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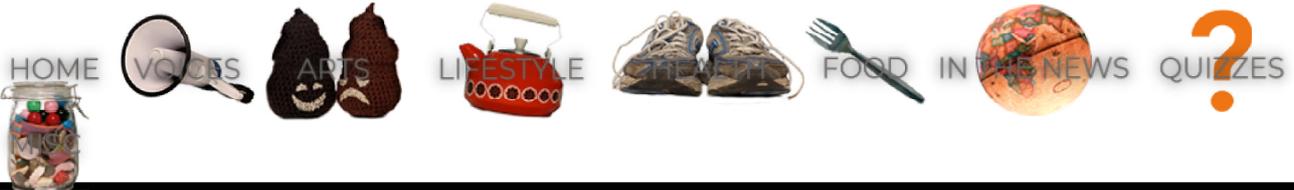
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Written by Maureen Younger

ARTS

MY Outlander

Maureen Younger talks forged signatures, sly old foxes and episode eight.
Contains SPOILERS.

Posted on 30/05/2016



Jamie (Sam Heughan) and Claire (Caitriona Balfe) are back in Scotland, where the plotting continues.

Photo: Sony Pictures Television/Starz.

This week *Outlander* is back in Scotland and is all the better for it. From the new set of opening titles alone, you get the sense we are going to be in for a visual treat over the coming weeks.

As usual, there's a lot of plot, great new characters, the return of some old ones, Claire (Caitriona Balfe) being her usual resourceful self and Jamie (Sam Heughan) being sexy, sensitive and manly. Seriously, what's not to like? (As it turns out, nothing.)

Claire and Jamie have by now returned home to Lallybroch, and we catch a glimpse of how happy these two would have been had history just left them alone. Here Jamie shows us his sexy side, when, bare-chested, he picks up Claire with immaculate ease and takes her to bed.

And if that's not enough to give Jamie's legion of fans palpitations, this scene is followed by one of Jamie cradling his sister's baby in his arms, whispering to the child in Gaelic. A scene filmed with such skill, it manages to be moving without once edging into sentimentality.

"Now branded a traitor, Jamie decides his only way out is to fight for Charles and ensure the Jacobite Rising is a success in the hope of changing history after all."

The scene gains even more emotional resonance because of Claire's reaction upon witnessing the two of them together: you realise on a purely visceral level the pain and sense of loss these two still must feel over the death of their daughter. And it is all the more poignant because you know that though Claire will go on to have another child by him, Jamie won't be there to see it born or be around to raise it.

But it's not long before we see another aspect of Jamie's character come to the fore – his manliness. News arrives that his signature has been forged by Prince Charles on a document declaring Charles the rightful King of Britain. Now branded a traitor, Jamie decides his only way out is to fight for Charles and ensure the Jacobite Rising is a success in the hope of changing history after all.

Unfortunately, this means having to try to elicit the support of his devious grandfather, Lord Simon Fraser of Lovat, played with considerable relish by Clive Russell, a historical character so colourful and so reprehensible you couldn't make him up. And we get a flash of the man Jamie will no doubt prove to be when he is arguing with his sister Jenny (Laura Donnelly) about the wisdom of such a move.

Jamie is adamant he won't let his pride (and let's not forget, he is one hell of a proud man) stand in the way of him trying to save Lallybroch, Scotland and everything they hold dear. Jamie has always been brave but he's now beginning to show true leadership.

While at Lovat's castle Claire and Jamie meet up with two characters from their past – Colum Mackenzie (Gary Lewis) back to his usual political machinations and an apparently chastened Laoghaire (Nell Hudson). As for Lovat, he proves to be as duplicitous and immoral as we were led to believe and could even give Black Jack a run for his money.

But we really get the measure of the man after Jamie refuses to give him Lallybroch in exchange for his support. Not one to be thwarted, Lovat threatens his own grandson that his wife will be gang-raped if he doesn't agree. Jamie shows he is not the headstrong Jamie of old but far wiler and threatens Lovat with the one thing that he knows will stop this superstitious Highlander in his tracks – the news that Claire is a witch.

"By the end of the episode Claire is hopeful that they might be able to change the future. Of course we know they won't."

It's clearly a man's world though when it comes to Highland politics, with Claire forced to be the silent partner for once – in public at least. While Jamie tries to convince the others to join Charles, Colum proves he is still the master of manipulation, deftly getting Jamie to admit the lack of French support that is so vital should the Prince's cause have any hope of success.

However, behind the scenes, Claire tries to force Lovat's hand by getting his weakling of a son to stand up to him. To do this she needs to enlist the support and womanly charms of her arch-rival Laoghaire. Claire tells Laoghaire a few home truths about the nature of relationships, and points out that if a man loves a woman, he makes an effort. But by the end of the episode we see Laoghaire has taken little heed, and despite Jamie's evident dislike of her, she is still carrying a torch for him. This surely can't bode well.

Barred from playing an active political role, Claire, our undaunted heroine, nonetheless still makes her mark: claiming to see a vision of Lovat being executed by Prince Charles as a traitor. It spurs Lovat's son to join the Jacobites but Lovat still signs a neutrality pact with Colum who is desperate for the uprising to flounder.

But Lovat is a sly old fox. He sends his men with his son to keep on the good side of the Jacobites, in the full knowledge he can use his own son as the fall guy should the uprising fail and cite the neutrality pact with Colum to keep in with the British. Charming!

By the end of the episode Claire is hopeful that they might be able to change the future. Of course we know they won't. And the fact that *Outlander* is still so enthralling is a compliment to the original story by Diana Gabaldon, the intricate plotting, the characters and the storytelling because as with most things in life and particularly with all good stories, it's not the destination that is really compelling but the journey.

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

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