

THE BEAR
&
HIS MONKEY



*Or, The More or Less True Account of a
Venturesome Twelve Week Journey to
Scotland and the Hebrides With Doctor
Samuel Johnson and James Boswell, Esq.*

LIST OF CHARACTERS

(in order of appearance)

DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON	WOMAN, BAREFOOT
JAMES BOSWELL	EUAN MACRAE
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN	MALCOLM MACRAE
EDMUND BURKE	HUGH MACRAE
OLIVER GOLDSMITH	PA MACRAE
MARGARET BOSWELL	MA MACRAE
SERVANT GIRL	NORMAN MACLEOD
JOSEPH	FLORA MACDONALD
SCOTSMAN	ANNIE MACLEOD
TAVERN-MAID	LITTLE GIRL
DRUNK PATRIOT	LITTLE BOY
EAGER WOMAN	PRETTY ANNIE
OTHER WOMAN	COLIN
LADY ALISON MACINTYRE	A LASS
MALE GUEST	AUCHINLECK
CLERIC	STEP-MOTHER
WOMAN WITH THICK ACCENT	MARY
SCAMP	BETSY BOSWELL

INT. THE TURK'S HEAD TAVERN – (LONDON, 1773) – NIGHT

[From the head of a long table, DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON (63) – a big bear of a man – presides over the weekly gathering of his “Club.” His voice booms.]

JOHNSON: Americans, sir, are felons and fanatics living among savages! To the moral detriment of each!

[JAMES BOSWELL (33), the Club's newest and by far youngest member, hangs on his every word, taking notes on the conversation. Anticipating a reaction...]

We follow BOSWELL's gaze down the table, past the others who've also turned to the evening's special guest...

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN (67) - wearing his distinctive fur cap. FRANKLIN leans across a huge pile of books on the table in front of him, and with a playful twinkle...]

FRANKLIN: This America which you imagine exists only at its most remote frontier. Philadelphia, I assure you, is as civilized as London.

JOHNSON: Then why, sir, do you wear that “pelt” on your head?

FRANKLIN: For the same reason, sir, you wear that wig. A concession to taste. Though, in my case, it also keeps my bald head warm. Here, try it.

[FRANKLIN offers his “cap” to JOHNSON. JOHNSON removes his wig, revealing a headful of short, wiry, uncoifed hair. They exchange head-pieces; then don them. Laughter.]

FRANKLIN: Now that you are suitably attired, perhaps you will return with me to Pennsylvania. One week among us and your prejudices will disappear.

[EDMUND BURKE (44), the famed Anglo-Irish statesman, seated at mid-table, interjects...]

BURKE: What, and let facts wreck opinions which have taken Johnson a lifetime to acquire?! Never!

FRANKLIN: Bravo, Burke!

[OLIVER GOLDSMITH (45) – the playwright, chimes in...]

GOLDSMITH: For all his talk of other peoples and places, the furthest Johnson has been from London is Streatham.

JOHNSON: All that life can afford is to be found in London. Any man who tires of London is tired of life! Yet...

[After a huge and hurried slurp of lemonade – his end of the table is littered with empty cups...]

JOHNSON: I am in no way adverse to travel. On the contrary, my dear Goldsmith, I relish its prospect.

GOLDSMITH: Then why have you never taken Boswell up on his offer to tour Scotland?!

JOHNSON: I've been busy earning my living.

GOLDSMITH: Pah! With the King's pension your living is secured. If you don't want to go rambling with Bozzy or Franklin, say so!

[On the spot, JOHNSON changes the subject...]

JOHNSON: I must inscribe those books for Doctor Franklin before I forget.

[As FRANKLIN's pile of books is shunted down the table, and JOHNSON snatches the pen right out of BOSWELL's hand...]

JOHNSON *[CONT'D]*: Though I still think that no place demonstrates the vanity of human hopes more than a public library.

FRANKLIN: Why compile a Dictionary, if not to advance general learning?

[JOHNSON grumbles and inscribes. BOSWELL hovers at JOHNSON's

shoulder to see what he's writing.]

JOHNSON: For God's sakes, man, give me room!

[BOSWELL quickly backs off, covering his embarrassment with...]

BOSWELL: Unlike America, the libraries of Scotland, public and private, are well stocked with Doctor Johnson's works. Now if I can just entice him to come to Edinburgh to inscribe them, as he seems willing to do for the Philadelphians, we may yet get the great man out of his lair and into the wild!

JOHNSON *[still scribbling]*: In due time, Bozzy, in due time.

BOSWELL: I remember Voltaire's response when I invited him to Scotland.

[Groans, grins, and asides – they've heard this story many (too many) times.]

BURKE: And Voltaire said he'd rather be boiled alive. Accept it as foregone, my friend, you'll never get Johnson to accept an invitation to do that which any French philosopher has declined.

[Laughter. After slamming shut the cover of the last book in FRANKLIN'S pile, JOHNSON suddenly announces...]

JOHNSON: I shall arrive in Edinburgh, by coach, Tuesday after next.

[BOSWELL is dumbstruck. JOHNSON hands him back his pen. Then, with a loud grunt, JOHNSON hoists the heavy pile of books.]

JOHNSON: Unless you have suddenly withdrawn your invitation.

BOSWELL: Uh, no. It's just that, well, I'm -

[As he lugs the books back to FRANKLIN'S end of the table...]

JOHNSON: Stunned? Delighted? Dismayed? What?

BOSWELL: Sir, I am honored.

[Off the thud of the books landing on the table...]

[SMASH CUT TO] “TWO WEEKS LATER”

[THE WHEEL OF A POST-CHAISE bouncing hard, fighting ruts, slashing through puddles, spanking stones, skidding. Hooves thunder, the abused frame and axles scream. A whip cracks, drivers shout, a woman yelps, a gentleman curses. A cacophonous salad.]

*[CUT TO] TWO DULL SHEEP standing in the middle of...
EXT. A ROAD - THE BORDERS, SCOTLAND – NIGHT*

[THE SHEEP – just two old mates out for a gambol in the moonlit hills – stare tensely down the long road south to London. There’s something in the air, something coming – THE POST-CHAISE AND TEAM OF SIX explode over a rise.

THE SHEEP levitate. Then bolt, each for the other’s side of the road, absurdly colliding, barely managing to get out of one another’s and the COACH’S WAY. THEIR VIEW as the hell-bent COACH roars off, climbing a bumpy grade.

THE POST-CHAISE crests the hill. Stretched out below is...

THE ANCIENT CITY OF EDINBURGH in moonlight, a warm twinkle from its many candles and lanterns, wisps of smoke from cooking fires and hearths.]

INT. THE BOSWELL HOME - PANTRY – NIGHT

[BOSWELL is tearing through cupboards looking for...]

BOSWELL: What’s happened to the lemons?! Peggy?! ... Peg!

[MARGARET BOSWELL (35) his wife, enters, already annoyed.]

BOSWELL: Doctor Johnson must have lemonade. I’ve explained fifty times –
MARGARET *[under her breath]*: Aye, and then some.

BOSWELL: If we can’t find the lemons –

MARGARET: Then the great man will just have to drink tea like the rest of us.

[He doesn't like her tone, but before he can respond, a SERVANT-GIRL flounces in with a BOWL OF CITRUS.]

MARGARET *[with mock relief]*: Saved!!!

[MARGARET marches out. The SERVANT-GIRL's dangerously loose and low-cut neckline, peevishness, and familiar demeanor around BOSWELL are such that we suspect that her "duties" have expanded beyond household chores. Drawing himself up...]

BOSWELL: Since Doctor Johnson labors under the impression that all Scots are crude savages...

[She slams the fruit bowl on a counter and stomps out.]

FOLLOWING HER - DOWN THE HALL

BOSWELL: I insist that while he is under our roof, we behave impeccably.

INT. THE DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

[The GIRL ducks in and pouts near a WALL CLOCK while MARGARET double-checks place settings, re-adjusting silver. BOSWELL follows the GIRL in...]

BOSWELL: There must be no mention of politics, religion, anything French, and especially not –

BOSWELL & MARGARET: Macpherson's translations.

BOSWELL: As a matter of fact, yes.

[BOSWELL dogs her heels, triple-checking, readjusting what she's just arranged. The last straw. MARGARET wheels on him.]

MARGARET: James!! If you don't – *[then continuing sweetly]* Perhaps you should go down to the High Street and wait for his coach.

BOSWELL: There's plenty of time.

MARGARET: What with fine weather and clear roads, it may arrive early.

[When BOSWELL glances at the GIRL, MARGARET notices. BOSWELL covers by re-adjusting a glass. MARGARET grabs his hand.

The SERVANT GIRL snickers. MARGARET wheels on her. Caught, the SERVANT GIRL covers by picking up a spoon. She LICKS it, then gives it a robust polish on her skirt. MARGARET snatches it from her hand. The GIRL curtsies and scurries from the room.

BOSWELL straining for dignity under his wife's glare, isn't aware of JOSEPH (40s), his man-servant – a tall, droll multilingual Bohemian – who materializes right behind him.]

JOSEPH: Sir?

[BOSWELL, startled, yelps, and turns.]

BOSWELL: For God's sakes, stop lurking!

JOSEPH: Yes, sir. Anything else, sir?

MARGARET: That will be all, Joseph.

JOSEPH: Yes, Ma'am.

[JOSEPH doesn't move. Then, after a slight pause, with a refined but very distinct Germanic accent...]

JOSEPH: If I might be so bold, the fish forks might be more appropriately placed at the far left.

[A bow. He exits. Beat. BOSWELL and MARGARET dash around the table rearranging the fish forks.]

JOSEPH *[reentering silently]*: Sir?

[Again, BOSWELL's startled. He discreetly sets down a fork.]

BOSWELL: What now?

JOSEPH: That clock, sir. It's been running approximately one half hour slow.

[Beat. Blink. BOSWELL bolts.]

[SMASH CUT TO] EXT. STREETS OF EDINBURGH – NIGHT

[BOSWELL races up a hill... takes a shortcut through an alley... nearly slips on something slimy as he rounds a corner... then sprints flat-out down a steep, ankle-twisting cobbled street which debouches on...]

PARLIAMENT SQUARE - HIGH STREET

[BOSWELL runs up just as... THE POST-CHAISE COACH is pulling out. A few PASSENGERS sort through the pile of luggage, OTHERS are getting into waiting carriages. But no sign of JOHNSON. BOSWELL takes off at a dead run, shouting...]

BOSWELL: Doctor Johnson!!

[Just as BOSWELL disappears around a corner...

JOSEPH strolls into the Square. Approaches the luggage, calmly surveys it, then leans over a TRUNK with AN ENGRAVED PLATE identifying the trunk as the property of...

“Sam. Johnson. 7 Johnson’s Court, Fleet Street, London.”
Off JOSEPH, hoisting the heavy trunk with surprising ease...]

EXT. EDINBURGH STREETS - OLD TOWN – NIGHT

[BOSWELL presses on, shouting JOHNSON’S name. He ducks down a dark alley only to find himself in a dead-end courtyard. He staggers to a halt. Despondent, self-flagellating, almost in tears.

But then he hears the distinctive roar of the BIG MAN’S VOICE. With the freakish acoustics of tall tenements and narrow alleys, JOHNSON could be anywhere.]

EXT. A COURTYARD - OLD TOWN – NIGHT

[JOHNSON in a splotted coat over a plain but seriously distressed shirt, the spouts of his TRI-CORNER HAT dripping effluent, screams at A WOMAN leaning from an open third-story window, empty bucket in her hand.]

JOHNSON: For fifty years, I've roamed the streets of London, you fishwife!

[Overlapping him, the Woman gives just as good as she gets, but does so in a Glaswegian accent so thick it's impenetrable to English ears – though we gather it has something to do with equating baby's piss and England.]

BOSWELL *rushing into the courtyard, discovers* JOHNSON *shouting...*

JOHNSON: Fifty years! And not once have I been doused!! But fifteen minutes among you troglodytes and –

[BOSWELL runs up, so breathless, he's almost mute.]

BOSWELL: I went to the square and...

JOHNSON: Bozzy!!

[Then, to the shrieking Woman above...]

JOHNSON: For God's sakes, stop your mouth!

[The Woman stokes her flow to even greater volume.]

BOSWELL: When I didn't find you, I...

JOHNSON: Did you at least pick up my bags?

[BOSWELL blanches. Beat. Then...]

BOSWELL: Don't move!

[SMASH CUT TO] PARLIAMENT SQUARE - HIGH STREET

[BOSWELL dashes to the spot where the luggage had been piled. JOHNSON's trunk is, of course, long gone. BOSWELL takes off.]

[BACK TO THE COURTYARD] – BOSWELL, a marathoner hitting "the wall," staggers into the now empty and eerily silent courtyard. He pipsqueaks...

BOSWELL: Doctor Johnson?

[Then, seemingly out of nowhere, JOSEPH materializes behind him, JOHNSON's trunk perched casually on his shoulder.]

JOSEPH: Sir?

[BOSWELL leaps like a startled cat. Once he's recovered, they hear LOUD VOICES coming from... A brightly-lit TAVERN beyond the courtyard arch.]

[SMASH CUT TO] A THICK HEAVY HAND slamming onto a table with such force the cups jump, ale slopping over rims of tankards. We are in...

INT. A TAVERN/INN – NIGHT

[JOHNSON leans across the table into the face of a large, red-faced, and sputteringly enraged SCOTSMAN (30s).]

JOHNSON: The Scots, sir, are incapable of producing anything greater than plump sheep, thin cattle, and sheaves of thistle!

[Fighting words. Mutterings among the clientele. JOHNSON lifts his heavy WALKING STICK, a veritable bludgeon.]

JOHNSON: Finegal, sir, is a fraud!

SCOTSMAN: Our great and ancient Scots epic –

JOHNSON: Macpherson's Finegal is neither ancient nor epic. Its so-called heroic lines, the doggerel of a third-rate poet with as little learning and poetical talent as this stick!!

[With which, JOHNSON hammers the table. Then, taunting...]

JOHNSON: Come, sir! Have you no rebuttal?!

[A dangerous silence. A few rough-looking characters begin to reach

inside their coats for weapons. Then, the STREET DOOR CLICKS OPEN. All eyes turn to...

BOSWELL *who enters, followed by JOSEPH. BOSWELL senses the tension in the air, the imminent possibility of violence.*]

BOSWELL [*blowing very Scots*]: Well, lads! I see you ha'taken me boon companion under yer wing!!

JOHNSON [*delighted*]: I thought I'd lost you, Bozzy!

[As BOSWELL crosses, careful not to step on too many toes...]

JOHNSON: Pull up a chair and order a punch for my fellow scholars! They need more spirits if they're to sustain such spirited literary discussion!

[A TAVERN-MAID who's "known" BOSWELL on an occasional basis for years, intercepts him.]

TAVERN-MAID: Is this one a friend of yours?!

BOSWELL: Aye. And a bit of a rascal too. But Dr. Johnson also happens to be [*loud enough for all*] the world's pre-eminent man of letters... At least in England.

[At mention of "England," half a dozen Scotsmen spit.

BOSWELL *takes JOHNSON by the arm, turning him to the door.*]

BOSWELL: Time to go, sir. Supper waits.

[As BOSWELL hustles him out, past his countrymen's glares...]

DRUNK PATRIOT: Mock if you must our Macpherson, but you'll find more poets in the Highland hills of Scotland than in all the alleyways of London.

[JOHNSON stops, turns to the crowd, then...]

JOHNSON [*quoting Horace*]: "Parturiunt montes, nascetur ridiculus mus."

[Uh-oh. BOSWELL tenses. JOSEPH translates for the puzzled...]

JOSEPH: "The mountains labor; a silly mouse is born." Horace. *Ars Poetica*.
JOHNSON *[clapping him on the back]*: Excellent, sir!! A Scotsman and a scholar, who'd have thought it?!

[The crowd erupts.]

JOSEPH: Actually, sir, I am a native of Bohemia.

[BOSWELL hustles JOHNSON out the door, just as hurled tankards come sailing their way.]

EXT. JUST OUTSIDE THE TAVERN/INN – CONTINUOUS

[With cups and cutlery clattering the door behind them...]

JOHNSON: We can't leave. I've booked a room.

BOSWELL *[hustling him off]*: You're staying with us.

JOHNSON: Then I'll be meeting your wife.

BOSWELL: Wives generally live with their husbands, even in Scotland.

JOHNSON: I had better change my shirt then.

JOSEPH *[from behind them]*: Excellent plan, sir.

INT. DINING ROOM - THE BOSWELL HOUSE - LATER - NIGHT

[Dinner's winding down for everyone but JOHNSON. MARGARET observes in stunned silence as JOHNSON gorges himself with utter disregard for acceptable table manners, slurping down oysters with gusto, barely interrupting his flow of speech...]

JOHNSON: A man of sixty-three who's labored forty years with his pen has earned the right to a vacation. I've long dreamed of travel to exotic lands, and where do I go?! ... Scotland!

[A fact which JOHNSON finds uproariously ironic and funny. Polite, forced smiles from the OTHERS. Johnson guzzles a tumbler of lemonade.]

SERVANT-GIRL *[flirtatiously]*: More lamb, sir?

JOHNSON: Excellent!!

[JOHNSON slides enough meat for three onto his plate. BOSWELL squirms under the look in MARGARET's eye – chilly enough to bring on winter. A socially desperate middle-aged WOMAN pipes up...]

EAGER WOMAN: I simply must ask, why, in your Dictionary, you define “pastern” as the “knee” of a horse?

JOHNSON: Ignorance, madam. Pure ignorance.

[She reinvestigates her vegetables. ANOTHER WOMAN chimes in.]

OTHER WOMAN: I, for one, am most grateful that you left out all the naughty words.

JOHNSON: Does this mean, madam, that you went looking for them?!

[The WOMAN wilts. But from across the table comes a burst of bright laughter. All eyes turn to LADY ALISON MACINTYRE (30s) a young, rich widow. Bright and beautiful, she aims her complete battery of charms at DOCTOR JOHNSON. He loves it.]

MALE GUEST: Has anyone informed Doctor Johnson that his so-called definition of “oats” is insulting to Scotsmen?

BOSWELL: You, sir, are the first.

MALE GUEST: Then you, sir, have been too long in London.

BOSWELL: Only a fool could take umbrage at a reference to grains.

[At which the Gentleman takes umbrage with BOSWELL. A CLERIC discreetly asks MARGARET...]

CLERIC: How did Dr. Johnson define “oats”?

[LADY MACINTYRE, overhearing, quotes...]

LADY MACINTYRE: “Oats are a grain, which in England are generally given to horses, but in Scotland support the people.”

[The CLERIC, the MALE GUEST, and both WOMEN bristle.]

MALE GUEST: I assure you that we feed oats to horses just as you do in England.

JOHNSON: Then, sir, I congratulate you on treating your horses as well as you do your people.

[LADY MACINTYRE laughs brightly. The MALE GUEST harummphs.]

LADY MACINTYRE: We must work on bringing Doctor Johnson to Edinburgh. Permanently.

BOSWELL: It's taken ten years to convince him to visit. To convince him to stay might take thirty.

LADY MACINTYRE: Sir, there will always be room in my house for you. And if my books or company prove inadequate, my estate is within an easy stroll of the University, which is just as ancient as the one at Paris!

JOHNSON: As in so many things, Lady, age is rarely an improvement.

LADY MACINTYRE: Then you, sir, are the exception.

[JOHNSON is utterly captivated. When she leans across the table and presses his arm, her bosom heaves with a wistful sigh. JOHNSON glows. REACTIONS as JOHNSON pats her hand. Sweetly. Then, with an extra little squeeze of his arm, she adds...]

LADY MACINTYRE: If only I could keep you here. *[then quite softly]* We could spend our days roaming my garden and our evenings with you instructing me in philosophy.

JOHNSON *[not hearing]*: What's that, my dear?

BOSWELL *[a bit too loud]*: She says she'd like to spend her days trotting you 'round her shubbery and her nights in logic.

[The guests are shocked. MARGARET is secretly pleased. LADY M., however, shoots a nasty glance BOSWELL's way, flashing her claws. What is it about these two?]

EXT. THE BOSWELL HOUSE – NIGHT

[BOSWELL, MARGARET, and JOHNSON see off the dinner guests. Ritual formalities. LADY MACINTYRE’S carriage waits.]

LADY MACINTYRE *[on JOHNSON’S arm]*: You must promise to call on me before you set off on your odyssey.

BOSWELL: We leave tomorrow at dawn.

LADY MACINTYRE: Then I shall see you off, like Penelope bidding her sweet Ulysses a fond farewell and a swift return.

JOSEPH: We sail from Leith Harbour.

JOHNSON: Until then, m’Lady.

[JOHNSON helps MACINTYRE into her carriage. With a look at BOSWELL, MARGARET goes back inside. JOSEPH follows her in. BOSWELL slips around to the other side of the carriage. He leans in to LADY MACINTYRE and in a rushed whisper...]

BOSWELL: Do not see us off.

LADY MACINTYRE: And why not?!

BOSWELL: If you do, we may never go.

LADY MACINTYRE: I’ll take that as a compliment.

BOSWELL: He thinks he’s in love with you!

LADY MACINTYRE: You once imagined the same thing.

BOSWELL: He’s an old man on his first vacation, Alison. Be kind.

LADY MACINTYRE: Don’t worry, “Bozzy,” I won’t steal him away from you.

[Her carriage pulls out. As she waves gaily to JOHNSON...]

JOHNSON: Alison MacIntyre is a blooming rose in a weed-congested wilderness! Her love of learning, her wit, her –

BOSWELL *[with sarcasm]*: Long neck and heaving bosom?

JOHNSON: I hardly noticed.

[BOSWELL, starting to go back inside, mutters...]

BOSWELL: Alison MacIntyre is much more and far less than she seems.

JOHNSON: What's that?

BOSWELL: Nothing, sir. Touch of indigestion.

[BOSWELL stops in the doorway to study JOHNSON, who is still watching LADY MACINTYRE's carriage roll off into the night. Beat. BOSWELL goes in. JOHNSON follows.]

INT. BEDROOM - BOSWELL HOUSE - LATER – NIGHT

[The SERVANT-GIRL unpacks JOHNSON's trunk. Buried among the carelessly packed clothing, linen, books and papers, she finds... TWO PISTOLS along with a POUCH OF SHOT and a HORN OF GUNPOWDER.

Picking them up, the unsecured top of the horn pops open. Black powder spews like Vesuvius over JOHNSON's shirts. BOSWELL, passing, sees what's happening.]

BOSWELL: My God, look what you've done!!

SERVANT-GIRL: Well he might have bothered to tighten the stopper!

[As they jostle one another, trying to flounce the black gunpowder from the shirt...]

SERVANT-GIRL: For God's sakes, let go of me! I'll get it off quicker without your clumsy fingers in the way!

MARGARET'S VIEW – from the open doorway. It appears that her husband is trying to undress the maid and that she is doing everything in her power to help him.

[MARGARET charges in, a nasty set to her jaw. BOSWELL jumps back, hands raised in innocence. MARGARET snatches the pistol from the GIRL's hand and wheels on BOSWELL.]

BOSWELL: Margaret, darling, I swear –

MARGARET: Why's he got pistols?!