

Helene Parks-Sawyer

Age: 21

Gender: Female

Nationality: American

Sexuality: Bisexual

Year: Junior

Academic Track: Classical

Societies: Consolamentum

Friend Group: The Thespians

Mentor Teacher: Tamara Grethe Jones-Hansen

Keywords: Cruel, Self-centered, Elitist, Strong, Romantic, Motivated

Inspiration:

Euripides, *Medea*: <https://archive.org/details/medeawithnotesan00euri>

Frederick Sandys, *Medea*, 1886:



Who You Used to Be

They should have seen you, in your red silks, sliding through the crowded rooms of the mansion like a knife. That was an important day, and so foundational in your life. You intimidated everyone. You wore your father's signet ring and carried the code to his safe, having recently looked through his papers to determine the condition of the company which he had for so long neglected in his increasing dementia. You were proud to be his better, and you saw the recognition of it in the eyes of your relatives. The whole clan had come here and having found your mother hysterical with tears and your brother lacking, they had gathered round you. Respectfully, afraid, and eager to please, perhaps to control. You were 10 years old, it was your father's wake.

Child prodigy, brilliantly gifted intellectual creature. "Not as emotionally developed as other children her age," it was said in the words of your family doctor, "but so very bright." Feelings can be learned. You taught yourself the most important ones through imitation. It makes no difference in the end. Some would disagree, but overdone morality does not lead to success and is a sign of weakness.

You had tutors. Not so many friends, for you rarely left your home, and when you did meet other children - or later teens - you never had much to say to them. Instead, you were secretly friendly with things; your books especially, but also the Rembrandt (copy?) over the stairs, the trees in the garden, and the cat, Tiberius.

Sometimes you'd get overwhelmed by emotion, not knowing why or what to call it. You never let anyone catch you in it. People will use your weaknesses against you. Instead you'd wrap it tightly inside, a hard little ball, and let it out when no one was looking. Destruction was your medication. Teapots, flowers, the telephone, Tiberius. They all suffered for your sake. Such is love. It is sacrifice. We give up little parts of ourselves to show we care.

You had your pick of universities. But you wanted to go to St. Theodora's. You were intrigued by what the place promised. A higher kind of knowledge sought and shared with earnest dedication. In your lonely heart you felt it call to you, a place where beauty, truth, and excellence would come together.

Who You Are

You still have the sharp edge inside you, a buried strength that allows you to survive the most challenging ordeals with the knowledge that when you really need to, you can make yourself hard and cold. But you haven't needed to for some time now. When Tamara first brought you into her project, you were doubtful. But

over many late nights of practice and reading together with the Thespians, you discovered a deep love for the work of bringing to life the old tragedies - and a tenderness for the people you were working with to do so. You gave yourself over to art and friendship, allowed yourself to believe that there could be more to life than the deep loneliness you used to know. When you act, you feel empowered. Strong. Beautiful. Or soft, trusting, and kind. You can let go of the barriers that keep you from feeling as wholly as others do, and while you've been working under Tamara's guidance, you've found yourself become, not just happier, but more human in a way. And you have friends. Real friends. With minds and hearts that resonate with your own and fascinating stories to tell. You feel happy when you are with them, and protective of their happiness as well.

Except, sometimes the perfect picture is threatened when the sharpness inside you lets itself be felt and makes everything seem shaky. False. Like everyone around you know something horrible which is hidden to you. Your hands will start to shake ever so slightly and you feel cold all over. You can hardly keep anything down, except water and alcohol and other things that don't feel like food. These are the times when you suppress your negative emotions until you can find something or someone to react on. Getting it out always makes it better, and then you can get back to what you were doing. Usually without anyone knowing there was ever an issue.

Who You Could Be

You don't like to show weakness, and you only do so with a very special few. You are not very good at being happy. You always mistrust it. It's your experience that everyone always want something from you. But the acceptance and closeness you've felt from your close friends give you hope. This last year and a half you've been so full of the promise of a happy future, you can almost touch it. All you need is to get rid of your doubts, and you will be there!

...And if anyone or anything actually does turn out to threaten your happiness, the friendships you've build, the new love you feel blossoming in your chest... you'll need to get rid of them too.

The You That Others See

To your closest friends, you are strong, proud, inspiring, fun, happy, loving. Your natural authority has made you one of the main leaders of the group, and the others respect you as much as they like you.

Most others see you as a serious or snobbish person who is much more interested in her studies than in socializing and making nice. You keep close to your small circle of friends, and are not really interested in getting to know anyone else very intimately. People say you are intimidating, cold, or shy.

The few unlucky freshmen who have been trapped in your path when you needed to let go of your pent-up frustration call you cruel. But who would care or even believe them?

The Ones Around You

Friend Group Description

You've been working with Tamara Jones-Hansen as a part of her specially selected group of Thespians since the beginning of your second year. You grew close with the other members, becoming like siblings - and in some cases, more than that. Obsessed by myth and history, you dedicated yourselves to reenacting ancient tragedies, sometimes to the point of losing yourselves to the fictional twists. None of you have yet admitted it, but during the work on Euripides' *Medea* you all started struggling to tell the difference between real and imagined feelings, divine inspiration and insanity, but still you strive toward perfection. More devoted than ever before. Somewhere in the fated text, you believe you can find hidden secrets.

You and **Giovanni Bianchi-Wells** have grown very close during the last year. You might not fully admit it to yourself, but you are in love with him, and the many evenings you've spent lying close together reading to each other and sharing your secret thoughts are a central part of why you've felt so hopeful and happy lately. He has told you in clear words that he shares your feelings. The only reason you have not told the others is that it would make what you share less special. Your love needs to grow in the darkness, for that is the kind of mystery it comes from. But it warms you and carries you through the days, and the others will know when the time is right.

Evelynn Vereen is your dear friend. Just as you, she is ambitious and passionate about her studies. You've written not a few essays together and often practiced

your parts just the two of you. However, lately she's begun to look a bit too intensely at Giovanni and you do not like it. Just because she reminds you of yourself doesn't mean she should get any ideas about taking what belongs to you. You mostly enjoy spending time with her still and try not to think about it, but it's getting increasingly difficult.

In the past you've shared a few kisses with **Faye Hammersmith** but it didn't mean much to you, and now you see her sort of like a sister. You trust her to help you when you ask her to and to keep your secrets, and in fact you probably do confide in her more often than anyone else. You are not as good at listening to her, but she understands that. You have different strengths. Yours isn't being emotionally supportive.

Rolf Bianchi-Wells is the brother of Giovanni, and less interesting than your love, but he is close enough to him to still fascinate you. The more distance you feel between you and Giovanni, the more you are drawn to Rolf. Like touching the cloth worn by the saint, holy through proximity.

Your Function at the Larp:

You are usually the perfect student. You work hard, you are dedicated, you come prepared and ask questions in class. Whatever you do, it's important to you to do it as well as you can.

Socially you are not exactly withdrawn. Rather, you reign above most others, too important to give them much notice. Even when you fully participate in the little parties and rituals of the other students, there is a barrier between you and them - a part of you is always outside of it all, looking in, and analyzing what their motives and weaknesses are.

Examples of Concrete Actions:

- Practice *Medea* with the Thespians.
- Study. Especially relevant: Euripides, *Medea*. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*.
- Seek guidance from Tamara or another member of faculty in dealing with your intruding thoughts.
- Try to find out what is going on behind your back.
- Destroy something out of anger. Maybe a relationship.

Questions to Develop Your Character

1. Sometimes you think about all the ways people might try to hurt you. What are some? And what do you think of doing to them in return?
2. Why do you think you were given the part of Medea? What could Tamara have seen in you that made it a good fit?
3. When you feel in need of softness and daydream of happy things, what do you imagine?
4. What is your favorite book? And why?
5. What makes you feel the most angry and humiliated? When do you lose control?