*Handmaid’s Tale* Chapter 6 Close Read

The men wear white coats, like those worn by doctors or scientists. Doctors and scientists aren't

the only ones, there are others, but they must have had a run on them this morning. Each has a placard

hung around his neck to show why he has been executed: a drawing of a human fetus. They were

doctors, then, in the time before, when such things were legal. Angel makers, they used to call them;

or was that something else? They've been turned up now by searches through hospital records, or, or

more likely, since most hospitals destroyed such records once it became clear what was going to

happen—by informants: ex-nurses perhaps, or a pair of them, since evidence from a single woman is

no longer admissible; or another doctor, hoping to save his own skin; or someone already accused,

lashing out at an enemy, or at random, in some desperate bid for safety. Though informants are not

always pardoned.

These men, we've been told, are like war criminals. It's no excuse that what they did was legal at

the time: their crimes are retroactive. They have committed atrocities and must be made into

examples, for the rest. Though this is hardly needed. No woman in her right mind, these days, would

seek to prevent a birth, should she be so lucky as to conceive.

What we are supposed to feel towards these bodies is hatred and scorn. This isn't what I feel.

These bodies hanging on the Wall are time travelers, anachronisms. They've come here from the past.

What I feel towards them is blankness. What I feel is that I must not feel. What I feel is partly

relief, because none of these men is Luke. Luke wasn't a doctor. Isn't.

I look at the one red smile. The red of the smile is the same as the red of the tulips in Serena

Joy's garden, towards the base of the flowers where they are beginning to heal. The red is the same

but there is no connection. The tulips are not tulips of blond, the red smiles are not flowers, neither

thing makes a comment or the other. The tulip is not a reason for disbelief in the hanged man, or vice

versa. Each thing is valid and really there. It is through a field of such valid objects that I must pick

my way, every day and in every way. I put a lot of effort into making such distinctions I need to make

them. I need to be very clear, in my own mind,

I feel a tremor in the woman beside me. Is she crying? In what way could it make her look good?

I can't afford to know, My own hands are clenched, I note, tight around the handle of my basket, I

won't give anything away.

Ordinary, said Aunt Lydia, is what you are used to. This may not seem ordinary to you now, but

alter a time it will, It will become ordinary.