



ANOTHER MEDEA

BY AARON MARK



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For Tom Hewitt

ANOTHER MEDEA was first presented at the Duplex Cabaret Theatre in New York City, beginning March 30th, 2013. The play was then further developed through New York Theatre Workshop's summer residency at Dartmouth College, in August of 2013.

It was subsequently produced as part of the All For One Theatre Festival at the Cherry Lane Studio Theatre, beginning October 19th, 2013.

An Off-Broadway run, produced by All For One Theater (Michael Wolk, Artistic Director) at the Wild Project, began January 14th, 2015. The lighting designer was Brant Thomas Murray; the costume designer was Michael Growler; and the production stage manager was Nicole Marconi.

All incarnations were directed by the author and performed by Tom Hewitt.

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CHARACTERS

One actor* plays:

HIMSELF, or a slightly more disheveled version of himself

MARCUS SHARP, our incarcerated host

JASON RUSSELL, a wealthy British oncologist

ANJELICA RUSSELL, Jason's sister, a painter

RALPH, an actor-turned-producer

JUDY, Marcus' agent

ROBBIE, Marcus' roommate

DOCTOR

PARIS LIST, a young British actor

LILY and GRACE, the twins

MAN'S VOICE on the phone

** See "On the Actor Playing Marcus" in the author's note on page 43 for casting options.*

ANOTHER MEDEA

A simple black table and a chair in full light. Nothing else. Any pre-show music (ideally Maria Callas singing Cherubini's Medea) cuts out abruptly when the Actor enters. He's dressed neutrally, primarily in black. He stands in a spot not far from the table, facing us, and there's a silence. A long, uncomfortable silence, as if he can't quite get up the nerve to begin. (He may or may not barely mutter the word "Fuck" under his breath; it's hard to tell.) Finally, he snaps out of it and addresses us.*

ACTOR. So you're here to see something that has to do with *Medea*. That might be all you know about this. It does have to do with *Medea*, but who it really has to do with is Marcus Sharp, the actor.

Early in my career, I replaced Marcus in a play at Lincoln Center. I barely spent any time with him one-on-one, but I certainly studied what he was doing, both onstage and off, and I remember being struck by his—intensity. The kind of person you might be fascinated by, but don't necessarily want to get too close to.

I saw him onstage many times after that—although somehow I never met him again in person—and pretty regularly, over the years, various casting directors would compare me to him, or my agent would send me in for something he'd just turned down. We were orbiting each other—or I was orbiting *him*. Maybe that's why I was always so drawn to his work. Um...

So when I heard what he did, years later, I was—profoundly disturbed, to say the least—by the fact that somebody from my own community could...do those things. Somebody I'd even shared a role with. And I found myself with this overwhelming need to understand it, or at least to try to. But Marcus wouldn't talk. He wouldn't give any interviews,

* See Special Note on Songs/Recordings at the back of this volume.

he wouldn't allow a single visitor, nobody'd heard a word from him since he went to prison.

But I just couldn't get past it, I couldn't stop thinking about him, he was showing up in my dreams, these dreams where he'd—he'd be coaching me, directing me, like I was getting ready to play him, doing what he...

So I started writing him letters. I told him I really wasn't a writer, just an actor, but that I wanted to maybe develop some kind of a theatre piece based on what happened and would he please consider talking to me. Much to my surprise, he wrote me back. He remembered me, but he wasn't interested. But I just kept writing him, I couldn't let it go, and he kept writing me back. There were three years of this, of these vague letters back and forth. Three years before he finally says he's ready to tell the whole story. And that I'm the one he's decided to tell it to. *Me.*

The lights slowly dim throughout the following as the Actor makes his way behind the table and takes his seat.

So I take a train out to see him, where they keep him. Maximum security. And I give them my three forms of I.D., and they search me for contraband, and I sign a bunch of papers. And then they bring me into a room with concrete walls, and they sit me down at this little table. There's a security camera in the corner. And I sit there, and I wait. And I wait. And then there's the sound of metal doors slamming, and a bunch of industrial prison locks being unlocked. And then, there he is. In the flesh. And the guard slams the door behind him. And Marcus Sharp sits down right across from me.

By now totally isolated by a tiny, focused amount of light, the Actor becomes Marcus. (In the original production, the Actor wore glasses, which he then took off to become Marcus.) He remains seated behind the table until almost the end of the play, in light so dim that we're only ever comfortably able to see his face and hands; the room itself goes away entirely.

MARCUS. Hey look, we got our own little room. Not bad, right?

Bless me, Father, for I have sinned.

That was an attempt at humor. You look like you just got thrown into

a cage with a wild animal. Please don't be nervous. I'm not crazy. And there are guards watching, they're right outside, so...

I do have a confession to make: I actually saw you do my part. At Lincoln Center. I wanted to tell you that in person. You were very, very good. Pretentious piece-of-shit play, but *you*... I almost forgot you weren't me. So it's nice that you came all the way here. I don't trust the press, they're all vultures, but *you*, you're like me. So please know, I do appreciate this, having you do this. And I appreciate your...relentlessness. Convincing me. To finally talk.

Because it's a horrific thing that happened. Things. The things that happened. I know that, I know they're horrific, but horrific things do happen in real life, and I think that's the important thing to remember here. And not just write this off, like a movie, or a bad TV show. Or like a *play*, obviously. It's important not to romanticize these horrific things, and just—tell them—straight, like they are, like *you* want to—I hope—because they don't come from anything other than the mundane, complicated, pathetic lives of miserable fucking *people*. Right? Don't you think that's right? Don't just nod, you can talk to—For fuck's sake, *I'm not gonna bite you*.

I'm sorry. Do you need anything? Can I get you anything? I don't think I *can* get you anything, but maybe they—Maybe somebody can, uh...

Fine. It doesn't matter. Are you ready? I'm not sure how much time they'll give us. Let's start with Jason. Yes? Jason. Actually, no—lemme start before that, give you a context:

My birth name is Marcus Nelson Sharp. I never knew my father. I have no siblings. My mother was a cunt. My freedom began the day she died. After a long, excruciating battle with lung cancer. Which was...*thrilling* to watch. For me. Totally empowering, totally liberating, and now she's dead, and that's enough about my mother.

Now: Jason...

When I met Jason, I'd been an actor in New York for fifteen years already. And that's all I ever wanted to do, work in the theatre. But it takes its toll, as I know you know. That life. Being in limbo like that, constant limbo, living at the whims of the other people, the

“creatives,” they call themselves, self-important assholes, as if *we’re* not creative. In my twenties, I was in the ensemble of a cult Broadway flop, and I know you know what it was, but let’s please not talk about it, ’cause we get started on that shitshow, we’ll never stop.

But since then, I go on the road, mostly I do regional theatre, summer stock, sometimes Off-Broadway. A lot of benefits. Readings. Shit for free. You know how it is; I work a lot, but it’s barely a living. And I’m like twenty thousand dollars in credit card debt and back taxes, so off and on I’m a bartender. For cash under the table. That’s what it’s come to.

So at this point, I’m well into my thirties, I’ve got two roommates, in Queens, also in their thirties, also actors, of course, and longest relationship I’ve ever had with a man lasted about five weeks. And this is fine with me, I think, ’cause of course I don’t need any *real* intimacy. Honestly, I never thought I’d have that. A partner, you know? A *relationship*. My mother didn’t have that. She made it extremely clear to me that *I’d* never have that. So I decide I’m happy with my friends and my life, I audition, I work, I’ve got my drugs—coke—mostly weed—never meth, I saw some friends die from that shit, I never touched it—but a lot of booze, of course—and I have a lot of sex. A *lot* of sex. My identity at this point, the identity of the people closest to me, too, it’s all about sex. Sex is the real drug. And if I can’t have it, my skin crawls, I need a fix, you know? And this is the role I play. Another perpetually struggling addict actor. I’m very good at it.

But somewhere between *Richard III* in New Jersey and *The Who’s Tommy* in Kansas City, I’ve grown up. Physically, anyway. And I’m having some kind of crisis, because it feels like I have no *life* outside of my *life*. You know what I mean? And I’m inundated with people every second, and I fucking *hate* people, but somehow it’s really lonely.

Anyway, I get a job, I’m doing a new play downtown at the Actors’ Playhouse for like two hundred bucks a week or something insulting like that, and I’m bartending most nights after the show to pay my third of the rent, and I’m doing this play, and in this play with me is this guy, Clifford. And Clifford’s like twenty-five years old, little

fucker. He's who I used to be. He still thinks he's God's gift to the stage.

And he's been fucking this guy, this fancy British doctor guy, he's taped up a picture of them together on the dressing room mirror. And this guy is Jason, obviously, Jason Russell. And Jason's one of these *money* people who *really* run the world, old family money. And Clifford's showing up to the theatre with all these new toys—clothes, and a fancy watch and shit—like he's found a daddy and he wants everyone to know. Clifford's an idiot. I don't say that to be mean, I say that to paint a picture. He's just not very bright. He's vapid.

Anyway, Jason comes to see this play. And after the show, in the dressing room, Clifford brings him back, you know, and I meet Jason—briefly—and he's frighteningly charming. And it's fucking unnerving. And I'm wondering what the fuck he's doing with this idiot kid, and then I watch him watch the idiot kid change clothes.

So: Next night, I get to the theatre, the idiot kid's out of the show. Stage manager says he's "sick." So I call him from the theatre, he says that Jason dumped him the night before, after the show, and he can't get out of bed. So dramatic. This is why Clifford doesn't work much anymore—one of the reasons—anyway—

After the show, I go back to the dressing room, and on the table is a bouquet of roses. With a card that says "Marcus." And they're from Jason. Fucking roses. I mean, give me a break. But—*bold*. And I'm intrigued. And the card says, "It would be an honor to spend an evening with so fine a talent as you." And it's got his phone number. Hand-written. His handwriting is beautiful.

And my first thought is, I can't do anything about this, I can't do that to Clifford, as much as I hate him, it's bad karma, it'll come back to bite me in the ass. But the next night, he's back in the show, and he's prancing around in his little dance belt like nothing happened, so fuck him. I was twenty-five once too—but I'm more talented, and that's why the fancy British doctor wants *me* now. So fuck Clifford. Fuck him.

So I call Jason. And he wants me to meet him the next night at this

ANOTHER MEDEA

by Aaron Mark

1 man

Marcus Sharp is a charismatic and enigmatic New York actor who recounts in gruesome detail how his obsessions with a wealthy doctor named Jason and the myth of Medea lead to horrific, unspeakable events. At once ancient and contemporary, this provocative mono-thriller is Grand Guignol horror in the style of Spalding Gray.

"ANOTHER MEDEA is the sort of theater experience that has you wanting to stop listening...while you're aching to learn what happens next. You need to find out if it's even more horrific than what has just preceded it. It's a tale that if told around a campfire would keep everyone awake for the rest of the night."

—**The Huffington Post**

"[ANOTHER MEDEA], expertly penned by Aaron Mark, is detailed, funny and horrifying. A perfect mixture of crime drama, horror and humanity. ... one of the most gripping, fascinating stories...I've ever witnessed."

—**TheaterPizzazz.com**

"Medea is inherently upsetting, but what makes this variation particularly disturbing is how damn relatable Marcus is—and disarmingly funny, too. He really puts the me in Medea."

—**Time Out New York**

"Aaron Mark's ANOTHER MEDEA is as intense and gripping a show as you're ever likely to see, a harrowing examination of Euripides' Medea myth, set in modern-day New York City."

—**TWI-NY.com**

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