

HAND OUT

LESSON – 8 THE HACK DRIVER

MODULE – 2

In the story The Hack Driver the narrator and the hack driver resumed their search of Oliver Lutkings. Both of them went to a poor farmyard to meet Oliver's Mother, and in noon time narrator decided to go to city, Next morning when narrator came back with his companion who knew Lutkings.

PART OF THE LESSON

READ AND FIND OUT

- What more does Bill say about Lutkins and his family?
- Does the narrator serve the summons that day?
- Who is Lutkins?

I know that Bill's helpfulness to the Young Fellow from the City was not entirely a matter of brotherly love. I was paying him for his time; in the end I paid him for six hours (including the lunch hour) at what was then a very high price. But he was no more dishonest than I. I charged the whole thing to the firm. But it would have been worth paying him myself to have his presence. His cheerful country wisdom was very refreshing to a country boy like myself who was sick of the city. As we sat on the hilltop, looking over the pastures and creek which slipped among the trees, he talked of New Mullion, and painted a picture in words of all the people in

it. He noticed everything, but no matter how much he might laugh at people, he also understood and forgave their foolishness. He described the minister's wife who sang the loudest in church when she was most in debt. He commented on the boys who came back from college in fancy clothes. He told about the lawyer whose wife could never succeed in getting him to put on both a collar and a tie on the same day. He made them all live. On that day I came to know New Mullion better than I did the city, and to love it better.

Bill didn't know about colleges and cities, but he had travelled around a lot of the country, and had had a lot of jobs. From his adventures he had brought back a philosophy of simplicity and laughter. He strengthened me.

We left that peaceful scene of meadows and woods, and resumed our search of Oliver Lutkins. We could not find him. At last Bill cornered a friend of Lutkins and made him admit what he guessed, "Oliver's gone out to his mother's farm, three miles north."

We drove out there, laying plans.

“I know Oliver’s mother. She’s a terror,” Bill sighed. “I took a trunk out there for her once, and she almost took my skin off because I didn’t treat it like a box of eggs. She’s about nine feet tall and four feet thick and quick as a cat, and she sure can talk. I’ll bet Oliver heard that somebody’s chasing him, and he’s gone on there to hide behind his mother’s skirts. Well, we’ll try her. But you’d better let me do it, boy. You may be great at literature and law, but you haven’t had real training in swearing.”

We drove into a poor farmyard; we were faced by an enormous and cheerful old woman. My guide bravely went up to her and said, “Remember me? I’m Bill Magnuson, the carter and hackman. I want to find your son, Oliver.”

“I don’t know anything about Oliver, and I don’t want to,” she shouted.

“Now, look here. We’ve had just about enough nonsense. This young man represents the court in the city, and we have a legal right to search all properties for this Oliver Lutkins.”

Bill made me sound very important, and the woman was impressed. She retired into the kitchen and we followed. She seized an iron from the old-fashioned stove and marched on us shouting. “You search all you want to — if you don’t mind getting burnt first.” She shouted and laughed at our frightened retreat.

“Let’s get out of here. She’ll murder us,” Bill whispered. Outside, he said, “Did you see her smile? She was laughing at us.”

I agreed that it was pretty disrespectful treatment. We did, however, search the house. Since it was only one storey high, Bill went round it, peering in at all the windows. We examined the barn and stable; we were reasonably certain that Lutkins was not there. It was nearly time for me to catch the afternoon train, and Bill drove me to the station.

On the way to the city I worried very little over my failure to find Lutkins. I was too busy thinking about Bill Magnuson. Really, I considered returning to New Mullion to practise law. If I had found Bill so deep and richly human, might I not grow to love Fritz and Gustaff and a hundred other slow-spoken, simple, wise neighbours? I pictured an honest and happy life beyond the strict limits of universities and law firms. I was excited. I had found a treasure. I had discovered a new way of life.

But if I did not think much about Lutkins, the office did. I found them all upset. Next morning the case was coming up in the court, and they had to have Lutkins. I was a shameful, useless fool. That

Morning my promising legal career almost came to an end before it had begun.

The Chief almost murdered me. He hinted that I might do well at digging ditches. I was ordered back to New Mullion, and with me went a man who had worked with Lutkins. I was rather sorry, because it would prevent my loafing all over again with Bill.

When the train arrived at New Mullion, Bill was on the station platform, near his cart. Strangely enough, that old tigress, Lutkins' mother was there talking and laughing with Bill, not quarrelling at all. From the train steps I pointed Bill out to my companion and said, "There's a fine fellow, a real man. I spent the day with him."



“He helped you hunt for Oliver Lutkins?” “Yes, he helped me a lot.”

“He must have; he’s Lutkins himself.”

What really hurt me was that when I served the summons, Lutkins and his mother laughed at me as though I were a bright boy of seven. With loving kindness they begged me to go with them to a neighbour’s house for a cup of coffee.

“I told them about you and they’re anxious to look at you,” said Lutkins joyfully. “They’re about the only folks in the town that missed seeing you yesterday.”

Summary

By now the lawyer was fully convinced that Bill is a generous and helpful person. He even started comparing city people and villagers. Later they went to Lutkins mother's house but she was a horrible lady and she was close to attacking them with a hot iron rod. At last, the lawyer has to leave without serving to summon to Lutkins. He was badly scolded by his Chief the next day and was sent again to New Mullion with a colleague who knew Lutkins. On reaching station the lawyer happily acknowledged that Bill was such helpful people to him in searching Lutkins. At this point, he was told by his colleague that the hack driver was none other than Oliver Lutkins. The lawyer felt ashamed of himself.

Conclusion of The Hack Driver

The story teaches us that we should not trust anyone without knowing them otherwise people will make fool of us.

GLOSSARY

hack: a horse-drawn vehicle

agreeable sight: pleasant sight

poker: a card game in which bluff is used as players bet on the value of their cards

earnestly: very seriously

creek: short arm of river; inlet on sea-coast

Think about it

1. When the lawyer reached New Mullion, did 'Bill' know that he was looking for Lutkins? When do you think Bill came up with his plan for fooling the lawyer?
2. Lutkins openly takes the lawyer all over the village. How is it that no one lets out the secret? (*Hint:* Notice that the hack driver asks the lawyer to keep out of sight behind him when they go into Fritz's.) Can you find other such subtle ways in which Lutkins manipulates the tour?
3. Why do you think Lutkins' neighbours were anxious to meet the lawyer?
4. After his first day's experience with the hack driver the lawyer thinks of returning to New Mullion to practise law. Do you think he would have

reconsidered this idea after his second visit?

5. Do you think the lawyer was gullible? How could he have avoided being taken for a ride?

Talk about it

1. Do we come across persons like Lutkins only in fiction or do we encounter them in real life as well? You can give examples from fiction, or narrate an incident that you have read in the newspaper, or an incident from real life.
2. Who is a 'con man', or a confidence trickster?

Suggested reading

- 'The Questionable Cargo' by Captain W. E. Johns
- 'My Last Dollar' by Stephen Leacock
- 'Barin Bhowmik's Ailment' by Satyajit Ray