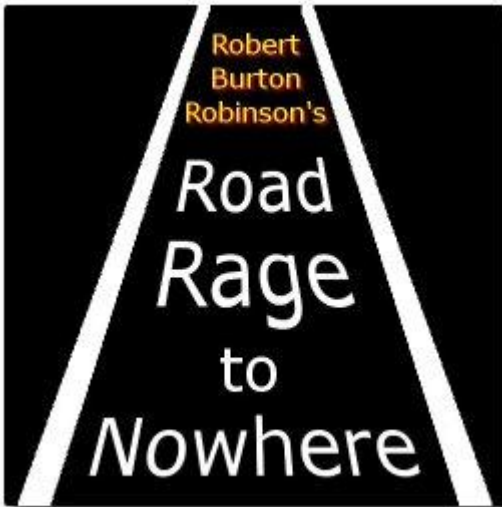


Road Rage to Nowhere

by Robert Burton Robinson



GENRE: Suspense/Crime. LENGTH: 1,264 words. SYNOPSIS: Road Rage can take you on a trip to somewhere you've never been. And make you wish you hadn't gone.

Miguel pushed his cart to the front of the small grocery store. Just as he reached an empty checkout lane and began to place his items on the conveyor belt, a tall man in a business suit slipped in past him and handed a jug of milk to the cashier.

The man glanced back at Miguel. "I only have this one thing. I'm sure you don't mind."

Why should I mind? thought Miguel. After all, you're white. And you've been working in a nice office all day making tons

of money. And you probably think I'm an Illegal—right? He started to say it all out loud.

But the man had already paid the cashier and rushed out the door.

When Miguel walked out of the store he saw the man sitting in a silver Lexus SUV. Why was he still hanging around? Thought you were in a hurry, Chump.

The man watched Miguel walk across the parking lot to a beat-up Ford Ranger extended cab. When Miguel was about to open the driver's door, the man rolled down his front passenger window and yelled, "Hey! Stop!"

Miguel wondered why Mr. Big Shot was hollering at him. Maybe he felt bad about the way he had broken in line, and wanted to apologize. Yeah, right. He got into his truck, placing the two plastic grocery bags on the passenger floorboard. As he drove away he saw the man in his rear view mirror, standing in the middle of the parking lot, yelling and waving his arms.

Miguel had been on the road less than a minute when he saw headlights coming up fast from behind. The guy got right on his bumper and wouldn't back off—no matter whether Miguel sped up or slowed down. There were no other cars on the road.

Miguel rolled down his window and waved for the man to go around.

But the man seemed determined to ride his tail all the way. Then he started flashing his headlights.

This guy's nuts, thought Miguel. Just a tap on the brakes would cause a collision.

The man kept flashing his headlights like crazy.

Miguel exited onto a dark two-lane road.

The Lexus followed him.

Miguel stomped on the accelerator.

The Lexus stayed right behind him.

Enough, thought Miguel. He slowed down and pulled to the side of the road.

The Lexus pulled over and stopped behind him.

Miguel jumped out of his truck, hopping mad. He didn't even bother to turn off the engine or shut his door. He stormed up to the man's window and screamed, "What's your problem, Man?"

The guy rolled down his window.

Miguel was not about to back down, even though he could see that the man was upset too. "Get out of your car and let's settle this right now!"

"But—"

“—but nothing! I’m sick and tired of being treated like this. You think I’m illegal, don’t you?”

The man started to speak, but Miguel cut him off.

“Well you’re wrong, Man. I’m just as much a citizen of this country as you are. And I work my butt off every day building houses for rich punks like you. But you think that makes you better than me, don’t you? Just because you work in a nice clean office all day wearing an expensive suit you think you’re high class and I’m low class. But I’ll tell you right now—if it wasn’t for guys like me who are willing to get their hands dirty and work all day in the blazing sun—you wouldn’t have any fancy office building to work in.”

Miguel noticed the man’s right arm beginning to move. It all happened in a split-second, but it seemed like much longer—as in slow motion. He could barely see the man’s arm in the glow of the instrument panel lights as he raised it higher and higher.

Had he underestimated this guy? Was that a *gun* in the man’s right hand? Miguel knew he would not be able to react fast enough. If the man wanted to kill him—he would be dead in two seconds.

Then he saw what was in the man’s hand. Nothing. He was pointing at Miguel’s truck.

Miguel turned his head just in time to see his truck beginning to move forward. Had he left it in gear? Then he saw a hand pull the door closed. The truck sped away.

Miguel looked the man, confused.

“That’s what I was trying to tell you. I saw a man get into your back seat as I was coming out of the store. And I thought he looked suspicious, so I wanted to warn the owner of the truck. But I didn’t realize that you were the owner until I saw you walk over to it. I yelled to try to get your attention. But you ignored me. So, I followed you.”

“I’m sorry, Man. I thought you were—”

“—you thought I was crazy. I know. Maybe if I hadn’t been so rude in the store. Sorry about that.”

“It’s okay.”

“Well, hop in. Let me take you home, or wherever you need to go.”

“Thanks, Man.” Miguel walked around to the passenger side and got in.

“What’s your name?”

“Miguel.”

“Glad to meet you, Miguel. I’m Jack. If you want, I’ll follow that guy. We could probably still catch up with him.”

“That’s okay. I was about ready to replace that old truck anyway. It’s a piece of junk.”

Jack smiled as he reached into his shirt pocket, pulled out a business card, and handed it to Miguel. “Jack’s Used Cars. I

can make you a great deal on a fine pre-owned automobile, Miguel.”

“Are you kidding me?”

“No, not at all. How much are you looking to spend? What kind of monthly note can you handle?”

“Get out.”

“What?”

“You heard me. Get out!” Miguel reached under his shirt and pulled out a pistol. “Now!”

“Why are you doing this?”

“Because I don’t appreciate your attitude, Jack.”

“What? I was just trying to help you.”

“Fine. You’ve helped me. Thanks for the car. Now get out!”

Now it all made sense to Jack. “That guy who stole your car—you two are working together, aren’t you?”

“Good for you, Jack. You figured it out. You’re a smart guy. Or at least you were until five seconds from now when you’re gonna be dead!”

Jack held up his hands. “Okay, okay.” He opened the door and began to get out.

“Wait,” said Miguel.

Jack froze in place.

“I hear sirens. Did you call the police?”

“Well, yeah. I thought that guy might be planning to kill you, so I called 9-1-1.”

“Get back in.”

“Are you sure?”

“Get in the car!”

Miguel opened his door and got out. The sirens were coming toward them from behind.

“Take off. And drive as fast as you can.” Jack slammed the door. “Now!” He pointed the gun. “Or I’m gonna start shooting. Go!”

Jack peeled out and drove away.

Miguel hid in the nearby bushes while the two police cars raced by. Then he walked out to the road and stood there watching, as the flashing lights got smaller and finally disappeared.

Fools, thought Miguel.

He took out his cell phone. “Hey, come back and get me...Yeah, he called the cops...It’s no big deal, Man. It won’t take long to find another sucker. But hurry up—before they come back here.”

Only two patrol cars had responded to Jack's 9-1-1 call. Miguel was surprised there weren't more.

There were. The third cop was trying to catch up—driving 125 mph, without siren or flashing lights.

It was already too late to get out of the road by the time Miguel heard the car coming up from behind.

THE END

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