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**THE HANDMAID’S TALE**

**The Relationships**

“Ignoring isn’t the same as ignorance, you have to work at it.”  
― **Margaret Atwood,**[**The Handmaid's Tale**](https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/1119185)

**June and Serena**

**Bruce Miller:** The relationship between June and Serena is born out as much by the acting as it is by the writing. By the performance between those two women, those two actors, the characters have grown and changed. It is very much a group project that we’ve all worked on together. Their relationship is very much at the core of the show.

Yvonne and Elisabeth are extraordinary at both their individual performances and their performances with each other. The amount of care and respect they show each other – it’s beyond remarkable. The result is a wonderfully complicated, fascinating relationship that one moment you may completely understand and relate to, and the next moment you can't understand why they’re doing the things that they’re doing. They are both intelligent, strong, stubborn, self-possessed people. In a different situation, they would’ve at least respected each other.

**Elizabeth Moss:** Serena is my favorite character besides June, and that’s largely due to Yvonne’s performance and how much nuance she brings to her character. She brings a humanity and a vulnerability and a cruelty as well. Because she’s a brilliant actress, she is able to do both. It’s, I think, exclusive to Yvonne. Watching her in this final season going back to being original Serena with all of that pride, which is her downfall, but also her belief in a better world and belief in a better Gilead, truly believing in the future of New Bethlehem and yet at the same time, not being able to not be that prideful Serena in her moment of glory. I think she has almost the best ending of any character in the series because it’s so perfect for her. All she ever wanted was a baby. It’s all she needs. That scene moves me every time, that scene, reading it, thinking about it's so special. I think that June and Serena’s relationship is the love story of the show. It’s the center of the show, and that's 100% due to Yvonne and her performance.

I do think June and Serena can trust each other. I think that Serena could have trusted June a long time ago. Can June trust Serena? At the very, very end, yes. But probably not a moment before.

**Yvonne Strahovski**: The relationship between June and Serena is central to the show.They’re the two key faces of Gilead. Every season, I try and look with fresh eyes at Serena, her relationship with the other characters - primarily with June. This season is probably the most raw, most real, most honest version of their relationship we’ve seen. There will be times where we almost feel like they have arrived at a friendship, whether they’re both seeing it that way is another story.

I think Serena believes in redemption. I think June has always had a place in her heart for Serena. But June says to her, ‘I want to forgive you, but I can't.’ June’s forgiveness is the one thing Serena desperately wants. The disaster factor is inevitable. There’s always going to be the hurdle of what Serena represents, what she turned a blind eye to in Gilead. It’s a foundational difference between the two of them. But if only they were passionate on the same issue. They’re both women who can get things done, and they’re both smart. If only they were on the same page, which they’re not.

Lizzie and I have a joke that we’re like Juliet and Juliet - lovers in a very dysfunctional relationship. We have these amazing intense moments, and then it crashes and burns and then we come back to each other. There is a constant dance between these two. I love the push and pull between the characters and what they represent, what they’ve become, what the colors represent, the red and the blue. I mean, it’s amazing.

**The Love Triangle**

**Elizabeth Moss:** When Luke gets out of prison, he has such a fire within him. I think he has completely started to change as a character. He has been waiting and waiting and waiting to be able to join this fight, to be able to get in there himself and try to get Hannah back himself. He needs to be able to do something to enact change. And you can just see it from the very beginning. He is ready to go. So as soon as Mark gives him that opportunity, he doesn’t hesitate. June is furious with Luke’s choice. She’s trying to keep everyone safe, and Luke signs up for this most dangerous of missions.

In this season, we see Nick and June together for the first time in quite a while. Finally, they can talk about things that have been left unsaid. They finally admit that they love each other now, not just in the past but now. But then, toward the end of this season, Nick betrays June’s trust. It’s the biggest thing that’s ever happened to the two characters. It’s inevitable in a way. June has been shown over and over again that Nick is a member of Gilead’s hierarchy and will abide by their rules. But, she just doesn’t listen. Love clouds her judgement. Now, finally, she is able to see who he is and what he’s capable of. It’s devastating.

**O-T** **Fagbenle:** Luke and June share a very tumultuous, ever-changing relationship. But, even in their darkest moments, they are united as a couple to save Hannah. On the road to that mission, they sometimes have to make sacrifices. They have to sacrifice intimacy, home life and romance. They have to navigate each other’s trauma. The North Star in all of that navigation is Hannah.

Obviously things are complicated by June’s involvement with Nick and Nicole, the child Nick and June have together. Luke has become Nicole’s stepfather. But this happens a lot in real life. I mean, not on this kind of epic level, but people do have affairs. There’s no right answer to any of this. And watching Luke and June navigate that is compelling.

It’s difficult for Luke to see June and Nick together because their connection is palpable. These are two people who are deeply energetically connected. They have a dynamism that he and June lack. Also, Nick is a man of action and, so far, Luke has not been. He has been the caregiver, who wakes up at 2 a.m. in the morning because the baby’s crying and needs a pacifier or warmed milk. It’s natural for people to look at their rival and have a sense of ‘I’m not good enough.’ And Luke definitely feels that when he sees Nick - so handsome, so confident, so strong. Max plays Nick with so much nuance and charisma that you totally understand why June is drawn to him. But, of course, Nick is still a commander in Gilead.

I think Luke is going to love June forever no matter what, although Luke fears that she might end up with Nick. I think he understands their connection is eternal, and he might have some uncertainty about how it’s going to ultimately play out. He’s a loyal guy.

**Max Minghella**: I don’t think that Nick has ever had any apprehensions about Luke. Nick’s always been very understanding of the fact that June has this pre-existing relationship, and they have a child together and this may also play into Nick’s imposter syndrome and self-esteem issues, but I think he doesn’t necessarily feel like he warrants June’s attention in the same way as Luke does. He’s often been quite compassionate toward Luke. I think he recognizes and understands that the situation is painful for both of them.

I think his relationship with Rose definitely factors into the changes in Nick’s relationship with June, but time is honestly a big part of it. We’ve spent a long time with these characters and in turn, they’ve been in these relationships for a long time, and relationships evolve, and resentments grow, especially when there’s so much external drama and chaos. I think it’s understandable that we would start to see the edges fray on this dynamic between June and Nick.

**Warren Littlefield**: Very early on, with Bruce and the writers, we talked about the power of a classic love triangle. I think for many, many people, it was an access point into a series that is not always easy to watch. June’s married to Luke but she’s in love with Nick. She’s having Nick’s child, but she still loves Luke. All of those dynamics are phenomenal – the power and drama of what each of these characters represented. Who should June end up with? Would both Luke and Nick survive? Who were the men they would reveal themselves to be? In the midst of everything else that’s going on in our narrative drive, we have a love triangle, great.

**Aunt Lydia and Janine**

**Ann Dowd:** In this final season, Lydia continues to evolve. I’m proud of her, very proud of her. She never closes the door to learning more about herself and what compassion is really like, and what is in the heart of her girls [the handmaids]. I think she becomes more and more aware of who they are. Her relationship with Janine, her Janine – well, she made a mistake early on with Janine. She took her eye. Since then, she’s felt responsible for her and has grown to love her as a daughter. That’s powerful, especially since Lydia’s not married and doesn’t have children. This is her child. This is someone she loves with all her heart and with love comes the crumbling of the walls that surround us to protect us.

**Madeleine Brewer:** Janine and Lydia have one of the more complicated relationships, one of the deepest and most loving relationships that we see on the show. It all stems from the fact that Ann Dowd is one of the most important people in my life as a friend. I think that the journey Janine and Lydia take together, I can’t speak for the writers, but it did feel like they kind of just wanted to see what Ann and I would do in certain situations. And I think what’s so important and what really shines through in the show and in our characters is that we love each other. We have profound love and respect for one another. As great an actress as Ann is, she can’t help but give that love to me. And I can’t not show her love. Even when Janine is grief stricken and angry and furious with Lydia, there’s love there and a desperate desire to be loved and accepted and embraced by Lydia whose love can feel so confusing the way that she shows it. But it’s love, nonetheless.

**-- 2025 --**