

By *Gratis Queerie*, our *Faux-Outrage Correspondent*

Alex and Alistair dining in Portree. K. I. S. S. I. N. G.



For several days the press in Scotlandshire has been animated by discussions about First Minister Alex Salmond's interview by Alistair Campbell in GQ magazine.

There has been much criticism for the First Minister's apparent failure to adequately 'monster' Russian Premier Vladimir Putin, the current 'Bogeyman' of the Western world.

There have also been complaints that Salmond described Scotlandshire as a "nation of drunks", ironically by such figures as Labour's Baron Foulksake of Glen Morangie.

But all of these commentators, while contorting to find a sufficiently damning interpretation of the SNP leader's words, appear to have missed the most startling revelation of all.

Reading the full text of the interview, which spanned a two hour discussion followed by another two hours of lunch, it is clear that a rapport had built up between the two protagonists

Like a pair of ageing gladiators, the former spin doctor and the FM circled one another trading feint and parry as they sought any tiny weakness which one of them might exploit. And in doing so, a mutual, if grudging, respect built up between them. Even a degree of friendship. Perhaps more than that. Perhaps love blossomed over that long romantic lunch.

Late in the conversation, the wordplay between the two makes this clear, perhaps as they reach

the end of the second bottle of wine.

The discussion hints at an earlier closeness, and a lasting resentment by Alistair. Accusations are levelled.

AC: Shall we both admit we got too close? All those invites you made...

AS: I probably invited you.

AC: You never invited me to anything.

AS: I invited Rupert...

AC: Rupert?

AS: ... and he couldn't come.

AC: Do you like him?

AS: I do. He is a remarkable man.

AC: Does he write to you?

AS: Often.

Then the accusations of infidelity start to widen.

AC: Did you bollock Nicola Sturgeon?

AS: She didn't say that.

AC: Do you like the Queen?

AS: Yes.

AC: Do you like Prince Charles?

AS: Yes.

AC: Say something nice about Osborne.

AS: [long pause]

At this point, unhappy with the direction the interview is taking, Alex turns the conversation away from past dalliances to their current (secret) engagement.

AC: I think we did get too close.

AS: What's wrong with this relationship? Why shouldn't politicians engage with people in the media?

Alistair begins to soften and becomes more playful.

AC: Favourite Food?

AS: It was lamb curry, but I am on the 5:2 diet.

AC: Really?

AS: Don't tell me you didn't notice.

The FM is becoming increasingly coy at this point.

AC: Favourite song?

AS: Burns. "Ae Fond kiss".

AC: You sure you're not just saying that.

Surely a come on if ever there was one.

AC: I'm not a proper Scot.

AS: Yes you are.

AC: Best quality in others?

AS: I like generosity of spirit.

This to a man who is paying for the drinks. And then the clincher.

AC: I bet you do. Same-sex marriage?

AS: In favour. I think we should have the first one next Autumn.

AC: Yes. I would love one.

And there we have it. The First Minister Alex Salmond, in public and on the record, making a proposal of gay marriage to one-time political rival Alistair Campbell. I, for one, am astonished.

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