

The Drink Tank





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Orphan Black: ACTING!

by Christopher J. Garcia

The thing about *Orphan Black* is it's really good.

I mean, it's the smartest science-fiction television show since *Twin Peaks* by far. The reason for that is fantastic writing, but perhaps more importantly, it's incredibly well acted. I mean, it's designed to be. It's a show that requires an actress who can not only play several different characters, but several characters who are incredibly different at the time as being a part of the same stock.



Tatiana Maslany is the kind of actor who understands how to work with material. That may sound like the absolute base ability needed to be an actor, but really, typically an actor is trying to react to other actors, or to props. But to react to the material is incredibly difficult. It's the difference between a great actor and a great genre actor.

And that is exactly what Tatyana is -- an amazing genre actor.

Here's a good example: Val Kilmer is one of the all-time best genre actors, as proved through his performance as Doc Holliday in *Tombstone*. He can react precisely to the rest of the cast, but then he goes beyond. He hits notes that are not scripted notes but pacing notes. There's a shot where the good guys (and yes, the Earps and Doc were the good guys, not the Clantons!) and they're walking towards the gunfight at the OK Corral. You've got three excellent genre actors in Sam Elliott, Bill Pax-

ton, and Kurt Russell. Watching them move is watching three actors who are trying to get across their character and the gravity of the situation. Doc, instead, is giving off this other sensation. It's about the meaning of the moment. He is moving forward with a quiet intensity, but he's also telling the story of film itself. That shot, without an edit, sees Kilmer give you the entire emotional range of the film in that one shot.

In *Orphan Black*, Sarah Manning watches a woman who could be her identical twin jump in front of a train, killing herself. It's an incredibly important scene, but there's something fascinating in watching her play it – she moves through ages in the moments we watch her. The very opening shots establish the entire series, where she's on the train, asleep, wakes with a massive start, then shoots a bit of anger out. She's three different people in those three shots, and it's incredible to see. I watched it at least five times, and I could not believe what I was seeing. She was three different people at three different stages of their lives in those three shots. It's easy to overlook, but we're given the entire series in those first three shots, but more importantly, as the scene continues, we're given more of her ability to plug into the entirety of the story. She then moves through a couple of phone calls, and briefly interacts with her double, which is incredible, not only because she gives us two different emotional moments, but when we see her double, there is absolutely no life remaining in them, which I guess makes sense as she's about to walk into the path of a train. The ability to play two different characters is not exactly unknown, but here, we see how these two characters interact as different parts of a lifeline. It's perfectly written for her, but she plays beyond the script and gets into the meat of the material, and it's incredible.

“Da Vinci Robbed Graves To Study Anatomy. In A Hundred Years, They'll Call Me A Pioneer.” – Evie Cho

When we look at her work in *Orphan Black*, we can see her evolve, but in that first scene the entire series is right there. I guess that's why they used that scene as the teaser for the entire series. As it goes along, we see very little scenery chewing, though Matt Frewer does a little bit in his appearances, but what we get, even in the more dramatic characters Tatyana plays, is portrayal of overall meaning. Everything we take from the series is put on the screen by the various characters Tatyana plays. She's not only the driver of the series, but her actions and reactions are both driving and naturalistic. If you want to see a performance that manages that, you have to look at something like Hugo Weaving in *V for Vendetta* or maybe Andy Serkis in *King Kong*. Those are wordless, and they must inhabit the character and make it obvious what they're feeling and doing, but at the same time, avoid being so distant and deep into those ideas that they can have a human relatability, which is hardest for *Kong* because he's a damn monkey!

Watching how she responds makes the entire series a more meaningful experience, largely because she gets to push the story in different directions, as well as keeping it on the rails. With a story that goes in so many directions as this one that is an impressive task!



Who Impersonated Whom?

by Andrew Wales

I first went into *Orphan Black* fairly cold. Despite it being a few years old, I'd successfully avoided spoilers.

Having said that, however, there are spoilers ahead.

I don't think many people would doubt Tatiana Maslany's acting skills, but the technical demands of *Orphan Black* really give an insight into her abilities.

One of the first things I noticed was Maslany playing many roles – the clones. An actor playing many roles isn't particularly new in itself, but *Orphan Black* brought something fresh to this for me. Not only did she play the lead in the show (with her non-native accent), but she also played a variety of supporting characters too, each with their own accents, traits, and behaviors. Frequently, these characters even appear in the same scene.

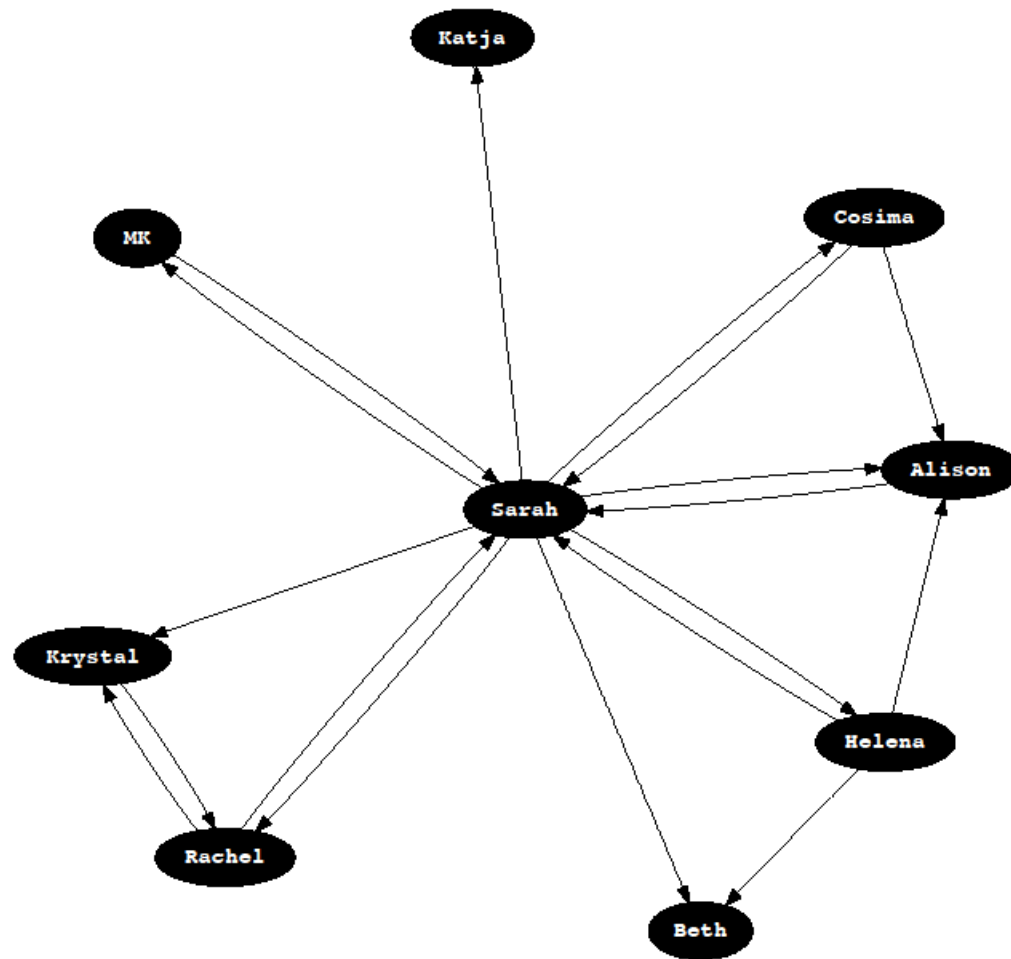
For me, where the clone aspect got really groundbreaking was where the characters needed to impersonate each other. It'd be a challenge for any actor to switch seamlessly between their characters, but what Tatiana brought to these roles was interesting. When Sarah was impersonating Alison for example, it was clear that Tatiana was playing Sarah playing Alison, not just Tatiana playing Alison. Likewise, when Alison impersonated Sarah, we got Alison's underlying uptightness but presented as being the best Sarah she could be.

Before long, it was apparent that many of the clones impersonated other clones, and I started to wonder how fully meshed this graph would be. I started to sketch it out as to the best of my memory, using Graphviz to lay it out.

When I next rewatch this I'll gather my own data but for now I used a combination of Reddit[1] and Stackexchange[2]. I suspect this data may be incomplete. Watch this space and wait for my rewatch.

[1]https://www.reddit.com/r/orphanblack/comments/3a3k6u/clones_that_have_impersonated_other_clones_a/

[2]<https://scifi.stackexchange.com/questions/128014/which-of-the-ledas-has-impersonated-another-leda>



Orphan Black: The IDW Comics and Hopes for an Expanded Universe

by Chuck Serface



Over five seasons, *Orphan Black* earned a massive fan base. Message boards, a wiki, and individual fan sites have hosted discussion after discussion. We can't get enough of the show's star, Tatiana Maslany, a powerhouse deserving every accolade laid at her feet. However, *Orphan Black* hasn't achieved monolithic status like *Star Wars*, *Star Trek*, or *Doctor Who*, even after netting the 2015 Hugo Award for Best Presentation: Short Form, surely a well-deserved achievement. Enthusiasts, including me, have hoped for an expanded universe like those enjoyed by other franchises, and while not as extensive as those listed above, we've received servings here and there. Books related to science, philosophy, feminism, sexuality, and behind-the-scenes insights have entered print. Realm has produced an audio show that continues where the television series ended. And, of course, comics have appeared.

In February 2015, IDW began its *Orphan Black* comic enterprise by releasing a six-issue miniseries. Each issue focuses on a specific clone, and while sharing plot details with televised episodes, the creators also provide additional information from character backgrounds. I waited until IDW released the entire series in trade paperback format, so a few revelations first shared here had been revealed on-air to me already. We meet for the first time [Veera Souminen](#), who stars in the later five-issue miniseries, *Orphan Black: Helsinki*, as well as having joined the show during Season Four.

Graeme Manson, John Fawcett, and Jody Houser handled the writing while Szymon Kudranski, Alan Quah, Cat Staggs, Wayne Nichols supplied art with colorists

**“She's Been Poisoned. By Big
Cosmetics. What About That Is
Confusing?”
– Krystal Goderitch**



Mat Lopes and Chris Fenoglio. Other than for Graeme Manson, I knew nothing about the writers. I was a bit more familiar with the writers, though. Kudranski's familiar through his work with *Spawn* and *Detective Comics*, Staggs from her *Smallville* covers, and I've heard about Quah's efforts on *Vampire Diaries*. Often details blur together or remain undeveloped, and critics have cited the “too many cooks” rule when voicing their disappointment. The point, however, is character expansion, a task not easily achieved via television due to that medium's limitations. Cat Staggs' cover portraits are lovely, and overall, the artists involved with each issue stand united stylistically, choosing to present impressionistic images rather than direct representations. How appropriate given *Orphan Black*'s conspiratorial nature.

IDW wasn't finished with *Orphan Black*. Next came *Orphan Black: Helsinki*, a five-issue prequel to the television show starring the Finnish



clone, Veera Souminen. The story's set in 2001, and we learn much about the dreaded Project Helsinki that led to six clones dying. As with *Orphan Black: The Comic*, this one has multiple contributing authors – Graeme Manson, John Fawcett, and Heli Kennedy. Wayne Nichols and Alan Quah supply artwork.

I originally read *Helsinki* upon its release in 2016. Like the previous miniseries and those to come, this one provides additional content, like *Star Wars* or *Star Trek* novels, or delves into story materials from different angles. I was well hooked and wanted more comics and hopefully novels, anything to fill voids between seasons, or perhaps a better metaphor involves receiving maintenance fixes until full servings become available. I sensed the beginnings of an expanded universe, and, boy, was I thrilled.

Star Trek has the mirror universe, and Marvel, historically the comics but now the films as well, has presented several alternate destinies throughout its multiverse, posing the question “what if?” Why shouldn't the budding *Orphan Black* expanded universe have similar outlets? *Orphan Black: Deviations #1*, penned by Heli Kennedy with artwork by Wayne Nichols and Sebastian Cheng, hit shelves on March 29, 2017. This miniseries explores what would happen if Sarah had saved Beth from dying.

“My Sexuality Isn't The Most Important Thing About Me.” – Cosima Niehaus



Quite a bit would change with Beth's extended presence. Some from the main television story who live now die. The Clone Club discovers Dyad more quickly, and, sadly, Helena doesn't undergo her famous redemption. If anything, this series help cement facts from the show, serving as a review. Beyond that, I felt less connected. Graeme Manson's departure here has affected my appreciation.

August 12, 2017: BBC America aired the final episode of *Orphan Black*. Although the show's runners did an excellent job concluding major plot points, Clone Club members continue weeping across social-media platforms years later. Only five seasons? No sixth season? Sorry, gang. Although the online world flourishes with fan sites and fiction, the real world only contains three comic miniseries, a few nonfiction books, and an audio series -- not much of an expanded universe.

But then possibilities arrived! *Entertainment Weekly* correspondent Nick Romano posted “*Orphan Black* Continues with Sequel Comic *Crazy Science*,” dated March 3, 2018. He reported:

Orphan Black lives again . . . in comic book form. After the fifth and final season left Clone Clubbers in mourning for the Tatiana Maslany-led sci-fi series, the story now continues in *Crazy Science*, a six-part miniseries from writer Heli Kennedy and artist Fico Ossio.

Picking up after the events of the series finale on television, Orphan Black fans will be able to read about the adventures of Cosima and Delphine, who travel the world to help cure the other sick 274 Leda clones. *Crazy Science* will debut this June [2018].

For emphasis, Romano quotes Heli Kennedy, now a well-heeled *Orphan Black* comic writer:

“I’m so excited to send Cosima and Delphine around the world. A scientist-superhero couple, saving clones in amazing locations — I couldn’t ask for much more, story-wise,” Kennedy said in a statement. “And I can’t wait to delve into who they are, outside of science. Both as a couple and individuals. Their intense love-work relationship is the perfect ‘in’ to explore their dreams, fears, families, the skeletons they keep hidden . . . all the good, challenging bits of a complicated relationship.”

Save Orphan Black Crazy Science Comic Series



Humberto Montes started this petition to IDW Publishing

The spin off comic series related to Orphan Black called Crazy Science needs to be kept in print. All of Orphan Black fans wanted this series to happen. The comic series was cancelled due to low pre-orders. It needs to continue.

375 have signed. Let's get to 500!



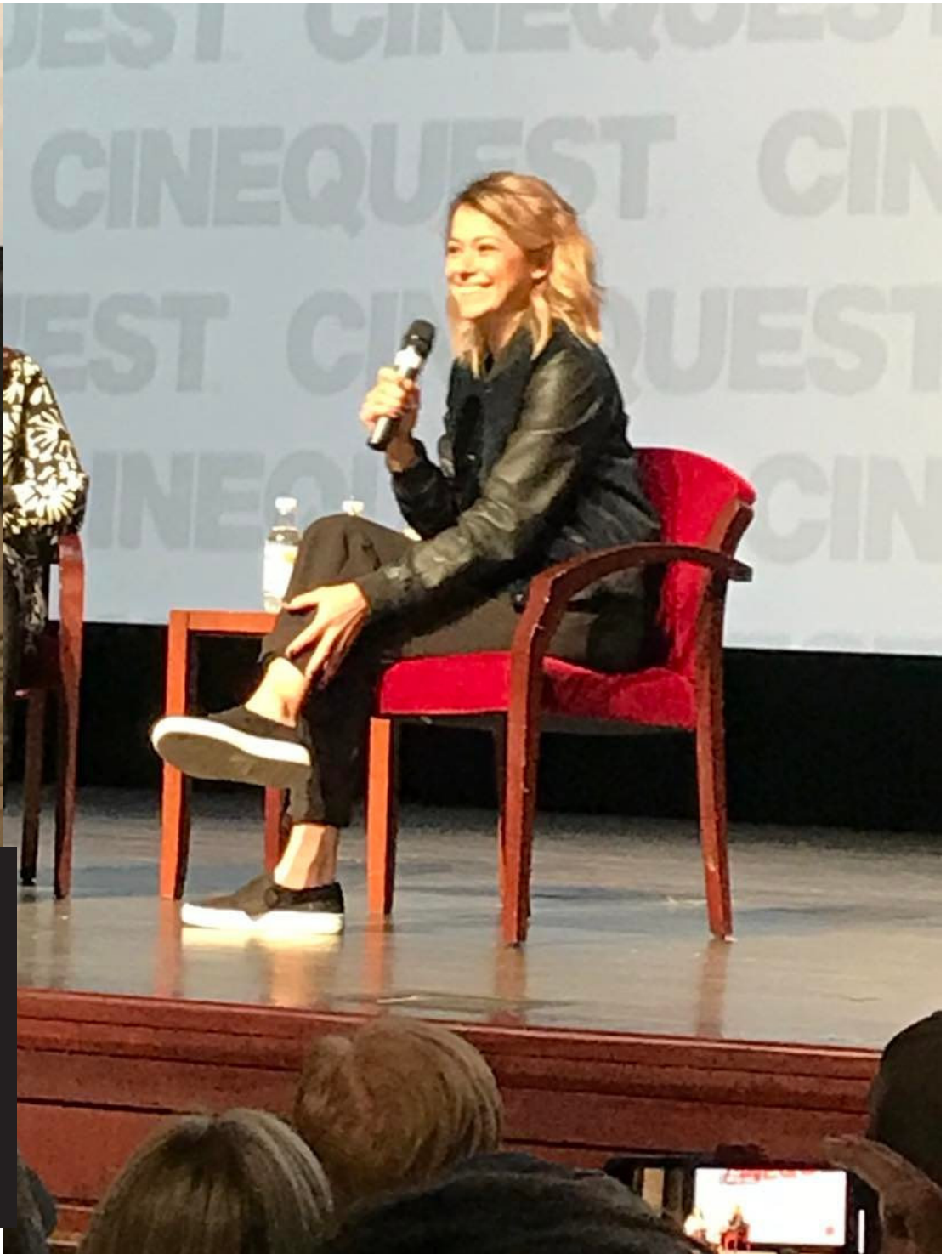
At 500 signatures, this petition is more likely to be featured in recommendations!

Suzette Smith signed this petition

San Jose, 95148
United States

Display my name and comment on this petition

[Sign this petition](#)



Tatiana Maslany
at Cinequest



Next Time— The Beatles.