



# LAZY WINGS

by RALPH OPPENHEIM

*Dogfights meant nothing to him—sleep was the thing. But when he went to sleep behind the German lines he learned that soft pillows have a way of being mighty hard.*

**R**ELUCTANTLY, Lieutenant “Sleepy” Miller opened his eyes, blinked, and rolled over in his cot. In the cold gray dawn the C.O.’s efficient orderly was bending over him, shaking his shoulder gently but with stubborn persistence.

“The colonel requests you to get dressed and report at once, sir,” the orderly was saying, for the fifth time.

Sleepy Miller groaned, yawned, and cursed, all in one lazy breath. He had not won his nickname for nothing. Indeed, he must have been born sleeping. He loved sleep more than he loved life itself, and there was nothing he resented so much as being yanked out of the arms of Morpheus, especially at this unholy hour. Nevertheless, orders were orders. And so, reluctantly, with the speed of a snail, he crawled out of bed.

Yawning and blinking still, Sleepy presented

himself before the grizzled colonel in the operations office, and, raising his hand as if it weighed a ton, he managed a lazy salute. The C.O. of the 23rd Pursuit Squadron was a hardbitten, leather-faced veteran with the voice of a lion. He glared up from his desk with eyes that were far more bleak than the chill dawn outside.

“Lieutenant Miller,” he barked, “the time has come for you to do something besides sleep around here. You sleep all night, you sleep all day—in fact they tell me that you are never really awake. But, before you sink into a fatal coma, have a small job for you. There is a new replacement, Lieutenant Potts, who has just arrived in this squadron. At present he is waiting outside at his new Spad. I want you to take Lieutenant Potts out on a two-plane patrol to show him the terrain. Stay on this side of the lines; just take him

around a bit, show him the scenery, and then bring him back.”

Sleepy Miller nodded, sleepily and disgustedly. “Yes, sir,” he yawned. Yanked out of bed just to take some raw replacement on a sight-seeing tour!

“And by the way,” the C.O. added, as Sleepy Miller turned to go, “while you’re over the Front keep your eyes peeled for signs of a large German tank. It’s rumored they have this new-fangled tank which can do almost everything except fly, and which is invulnerable. The Allies want to learn all they can about it. It has them worried.”

“Yes, sir,” yawned Sleepy Miller again. “If I see it I’ll look at it.”

When he crossed the field in the gray dawn and found the replacement waiting beside the two throbbing Spads, one of them fresh and new, the other rather faded and shabby, his resentment grew. The replacement, he decided in one glance, was dumber than hell. He was a big, hulking gawk of a fellow, with a big naive face, and two popping eyes with an insane stare in them.

“Lieutenant Potts?” queried Sleepy Miller, surlily.

The replacement turned to him with a grin as vacant as it was wide.

“That’s my name!” he announced, enthusiastically. “Only they call me ‘Bozo.’” His face grew wistful. “I don’t know why.”

Sleepy Miller’s smile was a sneer of contempt. “From now on your name is Kiwi. That’s much better!”

“Sure!” The replacement’s grin returned, wider than ever. “Kiwi—not a bad name at all. It’s a bird, isn’t it?”

“Yes, it’s a bird all right,” snarled Sleepy Miller. God, how dumb they were! “Now listen, Kiwi. I’m going to take you out for a tour of inspection. You just get into your plane and follow mine, stick to my tail, see! And try to accustom yourself to the terrain. Get me?”

“You betcha!” the replacement cried like an eager kid, his eyes popping with enthusiasm. “Let’s go!”

“What the hell’s your hurry?” growled Sleepy. But nevertheless he strapped down his helmet, went to the worn, shabby Spad, and climbed in. The replacement climbed into the new, fresh ship. One behind the other, they took off.

SLEEPY climbed into the haze of early morning sky. The replacement climbed behind him. At five

thousand feet Sleepy straightened out and headed, at three quarters throttle, for the Front. He glanced back. The plane of Lieutenant Potts was on his tail, its whirring propeller all but nipping his elevator fin. The replacement was obeying instructions all right! He was sticking to Sleepy’s tail with a vengeance.

As he went on, with the replacement still sticking faithfully to his tail, the peaceful air, the quiet of the Front below, and the warmth of the streaming golden sun, began to have a strangely restful effect upon Sleepy Miller. A delicious drowsiness crept over him. His head nodded to his breast. His eyes closed behind their goggles. And presently, beneath the drone of his engine, his snores rose, deep and rhythmic.

Sleepy’s awakening was as sudden as it was rude. A shrill staccato clatter, piercing his very eardrums, was what roused him. A smoky wreath of tracer, snaking right along his cockpit cowl, made him sit up with a curse.

Still on his tail, having obeyed orders to the letter, was the plane of Lieutenant Kiwi Potts. But there was a dazed, bewildered look on the face of the replacement, and his eyes were popping behind their goggles.

Swarming around the two Spads like infuriated hornets, diving, swooping, shooting, were three coffin-nosed Pfalz scouts!

And then Sleepy Miller realized, and horror gripped him. Good God, while he had dozed, his plane, stick in neutral, had sailed right across the lines and was now deep within Hunland!

Guilt supplanted his horror. He had led this raw replacement into a nice mess! It was plain to see that Lieutenant Potts did not know what it was all about; while bullets whizzed all around him he was dumbly continuing to follow the tail of Sleepy Miller’s Spad!

Frantically, Sleepy turned and waved futile signals back at the bewildered replacement. At the same time he whipped his Spad around in a breathless vertical bank and, with the three Jerries still swarming on all sides, tried to lead the way back toward the Allied lines.

Lieutenant Potts, still faithfully obeying instructions, continued to cling to the tail of the other Spad. But even as the two planes started to head back for the lines, it happened. To his horror and guilt, Sleepy Miller saw the replacement’s Spad suddenly lurch and shiver under a fusillade of Jerry fire. Slowly it winged over—and then it was hurtling down through space in a flat spin, plunging like a plummet! Right on a stubble clearing below it crashed, somersaulted three times, and lay still, a crumpled wreck!

Sleepy Miller groaned. Poor Kiwi! He hadn't had a chance; he probably hadn't even known what was happening to him! Sleepy cursed himself with unmerciful vehemence.

A sizzling whistle of Jerry tracer, streaking right past his face, rudely interrupted his bitter thoughts. His goggled face crimsoned, and his hand closed tightly about the joystick. With a berserk oath, he hurled his Spad into the very midst of his three attackers, and his twin Vickers spat! He half-rolled wildly as one of the Jerries banked below him. For an instant he caught the fleeting Pfalz shape dead in his ring sight. He fired, cursing. And this time his bullets found their mark! The Pfalz veered, staggering like a bird surprised by a sudden wound. A ribbon of livid flame leaped out of its engine and went licking greedily along its fuselage. And then, in a blaze of fire, it went twisting earthward, leaving a black wake of oily smoke behind it.

TWO Pfalzes left now! Grimly, cursing a blue streak, Sleepy Miller took them on. They fought back with grim and fierce determination. Then a lucky burst from Sleepy's Vickers did something to one of the remaining Pfalzes' tailfins; the German craft staggered, flew drunkenly for a moment, and then, losing altitude swiftly, limped off for home! Only one left now! Sleepy went for it, hell-bent! And he might have gotten it, but at that moment his engine gave a long, hissing sigh, coughed vainly for life, and then sputtered out, cold! The Jerry's bullets had found it!

The Spad, losing flying speed, stalled on its wing, slid down in a dizzy sideslip, and then began to spin! The remaining Jerry, deciding that this was enough for the day, flew off serenely. Down hurtled Sleepy Miller, fighting like a madman with his controls. At the last moment he managed, by some miracle, to lift the Spad's nose, managed to get her into a pancake. There was a rending impact, a shivering crash and the plane settled, its undercarriage completely buckled, its wings folded up like a butterfly's, and its fuselage, a shredded wreck, lay along the ground like a canoe.

Stiffly, dazedly, Sleepy Miller climbed from the wreckage. Every bone and muscle ached, but he was miraculously unscathed.

"Cripes, but it's good to see you, Lieutenant Miller!" He wheeled sharply at the voice, and then his eyes went wide with incredulity and surprise.

Standing before him like a big, gawky kid, with that wide, vacuous grin on his naive face, was Lieutenant

Kiwi Potts! The replacement was also miraculously unscathed, though behind him was an even worse Spad wreck than Sleepy's. It was only then that Sleepy Miller realized that Fate had brought him down in the same spot where the replacement had crashed, a desolate stubble field near an old, deserted-looking road. Before Sleepy could recover breath to speak, Lieutenant Potts grinned at him with joy and gratitude.

"Gosh," exclaimed the replacement, with deep emotion, "but it was white of you to land here to pick me up, lieutenant!"

"Huh?" gasped Sleepy Miller, his jaw gaping. And then again contempt came over his features. "Why you poor dumb kluck, do you think I came down here on purpose? Pick you up? Look at that Spad of mine—you couldn't even lift it up with a rope!" He shook his head, and his brows knitted. "Kiwi, we're in a bad mess! From what I saw of the terrain above, we're at least twenty-five miles within Hunland. Luckily there don't seem to be any Jerries hereabouts—but they're liable to spot us any time! Now the question is, what are we gonna do about it?"

Lieutenant Potts seemed somewhat confused. "Well," he asked blankly, "what is there to do?"

Sleepy Miller shook his head, and glanced ruefully at the two wrecked Spads, then at the near-by road.

"That road seems to go east and west, judging from the sun. If we follow it that way," he pointed, "we ought to be traveling toward the Front anyway. We'll have to try it, Kiwi!"

The sun was hot, but they walked along fast.

"Gosh!" Sleepy Miller wiped his perspiring face, "but this is just about killing me! I could sleep for a week right now!"

"I don't mind it at all!" grinned the replacement, whose step was fresh and spry. "I usta be a hitch-hiker once, only I never took hitches because I liked to walk better."

"Well, you'll do plenty of walking to-day," groaned Sleepy. "In fact——" He broke off abruptly, for at that moment a peculiar staccato noise rose from the distance behind. Sleepy wheeled, startled. Then a cry of wild alarm broke from him. "Duck, Kiwi! Duck fast!"

Down the road behind them, coming hell-bent in a cloud of dust, was a motor cycle and side car.

"Jerries!" Sleepy Miller cried as he pointed. "Come on, we gotta duck before they see us!" As he spoke he turned and sprang for the trees on the right side of the

road. But even as he ran into their shelter he saw to his dismay and horror that Lieutenant Potts had not followed! He glanced back, apprehensively. A groan broke from him. Lieutenant Potts, that bewildered look again on his naive face, was standing right at the side of the road, gaping.

“COME off that road, will you?” yelled Sleepy, from the shelter of the trees. But it was useless! The next moment he ducked discreetly behind a tree trunk as the motor cycle, just about fifty feet in front of the gaping replacement on the road, skidded around in a complete circle to stop short with a squealing of brakes. There was a gray-clad officer, a captain apparently, in the side car. A sergeant with a coal-scuttle helmet, evidently his aide, was the driver. The two of them leaped out, drawing ugly, long-barrelled Lugers.

Behind his tree trunk Sleepy Miller cursed helplessly. If only he had brought along his Colt automatic—but he never carried it when flying!

And then, to his amazement, the miraculous took place!

Lieutenant Potts had stood gaping dumbly while the two Jerries rushed toward him. But now, as they came right up to him with leveled Lugers, a strange change came over the replacement.

“What the hell?” he yelled.

And then, like a panther, so that he no longer seemed gawky at all, he sprang! The Luger in the Jerry sergeant’s hand barked shrilly, and a spurt of livid flame leaped from its muzzle. But the bullet went hopelessly amiss, for at that same moment Lieutenant Potts’ lanky left arm lashed out like a piston rod. He caught the Boche sergeant flush on the jaw and sent him flying across the road, where he sprawled out, cold. Instantly Lieutenant Potts whirled on the Jerry captain then, who was trying to bring his revolver to bear. With another terrific left, an uppercut this time, he lifted the Jerry captain right off the ground. And the Jerry captain did a neat backward somersault and also sprawled out, cold!

Dazedly Sleepy Miller reached the road. Lieutenant Potts stood, grinning widely and rubbing his knuckles.

“Gosh A’mighty!” gasped Sleepy, and there was, admiration and respect in his tone now. “Where the hell did you get that sock?”

Lieutenant Potts’ grin widened farther.

“I usta be a amachure prizefighter once,” he said. He looked down at his two unconscious victims,

sprawled on the road. His voice grew sad. “I swear I wouldn’t hit them, but they were pointing guns at me!”

Sleepy Miller shook his head. “Boy, but you sure knocked them for a loop!” His glance went to the motor cycle, which stood with its engine popping. A joyful smile lit his features. “Looks like we don’t have to walk now anyway, Kiwi!”

“Gee, let me drive it?” pleaded the replacement. “I usta race in motor cycle races once!”

“Wait a minute now. First thing is to get these two Jerries off the road. Then we’ll take their uniforms. Come on, let’s work fast!”

As Lieutenant Potts dumped the German captain rudely onto the ground under the trees, a white envelope fell from the Jerry’s tunic. Sleepy Miller saw it and picked it up. His brows knit hopelessly at the German words, for he knew no German. He was about to thrust the paper aside when Lieutenant Potts, looking over his shoulder, suddenly began to emit a series of strange, guttural sounds.

“What the hell are you doing?” exclaimed Sleepy. “Are you clean cuckoo?”

“I was just reading what’s on the paper,” said Lieutenant Potts, apologetically.

“You mean,” gasped Sleepy, “that you can read German?”

“I know it better than English,” grinned Lieutenant Potts. “You see, I usta be a bartender in Milwaukee once!”

“Cripes, isn’t there any limit to what you used to be?” Sleepy said with awe, “Well, what does this paper say?”

Lieutenant Potts read the translation aloud.

Captain von Keppel. You are to proceed to the town of Visches for your mission across the lines. Your sergeant may accompany you if you wish.

Ludendorf.

Sleepy’s face lit up. “Gosh, do you get that! An order from old boy Ludendorf himself! This Boche captain here,” he nodded down at the unconscious Boche officer, “was supposed to go to Visches, which is right at the Front, for some mission across the lines. I guess that means a plane, or maybe doing some spy work or something. Anyway, we’re in luck, Kiwi! As the captain and his sergeant we can go to Visches and——” His face suddenly clouded. “Wait now. There seems to be a hitch. To get to Visches we’ll have to pass all kinds of Boche, and even ask ‘em the way, because I don’t

know it. And I don't know a word of German! That means you'll have to do all the talking, which ought to be done by the guy who's the captain." He looked at the gawky replacement and shook his head. "No, you'd never pass as a Boche captain, not with that face! But then I can't speak German. That's the hitch!"

LIEUTENANT POTTS again looked confused and puzzled. They were both silent for a moment. Then, suddenly, the replacement's eyes popped with the old eagerness. "Look!" he cried. "I know what! You be the captain in the side car; I'll drive!"

Sleepy gave a low moan. "And I was just beginning to think you weren't so dumb after all! Cripes, didn't you get what I was telling you, that I can't speak German and——"

"Wait!" the replacement begged, all agog over one of the few ideas he had ever had. "Let me finish! You won't have to talk, even if you are the captain." His voice rose with childlike triumph. "You can pretend to be asleep!"

Sleepy stared at him for a full moment, and then, slowly, his face relaxed into a warm, joyful grin. He held out his hand.

"Kiwi," he said, "I take back all I ever said about you! You're a genius! Shake!" Eagerly the replacement shook and his grip almost broke Sleepy's fingers.

They quickly stripped the uniforms from the unconscious Jerries, and proceeded to get into them.

Then, since Sleepy wanted to take every possible precaution, they bound up the still unconscious Boche with their own discarded Yank uniforms and hid them in some brush.

Sleepy shoved the document found on the German captain into a pocket of his gray tunic. "This paper's gotta do the real work when we get to Visches," he said. "With Ludendorf's signature, it ought to work like oil!" He shoved the captain's Luger into his holster and Lieutenant Potts did likewise with the sergeant's. "Well, let's go!"

They went out to the waiting motor cycle, whose engine was still popping.

"Now, Kiwi," Sleepy cautioned, "I'm trusting everything to you. Now get this into your head. You start down this road and as soon as you see any Jerries, stop and ask 'em the way. I'll be pretending to sleep of course. Whenever any one tries to speak to me, you stop 'em; put your finger to your lips and say in German, 'Hush, the captain is very tired. He will be sore as hell if he is disturbed.' Or words to that effect.

Now do you think your head is big enough to hold all this? If not you'd better say so now."

Lieutenant Potts grinned. "Watch me!" he cried eagerly, and, turning the handle bars, he shoved the cycle off with an experienced foot.

Sleepy relaxed in the side car. His head nodded slowly. And he snored.

Lieutenant Potts drove on eagerly, with his sleeping passenger. A column of marching gray infantry suddenly loomed on the road ahead. Lieutenant Potts, obeying instructions as faithfully as ever, slowed down and drew to a stop right beside a stiff-backed Prussian *Oberleutnant*, who was evidently in command of the column.

"*Nach Visches?*" Lieutenant Potts inquired in fluent German, pointing down the road.

The stiff-backed *Oberleutnant* glared at him with scornful anger, obviously displeased at being so addressed by a mere sergeant. A snore from the side car brought the Prussian's eyes to the sleeping "captain." His expression changed at sight of a superior officer. He stiffened like a ramroad, and his hand snapped up in a salute.

"*Herr Hauptmann*——" he began respectfully.

Lieutenant Potts put a warning finger to his lips. "Hush! The *Herr* Captain is very tired! He would be infuriated if he were disturbed before we got to Visches!"

Another snore from the side car seemed to corroborate his words. The *Oberleutnant* nodded with understanding, and lowered his voice to give the direction.

"*Danke schoen!*" said Lieutenant Potts, whereupon his motor cycle sent a blast of exhaust smoke into the *Oberleutnant's* face as it sped off once more. In the side car Sleepy Miller still snored blissfully. On roared the cycle.

PRESENTLY a crossroads appeared. In the center of it stood a Prussian military policeman with a gleaming helmet. He was directing traffic for there were lots of trucks on the crossroads. As he saw the motor cycle, and heard its imperious siren, he stopped everything else to make way for it. Once more Lieutenant Potts slowed down to a stop.

"*Nach Visches?*" Then again he put a finger to his lips, as he saw that the military policeman was about to address Sleepy. "Hush. Do not wake the *Herr* Captain, please! He will be in a temper!"

"Take a right turn," the M.P. directed in a hushed whisper. "And go straight ahead to Visches."

Lieutenant Potts took the right turn and was off again. He went whizzing by trucks and lorries now. Miles went by. There was so much traffic now that Lieutenant Potts had to go slower and slower. Presently they passed a big sign. It said "Visches."

Sleepy Miller nodded sleepily. "Visches," he said, and then suddenly he sat up, wide-awake, tense. "Now for the trouble! Listen, Kiwi! Find out who's in charge here and drive to him! You'll wake me. I won't talk; I'll pretend to be tired and cranky. I'll just show 'em the paper from Ludendorf and we'll have to let nature take its course from there on." They passed several Boche who strolled along the sidewalk. Lieutenant Potts drew close to the curb.

"Who is in authority around here?" he demanded, in his perfect German. "Do not talk loudly—the *Herr* Captain must not be disturbed!"

One of the soldiers whispered, "The headquarters is right on the next street here. There is the adjutant standing out there right now. I believe he is waiting for you to arrive!"

"*Danke!*" Lieutenant Potts drove down to the building. Sure enough, a fat-bellied adjutant stood on the steps, watching the street. Seeing the motor cycle draw up, he waddled toward it on stubby legs. His eyes were strangely keen as they glanced at the occupants.

"You are the officer I was expecting?" he queried, cautiously, addressing the sleeping man in the side car.

"*Ja wohl!*" Lieutenant Potts said quickly, and added apologetically, "*Herr* Captain is very tired. I am afraid he will be in a temper, but I will wake him for you, sir." He leaned over and then, as if he were touching a poisonous snake, he very gently tapped Sleepy Miller's shoulder. "*Herr* Captain, we are here, sir, and——"

Sleepy Miller blinked, opened his eyes slowly, and looked around with a very sour expression. Then, lazily, he reached into his pocket, pulled out the paper, and handed it to the fat adjutant. The latter read it carefully. Sleepy Miller continued to yawn and blink, but in reality he was more awake now than he had ever been in his life. He knew this was a crucial moment. If these Boche knew the real Captain von Keppel at all the whole scheme would go awry and the two Yanks would be doomed, for their German uniforms technically made them spies! He waited tensely, blinking and yawning. Lieutenant Potts, his eyes popping but his face looking far more sober and thoughtful than usual, also waited.

The adjutant finished reading at last. To the intense relief of the two Yanks, an affable smile came over his fat face, and the cautious look went out of his eyes.

"But of course!" he beamed. "Captain von Keppel! We have been waiting for you! We are all ready; if you will but climb out, there will be no delay!" Throughout this speech, not one word of which he understood, Sleepy Miller merely nodded sleepily. But Lieutenant Potts promptly climbed off the cycle, and thus gave his comrade the cue. Sleepy Miller, with another yawn, proceeded to climb stiffly from the side car. Lieutenant Potts helped him respectfully. The adjutant meanwhile turned and barked something toward the building. An alert sergeant came dashing down, and stood like a ramrod.

"The sergeant here will conduct you," said the adjutant, and again Sleepy Miller nodded at the words he could not understand.

THE two Yanks followed the Boche sergeant down the street. He led them around the corner. They came to a little field, and as they reached it the eyes of both Lieutenant Potts and Sleepy Miller widened with awe and surprise.

In the center of the field, squatting like some huge monster on its great tractors, was a gigantic tank! Guns protruded ominously from its steel turrets. Its engine was idling with a rattling, metallic noise. The manhole on its top was open. Four Boche soldiers stood beside the monster, waiting.

Through the sleepy brain of Sleepy Miller suddenly rushed the words the C.O. had spoken to him earlier that morning. "Keep your eyes peeled for signs of a large German tank." By God, this must be the very one! There was no doubt about it; he had never before seen such a menacing, monstrous-looking tank! It was a new type all right!

The sergeant who had led him and Lieutenant Potts was addressing the four waiting soldiers who stood beside the big steel monster. "This is your commander!" he snapped. "He will be in charge of this experimental raid!"

Again Sleepy did not understand the words, but when he saw the four soldiers stiffen and salute him respectfully, he grasped the situation. So this was the mission von Keppel had been assigned to, to command this tank on some jaunt across the lines! But he was to take his orderly if he desired. Sleepy, while still blinking and looking sour, shot a quick glance at Lieutenant Potts.

Lieutenant Potts understood the look his comrade flashed to him. He spoke to the four soldiers, with the superior authority of a sergeant to privates.

“The *Herr* Captain wishes to start at once! He wishes me to accompany him also!”

The soldiers nodded respectfully. At a signaling nudge from Lieutenant Potts, Sleepy Miller reluctantly approached the tank. A moment later, dazed and bewildered, he stood inside the great steel monster. The clattering engine and radiator occupied its entire length. Gun butts protruded from its various slits. The floor and walls vibrated unpleasantly from the motor.

Lieutenant Potts came in then, and he was followed by the four soldiers. One of them closed the manhole. The sunlight was shut out but promptly somebody turned on the electric lights which were inside the tank, and they were dazzling bright. One of the soldiers climbed into the driver’s perch in the center of the steel monster. The others took up positions at the various guns. As for Sleepy, he sat down on a box of ammunition and promptly snored, feigning sleep.

Lieutenant Potts stood beside him. At a muttered word from Sleepy, Lieutenant Potts drew himself up. “The *Herr* Captain says to go! Straight across the lines!”

The driver nodded. He moved some levers on either side of him. The engine rose to an ear-splitting, clattering roar. The air inside the tank was growing stifling now, and the vibration was nauseating.

Slowly the big monster lumbered out across the field. A trench appeared before it, a third-line trench! It was moving toward No-Man’s-Land!

But before it had moved far, something happened outside. Suddenly a swarm of Boche soldiers came dashing up to the slow-moving tank and, because they could move much faster than it did, were soon on either side. They were shouting and pounding on the steel walls. The Germans inside were unable to hear what they were saying because of the clattering of the engine. But Lieutenant Potts, who also saw the swarming Jerries outside through his aperture, understood quite well, dumb though he had seemed to be! All this could mean but one thing! Those two Boche, the real Captain von Keppel and his aide, must have come to or been found by somebody. The Jerries outside were trying to inform the soldiers in the tank that two spies were riding with them!

LIEUTENANT POTTS hurried over to Sleepy Miller, and spoke to him beneath the clatter of the engine.

“They know we are spies outside and are trying to tell these guys!” the replacement said. “What shall I do about it?”

Sleepy Miller’s face paled. He thought fast. Even

at that moment the driver, at a shout from one of the bewildered soldiers at the guns, was slowing down. He was going to stop to see what all the rumpus was about! Sleepy Miller spoke hastily to Lieutenant Potts.

“Listen, tell that driver to put on speed. Tell him not to pay any attention to the soldiers. Say that I left my—er, wallet behind and they just want to give it to me. But not to bother, because we are in a hurry!”

Lieutenant Potts hastened to obey. Even as the driver was manipulating the gears, the replacement yelled to him, “*Mach schnell!*” and he repeated in German what Sleepy Miller had told him. The driver as well as the other soldiers, accepted the explanation; they dared not cross their captain. But the swarm of soldiers outside, growing larger and larger now, stubbornly followed their lurching progress.

“*Mach schnell!*” Lieutenant Potts yelled at him again. “Pay no attention!”

“But those soldiers—it seems they must want something else!” the driver insisted.

Lieutenant Potts laughed wildly. “To hell with them!” he bellowed.

But, in his excitement, he bellowed it in English! And, unfortunately, his profane English words had been louder than the engine! The driver and the three other Boche all turned suspiciously, alarm on their faces. And then Sleepy Miller, cursing, jumped up from the ammunition box; the Luger he had captured was in his hand.

“Don’t anybody move!” he shouted, and pointed the muzzle of the gun at the driver. “Drive on!”

The driver and the others did not understand English, but they understood the Luger. The driver, a frightened look on his face, drove on. But one of the other soldiers made a sudden furtive move and before Sleepy knew what was happening the Boche had whipped out an ugly, squat revolver of his own. At that, Lieutenant Potts acted once more! Once more he turned into a wild panther. His fists filled the stifling air of the tank’s interior as they flayed out, right, left, right, left. The revolver went flying out of the Boche soldier’s hand, and he sprawled to the steel floor.

Sleepy fired pointblack at one of the other two Jerry privates, and the man dropped like a log. Lieutenant Potts turned on the third, and sent him flying, head-on, against the butt of a machine gun.

“Attaboy, Kiwi!” Sleepy shouted enthusiastically. “Attaboy! You’re—hey wait! Don’t hit him!” he broke off in alarm, as Lieutenant Potts, in the heat of battle, swung a wild punch toward the frightened driver

of the tank. Too late did Sleepy try to stop him. The driver went flying off his perch, and landed in a heap with the other three Boche. The tank, with the soldiers still clamoring outside, lumbered on—without any hand at its controls now.

Sleepy gave a groan. “Gosh, Kiwi, I was just ready to think you were the Boy Wonder of the War, and now you go and spoil it all!” A gleam of desperate hope came into his eyes. “Tell me, did you usta be a tank driver maybe?”

Lieutenant Potts shook his head. “I never saw a tank before in my life! I don’t know the first thing about it!”

Sleepy shook his head, and cursed anew.

“Lucky it’s headed toward the lines and let’s hope it keeps on that way!”

INDEED the Jerries outside were getting desperate now. Unable to get any response from the interior of the tank, they decided the spies must have control of it. Their reaction was startling. There was a sudden muffled explosion which made the lumbering monster lurch once more. They were throwing grenades to stop it! But the tank seemed quite invulnerable; it went on unscathed. Sleepy rushed to one of the turrets where there was a loaded machine gun. Right into the faces of the Boche soldiers outside he fired the weapon, swinging it back and forth. The Jerries dropped like flies, scattered all over the place. From the other side of the tank, Lieutenant Potts cut loose with another gun. And meanwhile, the driverless tank lumbered on, engine rattling.

Those machine guns did the trick. The Boche outside dared not come so close to the lumbering steel monster now. And presently, as it lumbered on, it was lurching right over a front-line German trench and heading out across No-Man’s-Land! The Jerries dared go no farther. They gave up the chase.

Meanwhile, inside the tank, the three Boche that Lieutenant Potts had knocked out still lay sprawled in an inert heap. The fourth Jerry was dead; Sleepy’s bullet had pierced his heart.

Suddenly the two Yanks in the lumbering tank stiffened. A hail of lead was pelting against the steel wall outside. Sleepy looked out of the front turret.

“Holy hell!” he cried. “It’s from the Yanks! We’re heading right for their front-line trenches! They think we’re Boche! Wait, we must signal’em!” He climbed up the ladder to the manhole on top. With much effort he got it open. Cautiously, he poked his head out. His German helmet went flying right off, and a bullet

sizzled past his car. He ducked back, pulled out a white handkerchief, and tried to wave it. Before he had raised it far it was shot right out of his hand. He slammed the manhole cover shut, and came down again to the floor.

“It’s safer in here! Cripes, if only we could stop this thing now everything would be jake.” A sudden idea seized him. He went over to the unconscious Boche driver of the tank, whom Lieutenant Potts had knocked cold. Sleepy bent over the man, rubbed his wrists and neck, shook him, slapped his cheeks. But the driver showed no signs of coming to.

“Damn it!” Sleepy cursed. “If only you didn’t sock so damned hard, Kiwi!” He turned now and went to look at the rattling engine. He shook his head. “I’d be scared to fool around with it. There’s no telling what might happen!”

“Well,” said Lieutenant Potts, “one thing we can be sure of—it’s got to run out of gas sometime!”

“Yeah!” muttered Sleepy gloomily. The tank just then gave another mighty lurch. It had reached the front-line Yank trench, and was straddling right over it! The doughboys scurried out of its way, and at the same time fired at it with rifles and revolvers. It went on.

In Allied territory now! And yet the two Yanks inside were powerless to stop it. Slowly, but steadily, the huge steel monster lumbered right on, impervious to the attacking doughboys. The great tank was invulnerable all right! Nothing could stop it!

Sleepy’s tense face suddenly relaxed. “Look here, Kiwi,” he said, “there’s nothing to worry about, at that. This tank can’t be hurt and that’s all there is to it. And I’m good and tired.” He looked around. On one part of the floor lay a piece of burlap. Sleepy promptly settled down on it. Lieutenant Potts, the naive, bewildered look on his face, kept walking up and down.

Before long the whole U.S. army, or so it seemed, was firing at the lumbering tank which plodded stubbornly on. But neither shells nor bullets seemed able to pierce that monster. It kept going on, slowly, relentlessly. Lieutenant Potts’ face suddenly became eager. “Maybe,” he yelled, “maybe it will go as far as Paris!”

Sleepy snored in answer. The tank clattered on. The Jerry soldiers still lay sprawled inert on the floor—as did Sleepy.

IT WAS far in the back areas of France that the huge monster finally did give out of gas. While swarms of khaki-clad soldiers followed, shooting at it with

everything they had, the tank, with a long, sputtering sigh, conked out and came to a dead stop. The doughboys cautiously surrounded it, yelling at its occupants to come out and surrender. Nothing happened. The doughboys bravely went forward then. They reached the tank. They climbed it. With knives and crowbars they forced open its manhole cover and peered in.

On the floor lay five gray-clad figures. One was dead. The other four were unconscious, especially the one in the uniform of a German captain.

In the midst of these inert Jerries stood a sixth figure, in the uniform of a German sergeant. He was tall and gawky. The face he turned up at the men in the manhole was naive and bewildered, and his eyes popped.

“Cripes!” he grinned, “but I’m glad that’s over!”

Sleepy Miller came to, then, and rose dazedly to his feet. He looked up at the bewildered Yanks in the manhole. “Say, what’s the idea of trying to kill us! Can’t you see we’re Yanks?”

“By God!” a voice cried from above, “but I’m damned if that’s what you don’t seem to be! You intelligence men?”

“Hell, no!” cried Sleepy. “We’re aviators! Can’t you see?”

All through the remainder of that day Sleepy Miller and Lieutenant Potts were feted as the war’s two greatest heroes. Allied G.H.Q. sent down several brass hats to take charge of the captured monster. It was roped off on a field, and a sign reading: “KEEP OFF” was posted on it.

Meanwhile, Sleepy Miller and Lieutenant Potts were dined and wined at a lavish brass hat banquet in the near-by headquarters. Their C.O. had come down here to join them, and as he sat at the table with them his

voice was no longer the voice of a lion, nor were his eyes bleak.

“When I told you to look for that tank,” he said to Sleepy, “I didn’t mean for you to bring it home! You deserve at least two weeks’ sleep for this, and I’ll see that you get it!”

Sleepy beamed. He turned to Lieutenant Potts, who was also beaming, and whose eyes were popping with enthusiasm. “By the way, Kiwi,” Sleepy said, “there’s one thing I can’t figure out. How come you pulled off all that business with the motor cycle so perfectly? You certainly didn’t seem dumb then!”

“Well, you see,” grinned Lieutenant Potts, “I usta be a actor once, so I know how to play a part good!”

Sleepy shook his head. “I give up,” he sighed—and the sigh turned suddenly into a yawn. He sipped some more wine, and it made him deliciously drowsy. His head began to nod. But the cheering brass hats at the table roused him promptly to cheer him anew. He decided he’d better go off for that two weeks’ sleep right now.

Excusing himself, he slipped out and, beneath the cool shade of a tree, stretched himself out. But the hero-worshipers found him, pulled him up to cheer and acclaim him once more. He went into a Red Cross tent and flung himself on a cot. He was found again, and dragged out for fresh honors. He tried a latrine. They found him there too. At last an idea came to him. He went out to the field where the tank was roped off. There were two guards stationed there, but seeing the hero, they respectfully let him through. Sleepy climbed over the ropes. Carefully he adjusted the sign on the tank so that no one would fail to see it. KEEP OFF! Then he climbed into the interior of the steel monster which had already proved itself invulnerable to all outsiders.