

# Gospel Time Bomb

*by* Chris Okum



## **Here Come The Rome Plows**

About thirty minutes into meeting my future wife's family for the first time there was an explosion somewhere down the street. I was in the middle of talking about what I did for a living when there was a loud bang followed by the entire building having a grand mal seizure, just like in a low-budget movie where they have to shake the camera because they don't have the money to do anything else. No one mentioned the explosion. We all acted like it didn't happen. I continued to talk about my job, how much I hated it, hated the people, hated upper management, hated the day-to-day grind of doing something I hate. My future father-in-law got up from his easy chair and pulled up his pants. He walked over to my future wife and kissed her on the lips. Then my future mother-in-law got up from the couch and walked over to me and kissed me on the lips. My future

brother-in-law laughed and asked if I knew anything about the Lifestyle. I told him I had no idea what he was talking about even though I did. My future wife and I said our good-byes and left with a doggy bag full of soup. Outside there was smoke everywhere. A bodega that had previously stood next to my future in-law's building was no longer there. Cops were unspooling yellow tape around the smoldering void, dogs were barking from the balconies, and it sounded like a baby was crying, although my future wife said it wasn't a baby, but an old woman. On the corner three young men were getting ready to play music. It was a standard three-piece setup with a long-haired guitarist, a bespectacled bassist, and a shirtless drummer. The guitarist was standing in front of a ten-foot stack of Marshall amps. The band started playing and it sounded like a jet engine going full blast. The bassist also doubled as the lead singer. I could barely make out what he was saying. "Free your family!" I thought I heard him sing. "Lose your mind! Think about the valley from time to time! Bittersweet things I've never been! Happy that we left but I would leave again for you!" My future wife threw a dollar bill into a guitar case filled with loose change. The drummer nodded at us and then rushed through a run of fills. I put my arm around my future wife and felt something funny rub against my bicep. I pulled down the back of my future wife's coat and pressed down on her neck. She had a lump. A cold flash ran down the center of my chest. The next day my future wife made an appointment to see a specialist as soon as possible. I watched from the window as my future wife left our apartment to go to the doctor's office. It's been months and I'm still waiting for her to come back. But I'll wait. I do not doubt. I am always faithful. She will return.

### **Better Luck Next Time**

From *Dr. Mindbender: The Life And Times Of A Cult Deprogrammer*, by R. Jay Roberts, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007: "The problem with documentaries about cults is that the people least qualified to talk about the cult in question are the people who were in the cult, it's most zealous adherents, but those are the only

people, paradoxically, who are willing to talk on camera about their experience in the cult, albeit in a disingenuous manner. In my over 40 years of professional experience I have yet come across a single person who was forced to join a cult. Everyone who has ever joined a cult joined it voluntarily. And yet the main point every single former cult member wants to make is that they were tricked into joining the cult, that somehow it all happened against their will. As if the loss of agency came from without instead of within. They didn't know what kind of organization they were joining, they all say. They had no idea it was a cult. They just thought they had made friends with a large group of people whose main activity was playing volleyball, or making jam, or distributing news letters, and on and on and on the excuses go. And this is what gives former cult members zero credibility. Because they can't be honest about their experience in the cult, and certainly not about why they joined or why they stayed or why they turned a blind eye to the myriad illegal activities the cult was participating in, as well as the physical, sexual, and mental abuse heaped not only upon them but the abuse they heaped on others. I have never heard one former cult member say they joined a cult because they wanted to be a part of a group that was doing things they couldn't have done if they weren't in the group. No one who has ever been in a cult thinks they joined a cult full well knowing that it was a cult. Everyone was duped. Everyone. Because no one wants to admit that they're the kind of person who would join a cult. And then, when they're out of the cult, they remain obsessed with the cult, as if they're still in it. The ex-Scientologists in particular act as if they've escaped from the Church, but they haven't, and they never will. It's not that they can't believe they were in such a horrible organization; it's that they can't believe they're actually the type of person who would willingly want to be a part of such a horrible organization. And so they're inflicted with a lifelong case of cognitive dissonance. They can't get distance from their actions, no matter how hard they try and pretend they have. It doesn't matter whether you're an active member of Scientology or an ex-member; either way, you're giving your entire life and all of

your energy to the Church. I find these people incredibly sad, and once they've deprogrammed, it feels like a Pyrrhic victory. Because these people had one life to live and they went and wasted it on an elaborate con thought up by a speed freak mid-talent sci-fi writer. The bottom line is this: you can take the people out of Scientology, but you can't take the Scientology out of the people. Ever. Scientology tells you it can remove all of the bad feelings and ideas that are locked inside of your mind and body. But what they don't tell you is that you will never be able to remove what they've replaced those things with. Whatever a cult tells you its main objective is, the actual objective is the opposite. Going clear? Not in this lifetime. Or any other."

### **See/Saw**

Jennifer wanted to live poetically. Her hope was that after her and Marty took care of the issue with their children they would be able to take the DeLorean back to France during the reign of Louis XV, where Jennifer would be installed at The Deer Park and become one of the women in the King's harem. Once in France, Jennifer knew it would be easy to ditch Marty, and with her 20th century seduction skills and sexual bag of tricks she also knew it would be a fairly swift climb from being a mere mistress to the actual Queen. What was most important to Jennifer was to have an interesting life. The DeLorean could take her further and further back in time, and with each successive leap towards the beginning of human civilization her power and position would grow. Marty was cute, and nice, but he was also incredibly small and corny. It was inevitable that Jennifer would shed Marty as a tree sheds its leaves. She had an almost religious need to transcend the mundane. She thought it an imperative to live authentically, in good faith, being as honest with herself as she could. The ultimate goal was to take the DeLorean all the way back to Bethlehem circa 6 B.C. Even Jesus himself would be unable to resist her charms. The Son of God would die for her instead of dying for Him. She would completely change the course of history. To Jennifer, the world as currently constituted was total bullshit. That's why people accepted a dull life. Not her. Now now.

Not tomorrow. Not yesterday. Soon the bond with Marty would be broken. She would be the one to break it, and by doing so, Marty would be captivated by her for all eternity, which was fine, at least for her if not for him. Jennifer could not conceive of missing out on the hypothetical and temporal somersaults that seemed laid out before her like an endless row of threshold lights. That she could not prevent herself from living in a future past tense was a sure sign of the audacity of her soul.

