

THE GAME

It's only mid-morning, but the heat beats down. You and your team in the grass under the trees – lions in a savannah, quieter and quieter as the game goes on until it's only the sound of the dry-weather insects, their chorus louder with each wicket down.

You put on the pads, stiff as posts, and march out to the crease, a cheer from your team as you go. In the middle, a ring of opponents surround you – their mouths stretched into hungry, wide grins.

You tighten your jaw, narrow your eyes, but your stomach is a stormy sea, churning brown and green, spitting up wood on the shore. The bowler takes his mark. Your hands pulsing, gripping the bat. Your head – swollen breakers, thumping on the sand.

The bowler runs in – closer, closer. "Here we go," you say softly to yourself, wishing for that crack, the sound of ball on bat, to send that thing hurtling over their heads. The bowler's arm wheels around. You steady your feet, lift your bat, the ball – is released.

Louise Wallace



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by Louise Wallace

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