

Browne Jackson

"Lawless Avenues"

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Papa hit him, Mama kissed him
Made him go to Catechism
With the sisters in their black and white
And all the time those city streets
Were teaching him another kind of wisdom
When to run and when to fight
Up at the playground after school
Listening to tales of the prison system
And those lawless avenues
Down on a half darkened street
A child's footsteps repeat
And something there turns them
Down those lawless avenues
Silent Joe went down so bad
He was the strongest fighter the avenues had
Stabbed in the chest-- he went down swinging
Someone from some other part of town
No one even seen it coming down
And you don't hear no church bells ringing
And in the violent night the police light
Sweeps across the lots and the yards
Following those lawless avenues
Down on a half darkened street
Armies advance and retreat
And struggle to take control
From those lawless avenues
Manuelito's sister Rosa
Ran away with a surfer from Hermosa
Manuelito, cuida a Rosa
Hay mira como estan las cosas!
(Manuelito, take care of Rosa
Look at how things are)
But who could blame her after she saw
Every boy die who could have gotten close to her
Rosa es joven y solo quiere
ver la belleza del mundo
(Rosa is young and only wants
to see the beauty of the world)
Manuel said--
"You gotta fight for what you want in this life"
Just before they shipped him overseas to 'Nam
Otra guerra sin razon

Otra guerra sin fin, sin honor
(Another war without reason
Another war without end, without honor)
And she was fighting to understand
When they shipped Manuelito's body home
All she heard was one more shot
Echoing down lawless avenues
Hoy amigo, tal igual como ayer,
La lucha en el barrio no cambia
Nuestros hijos son los que han de crecer
Por ley de la calle, viviendo entre abrazos
Y chingazos
(Today my friend, just like yesterday,
The struggle in the barrio doesn't change
Our children are the ones to grow up
By the law of the street,
Living between hugs and blows)
Down on a half darkened street
Fathers' and sons' lives repeat
And something there turns them
Down those lawless avenues
En el calor de la calle
(In the heat of the street)
Buscan el valor en la calle
(Looking for valor in the street)
Hasta final de la calle
(Till the end of the street)

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