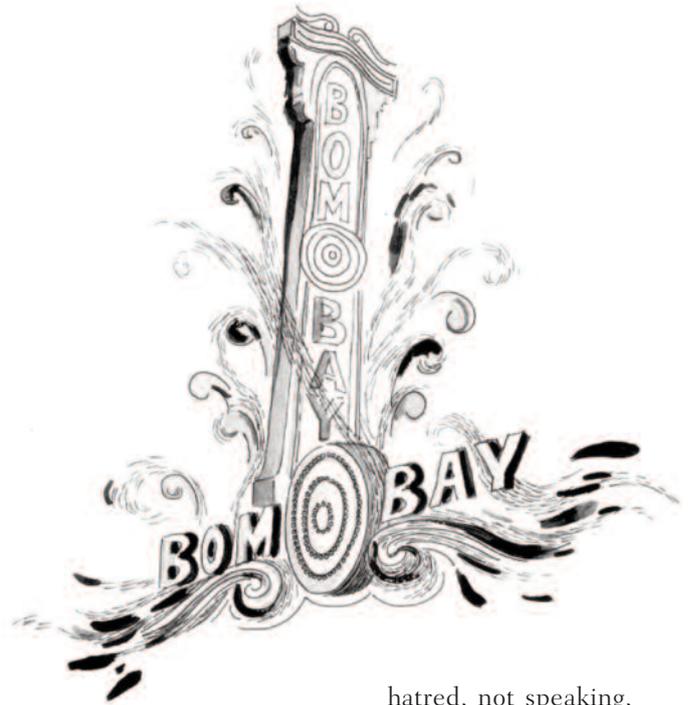


# God's Cage<sup>1</sup>

by Rafael Ramírez Heredia

**Y**ou said: that's it and you turned around and went against the traffic, driving north, toward the Bombay. You didn't bother with any of the boobs trying to flag you down, you just keep your eye on the Swatch because you're more than 15 minutes late and you remember your words: Ventura Mandujano doesn't come late even to the hour of his death, much less to see the Cocolisa, who's got you by the throat, with your whole maw bleeding, like that puffed-up peacock José Alfredo would say; you're going through the traffic, which is heavy this time of day, heavy because it's not nine at night yet and you said you'd meet Motor and Baude at the Garibaldi Plaza fountain, you'd down a few any old place; what of it, it's just to make time so you can go to the Bombi later and there's the queen, the biggest of them all, and fuck everybody's mother, that's all you said, you remember that you were talking about it? And your green VW minivan didn't want to take on any more passengers, fuck it's hard to get passengers, with that little cord you use to open and close the doors, well I'll tell ya, sometimes you get some hot pieces of ass like the time the Viaduct flooded and you had to circle around to come out by the Morelos housing project, beyond the velodrome, and you realized: the bitch had fallen asleep in the back and you, well, nobody looks a gift horse in the mouth. You took off toward San Lázaro and in the little street where you got out, you lock up the minivan and all of a sudden it seemed like the bitch was gonna scream because when she cracked an eye it was because you were all ready, with your Johnson in your hand and you were yelling, aw, don't get your panties in a twist, and the bitch just shut her eyes because she didn't even want to see your face. Afterwards, remember? you let her out at Joaquín Pardavé because you're not such a bad guy, those songs by Don Susanito Peñafiel y Somellera really get to you, especially that one that goes "Spray of roses, pretty little sprig, cut at dawn..." and if the bitch hadn't been looking at you with all that



hatred, not speaking, not even opening her mouth, you, my dear Ventura, would have told the bitch to kiss you, that she should put something on, that it was all the same given the situation you were in, and why should she be fucking fussy, the bitch was kind of out of it, like she wanted you to come quick to forget it all, and for sure the fucking bitch never even noticed you took care to let her out on Pardavé Street and as you left, you even whistled that song "Little Purple Window" that really makes you cry when you've got a couple of drinks in you, especially when it talks about those young boys who don't want to go to war, that's really how it is, who the fuck wants to go to war? That business about the war is why you don't want to go to the United States because otherwise you'd be the happiest man on earth if they let you go but didn't send you into the battles that they have every fucking day all over the fucking world.

That's why I understand you, my dear Venturi, going to see the Cocolisa, dancing with her even if you have to pay for it, no way you're going to save money when you know that she's on the clock, it's the way she earns her bread, it would be like your pals using you to drive them around from one place to another without paying the fare, not cool, right? what's yours is yours, business is sacred, you can't be an asshole and let yourself get fucked just because a fly



crossed the room, no, my dear Venturín, you've really got to work your ass off for your own good, I can just see you giving money to all the friggin' fire eaters in Mexico City, or letting the goddam windshield cleaners get money outta you on every corner, fuck, you've gotta work for them, seems like, doesn't it? And then come all the ones who sell Kleenex and gum, no, you're from the streets, my dear Ventura, you're not in it just to get by, you need enough dough to go to the Bombay, to alternate with King Caesar, you know that Mr. Caesar is the king of Bombis, and if you want to be, well not the king, but just the prince, at least you have to start by strutting in, my man, and leaving like a lord, because they see you comin' in all like a wuz, draggin' your butt, eyes on the floor, and they'll fuck you, and the first one to tell you to fuck off is Cocolisa because she likes her men macho and not pussies, don'tcha know?

You told them that later, so this is no time to see if you're gonna get there or not because Central Avenue was more jammed up than shit, you were weaving your minivan in and out everywhere because you were imagining Motor and Baude peeing themselves laughing with the mariachis, getting them to sing the ones you like even though sometimes you don't like that they don't know the ones by Pardavé who was super righteous, not like that bitch from the Morelos neighborhood who went to sleep like a little bird, and then you even thought it would have been a good idea to get her address, maybe you could have set her up like your regular bitch, even though you know that never works out, because you've told me yourself that regular old ladies just suck you in, always asking you for housekeeping money, they want to know where you're going, who the fuck you went out with, or why you come in so late, you're not one of those, my dear Venturis,

you're one of those guys who likes to spend his own money, you don't want them asking you where the dough is and taking your jack off you.

Going around the whole town, well, on your route, with the minivan always full up, with those guys who get on and off, with the bitches that you can tell want some, and you, my dear Ventura, looking in the rear view mirror, with those hand signals you make so that the hot ones sit next to you, the eyes you make at them, and sometimes you even take them out, like that little blond one who lived in Lucas Alamán, who got on at Jamaica, right away you saw that she was good for it because she was pushing her leg up against you, and every time you changed gears you could feel her luscious thighs and you ended up at the Ideal Hotel that has a garage because blondie told you not to let her out of the car at one of those hotels where you have to go by the reception desk because she didn't do it just with anybody, right? and you know what you got outta that because it was her and not the other one, it was the fucking blondie, they had to shoot you up with who knows how many units of penicillin. Now you're all bent outta shape that it might be AIDS, that's not just for fags anymore, my dear Ventura, but even real he-men, fucking-A, man, because if it's just the clap, well you can cure that, that's not dangerous anymore, now its Vietnamese and a little HIV action, AIDS, you gotta be smart, but, well, that's it, you and me, we're all into that, you're not gonna throw roses before the swine except by working and that's life, you work your ass off from eight to eight, you leadfoot it around like crazy, then those assholes come up with you gotta respect the traffic laws, don't go over the white lines, treat your passengers right, like you had time to waste on bullshit, like you, my dear Ventura, didn't have



enough of your own problems that the fucking passengers never see or hear about, they're in a hurry, you're in a hurry, too, for your own reasons, if you don't get your kicks like with that blond chick that you ended up giving a few bucks to because you didn't want the poor thing to go home on foot or to have to take her home, or that other chick from the Peñón public baths who got up in your face and you had to give her a few pops up side the head, or the other ones, but that's what you like, what your body asks you for so you can keep on in the minivan, with your little sign in the back that says "Pay attention: frequent stops", you think they don't get it that it's your willie standing at attention when you see the breasts of the kids in uniform, the little girls that get on with their short little skirts, with their little legs and everything, right, Mandujanito? nobody calls you Mandujano as though your last name were the same as your first name, you don't have a name, Ventura sounds like a last name, you're a guy who doesn't have a first name, just last names and that's why, do you think that's why you don't like anybody calling you by your second last name, Huerta? besides, you don't like La Huerta because once in a club in Acapulco they beat you to a pulp, you don't like getting beaten to a pulp, well, nobody does, but you're a guy who doesn't get into fights and your rages, my dear Ventura, you let



them out in other ways, with quick starts, by not stopping when a passenger says just up ahead, and you're like a wild animal, and you pass by the stop on purpose, and you don't pay any attention if the passenger complains or sends you to hell, but that's the least of it, just imagine if you got into it with every asshole who gets in the minivan, fuck, you'd have to fight on every corner, and there're thousands, millions of corners in the city, just on your route there are a billion tough guys who want to take out their anger against everybody who's driving, everybody who can go from one place to another without being packed in like sardines in the subway and even if the minivan isn't yours, well, it's like it was, because old man Ibarra has a fuckload of taxis, minivans, he doesn't know when you take it out and you go do your shit to give your body its pleasure, to blow off some steam and you go dance with Cocolisa like today that you're in Garibaldi, you're looking for Motor, for Baude, and you're gonna go down a few drinks with them, sing with the mariachis and then go see Cocolisa so you can squeeze her ass, pinch her a little, she likes you to pinch her bottom and you give her a few slaps, just lightly, or sometimes hard, when you're alone, she arches her back like a bow with what you do to her, with what you whisper in her ear: little whore, that you're sticking your bone into her, that her pussy smells, then the little slaps so Cocolisa gets a little red, yells, scratches your back. **MM**



#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This is an excerpt from Rafael Ramírez Heredia's novel, *La jaula de Dios* (Mexico City: Joaquín Mortiz, 1989), pp. 27-31.

Drawings by Héctor Ponce de León.