

## RURAL RECOLLECTIONS

## THE ILL-FATED TRUCK

## Part One

It was in the early thirties when my father bought the truck. That was his first mistake in a caldron of errors.

It wasn't a truck like any other truck. At least I don't think it was a truck like any other truck. Up to that point, I hadn't known any other truck all that well. It didn't act like my version of how a truck should act. This truck had a personality, though a disturbed one it was.

Clinton, our father's favourite son, convinced his favourite father that there was a lot of money to be made hauling pulpwood to the mills in Ottawa and Hull. Clinton had ridden to town in a truck of this type a few times with a friend, just enough to convince himself that driving a truck was no big deal. Father fell for it, as Clinton knew he would, and as Father knew he shouldn't. Clinton was smooth. Real smooth. He could charm a skunk out of a hen house. Now, you and I know that anyone who can do that has to be good.

Clinton and Father had, by now, completely lost interest in farming. The truck commanded their full attention. They were now clean-overalled workers, and they had no intention of going back to dirt farming. They were bronco busters with an ornery truck to tame, but they weren't sure how to go about it. And I feel sure that the truck sensed this.

It was a brand spanking-new truck. Not something you would see in every farmyard, if you



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know what I mean. Especially during that phase of our history. We had hardly mastered cows and horses when the truck came along. It was red. And shiney. And big. There weren't many trucks around for us to go by, but I think that's where its normalcy ended. It kept doing the damnest things.

For instance, when Clinton and Father worked up enough courage to entice the truck to move on its own power, the only time they managed to keep it on the road was when they were crossing it. Horses were more reliable. And I think at times, the truckers were wishing they had stuck to something they knew.

Oh, everything seemed normal enough, I guess to the casual observer. And everything would have been okay, I suppose if everything had just turned out okay. But Father, Clinton and the truck did not a normal union make.

The truck proved more than these cowboys had bargained for. We never were able to decide whether the personality problems were with any individual one, or all three. But the truck kept up its shennanigans until its demise, which wasn't long,

considering the life of some trucks. The truck led the would-be truckers on a merry ride, running over things, tipping over and catching fire, and breaking Clifford's arm.

When the agent handed the keys to my father I could swear I heard the truck moan. I was wary of the truck from the instant it hove into view. The feeling of forboding never left me until after the truck's suicide, some months later.

Father and Clinton took up residence in the truck for a few days after its arrival, leaving it only to eat and sleep. They just sat in it, pulling and pushing every moveable part, to get used to the truck and hopefully, to get the truck used to them. Familiarity breeds familiarity. At that point, they dared not start the motor. But, all the while, the truck was lulling them into a false sense of security, just waiting to get them out in the open. I felt more comfortable with the horses. That truck just kept staring at me, with that cold, glassy unblinking stare. I had the feeling that it was aching to run over me.

The concern in the partners' eyes, when it dawned on them that they were going to have to drive the truck sooner or later, didn't escape my notice either. If they were that worried, I thought then I had better stay well clear of the monster.

It was obvious that civilization was creeping up on the truckers a little too fast. Previously, the wood went to the mills by rail, with the horses, and sleighs performing the first lap. Father had never driven more than his Model T. And horses.

The partners didn't know it, but the new truck had many more mischiefs up its muffler. ( To be continued)