

The night I gained Clinton's full attention

Of all the gilt-edged invitations I have received, the only one I have kept came from the former Prime Minister, John Major, requesting my presence at a reception for President Clinton at 10 Downing Street. Fairly cynical by nature and not easily impressed, I confess I was excited.

Everyone wore their finery that night. I dragged out the Dolce & Gabbana matching coat and dress in pale blue. The dress was entirely indiscreet — wildly short, breathtakingly tight, with spaghetti-thin straps holding up the plunging bodice. The coat was a shield. Despite the November chill, the ornate rooms of the PM's residence were hot, leaving me no option but to remove the coat.

Northern Ireland was the reason for Mr Clinton's flying visit and he worked the room skilfully, shaking hands, smiling, spending the requisite amount of time with each guest before his advisers guided him on. During the hour or so that we orbited each other, the President and I made eye contact on several occasions. I was certainly keen to talk to him and, perhaps because of the pretty

Heidi Kingstone recalls a wildly indiscreet dress and a highly charged meeting with the American President

boring gathering that night, he was keen to talk to me — if only because I wasn't wearing black.

Suddenly it looked as though Mr Clinton was coming our way. There was a small massing of three grey suits. In the middle of these men, I racked my brains for something clever to say — with no luck. One of the troika droned on about the peace process and the President's jet-lagged eyes glazed over. A media executive said something and Mr Clinton's generally well-concealed boredom peeped through. Then it hit me. The flash of light went off, the cartoon bubble above my head had words in it. Out came: "So, when is Canada going to become the 51st state?" "Are you Canadian?" asked a newly animated Mr Clinton. "I sure am," I said, faking an Arkansas drawl.

The conversation took off. Mr Clinton told me how the Canadian Prime Minister, Jean Chrétien, had asked him, during the Quebec referendum, to reinforce the

message to the French-speaking province that autonomy did not necessarily mean automatic entrance into Nafta (the North American Free Trade Agreement). The President spoke about the

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state of the country and the fragmentation of the world.

He was highly articulate, charming and chemically charged — his pheromones were raging. He was engaging and easy to talk to, with none of the pomposity

that afflicts some other heads of state. When I met Binyamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister, he had none of Mr Clinton's savvy or people-skills and tacitly demanded to be treated with the respect due to his office; he would have preferred bowing and scraping.

Perhaps it was the irreverence of my question that caught the "Unabanger" off guard, but I doubt it. His common touch — no pun intended — is legendary.

Had the room not been swarming with VIPs, a prime minister and a future prime minister — Tony Blair was there — and press, would he have made a pass at me? What would I have done? Despite the fact that Mr Clinton's girth is larger in real life than one might expect, and his nose is more prominent, red and bulbous, he exudes sexual magnetism, which Tony Blair does not.

If the President were a petrol

station attendant and not the most powerful man on earth, would he still be attractive? One of the characteristics that has taken him to high office — besides Hillary — is his sheer force of personality; his magnetism came across in that brief meeting. I felt there was a sexual current, but it was not one-sided; marginal power of the kind that some other notorious adulterers possess would not be aphrodisiac enough to get me on the satin sheets. Morality aside, Mr Clinton's power could bowl over the most hardened cynic.

"Fornigate" may bring the President down. If the alleged affair between Monica Lewinsky and Mr Clinton is true, then it must have been hard for her to resist. What an ego-boost (until you remember the pictures of Paula Jones and Gennifer Flowers) that the President, like Uncle Sam, wants you.

As it was, Mr Clinton had to be dragged away by his aides. He was still talking to me about Canada as the crowds separated us and he glided into someone else's axis. Had he come on to me, would I have sued him for sexual harassment? I doubt it.



Heidi Kingstone: "The President and I made eye contact"