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## Blessed be the day meaning handmaid's tale

Ask Media Group | Photos & Title Graphic Courtesy: Hulu Based on Margaret Atwood’s 1985 dystopian novel of the same name, The Handmaid’s Tale made history by nabbing an Outstanding Drama Series Emmy in 2017. This season-one victory made Hulu the first streamer to ever win a major series award. That same year, Elisabeth Moss won a Lead Actress Emmy for playing June, a woman who, at the start of the series, is known as the handmaid Offred. And Ann Dowd, who plays the brutal Aunt Lydia, nabbed her own statuette. Since then, so many of the incredible cast members — Samira Wiley, Alexis Bledel, Yvonne Strahovski, Joseph Fiennes and Bradley Whitford — have garnered much critical acclaim for bringing the harrowing world of Gilead to life. Due to COVID-19-related shooting delays, we’ve been left hanging since the third season ended in 2019. This April 28, Handmaid’s Tale will finally return to Hulu for its fourth season, but, given that large lapse in time, you might’ve forgotten all of the details — or even the bigger plot points — that unfolded last time we saw June. With this in mind, we’re taking a look at all of the need-to-know plot threads ahead of the season four debut in our Handmaid’s Tale recap. Spoilers ahead. Let’s return to the basics for a moment. After all, Handmaid’s Tale’s resonance is about more than just strong performances. Like Atwood’s novel, the show’s nuanced world-building, replete with its own lexicon, is what’s so transportive. Unlike other dystopian stories, Handmaid’s Tale is set in somewhat-present New England where a patriarchal, totalitarian theocratic state, spawned from far-right religious fanatics known as the Sons of Jacob, has overthrown the United States government to form the Republic of Gilead. Additionally, in the wake of environmental pollution, the world at large faces an infertility crisis. As a result, Gilead has created a rigid system of social classes, influenced by their particular interpretation of stories from the Old Testament. In particular, women are stripped of their rights: No matter their social standing, they are not allowed to read, write, own property, handle money, or have control over their own bodies. Fertile women are forced to become Handmaids, the women in red cloaks and bonnets. Assigned to high-ranking men, or “Commanders,” Handmaids are subject to ritualistic rape each month in what Gilead calls the “Ceremony.” Apart from Commanders and Handmaids, Gilead is populated by the Commanders’ Wives, infertile but high-ranking women who wear bright blue; Aunts, women who train the Handmaids; Marthas, women who act as cooks and maids; and Guardians, the military patrols who watch Gilead’s citizens closely. When we first meet our protagonist, June (Moss), she’s called Offred — meaning she’s “Of Fred” — and is serving as a Handmaid in Commander Fred Waterford’s (Fiennes) house. There, she finds herself navigating the harsh Serena Joy (Strahovski), Fred’s wife; Rita (Amanda Brugel), a Martha who at first seems risk-averse despite her disdain for Gilead; and Fred’s driver, Nick (Max Minghella), who June fears might be an Eye (an undercover Guardian). June, Hannah and Luke run from Gilead’s Guardians and toward the Canadian border in the show’s pilot. Photo Courtesy: Hulu The viewer learns that, before Gilead, June lived in Boston with her husband, Luke (O-T Fagbenle), her daughter, Hannah (Jordana Blake), and her best friend, Moira (Wiley). When the Sons of Jacob overthrew the U.S. government, many Americans fled to Canada, but June didn’t make it — and neither did Hannah or Moira. While Hannah was placed with a high-ranking family, June and Moira were forced to become Handmaids by the oppressive Aunt Lydia (Dowd) and co. While placed with the Waterfords, June meets Emily (Bledel), a queer woman who was unable to escape to Canada with her wife and child. Despite the threat of being sent to The Colonies — a radioactive wasteland — Emily has joined Mayday, a clandestine network of other Handmaids and Marthas who are attempting small acts of rebellion, from setting off explosives to smuggling children and letters out of Gilead. June, eager to find Hannah and reunite with Luke in Canada, becomes a major player in this calculated resistance. But things are made more complicated when she becomes pregnant with Nick’s child. Pretending the child is Fred’s, June gives birth to Nichole. While the baby is everything Serena Joy could’ve wanted, it’s clear that even she is beginning to see Gilead’s cracks, especially when June tells her what’s best for Nichole, the baby they both love, is getting her out of Gilead. In the season two finale, Emily escapes to Canada with baby Nichole. At the last minute, June decided to stay behind, convinced that she can’t leave without Hannah — now called Agnes Mackenzie. Assigned to Commander Lawrence (Whitford), June tries to meet up with Hannah time and again. Commander Lawrence and June at Eleanor’s funeral service. Photo Courtesy: Hulu She also learns that Lawrence, despite being one of Gilead’s primary architects, is disillusioned with the system, especially since his wife Eleanor (Julie Dretzin), who would be deemed “unfit” by Gilead, is experiencing what seems to be early onset dementia. Although Lawrence feels trapped in a society he opposes — and although his wife could receive treatment and support elsewhere — he’d be tried for war crimes if he left Gilead. As a result, he refuses to take part in the monthly Ceremony and allows the Mayday operation to run out of his home. Meanwhile, some bad blood forms between June and the seemingly pious Ofmathew (Ashleigh LaThrop), who’s clearly distraught over her pregnancy. Eventually, Ofmathew snaps and tries to shoot Aunt Lydia, only to be killed by a Guardian. The doctors keep a comatose Ofmathew alive long enough to try and deliver her child — and, as punishment for the trouble she’s caused, June is forced to wait in the hospital room until the baby comes. Disgusted by the callous way the doctors treat Ofmathew, June vows to rescue as many children as she can from Gilead. After June manipulates Eleanor in an attempt to see Hannah, other higher-ups come to suspect that Lawrence is up to something. As a result, Waterford and other high-ranking officials force June, Eleanor and Lawrence to conduct the Ceremony and prove their loyalty. Later, Lawrence agrees to help June organize an escape plan for as many of Gilead’s children as possible. Feeling completely broken, Eleanor overdoses — and June, fearing Eleanor might put her escape plan in jeopardy, doesn’t resuscitate her. It’s a cruel and calculated move, but the act that really cements June’s new demeanor is her murder of High Commander Winslow (Christopher Meloni), who attempts to rape June while she is at an illegal brothel, getting the word out in the network about the escape plan. Rita, her fellow Marthas and a Handmaid lead a group of soon-to-be refugee children to a plane headed for Canada. Photo Courtesy: Hulu With Winslow deemed “missing,” June carries on with her plan. In the season three finale, a network of Marthas and Handmaids bring children and babies to Lawrence’s house. From there, the group sneaks through the woods to a cargo plane at a nearby airfield. June tries to distract the Guardian’s by attacking them. But since Hannah isn’t in this group of children, June feels compelled to stay. Most of the other Handmaids and Marthas join her, save Rita, who is responsible for getting the children safely onboard and staying with them on the flight to Canada. In the end, June kills a Guardian who follows her into the woods. Bleeding, she collapses on the ground until a group of Handmaids finds her and carries her off to (hopefully) safety. Meanwhile, Rita and the children land in Canada, where Moira, Luke and Emily, among others, are ready to help the refugees. Rita recognizes Luke and tells him that June was responsible for planning the escape. Over the course of the series, it became clear that Serena’s rhetoric and ideas informed a bulk of what the Sons of Jacob believed in. Pre-Gilead, she was a notorious right-wing writer and public speaker. Of course, she created her own demise insofar as her ideas led to Gilead — an oppressive society that stripped her of any agency as well as her right to read or write. In addition to allowing June and Emily to smuggle baby Nichole to Canada for a better life, Serena finds herself punished for suggesting that women be able to read the Bible. The result? Her own husband, Commander Waterford, allows Gilead authorities to cut off Serena’s finger. Left: Moira brings Nichole to Serena’s holding cell for a mandated visitation. Right: Commander Fred Waterford is arrested by Canadian forces after Serena tricks him into crossing the border. Photo Courtesy: Hulu Upset, Serena burns down her house — only to have June save her from the flames. It’s clear that she isn’t all that interested in remaining with Fred, but, at the same time, she doesn’t have much choice in the matter. While all of this seemed like the perfect recipe for Serena to help Mayday, she doubles down on her ferribleness. Under the instruction of Commander Winslow, Fred and Serena launch a campaign to have baby Nichole returned to them. Later on in the season, Serena travels to Canada, where she meets Luke, June’s husband, and Nichole at the airport. There, U.S. government representative Mark Tuello (Sam Jaeger) tries to make a deal with Serena, urging her to defect. With her desire to raise Nichole overpowering her, Serena tricks Fred into driving across the border, where he is arrested by Tuello. Much to her excitement, Serena does get to see Nichole again when Moira brings the child for a supervised visitation. The only problem? Serena isn’t exactly innocent. While in custody, Fred tells Tuello what Serena’s done. You know what they say: A couple who’s facing trial together for crimes against humanity, deserves each other. In Canada, Luke is caring for baby Nichole — which is undoubtedly difficult enough, but made all the more complicated when Serena Joy gets involved. When Luke takes Nichole to the airport to meet Serena, he learns that Nick is Nichole’s father. That’s definitely going to come back to haunt June, but, at the same time, it’s already haunting Serena: She forced June and Nick to conceive the child because she felt Fred was impotent, and, in the end, that’s the crime Tuello is holding her accountable for. Emily and her wife, Sylvia, say goodbye before being separated at the airport while trying to escape the U.S. as it falls to Gilead. Photo Courtesy: Hulu In addition to helping Luke raise Nichole, Moira has become an anti-Gilead activist as well as a kind of social worker who helps folks adjust to life outside of Gilead. One of those people happens to be Emily, who is so deeply traumatized by her experiences that she fears visiting her wife (Clea DuVall) and son. Eventually, she does share a tearful, difficult reunion with them both. As for other key players in Gilead, Aunt Lydia finds herself shaken. In what was once Washington D.C., things are even more oppressive — there, Handmaids’ mouths are sewn shut. And what about Nick? He’s been sent back to the frontlines to squash any American holdouts. But it’s also clear he has much more blood on his hands than he’s willing to admit. Details about season four are, unsurprisingly, scarce. It’s clear that June and the other renegade Handmaids will be continuing their Mayday exploits. And that the refugees in Canada, especially the children, will have a lot of painful adjusting to do. While the show’s creator has promised that the show’s “delivering” this season, that remains to be seen. After all, despite the phenomenal acting and production design and wonderfully jarring songs, Handmaid’s Tale has been rightly criticized for stagnating over the last few seasons. Pushing past the confines of Atwood’s book was a big risk — but is it justified? Only a handful of episodes in, The Handmaid’s Tale has already proved itself as an incisive lens for real-world issues, re-imagining contemporary fears amid a totalitarian dystopia called Gilead. Though the series takes things to an extreme, it presents a chilling parallel to our own world by touching on the misogyny, homophobia, and rape culture that continue to plague modern society. Thus far, we’ve mostly seen its characters suffer in silence, but the Handmaid’s Tale episode “Nolite Te Bastardes Carborundorum” makes the case for fighting back, and in a world where it often feels like our most basic rights are under siege, it’s a potent reminder to press forward — even when things seem most bleak.In protagonist Offred’s world, fertile women are simultaneously powerful and powerless. Their bodies are consecrated, but their minds are cast aside, their only value contingent on their ability to bear children. Her case is, of course, a radical leap from the war on reproductive rights raging on today, but it’s difficult to ignore how closely it mirrors the looming threat to women’s body autonomy.At first, Offred is depicted as submissive, obedient, broken. She goes through the motions of her day-to-day routine, detaching herself from reality and relying on the thought of finding her daughter as her only motive to tread onward. She explains that Gilead came to power because the country was “asleep,” and initially, it seems she’s still numb. But in the fourth episode of The Handmaid’s Tale, she’s shaken back to life — much in the way leftist America was jolted awake by Donald Trump’s election.After being banished to her room for weeks because she failed to get pregnant, Offred stumbles upon a phrase inscribed inside her closet door — a remnant from the woman who lived there before her: “Nolite Te Bastardes Carborundorum,” which translates to “Don’t let the bastards grind you down.”When she questions her commander about it during one of their clandestine Scrabble meetings, he reveals that the handmaid before her committed suicide to escape the misery of Gilead, and it’s then that Offred sees a chance to reclaim what little control she still has. Emboldened by the imparting words of her predecessor, she convinces the guilt-ridden commander to lift her exile, capitalizing on his concern that she might suffer the same fate.In the final moments of the episode, we see a triumphant Offred return to the outdoors, her fellow handmaids spilling into the road behind her as if to demonstrate their quiet solidarity. It plays like a visual representation of the phrase the former Offred left behind: “Nolite Te Bastardes Carborundorum.” “Don’t let the bastards grind you down.”Here, Offred’s victory is a small one, but as we continue to make our own calls for progress, it serves as an empowering, perhaps necessary reminder that sometimes even the littlest strides can make the biggest difference. For many, Trump’s election felt like a punch to the gut. His campaign was trailed by hateful, anti-feminist rhetoric, and his win rung out like a dispiriting wake-up call that sexism is far more alive than we may have wanted to think.But, like Offred, we can learn a lot from the women who walked before us. This is far from the first time we’ve had to pick up the pieces in the wake of a patriarchal triumph, and if we can take anything away from Offred’s story, it’s that we can’t back down in the face of defeat. No matter how powerless we feel, we have to push and claw and gouge for change with whatever means we have, even if it’s inch by inch. It’s how we got as far as we are now, and it’s the only way we’ll charge ahead.

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