

Hulu's "Handmaid's Tale" Casts Joseph Fiennes as its Male Lead

By Sarah Johnson

Hulu has announced Joseph Fiennes will star in the new Hulu series, *The Handmaid's Tale*, based off of Margaret Atwood's award-winning dystopian novel of the same name.

Fiennes, best known for his work in *Shakespeare in Love* and *American Horror Story*, will be playing "The Commander" Fred Waterford. Opposite him, Elisabeth Moss (*Mad Men*) is to star as the main character (and narrator of the novel) herself – Offred.

The naming of Moss' character is attributed to the man Fiennes plays – she is Fred's handmaid – therefore, she is "of fred." Offred's naming only begins to dabble in the twisting, disturbing, and eye-opening story of what our world could become, and the one Atwood wrote about when the book was first published in 1985.

The novel is told from Offred's (we never truly learn her real name) point of view, informing the reader of the North America she now lives in – and the totalitarian government that reigns over them. Under this new regime (called the Republic of Gilead), women have been set back 100s of years – their rights completely stripped away. Only elite woman can remain married and kept in livable conditions, but others are sorted into much less appealing categories. However, this government finds itself with fewer women who can reproduce due to their sterility – a big problem if they wish to continue their rule. This is where the handmaids come into play. Offred is the titular handmaid placed in The Commander's house, due to the fact she was married to a divorced man (in the eyes of the Republic of Gilead, she was still a single woman living with a married man).

All Offred yearns for is to go back to how life was – with her freedom, with her husband, and with her daughter – who she so desperately wants to find. Thus, the drive of the plot starts – one that will no doubt be the charge in the Hulu series. Deadline reports that MGM TV will start production on a 10-episode order in Toronto in order for a 2017 premiere of the dystopian story.

Atwood herself is set to be a part of the action as a consulting producer. She told Hulu in a statement, "*The Handmaid's Tale* is more relevant now than when it was written, and I am sure the series will be watched with great interest."

In 1990, a live-action film version was produced titled similarly as *The Handmaid's Tale* starring the late Natasha Richardson as Offred and Robert Duvall as The Commander. Though this is but one of its many adaptations, Mark Burnett (President of Television and Digital Group at MGM) and Steve Stark (President of Television Development and Production at MGM) are confident that as a TV series, the story will truly shine.

They said in a statement, "*Handmaid's Tale* has won multiple awards inspiring a film, a graphic novel, an opera, a ballet and finally, for the first time, a compellingly immersive drama series that has found the perfect home at Hulu."

It will be interesting to see what a younger Commander (Fiennes) brings to the role, as opposed to the age difference Duvall and Richardson showed on screen in 1990. Fans of Peggy Olsen in *Mad Men* are sure to be ready to see Moss take on the mysterious and determined Offred. The dynamic between the two lead roles is important to tell this tale, and Fiennes and Moss are bound to bring the tension, struggle, and chemistry needed.

While rooting for Offred to take action, viewers will also be pleased to see familiar faces on screen. According to the Hollywood Reporter, Samira Wiley (*Orange is the New Black*), Max Minghella (*The Social Network*), and Madeline Brewer (*Hemlock Grove*) are set to star alongside Moss and Fiennes.

Coming to Hulu streaming screens in 2017, the series will be created, executive produced and written by Bruce Miller (of *The 100* fame), and its first three episodes are to be directed by Reed Morano.

With a world like the Republic of Gilead showing the worst a society can become, it is always a reminder that our world is never far from tipping into any direction. *The Handmaid's Tale* can and most definitely will inspire women and men alike about the dangers of denying freedoms and rights.

Deadline Article:

<http://deadline.com/2016/08/joseph-fiennes-cast-male-lead-hulu-the-handmaids-tale-elisabeth-moss-1201807557/>

Hulu Announcement of Series/Statements:

<http://www.hulu.com/press/posts/hulu-announces-straight-to-series-order-for-the-handmaid-s-tale-from-mgm-television>

The Hollywood Reporter Article:

<http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/live-feed/joseph-fiennes-hulu-the-handmaids-tale-cast-921894>