

SCIENCE FICTION

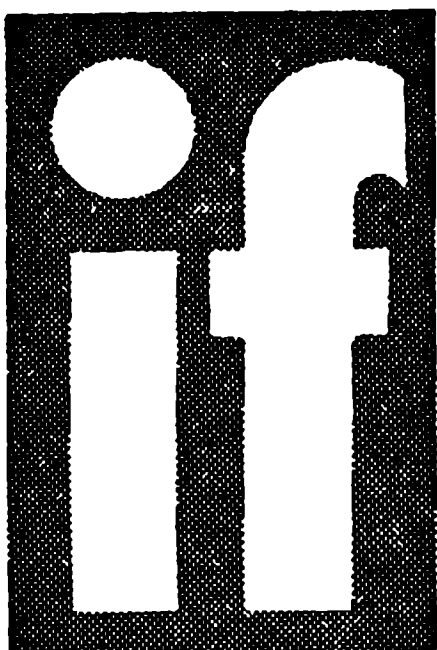
MAY • 35 CENTS

HEEL

by Philip Jose Farmer

if





WORLDS OF SCIENCE FICTION

MAY 1960

All Stories New and Complete

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SHORT NOVEL

A TOURIST NAMED DEATH by Christopher Anvil 6

NOVELETTES

A PRIDE OF ISLANDS by C. C. MacApp 56

MATCHMAKER by Charles L. Fontenay 106

SHORT STORIES

THIRTY DEGREES CATTYWONKUS by James Bell 37

WHEN DAY IS DONE by Arnold Castle 48

HEEL by Philip Jose Farmer 74

A GREAT DAY FOR THE IRISH by A. M. Lightner 94

FEATURE

WORLDS OF IF by Frederik Pohl 88

COVER by Finlay: "Pin-ups in Space"

Illustrations by Wood and Finlay

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HEEL

*Great cast! Stupendous
show! If this didn't
make history, nothing
ever would!*

By PHILIP JOSE FARMER



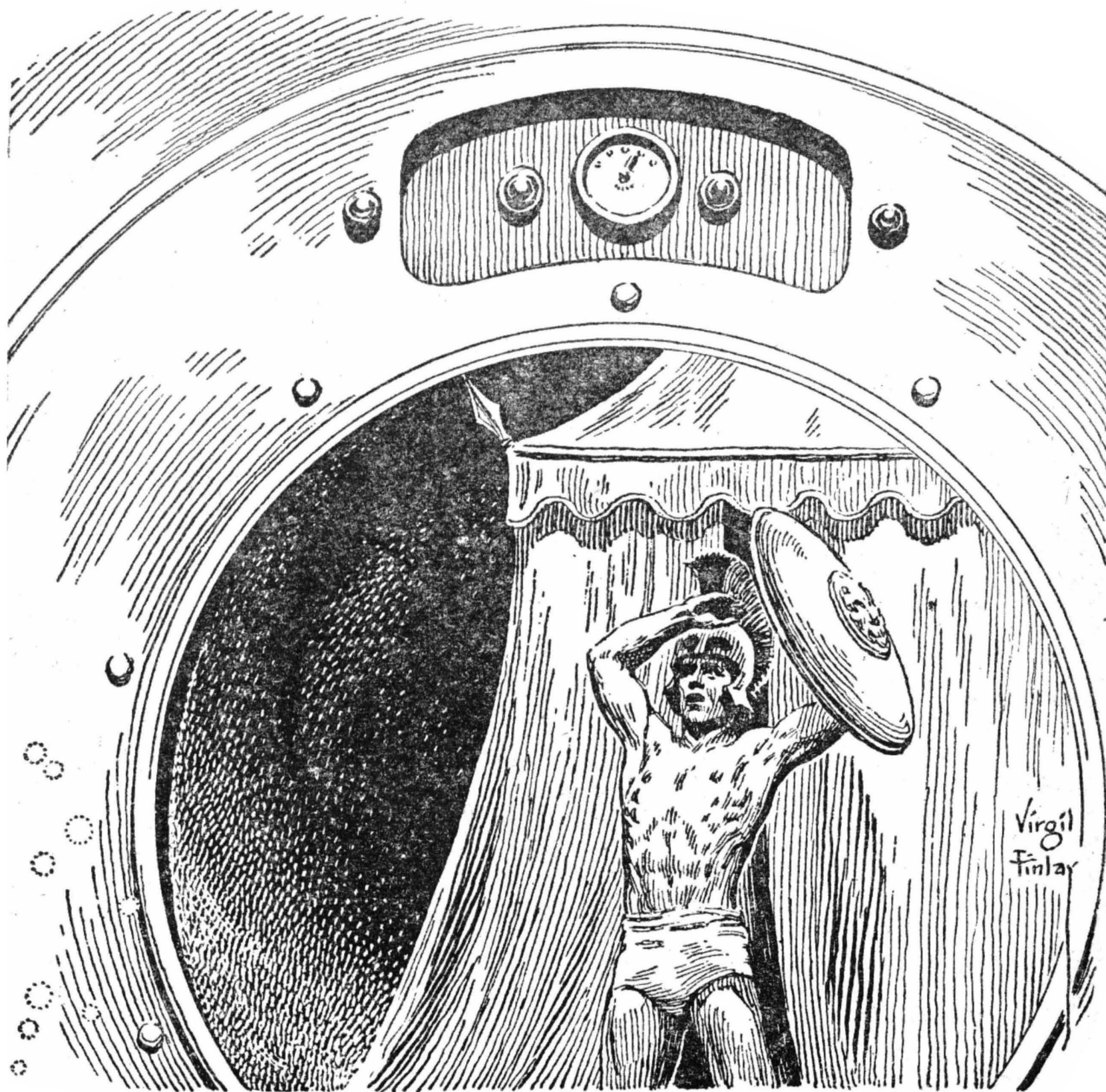
"CALL me Zeus," said the Director.

"Zeus?" said his wife, a beautiful woman not over a thousand years old. "What an egomaniac! Comparing yourself to a god, even if he is the god of those—those savages!"

She gestured at the huge screen on the wall. It showed, far below, the blue sea, the

black ships on the yellow beach, the purple tents of the Greek army, the broad brown plain, and the white towers of Troy.

The Director glared at her through hexagonal dark glasses and puffed on his cigar until angry green clouds rolled from it. His round bald head was covered by a cerise beret,



his porpoise frame by a canary yellow tunic, and his chubby legs by iridescent green fourpluses.

"I may not look like a god, but as far as my power over the natives of this planet goes, I could well be their deity," he replied.

He spoke sharply to a tall handsome blond youth who wore a crooked smile and bright blue and yellow tattoo spiraling around his legs and trunk. "Apollo, hand me the Script!"

"Surely you're not going to change the Script again?" said his wife. She rose from her chair, and the scarlet web she was wearing translated the shifting micro-voltages on the surface of her skin into musical tones.

"I never change the Script," said the Director. "I just make the slight revisions required for dramatic effects."

"I don't care what you do to it, just so you don't allow the Trojans to win. I hate those despicable brutes."

Apollo laughed loudly, and he said, "Ever since she and Athena and Aphrodite thought of that goofy stunt of asking Paris to choose the most beautiful of the three, and he gave the prize to Aphrodite, Hera's hated the Trojans. Really, Hera, why blame those simple, likable people for the actions of only one of them? I think Paris showed excellent judgment. Aphrodite was so grate-

ful she contrived to get that lovely Helen for Paris and—"

"Enough of this private feud," snapped the Director. "Apollo, I told you once to hand me the Script."

ACHILLES at midnight paced back and forth before his tent. Finally, in the agony of his spirit, he called to Thetis. The radio which had been installed in his shield, unknown to him, transmitted his voice to a cabin in the great spaceship hanging over the Trojan plain.

Thetis, hearing it, said to Apollo, "Get out of my cabin, you heel, or I'll have you thrown out."

"Leave?" he said. "Why? So you can be with your barbarian lover?"

"He is not my lover," she said angrily. "But I'd take even a barbarian as a lover before I'd have anything to do with you. Now, get out. And don't speak to me again unless it's in the line of business."

"Any time I speak to you, I mean business," he said, grinning.

"Get out or I'll tell my father!"

"I hear and obey. But I'll have you, one way or another."

Thetis shoved him out. Then she quickly put on the suit that could bend light around her to make her invisible and transport her through the air and do many other things. Out

of a port she shot, straight toward the tent of her protégé. She did not decelerate until she saw him standing tall in the moonlight, his hands still raised in entreaty. She landed and cut the power off so he could see her.

"Mother, Mother!" cried Achilles. "How long must I put up with Agamemnon's high-handedness?"

Thetis took him by the hand and led him into the tent. "Is Patroclus around?" she asked.

"No, he is having some fun with Iphis, that buxom beauty I gave him after I conquered the city of Scyros."

"There's a sensible fellow," said Thetis. "Why don't you forget this fuss with King Agamemnon and have fun with some rosy-cheeked darling?" But a painful expression crossed her face as she said it.

Achilles did not notice the look. "I am too sick with humiliation and disgust to take pleasure in anything. I am full up to here with being a lion in the fighting and yet having to give that jackal Agamemnon the lion's share of the loot, just because he has been chosen to be our leader. Am I not a king in Thessaly? I wish—I wish—"

"Yes?" said Thetis eagerly. "Do you want to go home?"

"I *should* go home. Then the Greeks would wish they'd not allowed Agamemnon to insult the best man among them."

"Oh, Achilles, say the word and I'll have you across the sea and in your palace in an hour!" she said excitedly. She was thinking, *The Director will be furious if Achilles disappears, but he won't be able to do anything about it. And the Script can be revised. Hector or Odysseus or Paris can play the lead role.*

"NO," Achilles said. "I can't leave my men here. They'd say I had run out on them, that I was a coward. And the Greeks would call me a yellow dog. No, I'll allow no man to say that."

Thetis sighed and answered sadly, "Very well. What do you want me to do?"

"Go ask Zeus if he will give Agamemnon so much trouble he'll come crawling to me, begging for forgiveness and pleading for my help."

Thetis had to smile. The enormous egotism of the beautiful brute! Taking it for granted that the Lord of Creation would bend the course of events so Achilles could salvage his pride. Yet, she told herself, she need not be surprised. He had taken it calmly enough the night she'd appeared to him and told him that she was a goddess and his true mother. He had always been convinced divine blood ran in his veins. Was he not superior to all men? Was he not Achilles?

"I will go to Zeus," she said.

"But what he will do, only he knows."

She reached up and pulled his head down to kiss him on the forehead. She did not trust herself to touch the lips of this man who was far more a man than those he supposed to be gods. The lips she longed for . . . the lips soon to grow cold. She could not bear to think of it.

She flicked the switch to make her invisible and, after leaving the tent, rose toward the ship. As always, it hung at four thousand feet above the plain, hidden in the inflated plastic folds that simulated a cloud. To the Greeks and Trojans the cloud was the home of Zeus, anchored there so he could keep a close eye on the struggle below.

It was he who would decide whether the walls of Troy would stand or fall. It was to him that both sides prayed.

THE Director was drinking a highball in his office and working out the details of tomorrow's shooting with his cameramen.

"We'll give that Greek Diomedes a real break, make him the big hero. Get a lot of close-ups. He has a superb profile and a sort of flair about him. It's all in the Script, what aristocrats he kills, how many narrow escapes, and so on. But about noon, just before lunch, we'll wound him. Not too badly, just enough to put

him out of action. Then we'll see if we can whip up a big tearjerker between that Trojan and his wife—what's her name?"

He looked around as if he expected them to feed him the answer. But they were silent; it was not wise to know more than he.

He snapped his fingers. "Andromache! That's it!"

"What a memory! How do you keep all those barbaric names at your tongue's tip? Photographic!" and so on from the suckophants.

"O.K. So after Diomedes leaves the scene, you, Apollo, will put on a simulacrum of Helenos, the Trojan prophet. As Helenos, you'll induce Hector to go back to Troy and get his mother, the Queen, to pray for victory. We can get some colorful shots of the temple and the local religious rites. Meantime, we'll set up a touching domestic scene between Hector and his wife. Ring in their baby boy. A baby's always good for ohs and ahs. Later, after coffee break, we'll . . ."

Apollo drifted through the crowd toward the Director's wife. She was sitting on a chair and moodily drinking. However, seeing Apollo, she smiled with green-painted lips and said, "Do sit down, darling. You needn't worry about my husband being angry because you're paying attention to me. He's too busy

shining down on his little satellites to notice you."

Apollo seated himself in a chair facing her and moved forward so their knees touched.

"What do you want now?" she said. "You only get lovey-dovey when you're trying to get something out of me."

"You know I love only you, Hera," he said, grinning. "But I can't meet you as often as I'd like. Old Thunder-and-Lightning is too suspicious. And I value my job too much to risk it, despite my overwhelming passion for you."

"Get to the point."

"We're way over our budget and past our deadline. The shooting should have been finished six months ago. Yet Old Fussybritches keeps on revising the Script and adding scene after scene. And that's not all. We're not going home when Troy does fall. The Director is planning to make a sequel. I know because he asked me to outline the Script for it. He's got the male lead picked out. Foxy Grandpa Odysseus."

HERA sat upright so violently she sloshed her drink over the edge of her glass. "Why, my brother means to kill Odysseus at the first opportunity! My brother is mad, absolutely mad about Athena, but he can't get to first base with her. She's got eyes only for Odysseus, though

how she could take up with one of those stupid primitives, I'll never understand."

"Athena claims he has an intelligence equal to any of us," said Apollo. "However, it's not her but Thetis I meant to discuss."

"Is my stepdaughter interfering again?"

"I think so. Just before this conference I saw her coming out of the Director's room, tears streaming from her big cow eyes. I imagine she was begging him again to spare Achilles. Or at least to allow the Trojans to win for a while so Agamemnon will give back to Achilles the girl he took from him, that tasty little dish, Briseis."

"You ought to know how tasty she is," said Hera bitterly. "I happen to know you drugged Achilles several nights in a row and then put on his simulacrum."

"A handy little invention, that simulacrum," said Apollo. "Put one on and you can look like anybody you want to look like. Your jealousy is showing, Hera. However, that's not the point. If Thetis keeps playing on her father's sympathies like an old flute, this production will last forever. Frankly, I'd like to shake the dust of this crummy planet from my feet, get back to civilization before it forgets what a great script writer I am."

"What do you propose?"

"I propose to hurry things

up. Eventually, Achilles is supposed to quit sulking and take up arms again. So far, the Director has been indefinite on how we'll get him to do that. Well, we'll help him without his knowing it. We'll fix it so the Trojans will beat the Greeks even worse than the Director intends. Hector will almost run them back into the sea. Agamemnon will beg Achilles to get back into the ring. He'll give him back the loot he took from him, including Briseis. And he'll offer his own daughter in marriage to Achilles.

"Achilles will refuse. But we'll have him all set up for the next move. Tonight a technician will implant a post-hypnotic suggestion in Achilles that he send his buddy Patroclus, dressed in Achilles' armor, out to scare the kilts off the Trojans. We'll generate a panic among the Trojans with a subsonic projector. Then we'll arrange it so Hector kills Patroclus. That is the one thing to make Achilles so fighting mad he'll quit sulking . . ."

"Patroclus? But the Director wants to save him for the big scene when Achilles is knocked off. Patroclus is supposed to put Achilles' armor on, storm the Scaian gate, and lead the Greeks right into the city."

"Accidents will happen," said Apollo. "Despite what the barbarians think, we are not

gods. Or are we? What do you say to my plan?"

"If the Director finds out we've tampered with the Script, he'll divorce me. And you'll be blackballed in every studio from one end of the Galaxy to the other."

Apollo winked and said, "I'll leave it to you to make Old Stupe think Patroclus' death was his own idea. You have done something like that before, and more than once."

She laughed and said, "Oh, Apollo, you're such a heel."

He rose. "Not a heel. Just a great script writer. Our plan will give me a chance to kill Achilles much sooner than the Director expects. And it'll all be for the good of the Script."

THAT night two technicians went into the Greek camp, one to Achilles' tent and one to Agamemnon's. The technician assigned to the King of Mycenae gave him a whiff of sleep gas and then taped two electrodes to the royal forehead. It took him a minute to play a recording and two to untape the electrodes and leave.

Five minutes later, the King awoke, shouting that Zeus had sent him a dream in the shape of wise old Nestor. Nestor had told him to rouse the camp and march forth even if it were only dawn, for today Troy would fall and his brother Menelaos would get back his wife Helen.

Agamemnon, though, who

had always been too clever for his own good, told the council of elders that he wanted to test his army before telling them the truth. He would announce that he was tired of this war they could not win and that he wanted to go home. This news would separate the slackers from the soldiers, his true friends from the false.

Unfortunately, when he told this to the assemblage, he found far less men of valor than he had expected. The entire army, with a few exceptions, gave a big hurrah and stampeded toward the ships. They had had a bellyful of this silly war, fighting to win back the beautiful tart Helen for the King's brother, spilling their guts all over foreign plains while their wives were undoubtedly playing them false with the 4-F's, the fields were growing weeds, and their children were starving.

In vain, Agamemnon tried to stop the rush. He even shouted at them what they had only guessed before, that more was at stake than his brother's runaway wife. If Troy was crushed, the Greeks would own the trading and colonizing routes to the rich Black Sea area. But no one paid any attention to him. They were too concerned with knocking each other over in their haste to get the ships ready to sail.

At this time, the only people from the spaceship on the

scene were some cameramen and technicians. They were paralyzed by the unexpectedness of the situation, and they were afraid to use their emotion-stimulating projectors. By the flick of a few switches the panic could be turned into aggression. But it would have been aggression without a leader. The Greeks, instead of automatically turning to fight the Trojans, would have killed each other, sure that their fellows were trying to stop them from embarking for home.

The technicians did not dare to waken the Director and acknowledge they could not handle a simple mob scene. But one of them did put a call through to one of the Director's daughters, Athena.

Athena zipped down to Odysseus and found him standing to one side, looking glum. He had not panicked, but he also was not interfering. Poor fellow, he longed to go home to Penelope. In the beginning of this useless war, he had pretended madness to get out of being drafted. But, once he had sworn loyalty to the King, he would not abandon him.

Athena flicked off her light-bender so he could see her. She shouted, "Odysseus, don't just stand there like a lump on a bog! Do something or all will be lost—the war, the honor of the Greeks, the riches you will get from the loot of Troy! Get going!"

Odysseus, never at a loss, tore the wand of authority from the King's numbed hand and began to run through the crowd. Everybody he met he reproached with cowardice, and backed the sting of his words with the hard end of the wand on their backs. Athena signaled to the technicians to project an aggression-stimulating frequency. Now that the Greeks had a leader to channel their courage, they could be diverted back to fighting.

There was only one obstacle, Thersites. He was a lame hunchback with the face of a baboon and a disposition to match.

Thersites cried out in a hoarse, jeering voice, "Agamemnon, don't you have enough loot? Do you still want us to die so you may gather more gold and beautiful Trojan women in your greedy arms? You Greeks, you're not men. You're women who will do anything this disgrace to a crown tells you to do. Look what he did to Achilles. Robbed him of Briseis and in so doing robbed us of the best warrior we have. If I were Achilles, I'd knock Agamemnon's head off."

"We've put up with your outrageous abuse long enough!" shouted Odysseus. He began thwacking Thersites on the head and the back until blood ran. "Shut up or I'll kill you!"

At this the whole army, which hated Thersites, roared with laughter. Odysseus had relieved the tension; now they were ready to march under Agamemnon's orders.

Athena sighed with relief and radioed back to the ship that the Director could be awakened. Things were well in hand.

AND so they were—until a few days later when Apollo and Hera, waiting until the Director had gone to bed early with a hangover from the night before, induced Hector to make a night attack. The fighting went on all night, and at dawn Patroclus ran into Achilles' tent.

"Terrible news!" he cried. "The Trojans have breached the walls around our ships and are burning them! Diomedes, Agamemnon, and Odysseus are wounded. If you do not lead your men against Hector, all is lost!"

"Too bad," said Achilles. But the blood drained from his face.

"Don't be so hardhearted!" shouted Patroclus. "If you won't fight, at least allow me to lead the Myrmidons against the enemy. Perhaps we can save the ships and drive Hector off!"

Achilles shouted back, "Very well! You know I give you, my best friend, anything you want. But I will not for all the gold in the world serve

under a king who robs me of prizes I took with my own sword. However, I will give you my armor, and my men will march behind you!"

Then, sobbing with rage and frustration, he helped Patroclos dress in his armor.

"Do you see this little lever in the back of the shield?" he said. "When an enemy strikes at you, flick it this way. The air in front of you will become hard, and your foe's weapon will bounce off the air. Then, before he recovers from his confusion, flick the lever the other way. The air will soften and allow your spear to pass. And the spearpoint will shear through his armor as if it were cheese left in the hot sun. It is made of some substance harder than the hardest bronze made by the hand of man."

"So this is the magic armor your divine mother, Thetis, gave you," said Patroclos. "No wonder—"

"Even without this magic—or force field, as Thetis calls it—I am the best man among Greek or Trojan," said Achilles matter-of-factly. "There! Now you are almost as magnificent as I am. Go forth in my armor, Patroclos, and run the Trojans ragged. I will pray to Zeus that you come back safely. There is one thing you must not do, though, no matter how strong the temptation—do not chase the Trojans too close to the city, even

if you are on the heels of Hector himself. Thetis has told me that Zeus does not want Troy to fall yet. If you were to threaten it now, the gods would strike you down."

"I will remember," said Patroclos. He got into Achilles' chariot and drove off proudly to take his place in front of the Myrmidons.

THE Director was so red in the face, he looked as if his head were one huge blood vessel.

"How in space did the Trojans get so far?" he screamed. "And what is Patroclos doing in Achilles' armor? There's rank inefficiency here or else skullduggery! Either one, heads will roll! And I think I know whose! Apollo! Hera! What have you two been up to?"

"Why, Husband," said Hera, "how can you say I had anything to do with this? You know how I hate the Trojans. As for Apollo, he thinks too much of his job to go against the Script."

"All right, we'll see. We'll get to the bottom of this later. Meanwhile, let's direct the situation so it'll end up conforming to the Script."

But before the cameramen and technicians could be organized, Patroclos, leading the newly inspired Greeks, slaughtered the Trojans as a lion kills sheep. He could not be stopped, and when he saw

Hector running away from him, he forgot his friend's warning and pursued him to the walls of Troy.

"Follow me!" yelled Patroclos to the Greeks. "We will break down the gates and take the city within an hour!"

IT WAS then Apollo projected fury into Hector so that he turned to battle the man he thought was Achilles. And Apollo, timing to coincide with the instant that Patroclos flicked off his force field, struck him a stunning blow from behind. At the same time a spear thrown by a Trojan wounded Patroclos in the back. Dazed, hurt, the Greek started back toward his men. But Hector ran up and stabbed him through the belly, finding no resistance to his spear because Patroclos had not turned the force field back on. Patroclos hit the ground with a crash of armor.

"No, no, you fool, Apollo!" shouted the Director into the radio. "He must not die! We need him later for the Script. You utter fool, you've bumbled!"

Thetis, who had been standing behind the Director, burst into tears and ran into her cabin.

"What's the matter with her?" asked the Director.

"You may as well know, darling," said Hera, "that your daughter is in love with a barbarian."

"Thetis? In love with Patroclos? Impossible!"

Hera laughed and said, "Ask her how she feels about the planned death of Achilles. That is whom she is weeping for, not Patroclos. She foresees Achilles' death in his friend's. And I imagine she will go to comfort her lover, knowing his grief when he hears that Patroclos is dead."

"That's ridiculous! If she's in love with Achilles, why would she tell Achilles she is his mother?"

"For the very reason she loves him but doesn't want him to know. She at least has sense enough to realize no good could come from a match with one of those Earth primitives. So she stopped any passes from him with that maternal bit. If there is one thing the Greeks respect, it is the incest taboo."

"I'll have him knocked off as soon as possible. Thetis might lose her head and tell him the truth. Poor little girl, she's been away from civilization too long. We'll have to wind up this picture and get back to God's planet."

Hera watched him go after Thetis and then switched to a private channel. "Apollo, the Director is very angry with you. But I've thought of a way to smooth his feathers. We'll tell him that killing Patroclos was the only way to get Achilles back into the fight. He'll like that. Achilles can then be

slain, and the picture will still be saved. Also, I'll make him think it was his idea."

"That's great," replied Apollo, his voice shaky with dread of the Director. "But what can we do to speed up the shooting? Patroclus was supposed to take the city after Achilles was killed."

"Don't worry," said Athena, who had been standing behind Hera. "Odysseus is your man. He's been working on a device to get into the city. Barbarian or not, that fellow is the smartest I've ever met. Too bad he's an Earthman."

DURING the next twenty-four hours, Thetis wept much. But she was also very busy, working while she cried. She went to Hephaistos, the chief technician, an old man of five thousand years. He loved Thetis because she had intervened for Hephaistos more than once when her father had been angry with him. Yet he shook his head when she asked him if he could make Achilles another suit of armor, even more invulnerable than the first.

"Not enough time. Achilles is to be killed tomorrow."

"No. My father has cooled off a little. He remembered that the Script calls for Achilles to kill Hector before he himself dies. Besides, the government anthropologist wants to take films of the funeral games for Patroclus. And he

overrules even Father, you know."

"That'll give me a week," said Hephaistos, figuring on his fingers. "I can do it. But tell me, child, why all the tears? Is it true what they say, that you love a barbarian, that magnificent red-haired Achilles?"

"I love him," she said, weeping again.

"Ah, child, you are a mere hundred years or so. When you reach my age, you'll know that there are few things worth tears, and love between man and woman is not one of them. However, I'll make the armor. And its field of force will cover everything around him except an opening to the outside air. Otherwise, he'd suffocate. But what good will all this do? The Director will find some means of killing him. And even if Achilles should escape, you'd be no better off."

"I will," she said. "We'll go to Italy—and I'll give him perpetuol."

Thetis went to her cabin. Shortly afterward, the doorbell rang. She opened the door and saw Apollo.

Smiling, he said, "I have something here you might be interested in hearing." He held in his hand a small cartridge.

Seeing it, her eyes widened in surprise.

"Yes, it's a recording," he said, and he pushed past her

into the room. "Let me put it in your playback."

"You don't have to," she replied. "I presume you had a microphone planted in Hephaistos' cabin?"

"Correct. Won't your father be angry if somebody sends him a note telling him you're planning to ruin the Script by running off to Italy with a barbarian? And not only that but inject perpetuol into the barbarian to increase his life span? Personally, if I were your father, I'd let you do it. You'd soon grow sick of your handsome but uncouth booby."

Thetis did not answer.

"I really don't care," he said. "In fact, I'll help you. I can arrange it so the arrow that hits Achilles' heel will be a trick one. Its head will just seem to sink into his flesh. Inside it will be a needle that will inject a cataleptic agent. Achilles will seem to be dead but will actually be in a state of suspended animation. We'll sneak his body at night from the funeral pyre and substitute a corpse. A bio-tech who owes me a favor will fix up the face of a dead Trojan or Greek to look like Achilles'. When this epic is done and we're ready to leave Earth, you can run away. We'll not miss you until we're light-years away."

"And what do you want in return for arranging all this? My thanks?"

"I want you."

Thetis flinched. For a moment she stood with her eyes closed and her hands clenched. Then, opening her eyes, she said, "All right. I know that is the only way open for me. It's also the only way you could have devised to have me. But I want to tell you that I loathe and despise you. And I'll be hating every atom of your flesh while you're in possession of mine."

He chuckled and said, "I know it. But your hate will only make me relish you the more. It'll be the sauce on the salad."

"Oh, you heel!" she said in a trembling voice. "You dirty, sneaking, miserable, slimy heel!"

"Agreed." He picked up a bottle and poured two drinks. "Shall we toast to that?"

HECTOR'S death happened, as planned, and the tear-jerking scene in which his father, King Priam, came to beg his son's body from Achilles. Four days later, Achilles led the attack on the Scaian gate. It was arranged that Paris should be standing on the wall above the gate. Apollo, invisible behind him, would shoot the arrow that would strike Achilles' foot if Paris' arrow bounced off the force field.

Apollo spoke to Thetis, who was standing beside him. "You seem very nervous. Don't worry. You'll see your

lovely warrior in Italy in a few weeks. And you can explain to him that you aren't his mother, that you had to tell him that to protect him from the god Apollo's jealousy. But now that Zeus has raised him from the dead, you have been given to him as a special favor. And all will end happily. That is, until living with him will become so unbearable you'd give a thousand years off your life to leave this planet. Then, of course, it'll be too late. There won't be another ship along for several millennia."

"Shut up," she said. "I know what I'm doing."

"So do I," he said. "Ah, here comes the great hero Achilles, chasing a poor Trojan whom he plans to slaughter. We'll see about that."

He lifted the airgun in whose barrel lay the long dart with the trick head. He took careful aim, saying, "I'll wait until he goes to throw his spear. His force field will be off . . . Now!"

Thetis gave a strangled cry. Achilles, the arrow sticking from the tendon just above the heel, had toppled backward from the chariot onto the plain, where dust settled on his shining armor. He lay motionless.

"Oh, that was an awful fall," she moaned. "Perhaps he broke his neck. I'd better

go down there and see if he's all right."

"Don't bother," said Apollo. "He's dead."

Thetis looked at him with wide brown eyes set in a gray face.

"I put poison on the needle," said Apollo, smiling crookedly at her. "That was my idea, but your father approved of it. He said I'd redeemed my blunder in killing Patroclus by telling him what you planned. Of course, I didn't inform him of the means you took to insure that I would carry out my bargain with you. I was afraid your father would have been very shocked to hear of your immoral behavior."

Thetis choked out, "You unspeakable . . . vicious . . . vicious . . . you . . . you . . ."

"Dry your pretty tears," said Apollo. "It's all for your own good. And for Achilles', too. The story of his brief but glorious life will be a legend among his people. And out in the Galaxy the movie based on his career will become the most stupendous epic ever seen."

APOLLO was right. Four thousand years later, it was still a tremendous box-office attraction. There was talk that now that Earth was civilized enough to have space travel, it might even be shown there. **END**