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God of the Dragging Feet

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GOD OF THE DRAGGING FEET

by Sue Nevill

I

"...the goddess Thetis of the silver feet went onward to Olympus, to bring back to her son the glorious armour."

The Iliad of Homer
Translated by Richmond Lattimore

God of the dragging feet, Hephaistos works on the weariless bronze for Achilles' shield.

His shrunken legs move lightly under him. His golden women intelligent and strong, do not remind him of his brazen mother who cast him out. He created them gentle.

Renowned Hephaistos hammers bounty into a five-fold shield: a pride of tilled land, the dancing floor of Knossos.

Smith of the strong arms, he works for the love of the metal, forgets the ingratitude of other gods, their constant laughter.

Here he has breathed his earth and universe. Its figures speak and move. The tireless sun runs its courses, moon waxes into fullness.

Content, he cleans his tools, sets the bellows back, wipes his massive neck and hairy chest. All is in order. His golden women precede him to the door. He leaves the visions of his willing heart, melted into bronze and silver, cooling in the dark.

II

"Aphrodite...loves ruinous Ares because he is handsome, and goes sound on his feet, while I am misshaped from birth..."

The Odyssey of Homer
Translated by Richmond Lattimore

His own dear bed fouled by a girl; beautiful indeed, but intemperate.

Heartsore and turbulent with sorrows, He hammers out a golden cobweb, strands to grip and hold the liars fast, but painlessly. He knows pain well, would not wish it for them.

What had he to hope for in this marriage? Aphrodite, beauty above all, and he— whose mother grasped his heel in horror, threw him down to Thetis' care. Perhaps he should ignore the insult. Cannot. This is not fair.

Subtle Hephaistos, cursing Helios, who brought the news, spins his lines from roof beams and from posts; takes a deep breath, waits for the lovers to lie down. This time the slow one will overtake the swift, though he is lame.