

THE SEEKER

by Glen Ellington



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THE SEEKER

Weston P. Barndance and the Search for Truth

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SYNOPSIS: The Seeker could be you or me. There is a longing—no, aching—inside him. In his search for something more, he encounters a wide and wacky array of individuals with the answer—they think. The Fortune Teller insists, "Just open your heart." The Deacon speaks flowery "Christianese," yet doesn't really say a thing. A salesman attempts to sell him a Cosmic Truth Decyfulator with no operating instructions. A volunteer is all about meeting every need of every person on earth, from food to clean energy. A Philosopher surmises that the answer is balanced upon the logistical pinnacle of human existence and may be found in one of the "isms," from existentialism to hedonism. All the characters encircle the Seeker, who is thoroughly confused by all this "truth." Their cries loudly compete for his attention until a new voice cuts through the clamor with pure simplicity. "Peace, be still," it says, and offers a different path.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 females, 3-4 males, 1 either)

SEEKER (m/f)	Sincerely searching for what he's missing in life. <i>(152 lines)</i>
FORTUNE TELLER (f)	Ethereal and mysterious but with little substance. <i>(16 lines)</i>
DEACON (m)	Over-the-top religious zealot who is missing the point. <i>(19 lines)</i>
SALESMAN (m)	Shyster who just wants to make a buck. <i>(26 lines)</i>
VOLUNTEER (f).....	Do-gooder with big dreams, if not misplaced ones. <i>(40 lines)</i>
PHILOSOPHER (m).....	Lofty and educated, but not smart in matters of the heart. <i>(34 lines)</i>
VOICE (m).....	Offstage voice of Jesus. <i>(18 lines)</i>

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PRODUCTION NOTES

CASTING: The Seeker could be played by a female, adjusting gender references when necessary. The Deacon and Salesman roles could be doubled, since they both dress similarly. Feel free to change their clothing a little for further distinction (like their tie or adding glasses).

COSTUMES: The Seeker may dress casually in a shirt and jeans or in all black. The Fortune Teller may wear a turban or scarf on her head, a long-sleeved peasant blouse, a long, full skirt, lots of jewelry (such as bangle bracelets and hoop earrings), and heavy eyeliner. The Deacon and the Salesman both wear a suit and tie. The Volunteer could wear jeans and a T-shirt saying “Save the Whales” or another similar slogan or dress hippie-like. The Philosopher wears Socratesian garb consisting of a draped white sheet as a toga and perhaps an olive wreath on his head.

PROPS

- ☐ A device or machine with lights emanating from it (a.k.a. “Cosmic Truth Decyfulator”)
- ☐ Money
- ☐ Instruction manual (small booklet of blank pages stapled together)
- ☐ a rolling cart
- ☐ supplies for the Volunteer (specifically bags marked “flour”)
- ☐ crystal ball for Fortune Teller (Optional)
- ☐ large Bible for Deacon (Optional)

SET: The stage may be bare except for a chair for Seeker.

MUSIC: Mystical-sounding music for the Fortune Teller’s entrance, old-fashioned gospel organ music for the Deacon’s entrance and exit, and optional music to conclude the performance.

PREMIERE PRODUCTION

THE SEEKER was originally produced by WordPlayers at Erin Presbyterian Church, Knoxville (TN) with the following cast:

SEEKER..... Rollin Prince
FORTUNE TELLER/VOLUNTEER..... Alysha Mitchell
DEACON Tom Ireland
SALESMAN/PHILOSOPHER..... Ryan Spargo

SEEKER: (*Enters. Sees audience.*) Hi, my name is Seeker, but you can call me Seek. Well, I guess you could call me Er, but Seek's good enough for now.

I wasn't always called Seeker, though. My real—I mean, my former—name was Weston P. Barndance III. Not exactly what you think of as normal or regular, and certainly not ordinary. But that doesn't matter. When I woke up today, something was different—I was different. I went to bed as Weston P. Barndance III, but woke up as Seeker.

What am I seeking, you ask? Well, I'm not sure. All I know is that there is this sudden longing—no, aching—inside me. I don't know where it comes from, but it seems it will keep growing until I either find what it is I am seeking, or I... die.

Mystical music plays as FORTUNE TELLER enters. She speaks with a Slavic accent.

SEEKER: Hello, I'm—

FORTUNE TELLER: I know who you are, and also what you are seeking.

SEEKER: You do?

FORTUNE TELLER: Of course. The spirits have shown me a vision of a young man who has an aching in his soul.

SEEKER: Hey, that's me. So what am I looking for?

FORTUNE TELLER: What is anyone looking for? The truth.

SEEKER: The truth about what?

FORTUNE TELLER: Life, my son. Life itself

SEEKER: So what is true about life itself?

FORTUNE TELLER: Would you really like to know the truth about life? You may not like what you hear.

SEEKER: Yes, please. Tell me the truth about life.

FORTUNE TELLER: Very well. Come closer, and I will tell you. This is for your ears only.

SEEKER: Wow, just for me. This is great. What is it?

FORTUNE TELLER: Life is a mysterious secret locked inside a black box and stored in a dark room.

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SEEKER: Wow, that's awful. I mean, how can I ever figure it out?

FORTUNE TELLER: There is one way, but—

SEEKER: But what?

FORTUNE TELLER: But the way is hard and can be dangerous.

SEEKER: I don't care how hard or dangerous it is. I have to know!

FORTUNE TELLER: You must find a quiet place and meditate.

SEEKER: Meditate? You mean like (*Yoga-esque.*) Ommmm.

FORTUNE TELLER: The words you say are not important. It is your heart which must be open. Only then will you be able to find the truth you seek.

SEEKER: But how do I open my heart? (*FORTUNE TELLER exits.*) Wait! Come back! How do I do it? (*Beat.*) I must open my heart. Wait a minute, let me try something. (*He crosses Downstage Center and sits in the lotus position. Loudly.*) Ommmm. (*Beat.*) No? Here truth, here truth. Come on, that's a good truth. Come here! (*Beat.*) Still nothing. I must be doing something wrong. This aching is getting stronger by the minute.

DEACON: (*Organ music plays as DEACON enters praying. He doesn't see SEEKER. All his gestures are very grand and bombastic.*) Most gracious and benevolent holy Father of light and love, maker of heaven and earth, source of all goodness, font of ev'ry blessing—

SEEKER: Uh, excuse me.

DEACON: Creator of ultimate importance—

SEEKER: I said excuse me.

DEACON: What is it? Can't you see I'm busy?

SEEKER: Yes, well, I'm sorry to interrupt, but—

DEACON: But what?

SEEKER: But what exactly are you doing?

DEACON: Young man, if you must know, I am addressing the Lord of hosts, the great and mighty all-powerful God of the universe.

SEEKER: But why?

DEACON: Why?

SEEKER: Yes. Why are you doing that?

DEACON: Because I wish to commune with (*Emphasizes and draws out "God" each time.*) Gooooood.

SEEKER: But what for?

DEACON: Because that is what praying is. I am the Deacon, and I pray a great deal. In fact, I pray most of the time.

SEEKER: Oh. I guess you've gotten pretty good at it then.

DEACON: Among my people, I am considered to be the leading prayer.

SEEKER: Are you in a contest?

DEACON: Of course not. It's just that when it comes to getting the attention of the Almighty, no one does it quite like me.

SEEKER: Oh. Is he hard to talk to?

DEACON: Well, you don't just talk to Gooood, young man. You have to approach him properly.

SEEKER: There's rules for it?

DEACON: Absolutely. You don't think just anyone can come before the Gooood of the universe, do you? I mean, think about it. Gooood is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent.

SEEKER: Is that good?

DEACON: Good? It's absolutely crucial. Don't you get it? Gooood is the all-in-all of the universal everything!

SEEKER: Oh, I get it.

DEACON: Well, it's about time. Now if you don't mind, I have to get back to my praying.

SEEKER: Oh, sure. Sorry I bothered you. *(Starts to exit.)* But I still have one question.

DEACON: And what, pray tell, is that?

SEEKER: I guess I understand why you address God—

DEACON: Not God but *(Big gesture.)* Gooood!

SEEKER: *(Copies gesture.)* OK, Gooood.

DEACON: That's it. Now, be off with you and let me get back to communing with our heavenly Father.

SEEKER: *(Starts to exit again.)* Sure, go right ahead. *(DEACON begins mumbling.)* One more thing...

DEACON: What is it?

SEEKER: When you commune with *(Big gesture.)* Gooood, what does Gooood say?

DEACON leaves in a huff, praying loudly as organ music plays.

SEEKER: Well, maybe I should try some of that praying stuff. Maybe that's the way to find cosmic truth. (*Adopts the DEACON posture.*) Now, let's see. Oh, great and powerful Wizard of—no. Oh, ye who are the biggest of the big and grandest of the grand, oh, that I mayest findeth favor in thy sight. Oh, thou all-seeing mega-mind. Come, thou Count of Monte—this is ridiculous. Even if there were an all-powerful Creator, how could I hope to “commune” with him using those words? I don't understand a thing I just said. (*Sits.*) Looks like I'll just have to figure out this cosmic truth on my own. I'm starting to feel a little weak, so I hope it won't take too long.

FORTUNE TELLER: (*Off-stage.*) It will take as long as it takes to open your heart to the truth.

SEEKER: Hey, wait a minute. Come back here. (*Sighs.*) I wish she would explain herself. This aching is really starting to hurt.

SALESMAN: (*Enters with bag or rolling cart with merchandise, including Cosmic Truth Decyfulator.*) So you say you want to find out the secret of your existence, eh? You say that you have to know what's true about this thing called life, hmmm? Well, step right up, my boy, and take a look at what I have here. Tell me, have you ever seen something like this before? (*Holds up strange device that should have lights emitting from it.*)

SEEKER: Well, no, I—

SALESMAN: You're absolutely right. You never have, because it's the only one of its kind. For a limited time, you can be its proud owner for three payments of only nineteen dollars and ninety-nine cents. How does that sound?

SEEKER: But what is it?

SALESMAN: What is it? Why, it's only the greatest invention since humans first climbed down from the trees and started walking upright. This, my lad, is the one, the only, the original Cosmic Truth Decyfulator!

SEEKER: What does it do?

SALESMAN: Why, it decyfulates cosmic truth.

SEEKER: Decyfulates?

SALESMAN: Well, certainly. And not only that, but it comes with a genuine imported porcelain astrolabe complete with self-generating crystal and gyroscopic quadraponder.

SEEKER: That sounds amazing, but what does it do exactly?

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SALESMAN: I'm glad you asked that question, son. That shows you're a thinking man. That's what I like to see.

SEEKER: Why?

SALESMAN: Why? Well, because that means you are that special person, that rare breed of man that can truly appreciate the fine workmanship on this little baby.

SEEKER: It sure is beautiful, but how—

FORTUNE TELLER: Of course you want to know just how it works and how this little wonder can change your life, right?

SEEKER: Yes! Yes! That's what I need—to change my life.

SALESMAN: Of course you do, and this is just the device to make that happen. Would you like to hold it?

SEEKER: Wow, would I ever!

SALESMAN: Are you sure you're ready for it? It's really powerful.

SEEKER: Yes, yes. I'm ready.

SALESMAN: Are you sure you're ready to make the change?

SEEKER: Yes! I'm really ready!

SALESMAN: Then here you go, young fella. (*Hands it to him.*)

SEEKER: Wow, it feels so—so—

SALESMAN: So powerful, so magnificent, so everything-you've-always-wanted and more?

SEEKER: (*In awe.*) It's the most beautiful thing I've ever seen.

SALESMAN: And it will stay that way, too. That astrolabe is genuine Italian porcelain, and that quadroponder? Why, it's made of an alloy that is ten times stronger than steel and weighs only a third as much. Yes siree Bob, the truth may be heavy, but this little honey won't weigh you down at all. And to keep that shiny glow, all the surfaces are retro-radiated with as much moron-ium that's allowed by law.

SEEKER: Well, that is important, isn't it? I mean, the last thing you want is for your quadroponder to be at risk. First thing you know it's starting to rust, and then where would you be?

SALESMAN: I knew I was right about you from the start, son. You know just how to cut to the heart of the matter and lay it bare. That's nothing less than genius.

SEEKER: Well, I don't know about that...

SALESMAN: And I'll bet you've already figured out how the crystal manages to be self-generating.

SEEKER: Well, I was thinking about it.

SALESMAN: Of course you were, and I'm sure you can see that the crucial element, the part that keeps that crystal generating day after day, year after year, is the, uh, veebelfeltzer. Am I right?

SEEKER: Well, yes. I had considered—

SALESMAN: In all my days, I have never seen such a lad as you. Why, you should be selling this to me!

SEEKER: Now, wait a minute—

SALESMAN: That's just it, my boy—I haven't got a minute! I have to go and demonstrate this amazing machine to some other folks, and you know I only have the one with me, and—

SEEKER: No, you can't go. I must have that machine!

SALESMAN: Of course!

SEEKER: I need to decyfulate cosmic truth for myself!

SALESMAN: Yes, yes!

SEEKER: How much did you say it was?

SALESMAN: Only three payments of nineteen ninety-nine, but for you I can make a special exception. Today only I can let you have this little baby for whatever you have in your pocket right now!

SEEKER: In my pocket? But I only have about twenty dollars, and—

SALESMAN: And so the price is twenty dollars!

SEEKER: I'll take it!

SALESMAN: You won't be sorry, young man. This is the investment of a lifetime. *(They exchange money and SEEKER takes the Cosmic Truth Decyfulator. SALESMAN starts to exit.)*

SEEKER: Wait. How do I work this thing?

SALESMAN: *(Throwing an instruction manual at SEEKER.)* It's all right here in the manual, my boy. Everything you need to know to decyfulate cosmic truth for yourself. Good luck, sucker.

SEEKER: That's Seeker.

SALESMAN: *(Off-stage.)* Whatever.

SEEKER: Thank you. Thank you so much! Wow, imagine me having my very own Cosmic Truth Decyfulator. Now, let's just look at the manual and see how this thing works. *(Opens it.)* Hey, wait a minute. These pages are blank! There's nothing written on them. *(Puts hand to head.)* Oh, wow. I've been a real idiot. I just gave him all my money, and all I got was this lousy device that doesn't work. Now I'll never be able to decyfulate cosmic truth. Wait a minute—what does that even mean? Well, I guess I will keep on seeking. I

just wish I really knew what I was seeking and how to make this pain go away.

FORTUNE TELLER: (*Off-stage.*) Open your heart!

SEEKER: I don't know how. I want to, but how do I do it? Everything is starting to feel so... heavy.

VOLUNTEER: (*Enters pulling a cart full of supplies.*) These supplies are really heavy, but I must not stop. I must meet the needs.

SEEKER: What needs?

VOLUNTEER: Why, the needs of the world! Where have you been? Don't you know the world is in need?

SEEKER: What is it in need of?

VOLUNTEER: Why, it's in need of everything! Food, shelter, clothing, medicine, and clean energy, to name a few. We have to fix the world. That's the secret of life, the ultimate human truth: the world is broken, and only we can fix it.

SEEKER: But does the world want to be fixed?

VOLUNTEER: That's beside the point. We know best, and only we can fix it.

SEEKER: Who's we?

VOLUNTEER: Why, it's us, man. Us! The ones who see things as they are, the ones who know what's best. We are the volunteers! We are the food-bringers, we are the water-purifiers, we are the educators-of-the-downtrodden. It's us, and only we can do it. Will you join us?

SEEKER: Well, gosh, I don't know. I've been seeking after the truth about life, but—

VOLUNTEER: Well, seek no more because this is it!

SEEKER: This is what?

VOLUNTEER: Volunteering. That's the source of ultimate human truth.

SEEKER: But why do you do it? Did someone tell you to?

VOLUNTEER: Tell us to? Of course not. We do it because it needs to be done. That's all we need to know.

SEEKER: Does it give you a feeling of satisfaction then?

VOLUNTEER: Satisfaction? Never! You can't ever be satisfied. We can never finish. There's too much to do.

SEEKER: Does it make you feel warm inside, knowing you helped people?

VOLUNTEER: We're not helping people. We're fixing the world.

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SEEKER: But—don't people make up the world?

VOLUNTEER: No, the world is too big. The problems are too complicated to let people get involved. Those of us who have learned this ultimate truth know that people are the problem. If we could just get rid of the people, then we might finally be able to fix the world.

SEEKER: But if you got rid of the people, wouldn't the problems go away too? Or if they didn't go away, then who would be around to fix them?

VOLUNTEER: Did you go to college?

SEEKER: Well, I did a couple of semesters, but I—

VOLUNTEER: Do you know how many degrees I have?

SEEKER: Is it important?

VOLUNTEER: Important? Why, the more degrees you have, the more you can be sure that you are the only one to fix the world.

SEEKER: So how many have you got?

VOLUNTEER: (*Very excited and giggly.*) Well, since you asked, I have a B.S. from Harvard, an M.A. from Princeton, and a Ph.D. from NYU. I was also awarded a fellowship from the government for solving the world's problems.

SEEKER: Are you the only one who can do this?

VOLUNTEER: Of course not. There are thousands of us all over the planet, each one of us a self-sustaining source of educated energy, all working to fix the world.

SEEKER: If there are so many of you, why does the world still need to be fixed?

VOLUNTEER: Because it's big, don't you see? It's *too* big. We can never finish, but we keep going, we keep working, knowing that maybe someday everyone on the face of the earth will be able to have all the food, shelter, clothes, medicine, and clean energy they could ever want.

SEEKER: Wow, how can I get involved with this? I want to help too.

VOLUNTEER: Well, you don't really have the qualifications necessary to truly be a world-fixer, but there may be something you can do to help.

SEEKER: Anything. I'll do anything. You gotta let me help!

VOLUNTEER: All right, then. See those bags of wheat flour on the cart?

SEEKER: Yes.

VOLUNTEER: Well, those bags of wheat flour have to be labeled and cataloged so we will know where to store them.

SEEKER: Don't people need the flour now?

VOLUNTEER: Not until we know how much we have. Once these are cataloged and stored, we can connect with the distribution agencies who have already been in touch with the needification companies.

SEEKER: The what?

VOLUNTEER: The needification companies. You don't expect us to deliver these bags of flour without knowing who needs them, do you?

SEEKER: Well, no, I guess not.

VOLUNTEER: So that's where the needification companies come in. Their job is to scour the world looking for needs, and when they have identified them, then they call the distribution agencies who in turn call us so we can deliver the supplies where they are needed.

SEEKER: What happens to the people who need them while you go through this connection process?

VOLUNTEER: Can't answer that. I am in cataloging, not results management.

SEEKER: Results management? What is that?

VOLUNTEER: Those are the agencies that evaluate how well the world's needs are being met.

SEEKER: Must be a good feeling to know you've helped so many people.

VOLUNTEER: I wouldn't know. I am in cataloging and storage, not human interaction. Our motto is, "Stack the bags up to the ceiling, let someone else get the fuzzy feeling."

SEEKER: Fuzzy feeling? Gosh, that's how I feel right now. Sorta fuzzy.

VOLUNTEER: You mean you're in need of medical treatment?

SEEKER: I don't know. There's this nagging sort of pain inside me, and—

VOLUNTEER: Is it constant or intermittent?

SEEKER: Inter-what?

VOLUNTEER: Never mind. The important point here is that once the world is fixed, you won't have trouble getting the medical care you need. But in the meantime, you'll just have to bear up and keep going. We all do.

SEEKER: OK, I'll try.

VOLUNTEER: That's the spirit. If we all try our best, we can get these bags to where they need to go.

SEEKER: Do you actually see where they go?

VOLUNTEER: Like I said, not my department. All I know is that I'm fixing the world. Every day I am helping to right all the wrongs. Me and thousands of others. All day, every day. We're fixing the world, one bag of flour at a time.

SEEKER: Wow.

VOLUNTEER: So, are you ready to start helping?

SEEKER: Sure. What can I do right now to help fix the world?

VOLUNTEER: (*Pointing.*) Take those bags and stack them up over there.

SEEKER: All right, I can do that. (*Starts to move bags.*) Now I can become part of this great work. I can fix the world. At last I have found ultimate truth. OK, the bags are stacked up over there. What now?

VOLUNTEER: That's great. Now stack the bags back in the cart.

SEEKER: But why? I just put them over there.

VOLUNTEER: And now they need to go back in the cart.

SEEKER: Will that get them closer to the people who need them?

VOLUNTEER: Like I said, I am in cataloging and storage, not distribution. All I know is that's how it's done.

SEEKER: Seems kind of silly just to take them out of the cart and then put them back in again.

VOLUNTEER: Excuse me, Mr. College Dropout, but how many degrees did you say you had?

SEEKER: Well, I don't really—

VOLUNTEER: That's what I thought. Why don't you leave the decision-making to those of us who know how things are supposed to be done? After all, we are the ones fixing the world, right?

SEEKER: Well, I guess.

VOLUNTEER: (*Exiting.*) That's good. Now the bags of flour are where they need to be, ready to be cataloged and stored until we can be sure of who needs them. Oh, it's noble work we do. Fixing the earth. Meeting the need. Only we know what it takes to fix the world. Yes, it's great work we do. (*She exits pushing cart.*)

SEEKER: Congratulations. I mean, thanks for saving the world. I mean, I don't get it. She says she is saving the world, but all she's really doing is moving stuff around so it can be used by someone else. Who? And how will the folks who need the flour actually get it? Now I'm more confused than ever. All I want to know is the secret of life. Well, I guess that's a lot when you think about it. (*Adopts pose of Rodin's sculpture, The Thinker.*)

FORTUNE TELLER: (*Off-stage.*) Open your heart. It is the only way.

SEEKER: But how do I do that? Why won't you tell me? I tried praying. I tried changing the world. But I am still no closer to the truth, and I don't know how long I can take this gnawing pain inside me. I need someone to tell me what I should do!

PHILOSOPHER: (*Enters.*) Why not think a great thought?

SEEKER: Say what? Who are you?

PHILOSOPHER: I am the Great Philosopher, and I said, "Why not think a great thought?"

SEEKER: Will that explain the secrets of life?

PHILOSOPHER: Of course, my son. All of life's secrets are locked within one single thought.

SEEKER: Really? Well, what's that one single thought?

PHILOSOPHER: Ah, what indeed? You have, good Seeker, landed your query flat upon the plateau of infinite promise.

SEEKER: My what on where?

PHILOSOPHER: Your query, the very question you so desperately seek an answer to, is at the very moment balanced upon the logistical pinnacle of human existence. Can you not see that?

SEEKER: See it? I can't even pronounce it.

PHILOSOPHER: Nonetheless, that is where you are. It is with the mind that all great ideas are conceived and eventually apprehended. The mind, my son, is where ultimate truth is derived.

SEEKER: The mind? But the Fortune Teller said I had to open my heart to the truth.

PHILOSOPHER: And you believed the Fortune Teller? (*Beat.*) You didn't go to college, did you?

SEEKER: Well, I did a couple of semesters...

PHILOSOPHER: But you didn't finish, did you? No, it seems like you have sorely neglected your intellectual development.

SEEKER: But I—



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