



Refugees from Hollywood: A Journal of the Blacklist Years

Jean Rouverol

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It is the early spring of 1951 in Hollywood. Jean Rouverol and her husband, Hugo Butler, are juggling the demands of raising four young children and furthering their careers as screenwriters. They are at work on a 'little domestic comedy' for Columbia Studios to star Bob Cummings and Barbara Hale, a forgettable piece intended to offer a bit of escapist romance and humour to a country in the grip of the Cold War and the Korean Conflict. But thanks to their well-known 1940s leftist affiliations, Rouverol and Butler cannot fly under the radar of those larger events. To avoid prison sentences like those imposed in 1950 on their friends among the Hollywood Ten, they flee to Mexico rather than accept a subpoena from the House of Representatives Un-American Affairs Committee. After taking refuge in Mexico City, Rouverol slowly re-creates new routines of family and professional life while her husband re-establishes himself as a screenwriter and director, most notably in collaboration on films with Luis Bunuel (in exile from Franco's Spain). Rouverol offers a compelling and candid eyewitness account that takes us into her life and thoughts during her dozen years of exile: simultaneously coping with the needs of four -- then five, then six -- growing and inquisitive children and keeping a watchful eye out for signs that the political winds in Mexico might shift against them as they did for a few others deported on often arbitrary charges.

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