A Queen Who Cares

May 1, 2000 By Joseph Carman

The Most Beautiful Woman in the World: The Obsessions, Passions, and Courage of Elizabeth Taylor
Ellis Amburn
Cliff Street Books/Harper Collins, 404 pp., $25.00

Everyone knows by now that Elizabeth Taylor kicked up more real-life drama than Martha hurled at George in Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? In The Most Beautiful Woman in the World, author Ellis Amburn dishes out Hollywood anecdotes like hors d'oeuvres, peppered with a pinch of cattiness. Of special interest to *POZ* readers: the chapter "Lesions, White Diamonds and Rough Trade," which documents Taylor's plunge into AIDS fundraising. "Oh, Elizabeth, this is one of your lame-duck causes," warned Frank Sinatra. Taylor's irrepressible response: "Without homosexuals, there would be no Hollywood, no show business." Amburn, who has penned biographies of Janis Joplin and Jack Kerouac, describes Liz's shotgun marriage with "the indomitable Mathilde Krim" during amfAR's inception, and how Taylor all but prevented a riot when President Reagan uttered the words "mandatory testing" in a rare amfAR speech. In the clout league with the pope and Elizabeth II, Taylor, writes Amburn, pulled Seventh Avenue out of the AIDS fundraising closet when David Geffen promised Calvin Klein that Taylor would be his escort at the "To Care is to Cure" benefit. Vivat Regina.

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