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# Vivian and I

Colin Bacon



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'Give me a f\*\*\*ing pre-med you f\*\*\*ers, I'm a personal friend of Sir Lancelot Spratt.' These words of frustration were the last to issue from Vivian's wonderful classically-trained voice. Forcing himself upright on the hospital trolley, he saluted his friends before being wheeled into the operating theatre for the removal of his voice-box; a procedure he later dismissed flippantly as 'getting a Jack Hawkins'. His final months would reveal a man of extreme courage, and a refusal to curb his excesses for anyone. Unable to swallow, he was forced to pump alcohol via a syringe directly into his stomach and spent his last few weeks propped up on Moroccan cushions listening to his beloved Elvis, refusing any nourishment other than dry sherry. This remarkable memoir of the legendary Vivian Mackerrell, on whom the character Withnail in Bruce Robinson's iconic film was largely based, is also an attempt to capture the essence of growing up as part of the 'Baby Boom' generation. It encompasses the half century from the end of the Second World War until the height of the ecstasy era. Vivian's story is told intertwined with incidents from Colin Bacon's own life along with a wealth of colourful eccentrics and luminaries including Bruce Robinson and Paul Smith. Both 'sons of Nottingham', Bacon came to know Vivian well. There was no doubt that Mackerell was a star. After leaving drama school he seemed, with his obvious talent and good looks, destined for great things. But by then his life had begun to decline into a maelstrom of insanity and excess. Despite the obvious health warnings, he continually refused to curb his excesses, accepting his fate with mild indifference. This funny, affectionate memoir will be essential reading to the many thousands of Withnail fans and a vivid social document of a now forgotten time.

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