

HAND OUT

LESSON – 8 THE HACK DRIVER

MODULE – 1

The Hack Driver is an amusing tale about a young lawyer who is very innocent. He goes to a village to serve to summon to a person called Oliver Lutkins. At the railway station, he meets a person who introduced himself as Bill. Bill told that he knew everyone in the village and promises to search Lutkins for the lawyer.

PART OF THE LESSON

READ AND FIND OUT

- Why is the lawyer sent to New Mullion? What does he first think about the place?
- Who befriends him? Where does he take him?
- What does he say about Lutkins?

AFTER graduating with honours, I became a junior assistant clerk in a magnificent law firm. I was sent, not to prepare legal briefs, but to serve summons, like a cheap private detective. I had to go to dirty and shadowy corners of the city to seek out my victims. Some of the larger and more self-confident ones even beat me up. I hated this unpleasant work, and the side of city life it revealed to me. I even considered fleeing to my hometown, where I could have been a real lawyer right away, without going through this unpleasant training period.

So I rejoiced one day when they sent me out

forty miles in the country, to a town called New Mullion, to serve summons on a man called Oliver Lutkins. We needed this man as a witness in a law case, and he had ignored all our letters.

When I got to New Mullion, my eager expectations of a sweet and simple country village were severely disappointed. Its streets were rivers of mud, with rows of wooden shops, either painted a sour brown, or bare of any paint at all. The only agreeable sight about the place was the delivery man at the station. He was about forty, red-faced, cheerful, and thick about the middle. His working clothes were dirty and well-worn, and he had a friendly manner. You felt at once that he liked people.

“I want,” I told him, “to find a man named Oliver Lutkins.

“Lutkins? I saw him around here about an hour ago. Hard fellow to catch though — always up to something or other. He’s probably trying to start up a poker game in the back of Fritz’s shop. I’ll tell you, boy — is there any hurry about locating Lutkins?”

“Yes. I want to catch the afternoon train back to the city.” I was very important and secret about it.

“I’ll tell you what. I’ve got a hack. I’ll get it out and we can drive around together and find Lutkins. I know most of the places he hangs out.”

He was so open and friendly that I glowed with the warmth of his affection. I knew, of course, that he wanted the business, but his kindness was real. I was glad the fare money would go to this good fellow. I managed to bargain down to two dollars an hour, and then he brought from his house nearby a sort of large black box on wheels. He remarked, “Well, young man, here’s the carriage,” and his wide smile made me into an old friend. These villagers are so ready to help a stranger. He had already made it his own task to find Oliver Lutkins for me.

He said, "I don't want to interfere, young fellow, but my guess is that you want to collect some money from Lutkins. He never pays anybody a cent. He still owes me fifty cents on a poker game I was fool



enough to play with him. He's not really bad, but it's hard to make him part with his money. If you try to collect from him, in those fancy clothes, he'll be suspicious and get away from you. If you want I'll go into Fritz's and ask for him, and you can keep out of sight behind me."

I loved him for this. By myself, I might never have found Lutkins. With the hack driver's knowing help, I was sure of getting my man. I took him into my confidence and told him that I wanted to serve the summons on Lutkins — that the man had refused to be a witness, when his information would have quickly settled our case. The driver listened earnestly. At the end, he hit me on the shoulder and laughed, "Well, we'll give Brother Lutkins a little surprise."

"Let's start, driver."

"Most folks around here call me Bill or Magnuson. My business is called 'William Magnuson Fancy Carting and Hacking'."

"All right, Bill. Shall we proceed to Fritz's".

"Yes, Lutkins is just as likely to be there as anywhere. Plays a lot of poker. He's good at deceiving people." Bill seemed to admire Lutkins' talent for dishonesty. I felt that if he had been a policeman, he would have caught Lutkins respectfully, and jailed him with regret.

Bill led me into Fritz's. "Have you seen Oliver Lutkins around today?"

Friend of his looking for him," said Bill cheerily.

Fritz looked at me, hiding behind Bill. He hesitated, and then admitted, "Yes, he was in here a little while ago. Guess he's gone over to Gustaff's to get a shave."

“Well, if he comes in, tell him I’m looking for him.”

We drove to Gustaff’s barber shop. Again Bill went in first, and I lingered at the door. He asked not only the Swede but two customers if they had seen Lutkins. The Swede had not. He said angrily, “I haven’t seen him, and don’t care to. But if you find him you can just collect that dollar thirty-five he owes me.” One of the customers thought he had seen Lutkins walking down Main Street, this side of the hotel.

As we climbed back into the hack, Bill concluded that since Lutkins had exhausted his credit at Gustaff’s he had probably gone to Gray’s for a shave. At Gray’s barber shop we missed Lutkins by only five minutes. He had just left — probably for the poolroom. At the poolroom it appeared that he had just bought a pack of cigarettes and gone out. So we pursued him, just behind him but never catching him, for an hour till it was past one o’clock. I was hungry. But I had so enjoyed Bill’s rough country opinions about his neighbours that I scarcely cared whether I found Lutkins or not.

“How about something to eat?” I suggested. “Let’s go to a restaurant and I’ll buy you lunch.”

“Well, I ought to go home to the wife. I don’t care much for these restaurants — only four of them and they’re all bad. Tell you what we’ll do. We’ll get the wife to pack up a lunch for us — she won’t charge you more than half a dollar, and it would cost you more for a greasy meal in a restaurant — and we’ll go up to Wade’s Hill and enjoy the view while we eat.”

Summary

This is a story of a lawyer who after completing his graduation started working with a famous firm in the city. He was working as an assistant clerk there. He did not like the job of serving summons because sometimes he had to face harsh situations. One day, he had to give summons to Oliver Lutkins who was a key witness in some case. He lived in a small village New Mullion. He was happy to go to the village but the village looked very dull and lifeless. The narrator saw a hack driver on a platform that was cheerful. He inquired him about Lutkins and came to know he was a shrewd man and had taken loan from many people. The hack driver cunningly extracted from lawyer that he has come here to give court summon to Lutkin.

The lawyer decided to rent Bill's hack and search for Lutkins. Bill manipulated the lawyer and made him visit different places in search of Lutkins. He always goes ahead and inquires about Lutkins. They went to Fritz's shop to catch Lutkins where he plays poker. They have been told that he has gone to Gustaff barber for shaving. Later at Gustaff's place also they could not meet him and somebody told them they saw him in the pool room. They could not find him there and told he left the poolroom after buying cigarettes. In Afternoon Bill asked the lawyer to buy food from his wife as it would be less costly than a restaurant. They had their lunch at Wade's hill which is a beautiful place.

