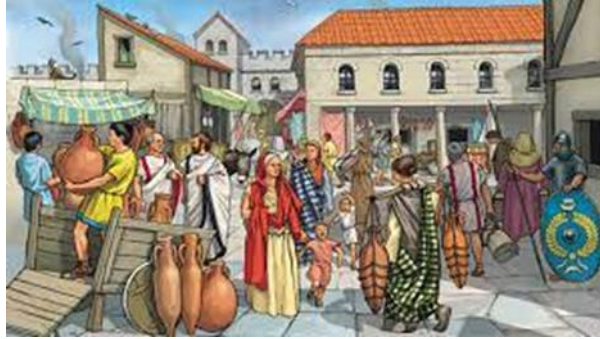


AESOP'S FABLE: "The Ants and the Grasshoppers"



(A Story of Dardanus the Rich)
A Dramatic Play Written by Connie Frank



Narrator on the Story: The elderly, gray-bearded man sat with his head in his hands at a bronze, three-legged table in despair. He realized he was not going to be living much longer since he was now 80 years old, according to the old physician who had treated his family for decades. Years ago, his wife and young son had died of measles, but his sadness had a price of making him age before his time. His wife was young and beautiful, and he could see her even now in his mind. She had been the love of his life. His young son, Alexander, had only been seven years old, but he was the light in his life. They had been gone for many years, and since that time, Dardanus had accumulated a great deal of wealth and power in his Ancient Greece city of Athens. Well-respected yet childless by choice, Dardanus, known as Dardanus the Rich, had been the target of several men in the city who wanted him to adopt them to gain his wealth. Dardanus had made a plan five years before, with Julius and Andrew, and he was determined to bring it to fruition.

Characters:

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| | Narrator: |
| | Julius: |
| | Andrew: |
| | Dardanus: |
| | Woman 1: |
| | Woman 2: |
| | Girl 1: |
| | Girl 2: |
| | Girl 3: |
| | Man 1: |
| | Man 2: |
| | Man 3: |
| | Thea: |
| | Belen: |

| Script: | |
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| Narrator: | Dardanus stood with his back to the large Andron, his home since birth, to watch Julius and Andrew walk toward him. They had been in his employ for two decades now, and he knew them to be trustworthy. Both men noted that Dardanus was anxious, shifting one foot then the other, and they knew that Dardanus did not have long on this earth. |
| Julius: | What happened? |
| Andrew: | Did you not like the young couple we brought to you? They had been very well recommended. |
| Dardanus: | (Holding both hands in front of him): No, I did not. I could see right through them. They were kléftes, thieves and gold diggers, just trying to grasp all they could. I found the woman trying to sneak my tiny statue of Zeus into the hem of her toga. I believe they would have murdered me in my sleep. |
| Andrew: | We judged poorly and depended on the word of others. I am sorry. |
| Julius: | I am sorry too. So how can we help you now? |
| Dardanus: | I have decided to send you to the town of Aphidna to find a couple worthy of the great gift I wish to bestow on them. It has a decent Agora marketplace. I am hoping you will find what I need. |
| Narrator: | The two young men bowed to Dardanus and quickly packed to travel. Dardanus provided all provisions for them and horses, so the two men left for Aphidna that day. Aphidna was a fortified town where Theseus had deposited Helen of Troy, entrusting her to the care of his friend Aphidnus, after taking the Golden Fleece. |
| Julius: | We are not far from the town. |
| Andrew: | I agree. We should be there by morning if we travel all night. |
| Narrator: | Bright and early the next morning, Julius and Andrew rode into the Agora, the marketplace for the little town of Aphidna. The town was bustling with people marketing their wares and mingling with the crowds of visitors that also came into the town to shop. |
| Andrew: | (Looking around) Surely, we will find a family here who are worthy. |
| Julius: | Let's take a look around. The children always reflect the way their parents treat them. |
| Narrator: | The two men slowly walked around the marketplace, considering buying some of the items. They looked closely to watch the faces and actions of each person. So far, they were highly disappointed. Most people were yelling at their children to get items for them or to stay out of the way. |
| Woman 1: | Hey! Get away from my kid! |
| Woman 2: | Scat! Go somewhere else! |
| Narrator: | The two men had been standing and watching the children bullying others. A group of girls were standing, laughing at a boy whose face was red and was walking away. They watched the boy, freckle-faced and thin, walk toward the path out of town. |
| Julius: | What was that all about? |

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| Andrew: | The girls were making fun of him. Look at the boy's ragged clothes. He is poor. |
| Julius: | Let's see what happens. |
| Narrator: | The two men walked through the market and saw the boy walk toward others, who ignored him. As they watched the crowd, it appeared that the boy was asking several of the people if he could help for pay, but everyone turned him away. Some yelled at the boy. |
| Julius: | This people anger me! The boy has done nothing wrong. He appears only to be poor and asking for work. |
| Andrew: | I saw one man push the boy out of the way. Shameful! |
| Julius: | The boy and his family may be who we are looking for! |
| Andrew: | Possibly. |
| Narrator: | The two men watched the boy turn, his head down, and walk down a path, away from the loud marketplace toward a group of sun-dried mud brick homes. He walked toward a house at the end of the row of old homes. The walls were apparently not very strong and crumbling on one wall. It appeared that the roof of the house was made of clay tiles, but those were broken and falling. The windows were small and covered with broken wooden shutters. The boy, his dark hair covering one of his eyes, looked up at the house. He picked up a couple of the fallen clay tiles and carefully placed them up next to the house, then opened the door. |
| Julius: | This family needs help. |
| Andrew: | This is horrendous. It just looks like they are poor and being treated badly. |
| Julius: | Did you see the boy pick up the tiles? He may be poor, but he still has some pride in his home. Could this family be the one? |
| Andrew: | (Shrugging) For the boy's sake, I hope so. I would really like to see a smile on his face. |
| Narrator: | Heading back to the marketplace, the two men carefully walked up to and asked a few questions from the girls who had made fun of the boy. |
| Julius: | Hi. Can I ask you why you made fun of that boy? Did he do something? |
| Girl 1: | (Laughing and pointing) Do something? No, that is just Belen. He and his mother live in that rotten house down that street. |
| Girl 2: | (Tossing her hair) He is the poorest kid in the town. His father died a few years ago. His mother works as a washwoman for us. |
| Girl 3: | He was over here asking if he could work for our parents, but our parents cannot stand him. My mother says he smells. He has a little brother who cannot work, or he would be trying to work too. |
| Narrator: | Noticing that a woman was looking at them suspiciously, Julius and Andrew walked through the marketplace, asking what the town did for their poor. |
| Man 1: | Why are you asking that? You know that the poor are not wanted here. It is a small town, but we have wealthy people here who always feel they need to hire these poor people so they can eat. |
| Man 2: | I think it is a shame that the boy and his family are treated so poorly! |

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| Man 3: | Man, are you dense? All they do is use up our resources. They can work and earn their keep. They just have to work harder! Here they come. |
| Narrator: | Just at that moment, Julius and Andrew looked toward where the man pointed and saw a very thin woman walking with the boy and a young child in her arms. Ignoring the three men still gossiping, Julius and Andrew walked up to the boy's mother and introduced themselves. |
| Julius: | My name is Julius, and this is my friend Andrew. |
| Narrator: | The woman looked a bit frightened, not expecting these two men who were apparently wealthy. |
| Andrew: | Might we ask your name? |
| Thea: | My name is Thea. Why do you ask? |
| Narrator: | The boy sidled up to his mother, obviously protective of her and his little brother. |
| Julius: | We work for the great Greek citizen Dardanus in Athens, Greece, and he sent us here for a specific purpose. |
| Andrew: | (Looking down at the boy): Would it be okay if we fix your house for you? |
| Thea: | (Looking down) I-I cannot afford to pay you. |
| Andrew: | We have not eaten since we arrived in town. What would you say to sharing your dinner with us? |
| Thea: | We do not have much. |
| Julius: | I am a rather good shot, and I saw some fat brown rabbits in the area. If I bring you a couple of rabbits, would you be able to fix a meal for us? |
| Narrator: | The boy's face brightened, and he nodded to his mother, who smiled. |
| Thea: | I would be very happy to make a nice meal for you. |
| Andrew: | Well, then, it is agreed. We will come to your house and fix your roof and your house for a wonderful meal. |
| Narrator: | As they headed to her house, Thea had two women who followed them, curious to see what was going on. The boy hoped that they were there to make sure the men were being honest on the deal, but the boy knew that the women were just going there to shore up more gossip to tell their friends. |
| Thea: | (Happily) This will be a meal you will never forget. |
| Narrator: | Julius headed into the forests to hunt down their meal, and Andrew went to the house, picking up more tiles that had fallen from the house. |
| Thea: | (Sighing) It has been years that the house has been repaired. My husband died three years ago, and everything just seemed to fall apart. |
| Andrew: | You have two beautiful sons, Thea. That is more than most people have. Young man, your name is Belen, right? Come, Belen, and we will get started. |
| Narrator: | Andrew and Belen began working right away, with Andrew teaching Belen how to fix the tiles and shore up the house so it would be sealed and sturdy. After an hour, Julius joined them, bringing a full bag of game to eat for dinner. After taking the bag into the house, along with a large bag of grain and vegetables that he had bought at the marketplace, Julius set to work with Andrew and Belen. Just as the sun was growing larger and hotter in the west, the two men and the boy finished. |

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| Belen: | Wow, it's beautiful! I cannot wait for my mother to see it! |
| Narrator: | Belen ran into the house and brought his mother and little brother out to see what they had accomplished. |
| Thea: | Oh, it's wonderful! Thank you so much! |
| Julius: | It is our pleasure. |
| Andrew: | Now how about that dinner you promised? I am starving! |
| Thea: | (Laughing): Wash your hands and come in. |
| Narrator: | Belen sighed and smiled at Andrew. |
| Belen: | I have not heard her laugh since my father died. |
| Andrew: | Well, your mother needs to smile more often. We need to make that happen. |
| Narrator: | The evening went well, and the dinner was delicious. As Julius and Andrew left for the evening, they promised to bring Dardanus back with them to visit in a few days. |
| Belen: | Would you teach me how to do more? I want to know how to do things. I want to be useful. |
| Julius: | That is a promise. We will return. |
| Narrator: | A few days went by. The town women and men gossiped and whispered to themselves as to why the two men had helped Thea and her family. One day while everyone was gossiping, one woman stated that she was jealous. The others laughed at her. That same day, a great procession entered the town. It is Dardanus, who had decided he must quickly come to meet Thea, Belen, and the baby after being encouraged by Julius and Andrew. As the procession came up to the house, Thea, Belen, and his little brother, Alcaeus stood with their mouths open. |
| Dardanus: | (Getting out of the fine carriage): Hello, Thea! I am Dardanus. It is very nice to meet you. |
| Thea: | Oh, my goodness! |
| Belen: | Wow! |
| Narrator: | Dardanus had been looking for an honest, worthy family to take over his fortune after he passed, and when he told Thea, she almost fainted. Dardanus took Thea, Belen, and Alcaeus to his stately Grecian home in Athens, where he adopted them and introduced them to Greek society. Belen and Alcaeus were educated by the best in Athens and both grew to be intelligent, caring men who took great care of helping others in need. Andrew had been so taken by Thea that he married her and Thea now had three more children. Dardanus had been looking for an unselfish family, and he had found it. Dardanus lived ten more years because he was so happy, and he his greatest joy was in watching the children grow and thrive. |

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| Narrator: | The Ants in the story The Ants and the Grasshopper by Aesop were selfish and self-centered, focused on working all day but never appreciating the other things in life that made life worthwhile. The Grasshopper had not thought toward the future, so he was forced to face his folly. Through no fault of their own, Thea, Belen, and Alcaeus were starving and living with the stigma of poverty all around them. Dardanus, Julius, and Andrew searched for a while to find the people who would appreciate his gift and they were rewarded with the satisfaction of helping others, making friends, and Andrew found a beautiful wife. To see Belen and Alcaeus grow and thrive was their reward. |
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The moral of this story is:

"There's a time for work and a time for play."