

**SPECIAL  
HOLLYWOOD ISSUE**

America's Fastest-Growing Lesbian Magazine

Jan/Feb 1997

# Girlfriends

*Is this the*

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Woman in  
Hollywood?**

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from "Bound"*

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Tinseltown:  
from Garbo  
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**SCIENTOLOGY**  
Setting Hollywood  
Straight?

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# Is Scientology Keeping Hollywood Straight?

Celebrities are dropping off the gay rumor mill by joining the religion of the stars. BY STEPHANIE TARNOFF

**W**hen L. Ron Hubbard penned his ground-breaking book, *Dianetics*, a shot rang out in Hollywood. The book, now available in more than 32 languages, has sold over 16 million copies since 1950. It has also attracted legions of famous followers to its Church of Scientology in Hollywood and its castle-like Celebrity Centre located in the heart of Tinseltown. During John Travolta's Golden Globe acceptance speech, for example, the church member—long rumored to be gay—thanked L. Ron Hubbard rather than his wife, Kelly Preston. "Dianetics put me into the big time," said Travolta. "Dianetics freed me up to the point where something really big could happen without interference." With the prevalence in the entertainment industry of "single-parent" adoptions and "beard" marriages, some are wondering if L. Ron Hubbard's Church of Scientology is helping to keep Hollywood straight.

Considering its explicitly antigay philosophy, Scientology may be the perfect beard religion. "The sexual pervert," Hubbard writes in *Dianetics*, "and by this term Dianetics, to be brief, includes any and all forms of deviation such as homosexuality, lesbianism, sexual sadism etc. ... is actually quite ill physically." Hubbard goes on to state that "perverts" display "overdevelopment of sexual organs, underdevelopment, [and] seminal inhibition or magnification," and are "extremely dangerous to society."

The issue of gays in the church makes even more sense when it is framed in Scientology's overall quest for social morality and species survival. Scientology's World Wide Web site offers a multitude of study guides, including a booklet called *The Way to Happiness*. The book is part of a campaign to "combat moral decline in our society." Nancy Cartwright, actress and the voice behind Bart Simpson, appears on the site laughing in the middle of a hand-picked group of multi-ethnic children. Cartwright (member of Scientology's The Way to Happiness Foundation headquartered in—you guessed it—Los Angeles)

gives a heartfelt plea on behalf of Scientology, encouraging the community to "help friends and colleagues increase their level of morality, and thus their survival."

Jeff Quiros, Director of Special Affairs at the San Francisco Church, concurs. "If every homosapien [sic] became gay, *Homo sapiens* would be in danger. This isn't a value judgment; it's just that procreation would suffer."

With this kind of pressure to live an ethical life and to produce offspring, it is no wonder that queer Scientologists remain closeted. It may also account for the high incidence of adoption in some rumored-to-be "arranged" marriages.

Kirstie Alley and her husband, Parker Stevenson, both Scientologists, have adopted two children since joining the church. Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman are also among the league of Scientologist parents with their two adopted kids. "Adoption is a natural outgrowth of Scientology," states Quiros, "because it promotes survival through sex and family."

Scientology offers "Life Improvement Courses" that promise to help members reach their full potential in everything from work to marriage. Well, what was I waiting for? I decided to call the San Francisco-based church and enroll in their course titled "How to Improve Your Marriage." The slick pamphlet informed me that a prerequisite to the course was marriage counseling with a Scientology chaplain. It did not tell me that the course and the counseling were available only to straight couples.

"The courses are designed for people who have taken marriage vows. It doesn't mean that we discriminate, it's just that we aren't up with the times," explains Quiros. Interestingly, Quiros was unable to think of even one gay church member with whom I could speak—a curious fact in a gay mecca where I live.

Christie alleges that Scientology is nothing more than a vicious cult that seeks to control its members and benefit financially. Former

(continued on page 38)

**KIRSTIE ALLEY: gaining her religion**

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home immediately.

"What's up?" I asked her when I arrived.

Her eyes searched the room, trying to find the words she needed to say. Finally our eyes met. "I have something to show you." She pulled out a large envelope. Out of the envelope, she pulled a type-written note. It read, *Dear Competition, get your lesbian ass out of Hollywood, or I'll send these pictures to the papers.* It was signed, *Someone who knows.*

G.G. reached back in the envelope and removed a picture. It was G.G. and Silkah, sharing a kiss and a hug on the beach. They were topless.

As I handed the note and picture back to G.G., she said, "Silkahl and I didn't invite you up here to help us make a decision. We have already done that. We asked you up here to give you time to make up a story about my departure. We are grateful for all you've done for us, but we have chosen to stay together, and that is impossible here."

In less than one month, G.G. and Silkahl were gone.

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I focused again on Mr. Grant's letter. *Now, my dear Mary, you must find who blackmailed G.G. My lawyer has all the numbers and addresses of everyone involved. When you've completed your task, you will receive your inheritance, and your last paycheck. Good luck, Mary. I know you'll solve this mystery. You must!*

Sitting back in my chair, I felt as if I had just run a marathon. For the first time, I felt the loss. I faced the fact that Mr. Grant would never appear in my room at three o'clock in the morning with an idea that just couldn't wait, never call me for a impromptu drive up to his bungalow in Santa Barbara.

And then there was the matter of the check enclosed. It read \$1,000,000. A note from Casey read, *When that runs out, there is more. Mr. Grant left an open account; your money is almost endless.*

Before I knew it, I found a very neat puzzle in front of me. Mr. Grant had all but left me a map. First, it had to be a woman ("Dear Competition ..."). A fellow actress. Besides, men call gay women "dykes," not lesbians. And I was sure the actress was motivated by G.G.'s success in that last movie Mr. Grant and I cast her in. Because she was only contacted by two women, Davis and Crawford, it had to be one of them.

A call to Ms. Davis produced a meeting for the very next day.

Over two dry martinis, the imperious Bette asked sarcastically, "Well, Miss Steward, what does Mr. Grant's assistant want with little ol' me?"

"I'll get right to the point. I've come about Greta Garbo."

"Unforgettable. Not too long after she caught fire, I met my second—or was it third?—husband. Thank God she retired early. Anyway, all the glamorous parts used to go to Garbo, but I managed to get them eventually."

Immediately I knew Ms. Davis was not the blackmailer. She worked her way to fame, and, as

I looked around, I saw she'd married very well. Four times, if I recalled correctly. The blackmailer had to be someone who benefited materially from G.G.'s departure.

I called Crawford's people, and set up a meeting. They asked me to meet with Ms. Crawford at her Malibu home and told me she had requested that no one else be present.

I arrived on time and was met at the door by Crawford herself. The years had been very kind to this giant of show business.

"Please come in, Ms. Steward. I've set things up in the living room. I hope tea is all right. I live a very healthy life, and I find tea to be a great drink."

Joan had something up her sleeve. I knew—everyone knew—she was a notorious boozier. But she served the tea and scones and said, "After you left Bette's house, she called and said you had paid her a visit. As you know, Bette never calls me except to goad me. I guessed I'd be the next one on your list."

"Then you must know why I am here."

"Yes, I do know why you're here; and to answer your question, I am the one who blackmailed G.G."

I was shocked that she just blurted it out that way. I guess she could see it in my face.

"That's why this meeting had to be between us. I simply wanted to tell you why I did what I did. And, it's not what you think it is. I didn't do it for professional reasons. When G.G. first came to Hollywood, I was mesmerized. I used to go to her sets to watch her work. One day, I was going up the back stairwell at Metro, and she was coming down. We were alone. Our eyes met, she looking down at me, I looking up at her. Her stare froze me in my tracks. I could not breathe, let alone talk. As she passed me, I turned toward her, the question in my eyes. She said, 'No thank you. I already have someone.' I had never been rejected in my life, and now by a woman.

"Believe me, the last thing I thought about was my career. For the first time in my life, I'd fallen in love."

Ms. Crawford sat silent for a minute. Then she cried softly. "Please stay close," she whispered. "I know you have never considered me your friend, but I feel like I can trust you. I can see why Mr. Grant hired you. You have a calm about you. Mr. Grant must have needed that on more than one occasion."

"My calm comes from living other people's lives."

Joan's eyes met mine. "Should you wish to work for me," she said carefully, "I think you would find such an arrangement enjoyable."

It was impossible for me not to feel anything. Here were two women who did not conform to the image Hollywood had created for them, and I was fated to play the middleman.

I made travel arrangements for both Joan and me to fly to Paris, where G.G. and Silkahl had retired in deep seclusion.

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Three days later, we were at G.G.'s and Silkahl's doorstep. I looked at Joan and winked. I ran the bell.

She and G.G. spent a very long time talking, privately, in another room. I paced nervously, but when they returned, I could see everything was settled. G.G. asked me to join her in her office. She went to her desk, reached in the drawer, and pulled out an envelope.

"Mr. Grant wrote me about what your task would be. In this letter, he told me to sign a statement verifying you had found my blackmailer."

"But I got the impression Mr. Grant knew all along it was Joan. Also, I think you might have known who it was."

"Would Joan ever talk to Cary, or to me? I don't think so. It would have been impossible without you. You are a kind person, like my Silkahl, and only you could have brought us together."

I took the letter and left the room, knowing I would never see G.G. again.

Back in Hollywood, I went to Brad Casey's office to deliver the letter from G.G. and the million dollar check I never had to cash.

"How was your trip?"

"I believe my job is over."

Brad opened the letter and read it. "Everything looks in order. Here. Keep the check. And as executor and beneficiary of the will, you should be expecting much more. Miss Steward, I am pleased to inform you that you are a very wealthy woman."

"A hell of a Christmas bonus," I said, thinking to myself, *Thanks Mr. Grant. And the girls thank you, too.* ☐

*Mary Meglemre is a Los Angeles-based screenwriter who, in one version of her life story, was a jockey and bodyguard to Cary Grant's daughter.*

## SCIENTOLOGY

Continued from page 19

"Members who associate with anyone that appears to be a 'potential trouble source' are ordered to 'disconnect' from that person immediately." Similar to "shunning rituals" prevalent among certain extreme fundamentalists, if the member refuses, he or she is often ostracized by other Scientologists. According to its critics, the Church controls its members' relationships on the most intimate levels—including, potentially, their marriages.

Not so, say Church officials. They insist that Scientology welcomes all members with open arms. They do, however, credit Scientology as the reason for their celebrity members' stardom.

"Before these people were actors they were Scientologists," says Quiros. Scientology made them so vivacious, outgoing and talented that they just became superstars." ☐

*Freelancer Stephanie Tarnoff serves as an editorial assistant at Girlfriends and contributing writer at San Francisco's City Voice.*