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Greece
Short-Term
Exchange
Amaliada, 6/10
May 2019
Ancient Elis
Theatrical Play of
“Augean stables”



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THE AUGEAN STABLES

CHARACTERS

(in order of appearance):

Narrators (14)

Eurestheus

Hercules

Iolaus

Augeas

Peneus

Alpheus

River waters (16)

Soldiers (6)





Narrator 1: A long time ago, king Augeas in Ilida had many herds of cattle, which he closed every night in his stables. But he would never clean them up. Thus, for many years the royal stables were so filthy and so full of dirt that nothing could sprout. The smell had become terrible and the manure brought a devastating plague that caused a disaster in human lives.

Narrator 2: The King of Tiryns and Mycenae, Eurystheus was determined to find a solution. And he knew very well who the best person would be to ask for help. The most powerful of all people, the exterminator of the wild beasts and monsters, the persecutor of evil and tyrants, good-hearted and courageous, the demigod Hercules. So, it was not too late to call him and tell him his difficult task, to clean up the stables of Augeas in just one day.

Eurystheus: Great Hercules, I understand that what you are called to do is terribly difficult, I would say impossible. But what is impossible for you? Because of this witless king of Ilida, the plague has swept the whole country, and you alone can help.

Hercules: My King, the challenge is great, but since it is for the good of all people, I will not hesitate at all. I'll hurry right away.

Narrator 3: Hercules did not waste time. He immediately found Iolaus, his nephew. Iolaus always helped and supported him. He was always ready to assist wherever necessary, to join his power with the power of





Hercules, to follow in any mission no matter how difficult it was. So, Hercules informed him about the mission that he would have to accomplish this time, and of course he immediately offered to follow him in his new labour.

Iolaus: There is no chance, Uncle, to leave you alone in this labour. I will come along you to help. We were together in so many missions. We had

hard times. Many a time, the thought of us not achieving it, crossed my mind. I cannot hide it from you, that I was often scared, that I thought we would not be able to get back. But we were together, united.

We supported each other and, despite the difficulties, we were trying to achieve our purpose.

Hercules: It is so, Iolaus. Your words touch me. You have learned so many things through adventures. You have understood that when we do not lose hope and when we are united in the difficult missions that come in our way, we have already secured half the success.

Iolaus: And what about the other half? How do we secure it?

Hercules: Our humility brings along the other half. Anyone who hurries to pride on his virtues loses victory. The world calls me a "hero". But I





only do my duty. I have the power to help people and I do it. But let's leave the words aside now. It is time to get on our way.

Iolaus: Let's go!

Narrator 4: So, Hercules, departed along with Iolaus. Once again, in their minds there was no thought of returning in victory so that they would be glorified, and the people receive them with brilliance and honor. Their only thought was to really help the people who were ill and suffered, the people who were for a long time forced to live in a rotten place. They would wash away everything that was dirty, so that people could live without fear, so that the flowers could sprout again. Approaching the kingdom of Augeas, uncle and nephew were faced with such a horrible smell that they almost got dizzy. Everything seemed dirty and contaminated. Without losing time, they rushed to the palace.

Augeas: You, then, are famous Hercules who asked to see me.

Hercules: Yes, it's me. And here is my nephew, Iolaus.

Augeas: What brings you to my palace?

Hercules: We have learned that there are countless herds in this place. They told us about a rich king with 3,000 oxen.





Augeas: That's me. I have filled my stables with animals that my father, the Sun, gave me.

Hercules: But these stables have been filled with lots of dirt. And everyone around is suffering.

Augeas: You see the animals are too many, and my shepherds, no matter how many they are, can't keep up with cleaning so much filth.

Heracles: That's why we are here for. We will take care of that.

Augeas: Really? If I see, then, my stables clean once again, after so many years, be sure, Hercules, that you will receive a great fee from me. You will get the 1/10 of my herd.

Narrator 5: After this meeting, the mind of Hercules was troubled by the clear instruction of King Eurystheus. He would have to complete his mission within one single day. Iolaus was also very troubled. But how could they wash up so much dirt so fast? As they were thinking without speaking, suddenly, voices began to sound in the silence. Voices, voices!

All hell was breaking loose! A great fight was happening. There was a big fuss.





Narrator 6: Puzzled, our two heroes got up and moved in the direction of the voices. When they reached the point of the brawl, they were surprised to see the two rivers, Peneus and Alpheus, entangled in a big brawl. They had started to compete, compare, fight with each other. They were looking to find who is the best, the fastest, the biggest. There was such a fuss and such a rioting that it cannot be described in words.

Peneus: Listen to me, Alpheus. Everyone is talking about Peneus. I am the most wonderful river in the Peloponnese. My length is 70 kilometers. I cover a large part of the county and I give life to crops spreading out on the plain. You will see that one day people will gather my waters into a big lake and so I can water all the fields of Iliada and give them life.

Alpheus: But what are you talking about Peneus? Could you ever be compared to Alpheus? I am the most important river in the Peloponnese because I am the longest. I am 110 km long. In my passage I go through many different places. I meet a lot of villages and mountains. People are building watermills on my shores and the athletes cool off in my waters.

Iolaus: But what's got into them and they have started fighting? How important is it who is the best? And besides, how could this be judged? In the world we live, every river like every human being, is important for its own different reason. If they understood this, they would not be wondering who the best was, but they would feel equal and useful.





Hercules: You have spoken well Iolaus. But, at least, a good thing can come out from all this fuss. I have an idea! I think I found the solution to what we are bothered about!

Iolaus: What good can come out of this whole thing? What can be the solution?

Hercules: Peneus and Alpheus, Hercules is speaking to you. You are truly two fine rivers of the Peloponnese and you embellish this place with varied forms of life. However, in order to find an answer to what you are looking for, it remains to be seen which of the two is the fastest; who has the greatest rapidness; who will pass through the dirty stables of Augeas and will manage with his gurgling and power to wash them so well that they will soon make them shimmer of cleanliness.

Narrator 7: Hercules' idea to put this test on the two rivers for everyone to supposedly see who the best is, proved amazing. Besides, especially in this labour, no matter how strong he was in the body, Hercules could not have done it if he did not use the power of his mind. What led him to find a solution to his difficult task was not his physical strength but his wisdom.

Narrator 8: Immediately then, the two rivers flowed simultaneously, rushing out, to pass, as fast as they could, through the stables that were among them.

(The River Waters run along fiercely on the stage.)

A crazy splash swept the place, and the waters did not cease jumping, sweeping aside everything they found in their passage.





Narrator 9: Hercules, in order to change the currents from the rivers that the rivers followed and open them wide along the way to the stables, dug two deep ditches that led there and left their waters pass through them with all their force.

Narrator 10: So, before the sun had set, all the manure was swept away, and the stables shone with cleanliness. Within a single day, the kingdom was rinsed out of the dirt and it could start again enjoying new, clean and joyful days. And of course, the time had come for Hercules to return to Augeas 's palace to receive his reward. But something would not work well.

Hercules: King Augeas, we are back. Our difficult mission has come to an end. Within one day the stables are clean again. Odor and manure are now past for your kingdom. It is enough, of course, that you keep this cleanliness so that, from now on, no dirt can gather again.

Augeas: That's impossible! You did what you said, but you did it with a trick, since you appointed the job to the two rivers. That's why you will not get a fee from me.

Narrator 11: Augeas was so angry that he did not only give Hercules what he had promised, but he even drove him away and forbade him to set foot back there. Thus, the rich king did not keep his word and, instead of thanking and honoring Hercules, after the good he had done for his kingdom, he treated him unfairly and hard.

Narrator 12: So, Hercules left, but after a while he returned with his army.

(The Soldiers appear marching all together rhythmically.)





He fought, came out victorious and killed the unjust king. For his victory, to be remembered, has set the games near Alpheus every four years. Hercules did this in honor of his father, Zeus. This place was named Olympia and the games were the Olympic ones. Hercules himself organized the first Olympic Games and it is remarkable that during the games the war ceased, and peace prevailed.

Narrator 13: Why did he do that? Because Hercules wanted, in this way, to help the Greeks stop competing and to learn what competition means; end the hatred and be friends together. Everyone wants to become better not in order to get ahead of the others but to go along with them for the common good.

Narrator 14: Let's not forget that even the rivers, who competed against each other and fought to find out who is the best, would not be able to clean the stables so quickly if they did not rush out at the same time. That was what Hercules had in mind. That is why, although a demigod, he helped mortal people so much and eventually became a hero for them.

