



Shut Up He Explained: The Memoir of a Blacklisted Kid

Kate Lardner

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With a wicked sense of humor and a born writer's perfect timing, Kate Lardner conjures up the Hollywood of the McCarthy era. In a kaleidoscopic and irresistible memoir, Lardner brings to life her jumbled childhood in a household of artistically talented, larger-than-life grown-ups.

When Kate was not yet two, her father, David, was killed while on assignment for *The New Yorker* in war-torn Germany. Two years later her mother, the actress Frances Chaney, married David's brother—a marriage that endured for more than fifty years. Ring was already a successful screenwriter, having won an Oscar for cowriting the Katharine Hepburn-Spencer Tracy hit *Woman of the Year*; in 1971 he collected another one for M*A*S*H.

Shortly thereafter, Ring was called to testify before the House Committee on Un-American Activities. Asked about his membership in Hollywood's Communist Party, Lardner said: "I could answer. . . . but if I did, I would hate myself in the morning." This much-publicized declaration of silence sent Lardner to prison. Subsequently neither he nor Frances could get work, which marked the beginning of Kate's blacklist childhood—and took the family from Mexico City to rural Connecticut to Manhattan.

Kate Lardner presents a vivid, behind-the-scenes look at the personal and family costs of weathering this ruthless and absurd period in history. She writes: "I wanted to tell my story of the events I had inherited. A therapist once told me she had the dirty job of ushering me into the real world. And now that I am more or less there, I have decided the time has come."

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