

# Helene Parks-Sawyer

**Age:** 22

**Gender:** Ciswoman

**Nationality:** American

**Sexuality:** Heterosexual, to the best of her knowledge

**Year:** Junior

**Academic Track:** Classical

**Friend Group:** The Thespians

**Mentor Professor:** Jonathan Allen

**Grades:** Excellent.

To her closest friends, Helene is strong, proud, inspiring, fun, happy, and loving. Her natural authority has made her one of the main leaders of the Thespians, and to the best of her knowledge, the others respect her as much as they like her.

Most others see her as a serious or snobbish person who is much more interested in her studies than in socializing and making nice. She keeps close to her small circle of friends and isn't really interested in getting to know anyone else very intimately. People say she is intimidating, cold, or shy.

The few unlucky Freshmen who have been trapped in her path when she needed to let go of her pent-up frustration call her cruel, but who would care?

**Inspiration:**

Frederick Sandys, *Medea*, 1886:



## Who You Are

You have a sharp edge inside you since long ago; 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 you were first brought into the Thespians, you were doubtful. But over many late nights of practice and reading together with the others, you discovered a deep love for bringing life to the written word – and a tenderness for the people you were working with to do so. You gave yourself over to art and friendship, allowing 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 wholly as others do, and while you've been working on the tragedies, you've found yourself becoming 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 with 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 knows something horrible that is hidden from 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 act out on. Getting it out always makes it better, and then you can get back to what you were doing. Usually, without most people knowing there was ever an issue.

## Who You Used to Be

They should have seen you, in your red silks, sliding through the crowded rooms of your family 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 gathered round you. Respectfully, afraid, and eager to please, perhaps to control. You were sixteen years old; it was your father's wake.

Child prodigy, brilliantly gifted, was how they had considered you. If also a bit of a freak. “Not as emotionally developed as other children her age,” it had been said in the words of your family doctor, “but so very bright.” But performing the right 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 others your age, you never had much to say to them. Instead, you were secretly friendly with things; your books especially, but also the unsigned Rembrandt over the stairs, the trees in the garden, and the cat, Tiberius.

You picked up on the finer points of conversation and value of playing social games at a frighteningly young age, but also the grimy reality that no matter your station, some people will still try to find ways to humiliate you. So much more reason to play nice.

Still, 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’s 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.

## The Ones Around You

Slipping into a new character is like second nature to you at this point. No wonder **Professor Jonathan Allen** took notice and brought you on board his project. Obsessed by myth and history, your group dedicated yourselves to reenacting ancient tragedies as closely to the original material as possible.

None of you has yet admitted it, but during the work on Euripides’ *Medea*, you have all started struggling to tell the difference between real and imagined feelings, divine inspiration, and insanity. Still, you strive toward perfection. More devoted than ever before. Somewhere in the fated text, you believe you can find hidden secrets.

You do not know Jonathan as well as you would like, but you are fascinated by the way his guidance has allowed you to portray Medea, and you wonder what else ... what else indeed, he can teach you.

You have a clear feeling that you are his favorite (why else would you have gotten the main role?), and you'd prefer to keep it that way.

Your friend **Stephan Bianchi-Wells** was a surprising choice for the role of Jason. Beneath his sarcastic and distant surface, which is always seeking out distractions, he has a warm and caring heart. Too soft for his own good, in a way that puzzles and pleases you. You were attracted to his company even before Allen brought the two of you together, finding that his presence brings you a calm you've never really felt in other circumstances. Seeing him grow into his performance, becoming more and more the hero-conqueror his role is meant to be, has made you admire him the more, and you push him further every chance you get, even when it takes practicing long into the night.

You've never been in love, so you don't recognize it. Besides, you're well aware Stephan tends to prefer men. It's just that the closer you grow, the more it feels like *he* is flirting with you, through Jason. You know he's bound to betray you, that he has to share his attention with Evelyn as well. It's hard for you to stand, however. It feels so good to have his attention, you catch yourself wishing he'd look nowhere else.

There is a strange otherness to Stephan's sister **Natalie Bianchi-Wells** that sometimes sends an unexpected, crawling sensation up your spine. When she first joined your group, Natalie confessed that Stephan was their father's illegitimate child during one of many wine-fueled evenings. The fact doesn't seem to faze her much, and it only serves to make the relationship between the siblings all the more inexplicable. She is brilliant in her own way, and it is easy to sink into deep conversations with her. She fascinates you, and you'd like to understand her better.

Natalie portrays the ruler of Corinth, Chreon, a controlling and manipulative role in *Medea*.

Sometimes at parties, you've shared a few kisses with **Felix Hammersmith**, but it's never meant much to you. It's just good fun. You do like Felix a lot, however, as a friend. You trust him to help you when you ask for it and to keep your secrets. In fact, you probably confide more in him than anyone else. You're not as good at listening to him, but he understands that. You have different strengths. Yours isn't being emotionally supportive.

Felix portrays King Aegeus of Athens, the accomplice of Medea and someone who is too easily taken advantage of when you wave their heart's desire in front of them.

Perhaps that is what you are doing when you let him think he might have a chance with you?

**Everlynn Vereen** is possibly the closest thing you have to a rival at college. With a fervor in her studies to match your own and often given more attention than you at parties, it is no wonder that the two of you frequently butt heads. However, the hour-long debates the two of you sometimes fall into have earned her your respect. You've co-written essays, and when you focus on your academic interests, you are easy friends.

It's fitting that Evelynnn plays Glauce, of all roles, because you can vividly imagine someone choosing her above you. She has an easy passion and a way with people you can only fake. You suppose it's because she's had a happy childhood.

As you dive deeper into the role of Medea, you might start to feel that something is going on between Evelynnn and Stephan, that she will steal your role, your relationship with your mentor, or indeed anyone else you have any warm feelings for. And what to do? What to do about that?

### **Your Secret Society: Friends of Calliope**

The Friends is about the search for the sublime, which is something that fills your thoughts increasingly. Poetry to you is a craft as much as an art form, and while it never interested you much before you joined the society, once you did, you wanted to master it.

The more involved you've become with *Medea*, the more meaningful the society meetings have become to you. When the muses are called now, it feels more real to you. Like they may actually be listening. Your poems increasingly concern themselves with themes of love, fear, and bloody, flesh-rendering, devouring desire.

Stephan is in the Friends with you. Society meetings are one of the few places where he still seems mostly like himself, your roguish, playful dreamer of a friend. How odd.

Modern junior **Mykhaila Makarenko** is someone you enjoy to talk to through the Friends. You don't have much in common, apart from both being highly non-sentimental intellectual women who share a love of the narrative form. This is plenty for a good creative work relationship, and you often exchange texts and feedback. It's relaxing to have someone you can do that with who you don't have to make an effort to soften your words around and who doesn't take it personally when you say there's something they can work on. You enjoy Mykhaila, and you respect her as an equal, which isn't something you can say about that many people.

## Other Relationships

**Your Guided Student:** Every student at St. Theodora's gets a Guide to help them adjust to college life when they first arrive. You have been assigned to Guide Modern freshman **Louise Falkenskiold**. You haven't put that much effort into her, considering St. Theodora's something you have to either succeed at or leave. She does have a strong will, which you appreciate, so you think she will probably manage to stay. As to advice, you've told her to improve her grades and learn to mask her emotions better. Women, especially, have to learn not to show weakness to get ahead in this world. If you can teach her anything, it's this.

**Bethany Sackville** is a classmate of yours, and though she often acts like a perfect little princess, you have seen her mask slip sometimes. She can't quite keep herself from making rude remarks to you, and sometimes you answer in return. Your grades are better, which gives you joy, but you also suspect that she watches you often, waiting for you to slip up so that she can take advantage of your weakness. It makes you more vigilant, but also more crass towards her. At the same time, she is one of the few people who can mostly hold her own against you, which might be something to be appreciated.

**Amalie Brockenhuus** is another classmate and someone who very much gets on your nerves. Unlike Bethany, whom you dislike but respect, Amalie is weak. To you, she's always seemed younger than her age. A conformist caged bird, she's so afraid to voice her own opinion, she always just agrees with whatever authority puts out, even when it's obviously designed to provoke a different response. A frail little people pleaser, she's never happy unless she has someone look at her with pride or approval. To be brief, she disgusts you and she deserves to be destroyed, to which you dedicate a sharp remark whenever the mood strikes you.

**Sophia Eugenia Agelii** is a Classical freshman in your secret society, and it's obvious to you that she has real potential to become somebody others will follow. You noticed her on the first day of this year, in Cavendish Hall. She held your gaze better than most, and it tickled you. Unfortunately, some of that pure potential has been tainted by the influence of Amalie, who is in her Mentor group and whom Sophia seems to look up to a great deal. Being in the same class as the freshmen from your play, she knows the same people you do.

Sophia is someone who seeks understanding in art and painting more than poetry, and in that, she makes a good complement to your own interests. You have wanted to collaborate on something, one way or another, since she joined the Friends.

After learning that she was one of those who had fallen for Amalie's distracting influences, you'd also want to take over as her primary source of authority here at college, at least within art and the sublime. And Amalie cannot get to her in your secret society.

## Your Hidden Self

You don't like to show weakness, and you only do so with a very special few; preferably people who'd never dare abuse the trust you put in them. You are not very good at being happy. You mistrust it. It's your experience that everyone always wants something from you, but the growing safety you feel in your friend group and position at college has filled you with some hope.

Sometimes it feels like people are trying to undermine you, though. A fleeting look of disdain or a misplaced comment is enough to send you into a spiral of mistrust and paranoia. On the other hand, it's not paranoia if there's a reason for it. If it turns out that someone or something actually does threaten your happiness and the status you have so carefully curated here at St. Theodora's... you'll need to get rid of it. At whatever cost.

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## Your Function at the Larp:

You are usually the perfect student. You work hard, you are dedicated, and 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.

In your friend group, you are a leader; someone who takes charge, directly or indirectly. You are also destined to be the downfall of the group, the embodiment of the rage, the woundedness, the unreasonable and righteous anger of Medea.

Examples of things to do:

- Practice *Medea* with the Thespians.
- Study intensely, dreamily. Get someone to read with you and discuss your thoughts about your finds together.
- Seek guidance from Jonathan or another member of the faculty in dealing with your intrusive thoughts.

- Try to find out if something is going on behind your back in your group of friends.
- Destroy something out of anger. Maybe a relationship.
- Befriend something. Maybe a person, maybe a marble bust; whichever feels easiest.