

Pregame ritual

by [Bill Stadick](#) in the [August 31, 2016](#) issue

Here in the basement of the *Espresso Royale*

on Sixth Street in this land grant university town,  
amid English Fog lattes and keypad-clatter,

in the afternoon before the all-hallows-eve in which Katie,  
a great-great-et-cetera granddaughter

of the townswoman they hanged for the crime

of witchcraft, will play a game—*homo ludens*—

of volleyball against the maize-and-blue Michigan Wolverines

I draft a missive to the good citizenry of Dorchester as though they might yet

happen upon these words,

as though their revived selves were a short

gallop

from this latitude and longitude, as though their sins  
of omission and commission might still be forgiven—

not just forgotten—by an act of penance that includes

a pilgrimage to tonight's venue and a maniacal

cheering

for this descendent as she executes (I didn't invent the language)

a perfect play that culminates in (really, I didn't) a kill.

Full stop because

I don't know how to end this letter.

So I do what

I always do:

continue breaking

lines

and staggering

down the page until

it's time to witness

more volleyball and cheer like nothing

else ever happens or

matters.