



THIS LOVE IS NOT FOR COWARDS

Salvation and Soccer in Ciudad Juárez

By Robert Andrew Powell (*Author*)

The candid story of a life-changing season an American journalist spent following Ciudad Juárez's hapless but beloved soccer team, the Indios.

When Powell (*We Own This Game: A Season in the Adult World of Youth Football*, 2003) decided to go south of the border and live in Juárez, a town that experiences 10 murders per day, cartels and corruption interested him only in so far as they were part of the local color. What caught and held his attention was the Indios, a soccer team struggling to hold on to its major-league status and its dignity. As Powell drew closer to the members of the organization, he learned that the Indios were much more than just an ordinary sports franchise. For owner Francisco Ibarra, the club functioned as “a vital social program, the one bright spot in a city growing impossibly dangerous.” For the players, the team offered professional and economic opportunities. For American-born midfielder Marco Vidal, the Indios were a way to reconnect with his roots and fulfill the family dream of returning to Mexico. And for the citizens—especially the members of the Indios' rowdy, irrepressible fan club, El Kartel—the team represented hope and a way for the people to show they had been neither cowed nor defeated by the violence surrounding them. At the same time, however, Powell also saw that the team was ultimately powerless to save people (including himself) from the tragedy of tacitly accepting atrocity as the norm. The team could only help people survive in a city where “[m]urder [was] effectively legal” and a country where the government was as much to blame for the daily executions as the drug lords it claimed to be fighting against.

Unsentimental and deeply humane.

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