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Written by Maureen Younger

ARTS

MY Outlander

Maureen Younger talks love, sexual violence and episode seven. Contains SPOILERS.

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"An acting tour de force": Claire (Caitriona Balfe) and Jamie (Sam Heughan) deal with the fallout from recent tragedies.

Photo: Sony Pictures Television/Starz.

This week's episode is a heartrending hour on the nature of loss and love. While Jamie (Sam Heughan) has lost his freedom, imprisoned in the Bastille for duelling with Black Jack Randall (Tobias Menzies), Claire (Caitriona Balfe) is having to deal on her own with the loss of their baby.

The focus of Claire's anger is the absent Jamie. Blaming him for their child's death and feeling betrayed, she believes, in the end, revenge proved more important to Jamie than her or their child. And it looks as if this might be the one transgression even Claire will be unable to forgive Jamie for. That is, until she learns from Fergus (Romann Berrux) the real reason behind Jamie's apparent backtracking on his promise not to duel with Black Jack.

With Jamie's actions now framed in a completely different light, Claire proves her usual resourceful self and sets about organising his release from the Bastille. As we know, she is one hell of a determined woman, and soon arranges a private interview with the King Louis (Lionel Lingelser), in the full knowledge that sleeping with him may well be the price she has to pay for Jamie's freedom.

But it would seem there is nothing Claire won't do to ensure Jamie's release, and she does indeed end up having some rather perfunctory sex with His Majesty, dealing with it the only way she can: by mentally switching off from what is happening to her.

What we don't appreciate at the time though is how emotionally numb Claire is because, in a judicious piece of editing, the full impact of what Claire has gone through is saved for the closing scenes. And boy do these scenes contain one hell of an emotional punch.

It is then that a haggard Jamie returns, fearful that his wife hates him for what has happened. The scene is intercut with one of Claire at the hospital weeks earlier, holding her dead child, reluctant to let her go. And I defy anyone not to shed several tears while watching her gut-wrenching agony in this scene.

"Caitriona Balfe seems to have an innate ability to project Claire's thoughts and emotions with a remarkably deft touch. At times her face seems impassive but nevertheless you still know exactly what Claire is thinking."

Nonetheless, Claire admits to Jamie that she no longer blames him but rather herself, as she was the one who put Frank before their family and asked the impossible of Jamie when she requested he not seek revenge on Black Jack.

Jamie tells her he forgave her long ago, for this and for anything else she might do. Claire immediately puts this to the test and tells him about her and the King. Jamie has no qualms about forgiving her for this either, equating it with [what he went through](#) with Black Jack at Fort Wentworth to save Claire. (Seriously, how many more fantasy male points is Jamie going to earn before this season is out?)

Not surprisingly, after all that has occurred, Claire wonders what is going to happen to their relationship. Jamie is adamant that the only way they can get through it all is by staying together. A tearful Claire then asks an even more tearful Jamie to take her back to Scotland.

A minor quibble with this week's episode is that according to the gravestone, their daughter died in 1744 while in episode one a slightly pregnant Claire arrived in France in 1745. Presumably this is due to some unintentional time travelling by the continuity department.

More thought-provoking is the thread of sexual violence that runs throughout the show. Almost all the major characters are victims of such violence. Does that reflect the realities of the society *Outlander* portrays or is the depiction of sexual violence just a lazy and salacious plot device? My money is on the former, but I hope to goodness we see no more. Yet with Culloden and its bloody aftermath hovering in the wings that may prove wishful thinking.

But all that aside, Balfe proves yet again she's one hell of an actor. She seems to have an innate ability to project Claire's thoughts and emotions with a remarkably deft touch. At times her face seems impassive but nevertheless you still know exactly what Claire is thinking. It's an acting tour de force.

This episode is entitled 'Faith', the name Mother Hildegarde (Frances de la Tour) gives to Claire and Jamie's dead daughter. But in a way it neatly encapsulates how *Outlander's* legion of fans view the relationship between Claire and Jamie: because you know that no matter what happens to them, you have faith that somehow or other these two will always find a way back to each other. No wonder their relationship and, by extension, this programme is so damn addictive!

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

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