

THEY first laid eyes on each other, so the story goes, at a party at New York's fashionable Kit Kat Club in 1998.

She was a tall, striking, 28-year-old Slovenian model, with geometric cheekbones and a sexy Slavic accent. He was a 52-year-old billionaire, with a ridiculous comb-over and a reputation as a ladies man.

Melania Knauss was chatting with a group of friends when Donald Trump, a pretty date hanging off his arm, entered the room.

Instantly mesmerised by the brunette, the billionaire sent his date off to the ladies room and made his move. No one knows what his killer line was. Perhaps a billionaire doesn't need one. Whatever it was, by the time his date returned, Melania had his numbers — all of them, not just the office line — to show his serious intent.

Their romance culminated in their wedding at Trump's Florida estate in Palm Beach in 2005.

Now of course, following 70-year-old Trump's winning of the Republican Presidential nomination last month, it is entirely possible that later this year the couple will step inside The White House as President and First Lady of America.

Just as it's now claimed Melania moved to New York in 1995 — not 1996 as she still says — based on a set of highly-charged, lesbian-themed, nude photographs of her said to have

SPECIAL DISPATCH from Natalie Clarke

IN LJUBLJANA, SLOVENIA

been taken in New York in 1995, which resurfaced last week — it is also now being suggested the Trumps may have got confused about the date of their first meeting.

But why is the exact date so significant? According to a Slovenian journalist who has recently published an unauthorised biography of Melania, the Kit Kat meeting was staged — an elaborate act for the benefit of the public.

Bojan Pozar claims the pair first met three years earlier, in 1995, around the time of the nude photo shoot. 'During my research I was told that they met in 1995,' says Pozar, a journalist who is co-author of Melania Trump — The Inside Story: From A Slovenian Communist Village To The White House.

'I don't know what sort of relationship they

had but I do know they were in touch from my conversations with modelling agents while researching the book. After 1995, Trump helped Melania with her modelling career. The agents said: "Trump's money talks." The first cover Melania did was for the April 1996 edition of Spanish Harper's Bazaar.

The years between 1995 and 1998 are the most secret years of Melania Trump. She'd had a number of boyfriends in Slovenia, but we did not find anyone involved with Melania romantically during these years — it is very strange.

If this is the case, it casts an even more troubling complexion on the work visa scandal concerning Melania that refuses to go away. Trump's uncompromising stance on immigration is, after all, very well known. It has been suggested by commentators in America that Melania did not have a work visa when she undertook the early nude modelling assignment in 1995.

Comments she made earlier this year that while working in New York she travelled to Slovenia 'to stamp the visa,' appear inconsistent with someone holding a U.S. H-1B work visa (who would not have to do this) and more suggestive of someone holding a tourist visa.

This month, 46-year-old Melania published a statement on Twitter saying she has 'at all times been in full compliance with the immigration laws of this country', but she is yet to produce documentary evidence that she was in possession of the correct legal paperwork.

If Trump knew Melania at this time, and she was working on a tourist visa, it doesn't look very good for a politician who made the issue of illegal immigration central to his campaign.

But why lie about the dates in the first place? Well, firstly, in 1995 Trump was still married to his second wife, Marla Maples, whom he'd wed in 1993.

His affair with Maples while still married to his first wife, Ivana, whom he married in 1977 and divorced in 1992, was well-publicised. Even back then, Trump had his eyes set on the White House and having weathered the Maples scandal, conservative America might not be so forgiving if it happened a second time.

Claims that the 1998 meeting was a 'ruse' are also made in another book, published this year, and available on Amazon. The title is decidedly unsavoury: From The Whore House To The White House: The True Story Of Melania Trump.

The book makes a number of unpleasant claims — such as one that a modelling agency Melania worked for in Milan before moving to



She's my lady: Trump and Melania at the Republican Convention

photos and basic information such as measurements, eye and hair colour, and agency details.

'One composite card was for the modelling business, and the other one for the sex business,' as it stated whether they prefer the older men and described their abilities in the bedroom.

The article added: 'What Melania's [composite card] looked like only the people involved know, but it is no coincidence she got a rich husband.'

This week the Mail spoke to the author of the piece, under the condition of anonymity. He insisted

Scurrilous claims were made in a magazine article

the seemingly fantastical story was correct, but all he would say to corroborate it was the information came from sources in America.

Mr Zampolli, however, was very clear. He told the Mail the allegations were 'f***** rubbish'. 'My agency was never an escort agency... come on,' he said.

There is no evidence to back up these startling claims made in Suzy magazine. But there is yet more trouble afoot in Slovenia. We spoke to Peter Butolin, a 48-year-old PR, who describes himself as Melania's first boyfriend. They met when she was 17 and dated for a few months before he had to go into the army.

He claims to be in possession of some pictures of Melania, topless and in her underwear. He is refusing to rule out selling these photographs and appears to be waiting for the moment Melania steps inside the White House for maximum impact.

'An American media organisation offered me \$200,000 for the pictures a few weeks ago, but I refused the offer. But will I sell them in the future? We'll have to see.'

He smiles. He seems to relish the thought that he might have another bomb ready to detonate under Donald Trump's feet.

Perhaps this is the reason, locals in Melania's home town of Sevnica say, that police a few weeks ago warned residents not to speak to journalists, suggesting someone, somewhere, has given the order to completely clean up Mrs Trump's past. But, aside from a few dodgy photos and visa issues, is there much to clean up?

When Melania was young, Yugoslavia had not yet broken up; Melania's father, Viktor Knavs, was a member of the Communist party.

The town is on the bank of the river Sava and across the river is an old building, now empty, which was the site of state-owned children's clothing factory Jutranka, where Melania's mother, Amalija, was a pattern cutter. As a child, Melania and her elder sister, Ines, took part in fashion shows organised by Jutranka.

Melania's father was a chauffeur, then ran a shop selling car parts.

Friends remember Melania as a beautiful and ambitious young woman, determined to use her looks

the sale of the summer



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