

In Search Of The Lost Ford By David Silver

The young man joyfully drove his powerful new car northwards on the M1 motorway, heading off to stay with his girlfriend for the weekend. It was one of the first Ford Capris to be equipped with a three-litre engine; at that time every aspiring boy racer was going weak-kneed upon hearing the clever, husky-voiced TV advertising slogan 'Ford Capri: The Car You Always Promised Yourself'.

What a fabulous time in his life this was. He'd completed his degree in biochemistry with flying colours. He'd secured a fantastic position with one of the big pharmaceutical companies. His wealthy father had, as a reward, bought him the brand new top of the range vehicle he was now driving. The radio was on and 'The Best Way to Travel' from the Moody Blues latest album In Search Of The Lost Chord was playing. Oh joy, what wonderful times!

His thoughts wandered a little. Here he was, travelling toward a brilliant future. What would that future hold? How would his life pan out? Career? Wealth? A wife? Kids? Would he age gracefully? How long would he live? What would it be like to get old?

The song continued playing.

*♪And you can fly
High as a kite if you want to
Faster than light if you want to
Speeding through the universe
Thinking is the best way to travel♪*

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"I'm so very sorry sir" said the oncologist to the 73-year old man. "I'm afraid your condition is untreatable".

"How long do you think I've got Doctor?"

"It's difficult to say, but perhaps 18 months".

Over the next few days he pondered the wonderful life he'd had. How high he'd flown in the corporate world of pharmaceuticals and the wealth he'd amassed. The mansion he lived in in Hampstead. The beautiful, artistic woman who was his wife, his companion and the mother to their five successful children. The nine delightful grandchildren. It really was such a shame that, despite his influence as a mover and shaker in Big Pharma, there was still no cure for his disease. It was ironic, but he knew he had to be philosophical about it.

What would he do with his remaining time? On the radio a song he hadn't heard for years, nay, decades, came on – The Moody Blues' Best Way to Travel. His thoughts were jolted back to his youth ... and to his first car, a top of the range Ford Capri. With the busyness of his life and the luxury limousines he'd possessed since, he'd forgotten all about it, like a long lost childhood toy - gone but still living on in deep memory. What had happened to it? Strangely, he just could not remember. A deep sense of nostalgia came over him. It would be so marvellous to drive it again. Well, not that exact vehicle of course, but one like it. His spirits were lifted. He had a project, an aim, something to achieve in his final months!

Ever a resourceful man, he set about contacting vintage car dealers to seek the right model with the right engine and in the right colour. It wasn't easy but after several weeks he got a lead. There was someone in a place called Annwyn Farm, around 60 miles away, who might have what he was looking for.

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He pondered the mouldering carcass residing in the barn alongside a number of other wrecks. "It looks worse than it is" said the dealer. "It can be rebuilt – at a cost of course". "What happened to it?"

"Apparently it was involved in a high speed accident on the M1. It was written off. The strangest thing is that the body of the driver was never found. That's why nobody has ever been interested – superstition y'know".

He felt something welling up inside him. A desire. A yearning. He had to have this car.

"Look, I want this vehicle in a driveable condition. Cost is no object. When can you get it done by?"

"Blimey, have you got any idea of the amount of work required and, dare I say it, it was written off. Putting it back on the road might not be, shall we say, strictly legal, although I doubt if there'll be records going back that far. It would take a couple of years, with regular stage payments for materials and labour and I'd have to get a big team of experts in".

"Do it in a year and I'll pay you double".

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Fifteen months passed. He was getting weaker and he knew the end was near. His family had rallied around him and he felt reasonably at peace. He was almost ready to go. But there was one more thing to do.

A low loader delivered that final thing. A 1969 Ford Capri in Saluki Bronze with a 3-litre engine. It looked immaculate. The interior smelled of oil, petrol, leather and nostalgia.

"Will you be alright dear?" his worried wife enquired gently as he climbed stiffly in. "Never better darling".

He started the engine and drove off. He headed for the M1 and put the radio on. As The Moody Blues' Best Way to Travel played he realised there was something that was niggling him. He worried away until his memory delivered the answer in a burst of disbelief and elation. The number plate – CHA 666H – that was his. How could he, Charles, ever forget that? This was his car. The one he'd been driving when he'd ... when he'd ...

He didn't notice the truck pull out suddenly into his lane. At 110mph there was little he could do about it.

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They say that when you know you're about to die your whole past life flashes before you. That wasn't the experience of the young man as he plunged into the back of a slow-moving truck at 110mph, desperately trying to avoid it but too late. The life he would never now lead was laid out before him. A spectacular career in Big Pharma, a prestigious house in a prestigious neighbourhood, the loved children and grandchildren, the loving wife, the illness and the final, grand, explosive exit from this world in a collision on a motorway. It would never happen now.

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