Name

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Date

**The Handmaid's Tale**

**Introduction**

The novel "The Handmaid's Tale" was written by the Canadian author Margaret Atwood. It was initially published in 1985. The story of the novel is set in near-future New England. The plot of the story revolves around a handmaid named Offred. Handmaids are prohibited to use the names that they have been given on birth, so they are given a name that resonates their master’s name. Hence, Offred which indicates possession “Of Fred.” The Handmaid’s tale talks about females in suppression in a patriarchal community. It talks about the struggles that they go through to gain individualism (Atwood). This paper will discuss the notion; Has Offred allowed the bastard to grind her down? Specific details and reasons will be given to justify the answer.

**Discussion**

 Offred has been assigned to carry a child on behalf of the Commander Fred Waterford and his wife Serena Joy. As time passes she goes through a lot in their house, the wife of the commander is not very kind to her. Serena is very cruel to Offred, but the Commander gives her some attention and tries to be nice to her. She starts to take another meaning out of it, but that all stops one day when she has a game of scrabble with the Commander. As time passes both Commander and Offred become informal with one another. She finds the Commander to be very friendly, even friendlier than Luke. She finds him to be like a father figure, however, she is still contemplating on the reason behind the kindness that she shows her.

Has Offred allowed the bastards to grind her down?

No, she does not. One day Offred and the Commander play scrabble, and the Commander, as usual, offers her a magazine to read after they are done with the game. Offred out of her curiosity asks questions from the Commander in her attempt to get to know him, but his answers are small and very vague. Then she eventually ends up asking him the meaning of the quote that is written in the room she is staying in; “Nolite te bastardes carborundorum.” The Commander translates it and tells her that it means; “Don’t let the bastards grind you down.” He tells her that it is just an old joke from when he was just a young boy and use to go to school. Offred figures out that the previous handmaid must have learned this phrase from the Commander (Atwood). Offred further out of her inquisitiveness asks again that what happened to the handmaid before her. To which, he tells her that she hanged herself after Serena found out about their activities after dark. It can be seen that Offred is trying to find a connection with the old handmaid, to which she finds out that they had a lot in common in terms of the fact that they both considered suicide.

Offred finally comes to the realization that the Commander is spending all this time with her to make her life less miserable. He still feels guilty of what happened to the old handmaid and is trying to compensate for it through her. The kindness that he is showing her is motivated by the guilt that he suffers from. However, Offred after learning the meaning of the phrase decides that it was a symbol of resistance from the previous handmaid. Offred and the other maids have to struggle so they can keep their humanity intact and repel their tyrants and she makes sure of it to the end that they resist and survive.

Work Cited

Atwood, Margaret. *The handmaid's tale*. Vol. 301. Everyman's Library Classics &, 2006.