

By ALROY WEST

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PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

Captain Wicks, captain of the trawler Lucky Lady.
Gallop, engineer on board the trawler.
Peter Drew, his mate.
Alla Barlova, a Russian girl, captain of the steamer Tovarish Rykoff. Captured by Arabs.
Raul Nunez, an unscrupulous politician interested in the trawler because of the gold.
Capt. Delgado, his helper. In command of a destroyer.
Sinclair, a pearl fisher of Margarita. Doyle, one of his helpers.
Crockett, on board the trawler.

Synopsis of Previous Chapters

Capt. Wicks, of the trawler Lucky Lady, has salvaged two boxes of gold in coin which have been dropped from a light aeroplane crossing the Channel. All the men on board the trawler, with the exception of Peter Drew, the mate, and Wellings, have served on different ships under Wicks, who has had a life of wandering and adventure.
Unwilling to join in Wicks' plan of stealing the gold and making for American waters, Drew makes an attempt to leave the ship, but is recaptured by Gallop, the engineer.
Gallop suggests a partnership, pointing out that Wicks will not let Drew leave the ship alive. Drew makes a pretence of falling in with the suggestion, but has hopes of escaping with Wellings, who is not satisfied with the adventure.
Crossing the Bay of Biscay, Wellings is lost overboard in a storm. Gallop suggests that it was murder.
(New Read On)
**CHAPTER VII
OFF MOROCCO**

Deprived of the possible support from Wellings, Drew had to make fresh plans. He attempted to establish more friendly relations with the captain, and also to keep in the good books of the engineer.
The storm blew itself out, and on the third evening they picked up the white flash of the Cape Finisterre light. Wicks stood out more to sea and completed the first thousand miles of his voyage when he was about a third of the way down the Portuguese coast.

The non-intervention patrol was still in force, and this prevented him from trying to make one of the smaller ports in order to replenish his supplies. Howe, the worst sailor of the crew, began to grumble and quickly infected both Crockett and Gordon with the desire to get ashore for a short space. Wicks, realizing the unrest, kept them hard at work making a few repairs. The heavy seas had done a fair amount of damage, although there was nothing of a serious nature.
Gallop, however, was the cause of an alteration in the plans Wicks had made. He started to complain in no uncertain manner of the low-pressure cylinder. Something had to be done about it. His technicalities were a little difficult to follow, but Wicks listened to him in silence and then abruptly nodded his head.
"We'll make land so that you can put it right," he said thoughtfully.
The days went past without incident. The weather was calm and everything was bathed in sunlight. The long coastline of Morocco appeared in the distance like a low-lying streak of cloud.
"We shall make the coast to-night," Wicks declared. "I hope, Mr. Drew that you will not consider it an unfriendly action on my part, but I propose to lock you up in your cabin. Being young and romantic you might have the wild idea of joining the Foreign Legion. It's really a miserable life, so I'll save you from it."
Peter took the first dog-watch and when Wicks relieved him was taken to his cabin and fastened in. Peter guessed that Wicks was not going to let him know at which part of the coast he was calling. At eight bells Gallop came into the cabin.

"The worst of this sort of life," he complained, "is that the only man who knows anything at all concerning machinery doesn't get his fair share of rest."
"Isn't Gordon shaping well?" Drew asked.
Gallop lit his pipe and sprawled out in his bunk.
"Not too badly," he said grudgingly. "But he can't be trusted when things are complicated. Wicks expects to make land by two bells, so I'm to be called in order to help him. I don't see why he should be so confounded careful. It seems to me that he's in league with every rascal on both sides of the Atlantic seaboard. Look how he managed to get that last lot of supplies! He'll be after some more tonight. I believe he's going to visit some of his pals."
"Where's he landing?" Peter asked. Gallop shook his head.
"I'm not a navigator," he said ungraciously. "It wouldn't do for me to be curious, anyway."
"He can't have you knocked over the head," Peter remarked.
"Not now or any time," Gallop declared. "He's taking good care that you don't slip ashore. Pretty good swimmer, aren't you?"
"Moderately good, I suppose."
"I can't swim a stroke. Don't see why I should be able to, either. Precious little chance of getting up from the engine room in the event of the ship sinking. There comes a time when a man has to die, so he may as well drown as spend several weeks lying on a bed in a hospital. I can't bear the sight of a hospital. I don't know why."
Peter thought the conversation uninteresting.
"Maybe you'd better get some sleep," he suggested.
"Precious little chance of that. I'm worried about that cylinder. I spoke to Wicks about it and he's promised to drop anchor somewhere along the Spanish coast. It's not exactly a health resort, so we shall be free from inquisitive observers."
"Rio de Oro?"
"Yes. I don't expect he'll keep you cooped up. I've always been told that the Arabs have a lot of unpleasant habits. So it's not likely that you'll go to them for assistance."
Peter laughed.
"I should say not," he said, hoping that his voice would carry conviction. Arabs certainly presented a difficulty, but he was determined to avoid the crossing of the Atlantic if he could possibly do so.
"I suppose Wicks—strange how I can't get into the way of calling him any other name; maybe it's because we were rivals at one time—hasn't said anything much about Wellings?"
"Nothing important. He did drop a hint that the man was acting queerly during the two days prior to the storm. Maybe he wanted to create the impression that Wellings deliberately threw himself over the side."
Gallop chuckled.
"Smart man, Wicks," he said thoughtfully. "I shall have to watch my step when we reach America. I suppose you haven't tried to warn him that the engineer is a black-hearted, treacherous dog?"
"Of course I haven't. I'm not concerned with what happens to him. I prefer to think that he'll finish up inside a prison—and an English one at that."
Gallop shook his head.
"They won't catch him," he declared. "Well, I'll close my eyes for a few minutes. It won't be long before they have me out again."
It was just after three bells that Crockett came to the cabin to arouse Gallop. The big man grumbled and swore, but clambered down from his bunk and lumbered away to take charge in the engine room. Peter smoked his pipe and listened to the medley of sounds. He heard the engine reduce to half-speed and then slow down preparatory to stopping. There were shouts and then the running out of the anchor chain. Shortly afterwards the dinghy was launched.
Peter expected Gallop to return, but there was no sign of him for over two hours. At last, however, he came to the cabin and turned in without a word.
"LUCKY LADY" BECOMES "VALDIVIA"

It was not until morning that Peter knew what had taken place. He was released to take the forenoon watch, and Wicks stayed on the bridge with him for a time.
"I had a very interesting time last night," the captain said.
"At Saffi, I suppose."
"Correct. I don't like the place, but I met an old friend there. I have an astonishing number of friends who frequent these places on the coast. They regaled me with an account of the gold which was lost. It's an amusing story. There was a rush on the gold shipments to Paris, so a new company transported some. Not being accustomed to dealing with such valuable cargo they rather lost their heads, and left two boxes behind. As soon as they discovered this, they sent a light aeroplane over with the boxes." He chuckled.
"We know what happened to them," he continued, "but it seems that nobody else has very much of an idea."
"I should have thought the pilot would have known the rough position where he landed in the air-pocket," Peter observed.
"He declared that it was the worst crossing he'd ever known. The machine did nothing but bump up and down. It was very fortunate for us."
"Had your friends heard any news concerning the 'Lucky Lady'?" Peter asked.
Wicks cocked his head slightly on one side and his eyes twinkled with amusement.
"Reported as missing, of course. There's a 'stunt' story going round that Captain Wicks may have been making for a Spanish port in order to land something for the Government to help them in their struggle. One of my friends read this and thought that it meant I was going to join the International Column!" Wicks thrust his hands in his pockets and laughed.
"The only person I would fight for is myself," he added.
"All shipping will be looking out for us," Peter reminded the captain.
"What if they are? You don't think that I expected to be able to slip away without somebody saying something, do you? I'm getting the men busy to-day on improving our appearance. We'll have a fresh coat of paint and a different coloured funnel. We might as well paint out our number as well."
"What about the name?" Peter asked. Wicks thought for a minute or so.
"We'll have a new name," he decided. "I'll think of one while I'm having a rest." He turned to squint at the distant shadow which indicated the position of the land. "It's a shade too far for you to swim ashore," he commented. "And I don't think you'll be so foolish as to edge in closer. I am not too familiar with the coast, but I believe there are some nasty sands dotted about. Maybe a few more than are marked on the chart."
"I shall keep her on her course," Drew promised.
"You'd better," Wicks growled, as he left the bridge.
He rested in his cabin for four hours, and then supervised the painting. The weather gave them no anxieties, and the three hands raised no objections to the programme of brightening up the ship. Only Crockett had been ashore with Wicks, but they had brought back with them several things which contented Howe and Gordon for the moment. They didn't think much of the wine and declared that the beer was abominable, but this didn't prevent them from drinking it.
By the end of the day the trawler looked very different, and by noon on the following day she was hardly recognizable as the "Lucky Lady." Her funnel, instead of a drab red band on a grimy brown stack, rejoiced in two brown ones on a green stack.
"Do those colours belong to anyone else?" Peter asked.
"Don't care if they do!" Wicks exclaimed. "It's my trawler—or partly mine."
"I wonder what your partners think of you," Wicks laughed.
"I don't care what they think!" he declared. "I own a third, and I shall do what I like with my third. It's my partners' misfortune that their shares have to go where my share goes. I'm not so sure that they'll suffer, though. It all depends. It's a pity we're not equipped with wireless. I was going to do something about it, but my partners refused to grant me the extra money and I was rather tight myself."
"If it seems that we're given up for lost, I might hang on to the ship and make some more definite alterations. On the other hand I might sell her. Then again, I might wreck her. She's insured, so there may be a chance of my partners getting something back."
"Anyway, that's their worry, not mine."
Wicks was satisfied that everything possible had been done to alter the appearance of the trawler. So it came about that, under the name of "Valdivia", the trawler made her way along the lawless coast of Rio de Oro.

**CHAPTER VIII
SIGHTED—A WRECK**

Gallop complained that it was taking a long time for the captain to find a safe anchorage in order that the necessary repairs could be done to the low pressure cylinder. His forecasts of what would happen became more and more gloomy as watch succeeded watch and the trawler still kept on her way.
There was not a great deal to occupy Crockett or Howe, and they began to grumble. Gordon was kept busier because he was learning all about his duties in the engine-room.
Peter could tell that Wicks was becoming anxious. So far as food was concerned there was nothing to worry

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about, but water was becoming rather scarce and there was not sufficient to last through the long portion of the voyage. He set a course nearer to the land and spent most of his time on the bridge. He appeared to be able to dispense with sleep.
"Gallop's nursing his engines far too much," Wicks complained. "It isn't making it any easier. But it's no good talking to him about it. He always was obstinate."
The coast-line was monotonously flat, with the vague shadow of higher ground further inland. The beach was marked by a thin white line of surf. They passed within two cables of the wreck of a Russian tramp steamer. It was tilted over the rocks and had been badly battered. The sun was blistering the paint on her sides.
Wicked stared at it.
"She hasn't been there all that time," he said slowly.
"Probably came ashore during that storm which we experienced in the Bay," Peter suggested.
"Maybe. Doesn't seem to be anybody aboard her."
"What about lowering the dinghy and having a look?"
Wicks thought for a minute and then shook his head.
"It's not worth the trouble," he decided. "It's a nuisance getting the boat back on board again. Apart from that, there's the risk of getting it stove in on a submerged rock. You can depend on it that the crew of that ship were either washed overboard or else got away in the boats. Both are missing, so far as I can tell."
"We can keep a watch as we go along her coast," Peter said, and was not contradicted.

"We must watch the coast in any case," the captain reminded him. "Gallop is getting more impatient than ever."
Shortly after noon they sighted a possible anchorage and Wicks took the wheel from Drew.
"Get Crockett forward with the lead," he instructed. "You'd better be with him and check the results. We don't want to finish up like that Russian ship."
Peter hurried to the bows and the trawler gradually nosed her way towards the shore and up a narrow inlet. At last the anchor was dropped and Wicks came from the bridge. He went to the engine-room to tell Gallop that he could get on with the repairs.
"How long will it take you?" he wanted to know.
Gallop shrugged his enormous shoulders.
"Best part of a day," he announced. "And I want some sleep before I do it."
"Naturally," Wicks agreed, more for the sake of peace than anything else.
Peter, left alone on the deck, gazed at the land thoughtfully. It didn't look inviting. There was, as far as the eye could see on either hand, a sand belt. Looking inland, at a distance of between two and three miles of the shore, were the dunes. Away in the northern distance, little more than vague purplish shadows, were the mountains. Truly an uninviting spectacle.
Peter, however, was not contemplating trying to penetrate into the interior. He knew that there was only a dreary expanse of sand which stretching for mile after mile. There was no help to be found from that source.
Far to the south was Cape Blanco and the French territory. A journey

that far was cut of the question. It was little better than making northwards for the mountains of the Anti Atlas chain. Little help was to be expected from any of the Spanish Legion. Indeed, he doubted if the normal routine was being maintained. Apart from that, it would not be easy to find an outpost.
There was a far better chance of escape in the shape of the Russian steamer. Peter calculated that she was lying about twelve miles along the coast. He had noticed that she was equipped with wireless and his scheme was to get away from the trawler, make his way along the coast, swim out to the steamer and try to get her wireless working in order to send out a broadcast for assistance. It was a desperate venture but very little less perilous than Wicks' scheme of taking the trawler across the Atlantic.
He hoped to be able to obtain some provisions and to equip himself as well as possible before making the attempt.
(To be Continued)

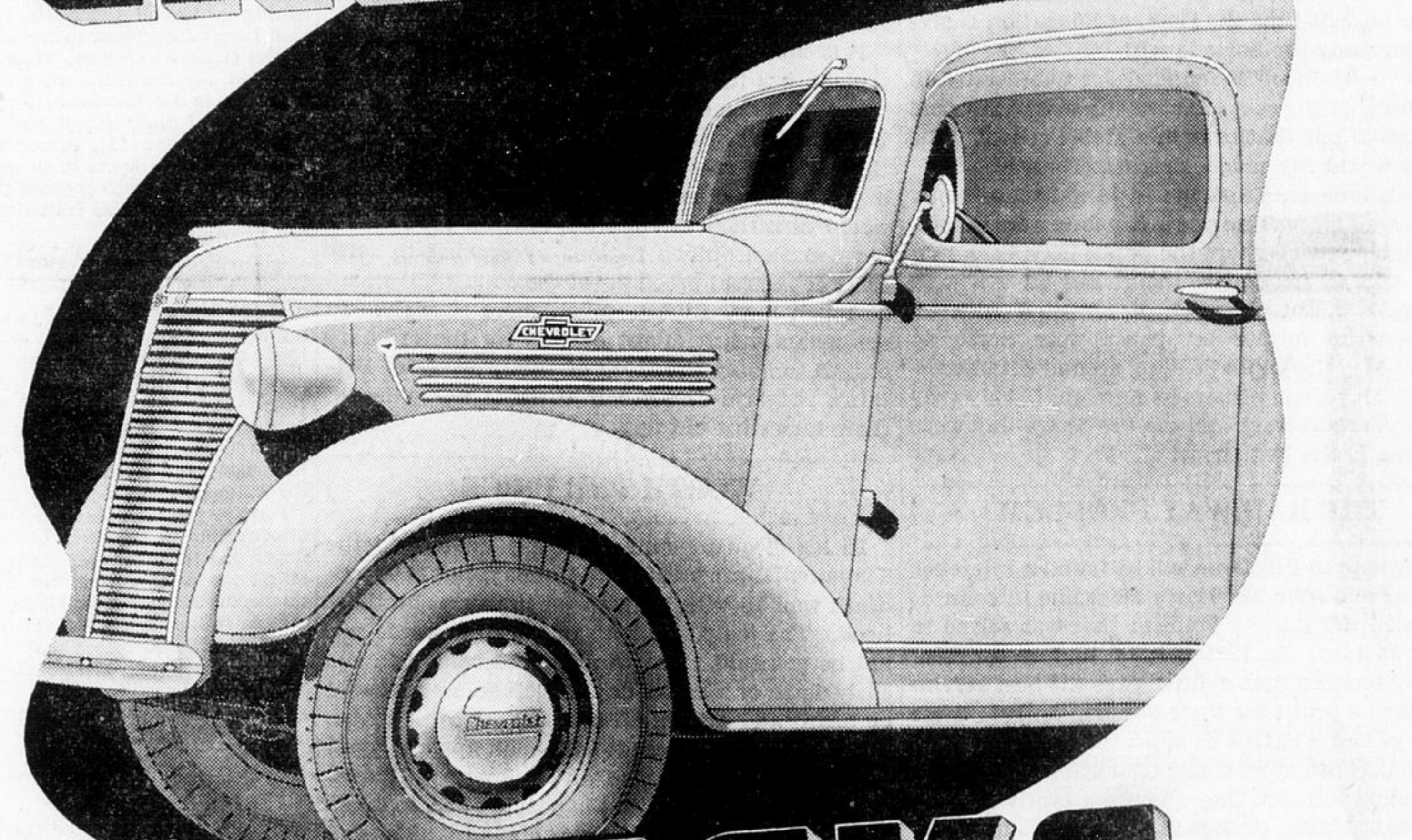
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