



Brewer, 46, in a colorful dress, with her friend Ombra Shady Maddy

Lady who launches

LIZ BREWER keeps the rich and famous in the headlines by throwing glittering parties for them. But her own mysterious background has remained firmly in the shadows

Liz Brewer is an enigmatic figure of the party circuit — it says so on the back of her new book. However, the smoke of grizzled wisdom does not do her justice. Flip over to the front cover, and you discover that Liz is not grey at all. She is, instead, a vision in sugar-pink tulle and marabou feathers. She reclines in a sea of pink balloons. Liz, as her book also tells, represents some of the madly rich and famous. She has advised, befriended, promoted and, in some cases, made money on A-list names.

Spinning for the seriously wealthy must, one assumes, demand sterner qualities than impermeating a blizzard. It does. I am hardly over the threshold

of Liz's lovely home, a Manilla Blahnik bop from London's fashionable Sloane Square, before I realize how steely Liz may be. Would I like a cup of home-made ginger tea? Lovely, I say. What a nice change from coffee. Admitting to a caffeine habit is, it transpires, like confessing to ultimate (or relative) sin.

"Not very good for you, especially as a woman," Liz warns, slackly. "At the institute where I go to detox, the people who drink coffee go through hell. For two days, at least, they can hardly get out of bed. These people are so toxic that they really suffer. After a week, the change is wonderful to see. They almost peel off as outer skin, and the serum inside comes out. And you should drink two litres of water a day." She



means it kindly, but I think Liz is accustomed to moving in the realms of the non-toxic such as Richard Branson and Ellen DeGeneres.

Her book, *The Party Bible*, is a digest of wisdom poured over a quarter of a century of planning lunches for her best friends Diana Trump and Elaine Shirley Bawley, plus other glitterati. Her methods may not suit revellers who think Wainey's and Pringles from the base of a beehive, but she does seem quite wide-ranging. Her guide begins with a quote from Goethe and moves straight on to a picture of a semi-naked Christopher Wiggins in a bathtub. You cannot get much more flexible than that.

Nothing about Liz Brewer is set in stone. Not her age, which she will not divulge — but she must be well over 50. Not her pedigree, for her mother would never say what her background was. As someone who was expelled from two schools, Liz

was not a social conformist. For an impetuous of frivolity, she seems to hold quite hard at the collar of high society. Or, as she puts it: "No one ever wants to see the pity-gritty of a working life."

She is a sweet-faced woman with no discernible snobbery and a politician's knack of delivering torrents of information without pausing for breath. It is here, on the cast list of Liz's social duties, that we may come unstuck. There are many differences between us, but the crucial one is this: she reads

TURN TO PAGE 24

By **MARY RIDEWELL**
Portrait by **BRIAN ARIS**

glossy magazines and I do not. 'You may have seen in a recent OK! the launch of the Special Olympics Great Britain Organisation. There I am, looking delectable in my little Eric Way latest number, at Downing Street with a lot of well-known people. What a party girl! But to make it happen takes months.'

I am lost already. Who is Eric Way? 'You will hear about him,' Liz says kindly. 'The first time I ever wore a dress of his, there was Dame Shirley — well, she wasn't a Dame yet — saying, "Liz! I have to have that dress now!" I have introduced Eric to quite a few other people. He now dresses Susan George. And he does Ivana and Ivanka [Ivana's daughter]. As we speak, he is draping Geri Halliwell's dog.'

Was Tony Blair at her Downing Street triumph? 'He was hovering next door, but Cherie dropped in. Actually, Gordon was hosting it on Number 11. He gave the most amazing speech. No notes. Just straight from the heart.' Liz may be quite a political animal. She once got Ken Livingstone as a present from a friend who had bid £800 in a charity auction for a lunch with him, and they giggle wonderfully well.

Her clients, she says, are also friends. 'When I first met Ivana, she cold-called and said everyone had said she must meet me. We went to lunch at Harry's Bar and chatted.' Liz was asked to do a mock-premiere for Ivana's film that, curiously, was not being released in Britain. 'We transformed the ballroom of a Mayfair hotel into New York. That was on a professional basis and I was paid a fee.'

'You become friends, but people know that if I'm doing something professionally I have to be paid, though I do a lot for the pure joy of it. For instance, I have thrown many parties for Dame Shirley over the years. I've just done an event for her, on a professional basis, when she was presented with an honour by the French Embassy in London.'

'She has been a very close friend for 21 years, but I have to keep a roof over my head. If there's a lot of work, I have to suggest a fee. How much does she charge? 'If it's going to take me six to nine months to plan, £25,000. But I'm not up there with the people who charge a £10,000-a-month retainer.'

As for lavish partying by the rich, she imagines that the excesses of the 1980s are dead. But no. 'There are people out there who are very keen to outdo one another,' Liz says. Not long ago, she was invited to a mock ball in Venice, a party on a yacht in the South



Party queen: Liz was married to society writer John Randall for ten years

of Jamaica, or of Shufson, a tycoon who 'started life selling plastic coat hangers door to door'.

Though she is charming, Liz must think me very stupid and probably the sort of person who entertains with warm Asti Spumante and pineapple cubes on sticks. If I threw a party like that, would she come? Oh yes, she says, gamely. 'Whoever people do, they're trying their best.' But I think she may be busy that night, darning with Hemlock, who went out with Dame Shirley for a while — and with Ivana, actually — or with Shulam, who threw a wedding reception said to have cost £5 million. 'He turned the Roundhouse into a rainforest, but it really cost under £100,000. Amazing style. The invitation was hand-delivered in a cigar box. When you opened it, two butterflies flew out.' The party featured waterfalls, rain lakes, and the credits cast of *The Lion King*, *Elton John*, *Cirque du Soleil*, and guests in themed fancy dress. 'There was even a crocodile scuffling around. I mean, an anaconda always associated to him.' There

she does not, quite literally, know who she is. Her father, Hugh Gansel Brewer, was a Lloyd's underwriter with stuffy tastes and a surname derived from Hugonot grandees called *de la Bruyère*. Her mother, Elizabeth, was a mystery. 'She was the most secretive woman I ever met. She never spoke of her past and I never met her parents. All I know is that she ran away from home at the age of eight and my great aunt brought her up. From then until the day she died, she would tell me nothing. My great aunt was Bill Zin, had three husbands and lived in Monte Carlo. But all she would tell me was that my mother had had a bad childhood, and came from very good Austrian stock, and that our great-grandmother was a countess,' she says hopefully. You sense that Liz's childhood, dominated by a traditionalist father and a mother with no part, may have heated her affection for new money.

Though neither beautiful nor greedy, she has a streak of rebelliousness. More tellingly, her own life has been far sadder than the glossy exterior may suggest. After six engagements, she married John Randall, a society writer, but the marriage expired after ten years. Her only daughter, Tallulah, now a 23-year-old singer with a band called Kitala, was eight when Liz divorced, and met, at roughly the same time, tycoon Graham Younger, who lived in Zambia.

'I was very much in love with him,' Liz says. 'We nearly did get married. You always know that a relationship is right when you don't need to go out or to meet people. But he crashed his plane and died. That was five years ago. He was piloting his own light aircraft, flying from Lusaka, Zambia, to the funeral of a nephew who had crashed his own plane the week before. It was very sad.' But her voice stays light, as if nothing in her lifestyle allows for tragedy. 'I was running a business and Tallulah was a weekly boarder; it was very difficult for her. She suffered. He was 50 when he died, a young 50. After that, strange things happened to me. I always seemed to have belonged to someone, or been in someone's life, and then I wasn't. I don't think, actually, that I will get married again.'

Her life, filled with Krug champagne and prospecting at Annabel's nightclub, suits her. Despite her loss, she is so cheerful and good-hearted that it seems perverse to concentrate on the miserable. So I ask her for some tips. 'Well, for clothes, you have little Eric Way. For hair, I go to Janet's. It isn't very big but it's full of the most surprising people who don't want the world to know they are having their room done.' Janet