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Written by Maureen Younger

ARTS

MY Outlander

Maureen Younger talks episode two: with the action shifted to France, there's opulence, some wonderful costumes and a reluctant stool. Contains SPOILERS.

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The emperor's new clothes? Jamie Fraser (Sam Heughan) finds out what the 'dressing of the king' involves. All photos: Sony Pictures Television/Starz.

Outlander episode two begins and ends with a presence that haunted season one and which is clearly going to haunt this season too – that of Black Jack Randall (Tobias Menzies).

This is despite the fact that he is believed to be dead and Claire (Caitriona Balfe), Jamie (Sam Heughan) and Murtagh (Duncan Lacroix) are now ensconced in Paris, and rather unbelievably for three Brits who have moved abroad, all able to speak the language.

And whereas Jamie is now physically on the mend, the opening scene shows that emotionally he is still severely traumatised, wracked by nightmares of Randall, and terrified he'll never overcome what happened to him at his hands.

Consequently, although Claire and Jamie appear to be the couple they once were, their strong sexual bond seems to have been ruptured by the trauma Jamie is going through. Claire might be understanding but she's also frustrated.

Now, if season two is anything like season one, there are a lot of storylines and characters to set in place, particularly as the story has moved to a different location and, for the time being at least, has shed most of the characters from season one.

Out of sheer necessity, a lot of this episode was concerned in setting up the new storylines, establishing the Frasers' new situation in Paris and introducing a host of new characters – Maître Raymond (Dominique Pinon), the Parisian apothecary; Louise de Rohan (Claire Sermonne), Claire's friend at Court; the French Minister of Finance, Duverney (Marc Duret); an apparent ex paramour of Jamie and therefore no doubt a French floozy, Annalise de Marillac (Margaux Châtelier); the French King Louis (Lionel Lingelser); a shy English girl Mary Hawkins (Rosie Day) and last but not least, Bonnie Prince Charlie (Andrew Gower).

Jamie and Murtagh soon get to discuss politics with the Bonnie Prince in a brothel. The location, an indication of the type of man the Bonnie Prince is.

"This Paris is licentious and decadent; we even learn that French noblewomen were into bikini waxes long before bikinis were invented."

One thing he is not, it would seem though, is the romantic Prince of many a Scottish song and legend. Here he comes across as rather petulant, neither a soldier nor a born leader of men.

Brought up in exile in Italy, this is a man convinced, like his forefathers, of his family's divine right to sit on the British throne, and deaf to any practical considerations which might naysay the venture.

Despite both Jamie and Murtagh telling the Prince the unpalatable truth, Jamie wins the Prince's trust: the latter asking him to be his representative to the French finance minister in demanding the necessary funds for the uprising.

As a result, Claire, Jamie and Murtagh end up at Versailles. Claire is dressed in an iconic red dress, though outdone slightly on the boob front by a courtier who decides to wear a dress which not only bares her boobs but has material entwined around her nipples to enhance the look further. Murtagh can barely keep his eyes in his sockets.

The ridiculousness of French court life is exemplified further with Jamie and Murtagh attending the 'dressing of the king', only to find they are just one of many watching the King trying to have a shite despite a bout of severe constipation.

As for 1740s Paris in general, it's in stark contrast to the more austere Scotland of season one; depicted with such care, attention and eye for detail that, come awards season, surely *Outlander* must be in the running for winning numerous ones in costume and art direction alone.

However, though this Paris may be more lavish than its Scottish cousin, it too is teetering on the abyss of its own destruction just as much as that of the Gaels' way of life is in the Highlands.

After all, this Paris is licentious and decadent, its nobles more concerned with the frivolities of life than the day-to-day realities of governing the nation.

We even learn that French noblewomen were into bikini waxes long before bikinis were invented. Claire decides to follow the fashion; this leads the viewer to find out two more things about Jamie. Firstly, honeypot is his name for that particular part of the female anatomy. (Never going to look at one in the same light again.)

Secondly, Jamie's score as best fantasy male ever goes up a few more notches when he reveals himself as a fan of the thatched-over look. (What a man!)

Then as the episode closes, a character from season one makes an unwelcome return in the form of the Duke of Sandringham. As portrayed by Simon Callow, the Duke is so shameless and self-serving, you want to punch him in the face or, even better, leave him alone in a room for five minutes with Murtagh.



But even more unwelcome news is on its way. Sandringham introduces Claire to his new secretary, Alexander Randall (Laurence Dobiesz), a younger brother of Black Jack Randall, who it turns out is very much alive. Claire now has the unenviable task of having to inform Jamie of this news.

With the wheels of this season's storylines now firmly set in motion, I'm looking forward to a bumpy ride!

Follow Maureen's week-by-week *Outlander* blog [here](#).

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