



# The German Pilot

By Gillen Minchen

(Age 14-18 Category, Aged 15)

The wind howled and mercilessly smashed into me as I staggered through the blinding sheets of icy rain, tripping over tree roots and rabbit holes. It was so cold, I suddenly found myself weeping as I trudged through the waterlogged farmer's fields. There were no stars or clouds that night, only a full moon and the periodic orange flashes of bombs going off in the distance after being dropped from zeppelins.

Sobbing, I took another step forward and my boot disappeared in a deep patch of mud, when I eventually wrenched my foot out of the bog it was only my sock that covered it, my boot was lost. Naturally this just made me cry louder. What a pathetic sight I must have been, my grey and red pilot's tunic was stained with mud and torn, several of the gold buttons were missing, my hair was singed and bedraggled along with the fact that I only had one boot.

What made matters worse though was that I was on enemy soil. My biplane, a tough old Gotha G.IV, was part of a bombing raid bound for London and the wind blew me off course, I had no idea where I was when the propeller began to make a dreadful spluttering noise before stopping altogether. The plane pitched forwards and I don't remember much of what happened afterwards, other than I survived the crash and managed to escape the burning wreckage unhurt. People would say I was lucky to survive but I wish I hadn't, I would be with God now enjoying the warmth of his hearth not this hell on Earth.

Sobbing, I took another step forward. If I just lay down I could go to sleep and never wake up, it would be so easy, so easy but a primal urge kept me going and I cursed myself for it, mind you, it would be worth it. I'd be able to see my little Else again, I could see her through my mind's eye, her long golden hair blowing in the wind and her beautiful eyes shining with pride as I accepted my Iron Cross from the Kaiser himself. That was one of the best days of my life, a day long before this war started and upended our happy little life together. When I left her to go to

war, she was expecting a baby. I hadn't seen nor heard of her since, perhaps she would have had him or her by now, I missed the birth of my child. My foot snagged on yet another tree root and I collapsed onto the ground and I heard a frightful snapping noise. This time I couldn't get up, the pain was too bad. What kind of man am I? I closed my eyes and let darkness take me.

When I woke up, I was in a strange room. The walls were whitewashed, wooden beams crossed the slanted ceiling and I realised I was in a rather comfortable bed with clean, white sheets. Maybe I was dead. I sat up and was greeted with a tremendous headache, with blurred vision, I followed to the window and threw open the curtains. Before spread an idyllic sight, a glorious sunny day with ladies and gentlemen going about their daily business in a quaint little town with their children playing games with one another as they raced down the high street. Perhaps this may be heaven, I thought as I surveyed the scene before me, there was no bomb damage on said street after all, no signs of the war at all as a matter of fact. I looked down and realised that my feet were bare and I began to search for my shoes, after all, no officer should be without shoes, even if he only had one. The door opened and a short, plump woman with a motherly face came in. "What on earth are you doing?" She asked.

"Shoes," I murmured, "I must find my shoes."

"Come now, you are delirious," she said, gently taking my arm and leading me to my bed like I was a child, "off to bed."

I opened my mouth to protest however a sudden wave of nausea overcame me, going to bed might be a good idea. I lay back down and stared at the ceiling, puzzled. I was German and this was an English town, why were they being kind to me? I was their enemy after all. Bemused I drifted off to sleep.