

The Seekers

Created by Stan Lee

Contest Submission
by
Lisa M. Staton

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Caption: Somewhere underground in Death Valley

PANEL 1

*In a dark cave, lit by randomly scattered lanterns, **ARTHUR NORDEN** sits on a large boulder scribbling in a notebook. He's an average looking man in his forties with mousy brown hair. He's not attractive, yet not ugly. Not skinny, yet not fat. Just the kind of guy you probably wouldn't remember if you saw him on the street. He's dressed in the standard archaeologist khakis and boots. A satchel sits next to him and he wears a utility tool belt with different sized pouches. He hears the sound of someone approaching clumsily.*

(SFX: BANG CLANK OOOF!)

NORDEN'S LOG:

Scoured the cave again and still cannot find whatever hole or crack Nature Boy came out of. It's like the earth repaired itself after vomiting him out and collapsing on my men. No more men now. Just me. Can't risk more death. Soundings show there might be a chamber under the cave floor, but I'll need to drill to be sure... And the media has sent another reporter to bother me. Sounds like this one actually managed to make it to me.

PANEL 2

NORDEN: *over his shoulder at the silhouetted figure of **JENNIFER HART** in the cave entrance.*
Miss Hart. World News Network. You found me.

HART:

You didn't make it easy.

PANEL 3

NORDEN: *turns to face **HART** and is surprised by her beauty.*

Oh.

I see.

HART: (OP)

See what, Mr. Norden?

PANEL 4

NORDEN:

I see what they're doing here.

Send the bubble-headed bimbo reporter to seduce the crazy old man and maybe we'll get a good story.

Well, that's clever, but it's just not gonna work for me.

You can march that pretty little butt right back out there to your waiting limo and go home to the big city to do the evening weather report. Maybe you'll get your own reality show someday.

PANEL 5

*We see a close-up of **HART** for the first time, and she is beautiful. Beautiful and angry*

HART:

I can assure you, Mr. Norden, that you are wrong AND that my "pretty little butt" is not marching back anywhere.

PAGE 2

PANEL 1

ARTHUR NORDEN and **JENNIFER HART** face each other – profiles. No dialogue. Tense.

PANEL 2

NORDEN: *shrugs*

Suit yourself.

PANELS TO END OF PAGE IN HORIZONTAL STACKED FORMAT

*He walks off down a side corridor, talking, as Jen follows him. We see glimpses of some sort of bas-relief and/or mosaic art obscured by shadows and lit haphazardly by Norden's swinging lantern. Jen is intrigued, but he doesn't give her enough time to study the ancient-looking wall art. **JENNIFER HART** is revealed to be a twenty-something tall blonde with*

medium length hair and an incredible figure. She is dressed sensibly in hiking boots, jeans and a buttoned shirt over a tank top.

NORDEN:

Well, Miss Hart, you're here to get a story. A story I've told over and over. A story no one believes. I mean, how often does a naked man burst from a hole in the ground and cause a cave-in that kills two of your best assistants?

HART:

Never.

NORDEN *looks at her with a baffled expression – raised eyebrow - that question wasn't supposed to be answered.*

HART:

Yes, Mr. Norden, everyone thinks you're lying. There have been rumors that you've been increasingly getting into the booze and that may have been –

NORDEN: *shouting irrationally*

THAT'S BULL—

HART: *interrupting*

I'm recording this

She brandishes a mini-recorder (appropriate to 2007 if the story is set in that year)

NORDEN: *composes himself*

I mean... yeah, I may have a few drinks... but not while I'm working.

He stops at an archway that leads to total blackness and bends down to pull the cord on a gas-powered generator.

NORDEN:

Anyway. Yeah. Here we are.

PAGE 3

PANEL 1 – SPLASH CENTER SURROUNDED BY SMALLER DETAIL PANELS

NORDEN:

Welcome to Atlantis.

Hart gasps as strings of work lights illuminate a giant cavern completely covered in the bas-relief art and mosaics we saw in the corridor. The work has an almost Mediterranean flow to it, with scrollwork and foliage, but an Egyptian-ish feel to the figures depicted. We see a figure that could possibly be the Gatherer, some flying discs, and something that could possibly be a caveman. In the far corner we see a section that is partitioned off with police tape, but it looks like it has been cleared with a shovel and wheelbarrow.

NORDEN'S LOG:

I could see I impressed the reporter when I flipped on the generator.

PANELS 2+

HART *wanders through the cavern in wonder as **NORDEN** writes in his notebook.*

She looks at the large image of the Gatherer and flying disks made of a red white and black stone substance as if she's remembering something. She touches a flying disk that's within arm's reach. She turns back to Norden.

NORDEN'S LOG:

I'd been waiting to deliver that line for awhile now. Too bad it had to be to one reporter instead of in front of a bevy of them in a giant media event. I guess people dying kind of put an end to that whole scenario. Had a nice speech prepared, too...

PAGE 4

PANEL 1

HART: *interrupting Norden's writing*

Why are you using a notebook and a pen? You know they make small computers now that are a lot easier to use. They call them laptops. You may have heard of them?

NORDEN:

Computers go dead. Pens and paper don't.

HART:

But what if you drop it in a puddle or something? I can't imagine you'd always be working in a desert environment.

PANEL 2

Norden places his open notebook on the ground, removes his canteen and pours water on the notebook.

PANEL 3

NORDEN: *shaking off the notebook and showing Jen the unharmed written sheet*

Weatherproof paper. Waterproof pen. Just wipe it off.

HART: *amused*

Is it fireproof as well?

PANEL 4

NORDEN:

Raises finger.

Ah.

PANEL 5

NORDEN: *Lowers finger and looks down, brow furrowed.*

No.

PANEL 6

NORDEN: *He almost turns away, but then realizes he has a question*

Wait. Aren't you even curious about my Atlantis comment?

PAGE 5

PANEL 1

*For the first time we see **HART** break into a large genuine smile – it makes her even more beautiful.*

HART:

Of course I'm curious! I'm a journalist! But I figured I'd let you get to it in your own time, Mr. Norden. You seem to be a man who likes things done certain ways.

PANEL 2

NORDEN:

Yeah. Well. First off, there's no archaeological evidence that Atlantis ever existed. Nada. Zippo. Zilch. No remains, no artifacts, no stray coins that can't be identified. As far as the professionals are concerned, it's a myth.

PANEL 3

NORDEN: *gesturing to indicate the room around them*

BUT... now we have this.

PANEL 4

NORDEN:

You see, there are three major sources for the myth of Atlantis: the Dialogs of Plato, a book by Ignatius Loyola Donnelly published in 1882, and the writings of that quack Edgar Cayce.

PANEL 5

NORDEN:

Plato speaks of Atlantis as a massive empire, contemporary of the ancient Greeks, that was destroyed by natural disaster. Donnelly started the whole god-men mythos that we see today. You know, people thinking that Atlantis was some advanced spacefaring culture of super beings and crap like that.

The kook Cayce agreed with the super being thing and claimed to be able to channel ancient Atlanteans.

PANEL 6

NORDEN:

BUT... each of them gave details about Atlantis...

Details that match the images you see in this room.

PAGE 6

PANEL 1

Norden walks over to a near wall and gestures at a mosaic image of what looks like a city built inside a circle. Concentric circles of what looks like farmland and water radiate out from the main city circle. The mosaic is composed of red, black and white stones.

NORDEN:

The myth goes that the capital of Atlantis was built inside a circle. Perfectly built with precise geometry to fit inside a circle. And they built it all from stone in these colors.

PANEL 2

Close up of Norden's finger tracing what looks like a river through one side of the city – there is a matching one on the other side.

NORDEN:

And here we have the famous hot and cold springs that ran through their main city.

PANEL 3

Norden whips around and rushes to another wall.

NORDEN:

Here they seem to be drinking Donnelly's "nectar of the gods" and radiating energy off their bodies.

PANEL 4

Norden moves on to yet another section.

NORDEN:

And these things that look like six sided crystals? Cayce said that was the power source for the advanced technology.

PANEL 5

NORDEN:

There's just so much like that. Even more. All the stupid fairytale crap documented on these walls right here. If I didn't see the insane carbon dating results myself, I'd swear someone had built this place just to mess with me...

Norden has lost track of where he's been walking in his ramblings and now notices he's standing in front of the pile of rubble with police tape.

PANEL 6

Close up of Norden looking distressed.

NORDEN:

Oh. Yeah.

PAGE 7

PANEL 1

HART: *coming up behind him*

So, I've read the other news reports... but I don't like taking anyone's word for it. What happened, Mr. Norden?

NORDEN: *sighs*

Yeah. Okay.

PANELS 2 - 5

(FLASHBACK ART WITH NORDEN NARRATING)

It was a great day. We had finally documented all the walls and made our notes. The samples had come back from the lab saying the remaining wood embedded in the walls of this place was definitely Bronze Age, if not earlier. We, of course, were celebrating because... well, LOOK at the things depicted. Major find. We were gonna be rich.

We see Norden pouring champagne into tin camp cups as a group of four men, dressed in "archaeologist" clothes, are gathered around him, smiling.

Turned out the wood is native pinion pine. Something that grows right here.

The styles in this art - the dates - even with massive earth movement... It has no right whatsoever being here.

Two of the men, one younger, one older, go off to excitedly gesture at the flying disks/The Gatherer section of wall art.

Roy and Jake were excited about the flying disks on the wall here and went over to talk about them.

Then the floor just opened up. Right under a support pillar.

Part of the roof collapsed on the guys and that bastard just floated up out of the hole in the floor.

FLOATED. Yes, he was flying. And naked. And the floor just closed up behind him. Like it had never happened.

Roof collapses, The Gatherer floats up, everyone is shocked.

PANEL 6

Norden leans against the wall and slowly slides down it into a squatting position.

NORDEN:

We didn't move right away to help Jake and Roy because of the shock of seeing that THING. It didn't even look at us, just started walking off. I think Gerardo yelled at him, but... I remembered the guys and went over to get them out. It was too late though. They were crushed.

PANEL 7

Norden covers his face with his hands.

NORDEN:

Jake was so young...

PAGE 8

PANEL 1

NORDEN:

The site was secure and stable, we weren't being stupid or roughhousing, just a hardworking team celebrating a victory...

I want to find that floating naked man. Find out where he came from. Tell him about the good guys he killed.

But I have no idea who he is... what he is...

HART:

A paranormal being.

PANEL 2

NORDEN: *confused look*
What?

HART: *shrugging*

I can't think of any other way to explain it. Barring mental illness or booze hallucinations, it would seem to be a genuine paranormal experience. Honestly, I think we should get that guy who does that challenge in here and see if you can win the million dollar reward.

PANEL 3

NORDEN:
I'm not crazy... or drunk. I know what I saw, Miss Hart.

FEMALE SEEKER: (OP)

You saw The Gatherer.

PANEL 4

*Norden and Hart turn to face the strange voice out of nowhere.
We see the same female Seeker as in the first scene of the comic.
She has long wispy white hair and pale blue eyes and still wears the pilfered t-shirt and nothing else.*

FEMALE SEEKER:

I must find him. You will come with me.

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LARGE SPLASH PANEL

It's a dark night in the desert, but the stars are out. We see the silhouette of a man in the foreground and a illuminated desert shack in the background.

A scruffy mutt dog is outside the shack, hackles raised, growling and barking at the man as he approaches. Old Hermit Ned yells at the dog from inside the shack.

NED:

SHUT UP, CHESTER! What the heck has gotten into you?

PANEL 2

He emerges from the house, wild eyed and wild haired (what's left of it) – a skinny old man in cut-off shorts and a wife beater, brandishing a baseball bat.

NED:

You crazy mutt! Did you see a coyote or something? Does Old Ned need to bash a head?

PANEL 3

*He looks up and we see shock and maybe a bit of disgust in his face. He's seen **THE GATHERER** (OP).*

NED:

What the... who the heck are you? And where's yer clothes?

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PANEL 1

***THE GATHERER** is a tall man with medium length dark hair. His skin is medium toned and he has no visible body hair except head hair and eyebrows.*

He reaches his hands out, palms upward to NED, as he approaches. Throughout this, the dog, Chester, is still going crazy, but does not attack.

THE GATHERER:

I require these clothes you speak of. Give them to me, please.

PANEL 2

NED:

For free? HA! Mister, you just need to keep on going with your naked ass. Old Ned ain't givin' nobody nothin' for free!

PANEL 3

The lights on The Gatherer's bracelet flash briefly and he looks confused.

THE GATHERER: *to his bracelet*

What is that? The communication wasn't clear. Did I not say it correctly?

PANEL 4

NED: *eyes lighting up and a grin spreading on his face*

Hey! Gimme that gadget and I'll give you all the clothes you want!

That sure is pretty!

SHUT UP, CHESTER!

PANEL 5

THE GATHERER: *looking back at Ned, confused still*

No. It is not for you.

PANEL 6

Ned raises the baseball bat and thumps it against his palm as he advances on The Gatherer.

NED:

Well, looks like you ain't got no way of stopping it from being *for me*, do you?

TREATMENT - THE SEEKERS (Contest submission by Lisa M. Staton)

STORYLINE ONE – 110 pages or 5 issues

The first storyline of our series will take place in Las Vegas and the surrounding Nevada/California desert, since the opening scene has been set for this location and it's a great place to start.

ARTHUR NORDEN is a jerk. No, really. He's kind of rude, abrupt with people, says exactly what he thinks and doesn't really like having to play nice and kiss ass. He has problems with social interaction, but is absolutely brilliant when it comes to finding lost artifacts of ancient civilization and piecing together impossible puzzles/riddles. He's NOT going to get any nicer. We're not going to find out that he's really a big softie underneath his gruff exterior. He's a jerk. But he's one of the good guys.

He's not going to reveal a lot about himself through his dialogue, but we'll get glimpses into his thoughts, feelings and motivations through **NORDEN'S LOG**, a battered old notebook he keeps with him to record his expedition notes.

JENNIFER HART is going to continuously surprise us with odd things she knows. She learned to shoot a gun while doing a story on the local law enforcement's trick shot competition. While spending a weekend with one of those "Survival Dude" types, she learned basic wilderness survival skills. Somewhere along the line we'll even see that she even knows how to juggle. We'll find out she has a knack for learning things quickly and retaining them. When questioned about her skills, she'll mention some human-interest story that she was sent on. This impresses Norden, but Jen fails to see it as an asset because she's too concerned about proving her competence as a "serious journalist".

The unnamed **FEMALE SEEKER** we saw in the original treatment will be the alien featured in this storyline. She's an ethereal type with wispy white hair and pale blue eyes. Although very petite in stature, she has a superhuman strength, as do all Seekers. Her superpower seems to be linked to the vibrations of matter. She can change solids into liquids, gasses into solids, make holes, move things – you get the picture. We'll find out that the bracelets the Seekers wear do not GIVE them their powers, they only amplify them. Otherwise, the bracelets are pretty much the alien version of a REALLY smart smartphone or laptop. The Seekers can interface with them and learn things in an instant.

They call their bracelets **ATA**, and they are in an almost symbiotic relationship with the Seekers. Are they alive? Maybe? Or are they just a really advanced artificial intelligence? This will remain a mystery that is slowly revealed over the course of the series. Somewhere in the series we'll find out what happens if a Seeker's bracelet is removed. It won't be pretty.

We'll do a flashback to explain how our first Seeker arrived at the cave with Jen and Norden.

Her first taste of the human world is Sin City. Not a good impression. She experiences the men on the streets hawking escorts and strip clubs, is propositioned by lecherous men, witnesses homeless people begging on the street corners all set against the garish lights and fake glamour of Las Vegas. She gets a really bad impression of humanity in general.

As she's leaving Las Vegas, following the pull of the Gatherer's trail, she sees a trashy man about to beat a child outside a convenience store. She uses her powers to kill the man. By disintegration. There are witnesses.

The Seeker calmly walks off into the desert.

When the Seeker meets up with Jen and Norden, she listens to their conversation long enough to realize that Norden saw the Gatherer. She then uses her Ata to focus her power, forming stone shackles around their midsections. Leading them back out of the cave, she questions Norden about the Gatherer and which way he went. She decides to take them with her as she looks for the Gatherer.

She starts marching them out into the desert, but Jen thinks quick and explains cars to her. The Seeker releases their bonds and they end up leaving Jen's rental car at the site and taking Norden's old 4WD utility vehicle out across the desert. They still feel like prisoners and when they stop for a potty break, Norden tries to sneak off. The Seeker, while talking to Jen, recreates the stone bonds and forces Norden back to the car. She assures them that they will stay with her until she is done with them.

During the drive, Jen puts on her reporter face and starts questioning the Seeker about who she is and what's going on. The Seeker, of course, won't tell her much, only that she's here for a purpose and she's looking for The Gatherer.

They eventually make it back to the outskirts of Vegas, where the Seeker offhandedly reveals that humanity might not be saved if all their cities are like this. The whole “humanity” thing sets off major alarms in Jen and Norden. They explain to the Seeker that they need sleep and get a couple of hotel rooms. They’ll find out that Seekers do sleep – after a fashion. It’s more like a meditative reverie.

Jen and Norden will be completely freaked out by a paranormal being talking about humanity being “saved” and set about brainstorming to try to figure out a way to show the Seeker that humanity IS good. They show her soup kitchens and charities. They take her to a cirque style show to show her arts. Eventually the Seeker decides that they, themselves, are good people and that she needs to observe more while looking for The Gatherer. She releases them and says goodbye.

She tells them her name is **DYANA**.

After the last scene with the old man and dog, **THE GATHERER** is heading north and west – wearing cut-off shorts and a wife beater that has stains that might just be blood on it. The clothes are too tight for him, but he doesn’t notice. We see that he can fly in a manner similar to a hovercraft, floating along the ground at a pace similar to maybe riding a bicycle.

He will remain the shadowy, mysterious figure over the course of the first five issues. We’ll hear him talk to his Ata some more, but nothing ever answers that we can hear. Is it telepathically communicating with him? There will be clues that he’ll receive about other Seekers waking up, and each one instills a new sense of urgency in his travel. We eventually get the idea that he’s going to join whatever it is he’s talking to. But there’s some kind of communication error with his Ata. It may have been broken (wounded?) somehow and it’s giving him confusing information and advice. As a result of this, The Gatherer does not quite get the grasp on humanity that the other Seekers do.

At the very end of the current series we’ll see him make his way to the North Pole. There, he uses his Ata to crack through the polar ice cap, revealing a massive structure has been buried there – The Seekers’ mothership.

The current storyline will end with him saying “Now the Gathering can begin!” as he floats down towards the still partially buried ship.

The last issue in this storyline will introduce **SECTION-P**.

AGENT WILLIAM WOO, a handsome man in his thirties, has been chosen to lead the team created to investigate the unexplained rash of paranormal happenings that seems to have started just after that famous archaeologist had two assistants turn up dead in Death Valley. He’s young, with something to prove. And he doesn’t believe in any of this crap.

One of the interesting parts of the series is how Section-P will find clues about the Seekers and they’ll relate to paranormal myths from all over the planet. Maybe a storyline will have them investigating something that is reminiscent of El Dorado. We might find out what the Bermuda Triangle is. There have GOT to be some clues on Easter Island. What about the Loch Ness monster? Nessie might even have something to do with the Seekers.

It seems that even though the world doesn’t KNOW about the Seekers... they know about them. Somewhere in the collective subconscious, the alien beings have carved a niche that humanity doesn’t even realize is there. They show up as myths and legends. As the clues are uncovered and the Seekers’ resting places are found, we’ll get a picture of those corresponding legends through the art and architecture of the sleeping chambers.

LOREN MEADOWS and **JAMES WRIGHT** are the other principal members of Section-P that we’ll meet. They’re the ones who really believe in paranormal phenomena and start putting the clues together about the Seekers. There might be other members of Section-P that are introduced at later times, but these are the three core members who will be fleshed out in coming storylines.

BOBBY will be used sporadically throughout the storyline. When Jen calls him to check in and speak with the nanny, she’ll tell Bobby an edited version of what she’s up to. Bobby will matter-of-factly compare it to something that happened in one of his favorite comic books and it will end up giving the heroes a shove in the right direction when they seem to have hit a wall in their investigation. These references can be either from real-life comics or totally made up ones, depending on copyright concerns. Paying homage to real-life comic greats would provide a nice pop-culture interest, though.