

# defiant green

SCENIC WRITING | A.V.REDEN | 10.09.2011

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Forty-five degrees and rain, on a Saturday in early-October.

Some people would call that ideal soccer weather—especially the rain. There is something visceral about a sliding tackle when bright orange and fuchsia cleats chew up slick grass and spit out mud. There is something unpredictable—even *dangerous*—about the way a dead ball hurtles through the air while a puddle explodes in its wake—

The eyelid of a goalie twitches with adrenaline as the ball nears; he knows his gloves are wet, and the ball is too. You can see his heart racing in his throat—

A striker scores a goal, races across the field towards his wildly shouting teammates, and turns his face to the heavens. The rain kisses him congratulations: the entire sky opens upon him in pure, unadulterated glory—

There is nobody on this soccer field.

At the sidelines, a few modest rows of bleachers seat nothing but beads of water. They have no team colors, and the only chanting is the relentless *tat-a-tat-tat* of rain hitting metal. A black, chain-link fence stretches upward toward the sky, dividing the field from the sidewalk beside it, lined with picnic tables. A small convoy of catering trucks are parked along the street. Their sides are plastered with photos of fare spanning spaghetti, pineapple curry and falafel, each loaded with exotic spices and piping hot. Yet the raw air carries the residual smell of gasoline, the threat of winter and little else. The trucks' windows are closed and dark, awaiting a warmer Monday. On the far side of the field, a city bus is gone as fast as it arrives. It never slows—if anything, it gains speed as it ignores its designated stop.

The field bides its time, a vast green beast facing off against a looming white sky. The sky leeches the color—the very *life*—out of the world, pressing down with a heavy hand. It is the weight of that hand that pushes the leaves down from the trees in autumn, and persuades the sun to leave earlier than it otherwise would. But try as it might, the sky can't touch the field; it remains a uniform, defiant green.

Watch long enough, and suddenly it's the field sucking the color out of the world, not the sky. The only color is locked and screaming within that supersaturated grass. The painted sidelines and logo in the center circle show no sign of minding the rain. And even with so much wet grass, and all the rich earth below it, the strongest scent is of the rust lacing the fence...

Astroturf doesn't fade when the rest of the world goes grey. You can't leech life out of something that never lived.

Still, the field waits, patiently, hoping that life will come to it. Kitty-corner, the football field also meditates in silence. Yesterday evening, the marching band serenaded a lively crowd with 'We Will Rock You' loud enough to rock you from blocks away, but in the hangover from Friday night lights, its much larger bleachers are as empty as the soccer field's smaller ones. Usually, the two fields are rivals. Right now, they are uneasy allies against the enormity of the sky. They nearly begin discussing tactics over the rush of wind, when they are suddenly distracted:

Voices—coming closer.

A group of guys approaches the soccer field, chatting amongst themselves. They aren't hurrying, despite the cold. Some of them carry duffle bags over their shoulders and drop them unceremoniously upon the turf when they stop. Their clothing is athletic but generic—classic black-with-triple-white-stripe Adidas running shorts and loose white t-shirts. Some of them pull out colored mesh jerseys and throw them on too, while others check the laces to their shoes. The field looks all the greener as the players spread across it. It has come to life.

A guy reaches into the recesses of a duffle bag and removes a single object, tossing it with an lazy hand to his closest buddy. It is black, and white, and round.

And flat.

Minutes later, a raucous game of Ultimate Frisbee echoes across the turf.

The field will take what it can get.