

LUCKY ESCAPE OF A TANK WHICH BEHAVED "LIKE A LUNATIC"

This is the story of the tank that came home on its own.

It was a heavy tank of a Yeomanry Regiment. During a static period it was one of a squadron which had a brush with the enemy in front of our main positions.

This tank was hit almost simultaneously by shells from two different enemy anti-tank guns. The officer and two of the crew were wounded.

Realising that the tank might catch fire and explode at any moment the driver climbed out of his seat and with the other uninjured member of the crew removed the wounded.

So engrossed were they that they did not notice that all the time the tank was moving slowly backwards. Not until he looked up after dressing the officer's wound, did the driver notice that the tank was no longer with them.

"Blincy," he exclaimed, "I must have left her in reverse."

It was too late to do anything about the tank, so the two men concentrated on the task of bringing the wounded to safety.

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The scene changes to the Colonel's tank, half a mile further back. We find the Colonel receiving an urgent message over the air from the commander of his cruiser squadron operating out in front.

"There's one of our tanks out here, behaving like a lunatic, sir," he hears. "Can you get him on the air and tell him that he's broadside on to the enemy and that unless he makes himself less of a target, he'll get what's coming to him?"

The Colonel had a message sent to every tank in the regiment.

"Whoever you are out there," ran the message, "turn your front to the enemy and look out for those anti-tank guns."

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Ten minutes later. Scene: the same.

A tank appears over the ridge, moving slowly in reverse. It comes on steadily, making straight for the Colonel's tank.

Several voices cry out at once. "Hi, you fool. Stop for heaven's sake."

But the tank continues its dignified withdrawal.

A man manages to scramble on to the front of the tank. He peers into the driver's seat. He looks up as though he has seen a ghost. He gives a hollow shout: "It's empty".

The robot-tank sails past the Colonel's vehicle, missing it by inches. "For God's sake stop," says the Colonel to the man clinging to it, "before it wrecks my entire headquarters.

The man struggles into the driver's seat and brings the runaway to a standstill just in time to avert a first class collision with a Grant.

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Like all comedies this one has a happy ending.

The tank crew - wounded and fit - got back safely. And the tank itself was quickly repaired and returned to the fighting line.