

Ares Considers a Career Change

by Gary Hardaway

I miss the old wars. Adversaries lived
within the boundaries everybody knew.

Combatants wore uniforms
like targets on their backs.

Barbarians and savages wore feathers
or frightful face paint or skin tones

one could recognize and aim for
with weapons one could feel

the heft and sharpness of in hand.
There was no bother with collateral damage—

the sack, pillage and rape were by the rules
and we all knew the rules. The winner

made the rules and carried off the spoils
in palpable silver, gold and precious stones

and the usable living flesh of livestock,
concubines and slaves. The spoils

weren't conceptual, strategic, or
a rate of growth in glossy quarterly reports.

War has gotten so much murkier. The goals
are muddied and confused.

The makers of weapons don't wield weapons
but spread sheets and data points

that track the trends and revenues. They pick
no sides and know prosperity lies

in endless skirmishes and squabbles
and the preparations for that massive

conflagration profits can't allow. The violence
becomes its own end and can never be allowed stop.

I grow tired of all this petty and inglorious
crap. I think I'll buy a football team instead.

