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ENGLISH

CHAPTER 8: THE HACK DRIVER



THE HACK DRIVER

~Summary~

-by Sinclair Lewis

The Narrator's Job

The narrator, a young lawyer works in a law firm and is assigned the duty to serve summons to a witnesses required in a court case. The narrator graduated with honours in law and dreamt of practising law. But all his hopes are dashed because he does not get any case to handle but is sent to serve summons. As this work is difficult and dangerous, he hates it. He thinks of going back to his town to become a lawyer.

The Lawyer goes to New Mullion to Serve Summons

One day he goes to a village named New Mullion to serve summons on Oliver Lutkins. He expects to find a beautiful and peaceful village. But his expectations are proved false as the village has streets full of mud. There are shabby wooden shops all around. The only cheerful thing that the lawyer finds a man at the station. This man drives a carriage and offers to help him find Oliver Lutkins.

The Hack Driver Tells the Lawyer about Lutkins

The hack driver informed him that Lutkins was hard to catch. He was always busy doing one thing or another. He tells him that Lutkins even owes him some money. The lawyer is quite impressed by the friendly conduct of the hack driver. Now, he trusts him completely. The lawyer hires his carriage for a couple of hours to find Lutkins. He even tells him that he had summons to serve on Lutkins.

The Hack Driver Takes the Lawyer Around

The hack driver suggests that he would find out about Lutkins as Lutkins might run away on seeing the lawyer. The driver takes him to Fritz's shop. Then he takes him to Gustaf's barber shop. After that they go to Gray's and the poolroom. But they miss Oliver Lutkins every time. Lunch time arrives. The driver gets him some cheap lunch made by his wife.

The Lawyer Enjoys the Driver's Company

The lawyer did not mind that he had not found Oliver Lutkins because he was enjoying the company of the hack driver. The lawyer was impressed by the wisdom of the man. The driver told him everything about New Mullion. He described the people and their habits. His simplicity and humour influences the lawyer so much that he plans to settle down in the village. He ends up paying the hack driver for six hours.

The Driver and the Lawyer Visit Oliver's Mother

The hack driver suggested that they should look for Oliver at his mother's place. She was described as a terrifying woman. The woman chased them away with a burning iron and threatened to burn them. The two escaped to save themselves.

The Lawyer Returns to Town

When the lawyer returned to town without serving the summons his chief got very angry with him. They needed Lutkins as an important witness in their case. The next day he sent another man who knew Lutkins with the lawyer to the village to bring Lutkins.

The Lawyer Serves Summons on Lutkins

The lawyer and his companion went to the village the next day. They found the hack driver at the station laughing and joking with Lutkins mother. He pointed out the driver to his companion and explained how the driver helped him in trying to find Lutkins. Surprisingly, his companion told the lawyer that the driver was Lutkins himself. The lawyer served summons on Lutkins who made fun of him.

Conclusion of The Hack Driver

In the chapter – The Hack Driver teaches us a major life lesson that we should not trust anyone blindly without knowing them, otherwise we may end up getting fooled.

NCERT SOLUTION

Questions (Page No. 47)

(READ AND FIND OUT)

Question 1. Why is the lawyer sent to New Mullion? What does he first think about the place?

Answer: The lawyer is sent to New Mullion to serve summons on a man called Oliver Lutkins. Lutkins was needed as a witness in a law case but he had ignored all letters from the law firm.

He thinks that New Mullion would be a sweet and simple country village.

Question 2. Who befriends him? Where does he take him?

Answer: Bill Magnuson, who says that he is a delivery man at the station, befriends the lawyer. Bill tells him that Lutkins is a very hard man to catch. Then he suggests to help him by going together to the places where Lutkins usually hangs out at. He takes him to Fritz's shop, where Lutkins is known to play poker games; then to Gustaf's shop; Gray's shop; poolroom; and many other places before finally taking him to Lutkins' mother's farm.

Question 3. What does he say about Lutkins?

Answer: He says that Lutkins is a hard fellow to catch and is always up to something or the other. Lutkins owed a lot of money to people and never pays them back. Lutkins plays a lot of poker game. Bill also tells the lawyer that Lutkins is very good at deceiving people.

Questions (Page No. 50)

(READ AND FIND OUT)

Question 1. What more does Bill say about Lutkins and his family?

Answer: Bill says that he knows Lutkins' mother. He says that she is a terror. He shared the incident where he had gone to her farm to deliver a trunk and she almost took his skin off because he did not carry it as tenderly as one would carry a box of eggs. He told that she was about nine feet tall and four feet thick. She was very quick and could talk a lot.

He also said Lutkins must have heard about them chasing him and thus, would have come to hide behind his mother's skirts.

Question 2. Does the narrator serve the summons that day?

Answer: No, the narrator is not able to serve the summons that day.

Question 3. Who is Lutkins?

Answer: The hack driver, Bill Magnuson, himself is Lutkins. He deceives the lawyer the entire day so as to avoid receiving the summons from him to be a witness.

Questions (Page No. 53)

(THINK ABOUT IT)

Question 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?

Answer: When the lawyer reached New Mullion, 'Bill' did not know that he was looking for Lutkins. He found it by talking to the lawyer and taking him into his confidence.

Bill came up with his plan for fooling the lawyer as soon as he got to know that the lawyer was looking out for Lutkins and he did not know Lutkins by face.

Question 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?

Answer: Lutkins openly takes the lawyer all over the village but no one lets out the secret. He never lets the lawyer talk to the village people at first. It is always him who approaches them. He keeps telling the lawyer how deceiving Lutkins is and scares him of Lutkins' mother. The villagers and Lutkins' mother also join him in deceiving the lawyer.

Question 3. Why do you think Lutkins' neighbours were anxious to meet the lawyer?

Answer: Lutkins' neighbours were anxious to meet the lawyer because they were the only ones who did not get a chance to meet the lawyer, who was fooled by Lutkins for an entire day. Everybody else in the village had witnessed the lawyer being deceived by Lutkins.

Question 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?

Answer: No, I don't think he would have considered this idea after his second visit. After his first visit, he was quite positive about the people of New Mullion. He thought that Bill was so nice and helpful to a stranger and so would be the rest of the villagers.

On the second visit to New Mullion, he realizes that he was deceived by 'Bill' for an entire day. He kept searching for Lutkins with Lutkins' himself. He was now a matter of fun for the people of the village. He would never think of visiting New Mullions again.