

LIAISONS NON-DANGEREUSES

A woman linked with the Blunkett affair falls prey to the paparazzi's poetic licence



Heidi Kingstone is a journalist and friend of David Blunkett's former lover Kimberly Quinn. Kingstone became acquainted with the former home secretary in the wake of the scandal

Millions of British people now know that I wore last year's Missoni cardigan on the night I met with a "famous and powerful" friend of mine. This is the ultimate humiliation for a "glamorous socialite". To be caught in old designer clothes, the day before I was to have my hair cut, does not bear thinking about.

Recently I found myself an object of interest to the paparazzi. Standing on my street, they watched my flat, chronicling who came and who went – and they eventually got what they were hoping for. They spotted a cabinet minister arriving for an "intimate" dinner: David Blunkett, the high-profile, hardline home secretary who resigned at the end of last year over allegations that he "fast-tracked" a visa for the former nanny of his former lover, Kimberly Quinn. (Though, after the general election in May, the prime minister brought him back into government as work and pensions secretary.)

Reading the newspaper stories afterwards was a bit like reading my obituary. Indeed, who could argue with the Mail on Sunday's description of me as "a respected journalist... [who's] not afraid to speak her mind"? You *can* believe what you read in the papers.

"Sympathetic", "kind", "loyal" – that's me, not Sadie, Blunkett's guide dog. Actually the real story that I have been trying to peddle is: "My lesbian sex scenes with Sadie: she's a bitch, but she's my bitch." I was hoping this might make a follow-up story in the Mail on Sunday, but the paper isn't going for it.

I had been friends with Kimberly Quinn for years. In fact, last August, the night before the News of the World broke the story of her relationship with Blunkett, Kimberly was due to come to a party I was giving. She had called to ask if she could bring her son William, whose father is

Blunkett (though she didn't come in the end). Stephen Pollard, Blunkett's biographer, did come to the party and later that night rang to ask if I had heard about the News of the World scoop.

In January, months after the story broke but only weeks after Blunkett had resigned, I wrote a piece for the Mail on Sunday about the complex personality of the Kimberly I had known over the years. I subsequently met Blunkett, and in May the paper became interested in our friendship, eventually revealing our "intimate dinner". The story included a picture of Blunkett leaving my "luxury west-London flat".

The Mail on Sunday quoted me as jokingly describing my former husband as a "blood-sucking lunatic hyena". While I don't remember that, I like it: it should keep Blunkett quaking in his boots. This is what the Daily Mail would like to think. It warned Blunkett, in its Ephraim Hardcastle column, that that "Rubenesque femme fatale piece of work" – me – is likely to "duff him up" if he doesn't mind his "Ps and Qs". Too right. Treat 'em mean, keep 'em keen is a philosophy I espouse.

In its account of that intimate dinner, the Mail on Sunday wrote about my famous "appeal to powerful men", comparing me to Kimberly. An example was an apparently flirtatious come-on line I used on President Bill Clinton at a Downing

Street reception. I asked him when Canada (where I am from originally) was going to be the 51st state. I did say this, and wrote about it in *The Times* – but rather than a come-on line, it was an opening for a conversation. That was me being serious and intellectual, not alluring, sadly, which is perhaps why Canada maintains its independence and Bill never called back.

Other papers, annoyed at having missed the *liaison non-dangereuse*, lobbed a few stones to see what they could dislodge. There wasn't much.

I was most relieved, however, to discover that my parents are "wealthy intellectuals". I have always suspected that I was adopted, although my mother and father have long denied this. The image totally shattered when they sent me a picture from Disneyland. Both parents were wearing Mickey Mouse ears.

So I am determined to solve the family riddle and have sent the Dr Seuss book *Are You My Mother?* to the Rothschild clan in the hope that I have at last found my true heritage. Heidi Rothschild – it has a certain "glamorous, wealthy and intellectual" ring to it. As Gloria Swanson said in *Sunset Boulevard*: "All right, Mr DeMille. I'm ready for my close-up."

And a warning to anyone who bugs me: don't. Or I'll get my friends to invade your country.

