

## BOOKS / TODAY

## HARD TO STOMACH

**A**S THE famous actor swept into the restaurant all eyes upon him, he turned and stared at Karen Moline dining quietly with a friend. "He looked at me as though I was lunch. I was like a deer in the headlights," admits the American showbiz journalist turned novelist.

In fact that unpleasant little scene – plus years of celebrity journalism in Hollywood – was the inspiration for Karen's first novel, *Lunch* (Macmillan, £9.99).

Karen discovered a world of sickeningly seedy sexual excess in the private lives of the beautiful people.

*Lunch* has been dubbed the most erotic novel of 1994 – but it certainly isn't your average raunchy blockbuster.

The anti-hero, a slum kid who becomes Hollywood's greatest star, initially seems like a Jackie Collins character.

But Nick Muncie is obsessed with sexual domination, and the scenes of sado-masochism with a stranger he meets over lunch are gruesomely graphic.

The way Nick gets his kicks is not unusual in Hollywood, according to Karen.

"The things I hear make Nick Muncie look like Bonnie Prince Charlie on a good day," she says.

The worst offenders, particularly where sex with minors is concerned, are the stars who are "happily married".

"The actor who says he is a devoted family man often turns out to be a pervert," says Karen.

**This lunch is not for the squeamish**

by SHARON DAVEY

"It's always the one who trumpets family values – I guess like members of your Conservative Party!"

Naturally Karen is not naming names but Nick Muncie is a composite of actors, directors and producers.

### Flash

And we should not be surprised by such strange behaviour, she says. Stars are often damaged people from broken homes who have clawed their way to the top, just to be loved

and desired. They drive down Sunset Boulevard in flash convertibles, drawing attention to themselves while demanding "no publicity please".

Of course they're not all bad. Of the many stars she's interviewed, Karen cites Jodie Foster, Sharon Stone, Mel Gibson and Sylvester Stallone as Hollywood's intelligent, straight-forward good guys.

She also cites O J Simpson as a prime example of fame gone badly wrong.

If you can stomach the violent sex, *Lunch* provides engrossing insights into the dark and dangerous side of Hollywood.



Karen Moline bites into Hollywood's rotten apple Picture: Mark Mawson