

*I It's My Party and I'll Cry If I Want To*

The *party* starts on 17 March 1956 in Didsbury – a smart, affluent suburb of Manchester. I am named after my paternal grandmother.

Elizabeth Taylor.

It is Manchester Derby Day in town. Dad goes to the match. Priorities set.

Four years later my parents have obviously decided that I was not by that point a car crash and my sister Caroline is born. She doesn't survive. In 1960, my brother Robert arrives. At nursery his teacher suspects he is struggling to hear. These are the dynamics that shaped my childhood.

Dad is a barrister and by the age of 45, a judge. Sometimes there seemed no difference between the court of the law and the justice of home. Unable to give or receive genuine affection, he mistook arrogance and success for protective discipline that manifested itself in bullish behaviour.

Mum played the game. One of five sisters, which then led to eighteen cousins, she simply took on the role of the lawyer's wife – home help a permanent in our house. The ladder to success was firmly secured in our middle-class home

Dad was a very unhappy man and yes, it bought you luxury holidays and the chance to see places like Venice or Cannes and cruise destinations around the world before they became mainstream, but it also pays for me to go to private school at the age of four. Sometimes the two were combined. Control was king, much of it was for show and Dad's expectations were sky high for me. And you know what that means. I was only going to disappoint.

'If Elizabeth was not so bossy, she might achieve a lot more,' read an early note on a school report when I was still at that age where most kids were 'polite', 'making progress' and 'coming on well'.

I never embraced any of my education. If you pushed me, I would say maybe English was my favourite. I was always rather eloquent. Nor did I particularly idolise any of the teachers, so the connection was blank. No role models there to encourage the wild child to set

free. All straight down the line – as you would expect at that price. I was a daughter and a sister but didn't tow the line and my independence was in fact considered insolence and a constant un-nurtured strength.

Coming from a large family with my paternal grandfather a successful self-made property developer, I formed lots of friends from many religions and walks of life. I knew that our Jewish community was our hub but also one where your business was never your own and everyone had a story beginning with 'My father came over here with nothing'! One-upmanship and letting people know your status was rising cut in early. Yet that post-war society bred a hard-working ethic and a survival instinct. If something bad happened on our doorstep, everyone would rally round. So, these are the genes I was handed!

When asked what I wanted for my fourth birthday, I confidently requested 'piano lessons'. I knew I loved music and I suppose it was the first glimpse of what lay ahead.

Later, I would invest serious amounts of money and time on therapy with the sole purpose of trying to understand why I felt a failure.

I don't know where it all came from.

Dad's own childhood was tough – he would go to school, cook dinner, stoke the fire and came from a working-class background. His Mum was tough and his father a yes man. Later, his younger brother died at the age of 32. You can see perhaps why the desire to escape drove him.

It was all about status. If he wanted the first Citroen in the U.K. so buy the first Citroen. We move to affluent Hale in Cheshire when I was eleven and are only the third Jewish family to do so. To all intents and purposes, we had an enviable lifestyle.

The stability came through family. The *tradition* of religion over its sentiment was the glue, the safety net and sense of belonging. I liked that and to this day, still always prepare a Friday night dinner for the family.

Of course, I felt rejection.

Obviously, I craved attention.

Do I have any happy memories of growing up?

Only now am I beginning to find them.