

# Dark Star: A Comprehensive Biography of Vivien Leigh

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## Early Life and Career

Vivien Leigh was born Vivien Mary Hartley on November 5, 1913, in Darjeeling, India. Her father, Ernest Hartley, was an officer in the Indian Army, and her mother, Gertrude Robinson, was a well-educated Irish woman. Leigh had a privileged upbringing and spent her early years in Darjeeling and Bangalore.

**Dark Star: A Biography of Vivien Leigh** by Kristen Green

★★★★☆ 4.3 out of 5

Language : English



|                      |             |
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From an early age, Leigh showed a passion for the arts, particularly acting and music. In 1931, she attended the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London, where she honed her craft. After graduating, she began her professional acting career in the West End, performing in a variety of plays.

### **Gone with the Wind and Iconic Roles**

In 1939, Leigh auditioned for the role of Scarlett O'Hara in the epic film *Gone with the Wind*. She beat out hundreds of other actresses for the part, and her performance cemented her status as one of the most iconic stars of all time. Leigh's portrayal of Scarlett was complex and nuanced, and she brought to life the character's strength, determination, and vulnerability.

The film was an instant success and won eight Academy Awards, including Best Picture and Best Actress for Leigh. It propelled Leigh to international fame and made her one of the most sought-after actresses in Hollywood.

Following *Gone with the Wind*, Leigh starred in a series of other critically acclaimed films, including *Anna Karenina* (1948), *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951), and *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone* (1961). She won a second Academy Award for Best Actress for her performance as Blanche DuBois in *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

## **Personal Life and Relationships**

Vivien Leigh was married twice. Her first marriage was to the actor Laurence Olivier in 1940. The couple had a tumultuous relationship, which was marked by both passion and conflict. They divorced in 1960.

In 1961, Leigh married the actor Jack Merivale. Merivale was a devoted husband and helped Leigh through some of the most challenging periods of her life. They remained married until Leigh's death in 1967.

## **Mental Health Struggles and Later Life**

Throughout her life, Vivien Leigh struggled with mental health issues, including bipolar disorder. Her mood swings and episodes of mania and depression often made it difficult for her to perform and maintain relationships.

In later years, Leigh's health declined due to both mental and physical ailments. She was diagnosed with tuberculosis in 1945 and underwent several surgeries to treat the disease. She also suffered from insomnia, weight loss, and chronic pain.

Despite her health challenges, Leigh continued to act until the end of her life. She made her final film appearance in *Ship of Fools* (1965). In 1967, she died at the age of 53 from a combination of tuberculosis and a weakened immune system.

## **Legacy and Impact**

Vivien Leigh is considered one of the greatest actresses of all time. Her performances in films such as *Gone with the Wind*, *A Streetcar Named*

*Desire*, and *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone* continue to be studied and admired by actors and audiences alike.

Leigh's beauty, talent, and enduring legacy have made her a cultural icon. She has been portrayed in numerous books, films, and documentaries, and her image continues to be used in advertising and merchandising.

In addition to her artistic achievements, Vivien Leigh is also remembered for her strength and resilience in the face of personal adversity. Her story is a reminder of the importance of mental health awareness and the enduring power of human spirit.



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