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Written by Maureen Younger

ARTS

MY Outlander

Maureen Younger talks bravery, the risks of pissing off a Scot and episode 11. Contains SPOILERS.

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Hostage to fortune: Claire (Caitriona Balfe) Photos: Sony Pictures Television/Starz.

This week Murtagh (Duncan Lacroix) proves he is a man of his word as well as being rather nifty with an axe; Jamie (Sam Heughan) is brave, as per usual; Claire (Caitriona Balfe) as resourceful as ever; Dougal (Graham McTavish) hot-headed, and Mary Hawkins (Rosie Day) shows she has far more gumption than anyone – including me – would have credited her with.

However, the episode begins with one of those 'what if' moments of history. What if Prince Charles' army hadn't turned back at Derby but continued with their march onto London? Would the Stuarts have ended up on the throne, and if so, how long for?

For while the Prince's war council opted to return to Scotland, much to the chagrin of the Prince, London was in total panic with King George II reportedly having packed up his things and about to head back to Hannover.

Similarly, *Outlander's* Prince Charles (Andrew Gower) is for marching south, while everyone else is for turning back, with the exception of Jamie who, thanks to Claire, knows what disaster awaits the Jacobites on Culloden Moor.

With it looking increasingly likely they will be unable to avoid their fate, Claire and Jamie share a tender moment as Jamie prays in Gaelic over a sleeping Claire; and for once the Gaelic is subtitled so we understand the depth of his feelings.

Claire, like any hot-blooded woman, awakes as soon as Jamie kisses her gently on the shoulder. Jamie then looks and smiles at Claire in a way that is reminiscent of how he used to look at her in season one and it's a lovely sight to behold.

"Duncan Lacroix is probably the only actor who could give Bill Nighy a run for his money if ever they decided to create an award for best eyebrow acting in a film or TV series."

My reaction was twofold. Firstly, how in hell does Claire happily go back to sleep when she has a naked Jamie whispering sweet nothings in her ear? Secondly, it makes you appreciate just how much we missed the Jamie of old and the tenderness between Claire and Jamie which was absent from much of the first half of the season.

And how we long for the Jamie of season one! So, it's a treat to catch glimpses of the old Jamie again. However, this sense of loss which you definitely felt as a viewer is also a neat way of making you appreciate the frustration and sense of loss that Claire must have felt when Jamie is no longer the Jamie she met and fell in love with due to the trauma he has suffered.

Later we see one of the reasons why Jamie loves such a spirited woman when, hiding in a church and surrounded by Redcoats, true to form Dougal wants to fight despite the odds stacked against them, Jamie is willing to sacrifice himself to save the others while Claire comes up with a far more credible plan: pretending to be a hostage so the British will bargain with the Highlanders for her 'freedom' in exchange for letting the Highlanders go unharmed. While en route and despite a British officer standing right next to her, Claire is even able to pass on a message to the beggar Hugh Munro (Simon Meacock) to ensure Jamie knows where she is being taken.



It turns out Claire is being taken to a home of the Duke of Sandringham (Simon Callow) and just when you think the Duke can't be any more duplicitous and despicable than we already know him to be, he plummets to even lower depths.

He is forced to confess to Claire that he was behind the rape of his own goddaughter, Mary Hawkins and the would-be rape of Claire, assuming (wrongly) that Claire will be appeased by the fact he suggested raping them to the Comte St Germain (Stanley Weber) rather than having them killed. Yet more skulduggery is to follow, when Sandringham admits he has tricked Claire into inadvertently luring Jamie into a trap in order to hand him over to the British.

Fortunately, Jamie and Murtagh manage to evade the British troops, though this does not prove so fortuitous for Sandringham and his right-hand man Danton (Andrea Dolente), once the others learn of the part they played in the attack on Mary and Claire. Mary stabs her attacker Danton to death, while Murtagh decapitates Sandringham and lays Sandringham's head at the women's feet.

This might be the Highland way of doing things but it is clearly a shock to Claire and Mary. Mary responds in the most British way possible with true British understatement, simply commenting: "I think we better go."

"How in hell does Claire happily go back to sleep when she has a naked Jamie whispering sweet nothings in her ear?"

As for Murtagh, the look he gives as Jamie pushes the Duke towards him and to death is truly ominous, a fine example of an actor who can speak volumes just by staring. He is also probably the only actor who could give Bill Nighy a run for his money if ever they decided to create an award for best eyebrow acting in a film or TV series. And that's praise indeed!

Talking of acting, Simon Callow creates such a vile character in Sandringham, you simply want to punch him every time you see him. Though a coward and not someone who would get his own hands dirty, Sandringham is as much a villain as Black Jack Randall. And like Tobias Menzies who plays Black Jack, both men are consummate actors who ensure there is no danger of either villain ever edging into pantomime villain territory.

Sandringham is self-serving and duplicitous, but thanks to Callow's fine performance we see in his self-justifications a very human but (hopefully) exaggerated form of the way people tend to justify their own actions to themselves even when deep down they know the path they have taken is the wrong one.

As for the moral of this week's episode? I've said it before and I'll say it again, if *Outlander* teaches you anything it's this: it's never a good idea to piss off a Scot, particularly a Highlander and definitely not a man like Murtagh.

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

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