking at on page number 52. The reason why I chose this specific scene is because of the internal dialogue Offred has with herself during the search. Of course one of the things that stood out during this scene was the writing of "Nolite te bastardes carborundorum." For me though, what really stood out during this entire scene was Offred's line of thinking. The only thing that is really meant to stand out in this otherwise normal cupboard is the red noose that is roughly etched into the door. The aspect that really stood out to me and I wanted to show to the viewer is the fact that even while being oppressed Offred is still thinking about ways to possibly harm herself. I made the noose chicken scratch because of the saying, "Nolite te bastardes carborundorum" was also etched into the cupboard. I took etching messages Gilead doesn't want shown as a way of resistance, and that possibly harming herself would be her own way of resistance, because Gilead really values her body, specifically only her reproductive organs, so the act of harming herself in a way that makes it impossible for them to use her body is one of the biggest ways of resistance.

The choice of it being red isn't simply because Offred is a handmaid, although that does play

a role, it is to show how even through her thoughts of minor and/or major resistances to the structure of Gilead, evidently she is still following her role as a handmaid. She is still a cog that works in the machine. At this point in time Offred is still acting in a similar fashion as a sheep, being constantly led and controlled by Gilead, still thinking of what it would be like to escape. She was thinking about how to make the noose, yes, but it was with the stockings that is given to her by Gilead, the red also represents the tools of resistance that Gilead unknowingly gives its people.

Another reason as to why it is etched rather than there actually being a noose made of her stocking is because I wanted to show the difference of thought vs actions. Offred's resistance at this point of the story is mostly if not entirely mental, not physical action. Something that could be wiped away like a drawing, or covered up like blemish. Offred's thoughts are very fleeting and, although possibly leaving a mark, are very much temporary.

To add on to the choice of it being red, the color of red is often associated with rage, blood, and violence but in Gilead it means obedience and fertility. To contradict with the previous statement of it being red to simply mean obedience, it also stands for the violent methods Offred is thinking about to possibly leave this violent society. The fight between obedience and violent rebellion/resistance is something that always stands out in this society, and can often be seen in the real world.