

# Hands Away

## *chaila and beccatoria*

Honorary Award 2011: Hollywoodgrrl's choice

The review below may contain spoilers for *Fringe* and *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*.

**HWG:** Hands Away is an achingly sincere love story about two women who bear the burden of carrying the world (multiple worlds even!) on their shoulders and happen to find solace in one another. Set to a perfect, musically emotional song this vid is an AU reality where Sarah Connor and Olivia Dunham not only share the screen but also a bed. But their individual journeys are not lost in the edit. In fact what is revealed is how similar they are.

**Nicky:** Yes, what came through particularly clearly for me is how much their journeys parallel each other, and how much their longing for each other is reflected through their mirrored actions even as they are divided by universes.

**HWG:** The vid opens gracefully with the two gals sitting side-by-side on a swing set, a brilliant choice by the vidders as I think it does a perfect job setting up this relationship in a poetic manner. They don't speak because they don't need to, they understand. As Sarah gets up to go back in the house, the empty swing next to Olivia nicely foreshadows how the rest of their story will play out. It's a back-and-forth between them, an endless struggle to reconnect as the two are almost never again in the same place or in the same time.

**Nicky:** I mentioned quantum entanglement in another review and I think that concept applies equally well here. It doesn't seem to matter how far apart they are physically - and I guess I mean that in a "physics" sense, as I'm assuming that they exactly occupy each other's physical position, just in different universes - their thoughts and emotions seem to forever bind them together.

**HWG:** I have a lot of favorite parts here but two of them happen almost immediately. At 0:26 - 0:31 a traumatized Olivia is handed a gun by Sarah which she proceeds to load and rack confidently. This is a meaningful moment since in the canon Olivia's struggle to regain control of her weapon lasts four episodes (something that the writers refer to as "the gun arc") and culminates in her using that gun to kill her partner. I love that here it's Sarah who gives her that control but immediately the gun is put aside as the two ladies lose themselves in one another.

**Nicky:** I'd always read that scene as Olivia pointing the gun at Sarah! I suppose it could be both?

**HWG:** Ooh! That's so kinky! I love it.

After this comes a wonderful moment set in a bar that has some great little masking moments like 0:42 - 0:43 which runs so fast you hardly notice it, but your brain registers and it's that extra little step that cements the scene spatially. It's a nice touch. I also really appreciate how Sarah leaves Olivia a clue pertaining to the canon of *her* show. (As a vidder I always enjoy doing that trick. Hee!)

**Nicky:** That's what really cements the AU in my mind. The manips give you a sense of how they *look* together, but it's the use of these canonically significant symbols that really ties together the plot and narrative flow of the vid.

**HWG:** There's a shift in the music at 0:50, the guitar starts sounding a little more urgent and the editing matches that feeling with a long section of Olivia searching for Sarah. There are so many seamless near-misses like at the hospital and when Sarah's in the van, but it's not until 1:12 - 1:33 that the viewer suddenly picks up on the fact that what we've been witnessing is Olivia's massive conflict of interest. She's chasing after Sarah because Sarah is the Fringe event! Or at least she's causing them by jumping through time. It's such a neat twist, wonderfully dramatic and believable especially since we never lose sight of how committed each woman is to her individual duty (0:57 - 1:06). It's also a brilliant way to make sense of both canons co-existing in this one universe.

**Nicky:** And it ties so neatly into the fact that universe-jumping (and I assume time-jumping, if they could do it) in Fringe is such a huge deal that sends out ripple effects that can't be ignored, so of course Olivia is going to try and stop Sarah. At the same time, of course Sarah needs to do it, so it sets up this wonderful conflict of character motives that makes sense on both sides, and gives us that insight into why they can't work this relationship, even if both of them very much want to. With the two of them, it's always about duty above love.

**HWG:** Exactly!!! These are two incredibly fierce female characters who inhabit the roles traditionally reserved for their male counterparts. They're protectors, their weapons are practically extensions of their fingers and they wear their manpain as easily as they wear their favorite pair of boots. And you know what? It's DAMN SEXY. The parallels alone are off the charts! But as I watch this vid over and over what stays with me *always* is the section from 1:39 - 1:52. The singer seems to stretch out the word "desperation" and what we see on screen is exactly that. Sarah and Olivia fighting for their lives, facing their respective metallic foes. But at what cost? To witness this breaking point is both tragic and beautiful.

**Nicky:** The pacing in this section is gorgeous. As you said, that sense of *desperation* is so incredibly immediate, both in a physical danger sense and an emotional sense.

**HWG:** Because the girls are not in the same timeline I love how the vidders were able to make them connect with one another through the power of editing! The drug induced dreamscape (notice how it ends thematically with Olivia's empty hands) had another bit of cheeky masking with the names on the monitor (1:55) and of course the video swap (2:04 - 2:09) is executed brilliantly so that both women can see each other in their most vulnerable state.

**Nicky:** All of this comes so hard and fast that it took me several viewings to register the richness of the universe built up in this vid. The more you watch it, the more you appreciate the intricacy and level of detail built in through paralleled images, video inserts and masking, and the way each is built into the mythology of the other show.

**HWG:** At 2:10 the song enters a critical phase. As we ride the wave of the music the intercutting gets even more fervent, culminating in some delicious graphic matches (2:22) that visually propel the story beyond multiple universes and into multiple timelines. This is the climax of the vid and here the vidders do a phenomenal job of not only pushing the stakes but widening the scope of the story. I absolutely adore the idea that Olivia enlists the Cotexikids in order to help her cross over to Sarah's timeline. (Suddenly Olivia's "because you belong with me" line has even more impact when applied here.) And when they finally reunite at 2:33 - 2:36 it's even more rewarding.

The final shot of the two women in the bath echoes the opening on the swings. They don't speak, they rest. But it's not a happy ending, I don't think. It's more loaded than that. It actually reminds me a little bit of the ending to *The Graduate*. A bit of a "now what?" moment. And that's really, really sad! But at the same time, yeah, of course this is how their story would end. Because these women are their duty, they're soldiers in an endless war and they're never backing down. The drop of blood falls between them. (And it hurts! It hurts so good!)