RAGE

 I had just finished watching the newest James Bond movie, "No Time to Die," at my neighborhood Regal Theater in Davis, California.

 It was Friday, October 8, 2021, just past 6 p.m. I headed back to my car in the underground parking garage, got in, and slowly backed out of my spot to exit the structure.

 Suddenly, I heard a man yell, "YOU HIT MY CAR!" I turned around and saw a large, quite new and immaculate white truck with an extended cab. "HEY! HEY! he loudly persisted. I immediately assumed that he was some kind of crazy person, as I caught a glimpse of a young white male behind the wheel with short blond hair. He had an agitated and angry expression, and looked threatening.

 I didn't want to stop and confront him, so I carefully turned left on Fourth Street to leave and get away. He roared his engine to life and followed me, honking his horn and flashing his lights on and off. His driver's window was down, and I could vaguely hear him yelling a few car lengths behind me.

 I judged that driving the three miles back to my house was not a good move, for this person could possibly harm me and/or my wife, plus he would then know where I lived. So I continued down to L Street, made another left, and next made a sharp right on Fifth Street. The main Davis Police station was shortly past Fifth and Pole Line Drive heading east, about a mile away. I could safely stop there and quickly get help if the man kept following me.

 But the strange man persisted, honking and flashing his truck lights and yelling, and continued to chase me. Things were beginning to get scary.

 Soon, the situation got even more dangerous. Fifth Street has two lanes (two going in each direction), so now the white truck accelerated, passed me, and pulled in front of me while I was in motion, yelling something which I couldn't make out. Suddenly, he stopped cold! Alarmed, I jammed on my brakes and narrowly missed him by swerving left and around him. I could see other cars and their drivers nearby noticing the scene in fright and amazement. Fortunately, I made it to the upcoming stoplight just as it turned green, and continued to the traffic circle just before the police station. I turned into their parking lot, my heart pounding, wondering what the hell was going to happen next.

 The big white truck sped into the parking lot right behind me, and positioned itself to block any further movement on my part. I took a deep breath, turned off my engine, and got out.

 "What's the problem?" I asked, as calmly as I muster. I remember putting my arms out at my sides with my palms opened, a universal gesture of innocence and an intended show of non-violence.

 The man got out of his truck. He was in his mid-20s, with a powerful physique. He was about 6'4'' and 245 lbs., and wore a tan-colored T-shirt. With his short-cropped blond hair, he closely resembled the actor Dolph Lundgren, of the "Rocky 4" boxing movie, who co-starred opposite Sylvester Stallone. My mind spinning, I realized that, if enraged, this tough guy could easily have crippled me before I could be helped.

 But the strangest thing happened next. His red-faced agitation and anger dissolved before my eyes. Was it the realization that we were right outside the police station, and that he would be swiftly arrested if he attacked me? Was it the recognition that I was so much older than him? Was it my bland, non-threatening facial expression and body language that somehow neutralized his rage? Or was it my guardian angel -- invisibly enveloping me in a divine sphere of bodily protection?

 The man spoke, now in a more normal voice. "Hey...you hit my car...why didn't you stop?"

 I replied. "I didn't hit you. I thought you might become violent because of your behavior, so I drove to this safer, more neutral ground." I indicated the police station.

 The stranger explained. "I was asleep in my truck when I felt you bump me. It woke me up. I had been having a bad day. I was ready to go to my martial arts class. When you didn't stop after I called out to you, I needed to chase you."

 "I understand," I replied, thinking in my mind that he could have injured us both while crashing our vehicles when he cut in front of me and abruptly stopped in moving traffic. "Maybe you imagined that I hit you when you were sleeping? Anyway, let's take a look at your truck and see if there is any damage."

 The white truck was gleaming, all of its chrome polished, with several impressive 'tricked out' accessories -- including a front grill protector, fancy wheel rims, and an over-cab rack of fog-lights. I could see why he was so proud and protective of his obviously expensive vehicle. But when we went around to the area near the truck's front bumper, there was nothing to see. Next, when we went over to the back left of my car, there was nothing to see either.

 "I'm really sorry, man...I guess I over-reacted." He looked down, then up, then put out his hand. I was somewhat surprised by this gesture, but I shook it. He towered over me, and he had the steel grip of a body-builder. But any potential danger between us now seemed to be over. Thank God!

 To further deflate the tension, I added, "Hey...I just saw the new James Bond movie. You should check it out. It's really good, with two surprises at the end."

 "Yeah, I'll have to do that sometime," he replied. I think he was embarrassed and ashamed of losing control, his violent emotions over-whelming his (hopefully!) more ordinary composure. I never found out his name, nor did I notice his CA license plate number, or the make and model of his truck. He drove off without any further comments. I went home, my adrenalin rush slowly dissolving, and I was finally able to relax by the time I pulled into my driveway. I kept the details of the bizarre incident from my wife so as not to alarm her, sharing instead my enthusiastic experience of seeing the 007 movie, which I had waited almost two years to view on the Big Screen, due to various Covid-19 movie release delays.

 This was my first encounter with spontaneous 'road rage,' and I hope it will be my last! Be careful out there, everyone, because you never know what could happen, or who you might have to deal with...

 THE END

 by Jack Karolewski

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