

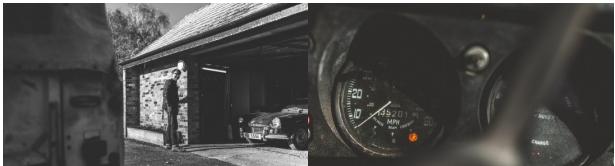
CLASSIC DRIVER

Into the woods with Tim Bent and his beloved Landy

Lead
Tim Bent's cottage in the woods is what fairy tales are made of: rustic charm, blankets of fallen leaves, a wall of woods, magical animals — African water buffalo, anyone? And this fable wouldn't be complete without an unlikely hero — enter the Land Rover Series 3...

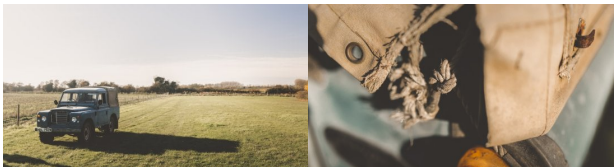
Once upon a time, in a magical nature reserve just north of Cambridge, there lived the family Bent, comprised of father Tim, mother Hannah, son Ned, and daughter Martha. When not working away in their London shop — [Bentleys London](#) — sourcing, restoring, and selling the finest vintage luggage and English crafts in the world, they escape to the countryside for a change of scene, one involving a quaint family home nestled on the edge of thick woods, where magical animals (in the form of African water buffalos, Highland cows, and wise old owls) visit, trouble (dive-bombing bats and pot holes the size of small children) lurks around every corner, and a mighty mechanical warrior defends the kingdom...

The chariot awaits



While not a majestic carriage, this weather-beaten and -battered Land Rover Series 3 can easily put anyone under its spell. And of those most enchanted is Tim, who bought this burly off-roader just over two years ago. As Tim recalled, "I found it up at auction in King's Lynn, so not far away. I think it had been off the road for 21 years or something like that and it had been shut in a barn. They must've literally just driven it into the barn and left it, because it was caked with mud — all the wheel arches had about six inches of mud plastered in them. And it had this fantastic bleaching effect. I think the end of it must've stuck out of the barn a bit, where the sun just came around, and you get this kind of faded effect, where the rear wings are bleached a completely different colour to the front — which I love! It's perfect."

A tale as old as time



Like a true Prince Charming, Tim doesn't judge the Landy for its looks and fairly rough condition — it was actually these faults and flaws that made him fall in love with the Landy in the first place, and he's been devoted to keeping this faded blue wonder as is — even if those around him don't see the Cinderella underneath the rags. Tim elaborated further, "I decided that I wasn't going to wash it or clean it, so when I took it to the garage to get it back running again, which actually wasn't particularly difficult — they're pretty bomb-proof, aren't they? — I said, whatever you do, I don't want it washed. I want it covered in dirt. I don't want anything touched on the outside. You can do whatever you like underneath to get it going. And so, it's been out in a few showers but nothing else."

A dream is a wish your heart makes



And while Tim’s wife, Hannah, doesn’t mind the mechanical beast in her kingdom, there are concerns of more brawny 4x4s creeping into the sacred walls of their sanctuary — and we can’t blame her. As Tim explained, “She’s worried there’s going to be dozens of them lined up the drive. I actually did put in a bid in for five of them from the Falklands, but they were absolute wrecks — I mean proper wrecks. And I suppose down there, they’re just covered in rust. But they sort of rebuilt them all, and I thought, actually, each one had this weird patina on it. You could make one really amazing harlequin out of them all. But they were rusted to hell, and they were down in Devon, and I thought by the time I’ve got five of them back here, the cost would be just too much. So, I ended up being realistic about it, which is quite unusual for me. The dream sometimes is far more appealing than the reality.”

The temptress



Even though the dream hasn’t ventured any further beyond the land between sleep and awake, the Defender does share a stable with one stealthy step-sister. While not wicked like most in these tales, the Triumph Spitfire sibling is the perfect complement to the Land Rover. Providing an automotive allegory of desire versus necessity — one that most wouldn’t put together — the two are actually the perfect pair. With a cheeky grin, Tim said, “The Triumph was first registered the day after I was born. When I found that out, I thought, perfect, I shall never have to sell it. And Hannah’s been quite good about it really. It has been mentioned a few times — do you really need it? No, I don’t need it, but would that make any difference whatsoever? Need is not relevant. Where I can sort of justify the need for the Land Rover, with woodlands to tend to. A Land Rover is more useable than a tractor — it’s so much more practical.”

The moral of this story? Just as you shouldn’t judge a book by its cover, Cinderella by her clothes, or a lonely prince by his beastly appearance, you shouldn’t judge a car by its bodywork — for what is a beaten and bruised Land Rover Series 3 to some is a faithful and joyous steed to another...just ask Tim Bent.

Photos: Robert Cooper for Classic Driver © 2017

Gallery

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